

CAST UPON THE SHADOWS: ESSAYS TOWARD THE CULTURALOGIC
TURN IN CRITICAL RACE THEORY

By

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DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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TITLE: CAST UPON THE SHADOWS: ESSAYS TOWARD THE CULTURALOGIC TURN IN CRITICAL RACE THEORY

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Unlike many Black-specific disciplines in the academy (Black psychology, Black history, etc), Black philosophy never completely forged a unique conceptual framework separate from American and Continental intellectual traditions. Instead the field has continued to define its validity by the extent that Black authors extend the thought of white philosophers towards race. This epistemic convergence, or the extent to which Black theory converges with established white philosophical traditions, and hence white racial sensibilities, continues to misguide many of the current philosophical systems of Africana thought. Because this practice is so dominate, it has made current scholarship in African American and Africana thought derelict, in the sense that all investigations into Blackness are normatively, hence ideologically driven, and not culturally relevant to the actual lives of Africana people.

Because whites are able to connect their work in traditional philosophy to studies of race under the misnomer of “critical race theory,” these white associations with Black philosophy have given the illusion that integration and multicultural exchanges in Africana philosophy contribute to the restructuring of the discipline of philosophy and psychical changes in whites. Unfortunately this is merely wishful thinking that fails to consider the empirical research that confirms the undeniable failure of integration. This

inability by Blacks to accept and explore racism without the illusion of racial coexistence in America makes current approaches to Black philosophy irrelevant to the present day struggles that Blacks find themselves burdened by in the American context.

This dissertation however argues that the acceptance of the racial realist perspective, which accepts the permanence of racism, allows Blacks to “conceptually disengage” the triumphalism of the integrationist myth and explore the world without the illusion of anthropological parity. This lacuna in the European narration of liberal democracy’s vision of equality spurs the culturalogical turn in Critical Race Theory, and introduces the philosophical insights of Derrick Bell and Paul Robeson as guiding voices towards the silencing of the idealist trends in contemporary studies of racism.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the two Mrs. Curry's in my life. My mother, Shirley Mae Curry, and my wife, Gwenetta Denise Curry.

My mother always told me, "No matter what get your education, Jermaine." It is because she drilled this into my head since birth that I am where I am today, despite the obstacles I have faced as a Black man in philosophy. Don't worry mom, I only have one degree left.

And I cannot forget my wife, who made sure that I finished my Ph.D. It is because of her love, and her support that I stand before the world as Dr. Tommy J. Curry. I love you, Gwen. You are my heart, my inspiration, the reason my words have the courageous messages to convey.

PREFACE

Is African American philosophy, philosophy only to the extent that it reproduces or can demonstrate that it deals with the same issues that dominate American and Continental trends? Is African American thought merely “philosophy” in Black face, or is there something much deeper—much more substantive about the study of Black philosophy? Historically, the field of African American thought has run its course parallel to the “cutting edge” developments of Western discontent. In an effort both to demonstrate its rigor and to separate itself from the “radicalism” of the sixties, Black philosophers who pursued philosophy lived out the colloquialism of the Rodney King era and made the question of “Can’t We All Just Get Along?,” the ideological foundation of their scholarly productions.

With the demand for racial détente in philosophy, the inevitable product of the anti-essentialist and humanist morality in the discipline, African American thought has, for the last two decades, been almost exclusively dedicated to developing the proper “ethics of disdain.” These newly emergent ethics, which made the question of racial identity and the proper conditions under which one could claim that identity as its focus, continue to dictate the very conditions by which Black thinkers could “rigorously” pursue inquiry centered upon themselves. By drawing a very clear bright line between what was “African American philosophy” and what was “Black ideology,” philosophy enforces a moratorium on any “Black thought” that could challenge, uproot, or destroy the Eurocentric orientation of American and Continental tradition, while simultaneously encouraging concerns about “diversity” that cultivate interests in matters of race that

remain impotent to destroy the firmly rooted systems of white supremacy in the discipline.

Because white scholars are given a type of discursive authority for their interest in, rather than their actual studying of, Black philosophers, a systemic obstacle to the progression of the field has emerged. Because there is a continuing need for those whites who are merely interested in “Black thinkers” to be included in African American philosophy—as evidence of African American philosophy’s therapeutic success and an indication of African American philosophy’s ascension beyond Black ideology—Black students hoping to be trained specifically in African American philosophy and Africana thought will inevitably be forced not only to interact with the canonical figures of European and American traditions as a matter of professional survival, but whites, who are not trained in African American philosophy, seeking to extend their familiarity with white philosophers to their engagements with race. This institutional reality of the field has made “critical theories of race” a political concession to the parameters of white philosophy, rather than an insightful theoretical approach against it. Today, most Black graduate students claiming areas of specializations in African American philosophy are either trained by white professors, who have little to no training at all in the history of African American thought, or Black professors dedicated to the convergence of Black experience and European theory. Most graduate courses that do focus on Black thinkers, pluck these thinkers from the currents of history and confine their thought to the shallow ponds of European traditions instead of trying to understand Black thinkers in relation to their Black intellectual forefathers and foremothers. *Cast Upon the Shadows: Essays towards the Culturalogic Turn in Critical Race Theory* is my attempt both to ground

African American philosophy's contribution to CRT in culturalogic thinking and to reclaim the intellectual history of CRT's Black authors.

This “crisis” of African American philosophy first became apparent to me during the senior year of my undergraduate study, when I wrote a paper on John Dewey that was a little to Black for the professor. Though I received an ‘A’ on the paper and an ‘A’ in the class, I was immediately sent to the chair of the philosophy department, because, of the entire white faculty in the department, he was the only one “interested in those kinds of problems.” Needless to say, the relationship I have shared with Dr. Kenneth Stickers has grown to one of friendship and mutual respect over the last decade—yet, I still find it funny that my interaction with him began because I put too much of a “Black spin” on Dewey. Despite my seemingly natural acuity to philosophical problems and my superb argumentative skills, as evinced by two national CEDA debate championships, it became apparent that there was something about “white philosophy” that stood steadfast against Black intelligence. This conflict only deepened as I began searching for a graduate program that took the study of race seriously.

In August of 2002, I entered the only philosophy program in the country that advertised an area of specialization in Critical Race Theory (CRT). I was the only one of the three African American men accepted that year into the PhD program concentrating specifically on CRT. Though I was still torn between my decision to forgo law school and pursue my PhD in philosophy, the decision to pursue a PhD in philosophy was largely motivated in what I took at the time to be a genuine opportunity to both develop and practice my expertise in CRT before pursuing a strict and rigorous legal training.

My first year was a period of adjustment to say the least. The first class I took under the CRT stream was entitled, “Fanon and Foucault.” At this point I was a little lost, since my study of CRT was rooted largely in the law journals on Lexis-Nexus and Hein-Online and the three major anthologies of this movement.¹ Nevertheless, I continued taking the class and maintained a rather optimistic view of philosophy and its commitment to CRT. However, this began to quickly change as the class progressed and class discussions began involving a serious discussion of race. I noticed that Fanon was never taken as an intellectual author or philosopher in his own right. Any shortcoming of Fanon would be answered by Foucault. He was constantly being used as a precursor to Foucault’s ideas about the body and power, and criticized for what the class took to be sexism and reverse racism. This reading of Fanon seemed both condescending and incorrect. Could Fanon not be taken seriously as an author in his own right? Certainly his discourses with Cesaire, his criticisms of “Black Orpheus,”² and his works³ constituted a seminar for itself. I had hoped that the Fanon class was an isolated incident and continued to look for more classes that were geared towards a more formal understanding of CRT. By this time, I was known in the department for my isolated commitment to study issues of race and only Critical Race Theory. Despite what I took at the time to be merely misperceptions, I continued to look for classes that would speak to my interests. In the winter and spring quarters, I had thought that I found it. I took a course in the philosophy department labeled “Critical Race Feminism.” I thought I hit the jackpot. I assumed we would be reading the first edition of Adrien Wing’s anthology, *Critical Race Feminism*,⁴ since it had already been out for six years at this point. I was wrong again. The Critical Race Feminism course was focused specifically on Kristeva and Melanie Klein, and the

only reading that dealt specifically with race was Hannah Arendt's 1959 essay "Reflections on Little Rock." At this point, I realized I had been duped and was committed to studying white philosophy from white philosophers who only referred to CRT as a marketing label to attract people of color, but were not committed to integrating these scholars' views in their classes or curricula.

In my first yearly review, I voiced my concerns and asked why there was such a resistance to the study of Critical Race Theory when this university claimed Critical Race Theory as a graduate specialization. The reply was simple enough—"most white students would not take a class devoted specifically to race and jurisprudence." Little did I know that my concern over what I took to be my area of study would become the ammunition for my dismissal. In my following yearly review, I was told that I did not have philosophical concerns that were worthy of continuance toward the PhD, nor a project that warranted philosophical attention. It is even worthwhile to note that at DePaul, CRT was "unofficially" referred to as the ghetto of philosophy. It was this obstinance of the discipline that made me realize that there was something about my Blackness, or more specifically my African-centered Black male-ness, that was at odds with the stake the discipline had in accepting me. I had to accept that certain ideas, regardless of their historical origins or closeness to the historical opinions of Black philosophers, will never be accepted by the white academy as legitimate—they will always be classified as Black ideology.

Luckily my return to Southern Illinois University in the Fall of 2005 offered me some avenues to pursue an independent course of learning and insert the first two graduate seminars on Black philosophy in the history of the program into the curricula.

After finishing my doctoral coursework in a year, I set forth to write a dissertation that only dealt with the thoughts of Black thinkers about race and racism in America. I told my advisor that the only time whites would be mentioned in my dissertation was when I took on their erroneous interpretations of African American philosophy, or Critical Race Theory. Fortunately, he agreed, although with some reluctance.

The first time I used the term “culturalogics,” I was writing a paper for the late Emmanuel Eze’s Post-Colonial seminar during the first year of my master’s program. Eze’s reply to the introduction of the term was not as complimentary as I would have liked. He said “that my African-centered ideas needed more development.” In a weird sort of way, even though I adamantly rejected the (Alain) Lockean idealism of Emmanuel’s post-racial work, I was unintentionally influenced by it. I suppose my rejection of his project was one of the moments that I decided that culturalogical thinking should be the alternative to Eze’s post-racial humanism.

My anti-humanist orientation was solidified by two intellectual traditions: the first was Critical Race Theory, the dominate political orientation I carried with me since high school debate; and the second was African-centered thinking, an orientation I picked up from Dr. Kevin O. Cokely during his tenure at Southern Illinois University Carbondale as a psychology professor. Since my initial introduction to these two arenas of thought, however, my research has become heavily influenced by the racial realism of Derrick Bell and the psychological perspective of Dr. Daudi Azibo, as both of these orientations are fundamentally driven by the importance of “thinking Black about Blackness.”

Consequently, these two traditions compelled me to undertake my dissertation with four points in mind. First, the practice of African American philosophy is politically,

not scholastically, driven. Second, the impact that whites have in African American philosophy dilutes the study of historical African descended figures. Third, claiming African American philosophy as an area of specialization should entail an understanding of the historical associations and a philosophical genealogy of the ideas, and last, but not least, the recent proliferation of white scholars claiming the label of “critical race theory,” is yet another attempt of imperial scholarship to undertake the erasure of peoples’ of color contributions to racial inquiry.

To some reading this preface, the matriculation of another Black male scholar from SIUC in philosophy will provide a sign of hope, a symbol of progress, and the belief that hard work and perseverance can triumph over philosophy’s racism and its concurrent under-representation of African-descended people. However, I compel the reader to consider my intent in sharing this narrative. Consider that in the last decade SIUC’s philosophy program has only granted doctorates to two African American’s, assuming of course that this dissertation is accepted. Consider that until the spring of 2005, there had been no classes, undergraduate or graduate, taught about a Black American historical thinker, despite the department’s claim to being the leading graduate program in American philosophy. Consider that a Black professor has never been hired in the department of philosophy at SIUC. Consider that amongst Black men in philosophy leaving a Ph.D program or being threatened to be dismissed from a program is a common occurrence. Consider that whites are claiming that historic figures like Josiah Royce, Immanuel Kant, and John Dewey, who adamantly declare the inferiority of African-descended people, are used as anti-racist thinkers, over actual historic Black philosophers writing about race.

What I ask of those who read this preface is simply to accept that in an all white discipline that claims to be about the integrity of the mind, whiteness still prevails, and it is only by the conscious acceptance of this reality—not its denial—that African-descended people can develop the strategies to resist the apotheosis of the European perspective. For Black men, this is especially important given our tenuous relationships with whites and our inability to easily negotiate the boundaries of acceptability. Like me, various other African American men have confronted philosophy. Young brothers like O'Donovan Johnson, James Haile, and Dwayne Tunstall come to mind. Some of us have gone, some of us have stayed, but we have all recognized that European philosophy cannot be redeemed, or made relevant to the understanding of African-descended peoples, and as such must be replaced by “thinking”—which exists, for me, as a distinct cultural logic. Without the fellowship of these aforementioned brothers, my intellectual quality of life would be nihil. However, I can't give all the love to the brothers, because one sister in particular, my best friend, Ms. Teniesha Bryson, has been on this journey with me towards the Ph.D since my undergraduate days. For her support and love, I will be eternally grateful. And last but not least, I must thank my family for giving me the spiritual nourishment to continue the fight.

There is also another aspect of this dissertation yet to be considered, namely that it is the end result of my decision to continue this battle in philosophy, and several individuals have to be thanked (or blamed, depending on how much chaos my work causes) in that regard. I would like to thank Dr. Kenneth Stickers, who supported me since I was 19 in my philosophical endeavors; Dr. Joseph Brown, who provided what seemed like infinite resources for conferences and research; Dr. Seymour Bryson, for his

encouragement and wisdom; Dr. Lewis Gordon, for believing in my potential; Dr. Bill Lawson, for endless conversations about the best way to “get along in the discipline;” Derrick Bell for revealing his Robesonian inclinations to me and sharing his wisdom and life stories; Richard Delgado for his caustic, but helpful remarks, about the last chapter; Al Brophy for his suggestions on chapter 4; Dr. Daudi Azibo for giving me a standard of scholarship toward which to aspire; Dr. Ernest Allen Jr. for his correspondence on W.E.B. DuBois and John E. Bruce; Leonard Harris, for being Leonard Harris; the National Conference of Black Studies for providing a venue for my work; and last but not least my committee: Dr. Doug Anderson, Dr. Doug Berger, Dr. Sarah Beardsworth, and Dean Peter Alexander, who probably comprise one of the largest committees in the history of the program, but who also believed and supported the thinking of a young scholar. Your ability to look into the shadows has truly given me the courage to cast the world upon them.

Notes

¹ I am referring to the two most definitive works on CRT proper—see Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller and Kendall Thomas, *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* (New York: The New Press, 1995), and Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge. 2nd ed.* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000)—as well as the most recent anthology in this area by Francisco Valdes, Jerome McCristal Culp and Angela P. Harris, *Crossroads, Directions, and a New Critical Race Theory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002).

² See Jean Paul Sartre, “Black Orpheus,” in *Race*, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 115-142.

³ See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1967), *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), *Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), and *Toward an African Revolution*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

⁴ See Adrienne Katherine Wing, *Critical Race Feminism: A reader. 2nd edition* (New York: New York University Press, 2003). This is the definitive work on Critical Race Feminism (CRF) that explains both the divide Black women and other women of color have with traditional feminist discourses and how CRF sees itself as a continuation of the Critical Race Theory tradition. The first edition of this work was published in 1996.

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INTRODUCTION: Why Cast them Upon the Shadows

Over the last several decades, African American philosophy has risen to a certain level of visibility as a commentary on the inadequacies of traditional European thought. While many professional philosophers do commend the field for its politics of inclusion, its insistence upon social critique, and its seemingly infinite capacity to be compatible with any number of philosophical traditions, regardless of those traditions' historical associations with racism, sexism, and colonial logics, African American philosophy is not recognized as a "rigorous" course of philosophical study. Because African American philosophy is mainly praised for its ability to point out the inadequacies of European thought, there has been relatively little scholarship that articulates the actual historical positions that many Black authors held outside Africana philosophers' criticisms of European thinking. Rewarded for driving philosophy towards its unrealized ideals of equality, human freedom, and racial harmony, African American thought is consistently relegated to the status of a "sleeping dictionary," that gives white philosophers a racial dialect to deal with Blacks in exchange for the dominant philosophical lexicon. As Tommie Shelby has also recently noted, "although engaged with social realities and historical events, its [African American philosophy] mode of inquiry still tends to be relatively abstract and somewhat tentative in its conclusions, often asking more questions than it answers...Moreover, given that African American philosophy scrutinizes and defends basic normative ideals, it might seem hopelessly utopian, engaged in painting a picture of an ideal world in which none of us will ever live."¹

Unlike many Black philosophers² who champion the newly emergent visibility of African American/Africana philosophy as a triumph, I regard the recent recognition of

African American/Africana thought by white scholars in mainstream philosophy as more of a Pyrrhic victory than the actual concretization of its canonical legitimacy. Because African American philosophy's currency as a philosophical enterprise resides in its ability to point white theory towards uncultivated Black experience, exposing European philosophy's inadequacies only results in extending white philosophical figures theories to previously neglected questions of race. While African American thought has become effective in demonstrating the inadequacies of traditional philosophical practices, it nonetheless remains impotent to replace those practices, because European thought remains the only "philosophical practices" available to most academically trained philosophers, and the discipline has overwhelmingly endorsed a strategy of revising the racism in white philosophers' thinking rather than engage these questions with Black philosophers. In the few instances where Black philosophers are used in "philosophical inquiry," these thinkers are funneled through white theoretical apparati and categorically removed from the organic Black thinking and associations that molded their philosophical outlook throughout their lives. W.E.B DuBois becomes a psycho-analytic pragmatist and an Hegelian; Anna Julia Cooper becomes a philosopher because her thought highlights the concerns of contemporary white feminists, and Black nationalists like Martin R. Delany are read as integrationists, while those Black thinkers that "just don't fit" into contemporary streams of theory, like William H. Ferris, John Edward Bruce, Alexander Crummell, Edward Blyden, Paul Robeson, and Derrick Bell, are denied philosophical attention, despite their enormous roles in Black intellectual history.³

Instead of theorizing the cause of racism, its origins, its various manifestations, and how Black thinkers have historically come to understand it, most philosophical

treatments of race either revolve around the existence of race(s) or the historical racism of past philosophical figures. While there is ample scholarship that historically links virtually all major philosophical figures, be they in the American or Continental tradition, to anti-Black racism and colonialism, the curricula within philosophy departments across the country remain unchanged by these acknowledgements.⁴ Because many works in African American philosophy require the denial of the racial realities before us, since such a critique would no doubt implicate “whites friendly to the field,” many readers may consider my approach to “Critical Race Theory,” and the descriptions regarding the state of African American philosophy and the function of white supremacy in the discipline, unsettling. While I cannot deny that prior investigations into race and racial identity have certainly moved the field forward, conversely I cannot deny the level of stagnation as a result of the reproduction of age-old questions and the repetition of dilapidated answers. This dissertation is interested in the theoretical intervention that a renewed Critical Race Theory can have in our understanding of racism, and because this work focuses on the real racism as *known* by the Black victims of white oppression—it categorically denies the need to defend philosophically a position of racial identity or converse with white thinkers (historical or contemporary) who continue to negotiate abstractly the validity of that experience.

In law schools, Critical Race Theory has become almost passé in light of the ever growing conservatism both in American politics and the constitutional interpretations of U.S courts that continue to view racism as a thing of the past. In philosophy departments, Africana thought is not seen to possess any real philosophical content and has been largely referred to as an “applied philosophy” concerned with matters of race, and in

Africana studies, there seems to be an ever growing tension between postcolonial discourses, which hold race as a social construct, and the traditional African-centered school that dominates the National Conference of Black Studies. The interrelatedness of these problems demonstrates a need not only for interdisciplinary work, but a philosophical perspective that can unify the warring traditions under a coherent methodological approach that does not flee from the brutality involved in living Black.

What Race and Racism are in this Dissertation

Some readers may find it strange that a dissertation written on African American philosophy and Critical Race Theory does not take up the traditional practice of dedicating a chapter to defining what is meant by race.⁵ For many African American philosophers dissecting the category of race and clarifying what is meant and intended by calling one's self "raced" is at the heart of African American philosophy's contribution to race theory.⁶ For these authors, racial identity and the conditions that allow one to "legitimately" claim a racial identity are ethical questions that must be settled before any genuine attempts to solve the race problem can be discussed. For many of these thinkers knowing the terms of the discussion is just as important if not more important than what one actually discusses. At the risk of sounding cynical—I adamantly disagree. If those who claim to think about race, *seriously think about race*, then the phenomenon of racial designation in America is actually quite simple.

Racial identification only becomes difficult when it is abstracted from reality so that it may be strategically used as a weapon in the interplay between Black people's experience of racism at the hands of whites and the enforcement of a certain type of ethics which defines the proper ways by which Black discontent can be expressed

philosophically without stigmatization. Since these ethics act as a buffer against the ability of Blacks to confront whites in philosophy with the actual reality of racism, I have termed these ethics, the ethics of disdain, or those moral rules Blacks must play by so that their critiques against white oppression are deemed philosophically appropriate by the very scholars they criticize. These ethics play a major role in removing the concept of race from its corporeal and terrestrial encasement as racism towards a seemingly endless manipulation of abstractions.⁷ Whereas racism is of undeniable consequence to its victims, race is a conceptual negotiation and hence, philosophizable, in the sense that anyone can think creatively about the history of race's formulation and indulge the complexities of a philosophical historiography aimed at revising the narration of racial identifications. This ubiquitous neutrality, the ability to play with the concept without getting one's hands dirty by engaging how Blacks have come to understand racism, is why, as Barbara J. Fields states,

well-meaning scholars are more apt to speak of race than of racism. Race is a homier and more tractable notion than racism, a rogue elephant gelded and tamed into a pliant beast of burden. Substituted for racism, race transforms the act of a subject into an attribute of the object. And because race denotes a state of mind, feeling, or being, rather than a program or pattern of action, it radiates a semantic and grammatical ambiguity that helps to restore an appearance of symmetry...⁸

Because a true theoretical inquiry into the nature of racism would require Blacks to conduct an honest assessment into the role that seemingly well intentioned, rational, and "racially sensitive" whites have in Black oppression, most Black philosophers stray away from any analysis of race relations that can be characterized as accusatory. When the focus of Black philosophy remains confined to individual perceptions, whites are empowered to participate in "Africana thought" as they please.⁹ Since the undisclosed

aim of Africana philosophy is to be therapeutic to the white conscience and is ideologically driven by the need to make whites less racist through a “Black education,”¹⁰ those whites who volunteer to read or write about Black authors and discuss their racial and racist perceptions of Blacks are given an almost indisputable authority on race matters. Whereas an analysis of racism would ask about white presumptions of authority in Black thought, their ability to bracket their whiteness, and the overall material gains (be it financial or political) from claiming to be an “Africana philosopher,” the general study of race allows an undue profitability by whites who know very little if anything about Black philosophy. As Fields notes,

Racism—the assignment of people to an inferior category and the determination of their social, economic, civic, and human standing on that basis—unsettles the fundamental instincts of American academic professionals who consider themselves liberal, leftist, or progressive. It is an act peremptory, hostile, and supremely—often fatally—consequential identification that unceremoniously overrides its objects’ sense of themselves.¹¹

It is because of this categorical flip, whereby whites are totalized by their historical disposition of oppression and robbed of their immaculate rationality, that many philosophers resist understanding the realities of racism as the foundation of any critical philosophical treatment of race.

Blacks have always known who “we” are; and this reality should not change in our inquiries into ourselves amidst philosophy’s seductions towards racial disembodiment.¹² Thinking about race as separate from the concrete realities of racism has become synonymous with “thinking philosophically” about race. The problem is that “thinking philosophically” is not really thinking about race for Blacks. By making the interests white have in absolving themselves of modernity’s shadows—those melanin-

ated bodies that remind Europeans of their tyrannical legacy—philosophy creates a seemingly neutral colonial space where whites are presumed to be racially oblivious minds ready to join the anti-racist campaign so long as there are willing Blacks anxious to nurture personal relationships with them. This philosophical mandate for inter-racial conversations is nothing more than the secular commodification of theory, since it on the basis of these personal relationships that whites demonstrate to the viewing world that Black thought effectively transforms reason, and Blacks can tout Africana philosophy as a therapeutic success. Rather than voluntarily declaring itself a victim of this aforementioned commodification, this dissertation explores the ways in which Black philosophy is historically independent of Europe, an example of African-descended peoples' contouring culturalogics.

Can There Be a Philosophy Dissertation without White Philosophers?

African American philosophy has always understood itself to be tied intimately to the Black radicalism of the 1960's and an extension of the paradigmatic shift towards the study of African-descended people the world over. According to the "Preface" of *A Companion to African American Philosophy*, "contemporary African-American philosophy emerged at a specific political moment in the 1960s to vie for recognition in the discipline, and is now an academic specialization that constitutes an evolving socio-historical reality."¹³ The establishing of the field was directly related to the political struggles coming out of the civil rights movement for the legitimacy of Black history and Black liberation. "Without the 1960s political movements, however, Black Studies would not have been established. Hence, political activism gave Black Studies, and African-America philosophy, its initial momentum and reason for being, its ideological coloring,

practical aims, and its first recruits.”¹⁴ At its core, African-American philosophy wants to claim a level of authenticity in its attempts to examine Black life in America, but remains burdened by the need to appear philosophically legitimate to the white dominated discipline of philosophy. Whereas Black Studies is clear about its political and theoretical allegiances, African American philosophy remains sequestered by Black studies for its disingenuous attempts to inquiry into Blackness, and by philosophy for its seemingly irrelevant perspective upon universal truth(s).

Over several decades, the field of Black Studies has dedicated itself to establishing key journals devoted to preserving, investigating, and valorizing Black thought. Journals like the *Journal of Black Studies*, the *Journal of African American Studies*, the *International Journal of Africana Studies*, the *Black Women, Gender and Families Journal*, the *Journal of Pan-African Studies* and *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture and Society*, build upon the foundations set by historical journals dedicated solely to understanding Black people like the *Journal of Negro History*, the *Journal of Black Psychology*, *Phylon*, and *Callaloo*. While this short list is by no means exhaustive, it shows that Black thinkers have constructed a theoretical toolbox from their own peoples’ experiences. In philosophy, only two Black journals, *Philosophia Africana* and the *C.L.R. James Journal*, are popularly known, and the *APA Newsletter on the Black Experience*, while rich in cutting edge work in African American philosophical history, is rarely cited or afforded the same visibility as its peer reviewed companions. Despite the rhetoric by African-American philosophers who proclaim a dedication to “Black thought,” their voices are mysteriously absent from the National Conference of Black Studies, and many of the Journals that speak exclusively to Black Studies. What I

propose to the reader is that this division exists because African American philosophy continues to frame inquiries into Blackness within the boundaries of “approved” European techniques of investigation, while Black Studies is primarily dedicated to the historic task of accumulating Black knowledge.

In many ways, this disconnect is a conscious choice among African American philosophers who aim to avoid what is perceived as a “racial essentialism” among many “hard core” Black Studies scholars. I, on the other hand, have always found this break between Black Studies and African-American philosophy over the essentialism question rather ironic, given that many of the appeals that European traditions use to investigate race, like liberalism, psycho-analysis, humanism, and Marxist/Foucauldian analyses, appeal to essentialist accounts of rational subjects. It seems that essentialism is acceptable, as long as it is not racial or culturally exclusive, despite the historical record that seems to demonstrate beyond a doubt that the most distinctive division of thought between Blacks and whites in America occurred around race.

Rather than debate the ability of African American philosophy to speak to this paradigmatic difference with Black studies, this dissertation wants to solidify a theoretical approach by which one can more accurately investigate racism as Black authors have experienced and understood it through the centuries. Since the early 1800’s, Black thinkers have organized their thoughts in newspapers, conventions, and curricula against white supremacy. In 1827 with the founding of *Freedom’s Journal* to the 1840’s, at the height of the convention movement, Black thinkers debated, taught and developed a critical outlook amidst the racist landscape of America.¹⁵ The 1800’s were filled with various ideas and analyses of the race problem. The radical perspectives of David

Walker's *Appeal* (1829), Robert Young's *Ethiopian Manifesto* (1829),¹⁶ Hosea Easton's *Treatise on the Intellectual Character, and the Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People of the United States*,¹⁷ were met with a tempered response by Maria Stewart that urged economic prosperity and redemptive hope in God's grace instead of revolt.¹⁸ Out of the Convention Movement came the revelation that the myth of racial inferiority was an issue of policy rather than divinity. The debates between Fredrick Douglass and Martin R. Delany and the eventual demise of the *North Star* signaled a shift in the ideas that motivated racial elevation in the country. Rather than rely on the grace of a just God to redeem the suffering of African-descended people, Delany and, to a lesser extent, Douglass began approaching race as a political ideology rooted in a cultural and ideological mis-orientation. By the late 1880's the approach of dealing with race as a socio-legal concept became the mainstay of Black men's engagement with the race concept.¹⁹ With Delany's publication of the *Principia of Ethnology* in 1879, Edward Blyden's *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* in 1888,²⁰ and Henry McNeal Turner's Black radicalism²¹ in the last decades of the century, the tone was set to begin thinking of racism as a permanent structure of American society and cultural development as the way to escape the supposed inferiority of African-descended people. Faced with these seemingly overwhelming political realities, T.Thomas Fortune began looking at racism and its roots in labor, and started the National Afro-American League as a civil rights organization.²² Following the social agitation philosophy advocated by T.Thomas Fortune, Ida B. Wells became an exemplar of an activist-theorist with her sociological analysis of lynching and the accompanying myth of the Black male rapist.²³

By the turn of the century (1897), the American Negro Academy (ANA) had been established and its decree to solve the race problem had been adopted by over forty lettered men.²⁴ The American Negro Academy was the first official school of Black philosophy in the United States. In Alexander Crummell's first words on the ANA, he argued "seeing that the American mind in the general, revolts from Negro genius, the Negro himself is duty bound to see to the cultivation and the fostering of his own race capacity. Our special mission is the encouragement of the genius and talent in our own race."²⁵ By defining the goals of the ANA by this separatist intellectual agenda, Crummell's pronouncement articulated a commonly understood position about Black scholarship's difference from white scholarship on Blacks. This movement set the stage for understanding "Black thinking" quite differently from the comparative philosophical approaches currently popular in mainstream African American philosophy. The encyclopedic works of John E. Bruce,²⁶ William H. Ferris,²⁷ W.E.B. DuBois, and Benjamin Brawley,²⁸ documenting the presence of genius in African-descended people and the political analyses of Booker T. Washington, Kelly Miller,²⁹ Charles Victor Roman,³⁰ Marcus Garvey and Ralph Bunche were the source material that nourished the scholars of the mid-1900's.³¹ Drawing from the intellectual reservoirs of thought established by these thinkers, Black intellectuals like Harold Cruse, Cedric Robinson, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Black Panther activists like Angela Davis, Huey P. Newton, and Stokely Carmichael set the tone for the echoes that resonated with the cultural uplift thinking of Paul Robeson and the later genius of Derrick Bell.

Stated simply, this dissertation does not include any white thinkers because white philosophy simply has nothing to do with Black philosophical thought. Black philosophy

stands on its own; it has its own historical integrity, and hence, has no need to be supported by the currency of white theoretical inventions. Because the institution of slavery, Jim Crow, and the persistence of segregation well into the 20th century maintained rigid distinctions between supposed white superiority and Black inferiority, white philosophers never interacted with Black thinkers in such a way that their experiences and the theories that could account for that experience genuinely converged. What this dissertation demonstrates is that a treatise looking at the cultural logic that African-descended people have used to understand racism is not only sufficient, but the most historically accurate way that one can encounter the American conundrum of racial oppression. By casting Black thought onto the shadows, those images projected from whites' delusions of equality, freedom, and reason, Critical Race Theory has a unique opportunity to understand the raw materials from which African-descended people have contoured their reality for centuries.

The Structure of the Dissertation

Unlike most dissertations in philosophy that seek to answer a series of pressing questions, this dissertation is an argument for a cultural logical perspective in Africana philosophy and contemporary investigations into racism. This dissertation aims to convince its readers that the inherent problems in current practices of Africana/African American philosophy and the status quo's appropriation of "critical race theory," makes genuine research into Africana thought impossible. As a remedy to the philosophical inadequacies of current theorizations of "critical race theory," I propose a cultural logical perspective rooted in "racial" reality (ism) that attempts to show that one need not revise historic Black thought to have a functioning idea of subjectivity. Rather than destroy the core

beliefs and insights of Black authors to fit with the contemporary social conscience of whites, I argue that African-descended people can and historically have theorized under the seemingly permanent condition of anti-Black racism. By starting with the premise that hope for the eradication of racism is not a requisite for African/a theoretical insight, I believe that this dissertation signals a changing of the guard so to speak where Black thought can be cast back into the shadows of African-descended peoples' suffering, and not retreat from the realities illuminated by the umbra of European domination.

Chapter 1 outlines what I take to be the central problems with Africana/ African American philosophy's claim to be an endemic perspective born within the perennial struggles of African-descended people against modernity. Current investigations into race are politically motivated by the ideals of integration—ignoring the dominance of Black nationalism through most of Black intellectual history—and continue to produce scholarship and ideology that converges with the ways in which whites understand and analyze the world. By making Black authors subservient to the dominant methods of philosophical analysis like phenomenology and psycho-analysis, and contemporary social attitudes like anti-essentialism and integrationism, African American philosophy in the academy neglects the actual thought of Africana thinkers. This chapter makes what I take to be a very obvious fact in the philosophical study of African-descended people, namely, if the actual thoughts of Black thinkers are revised so that they fit with contemporary philosophical sentiments—be it in respect to method or social awareness—we learn very little about the actual thought of those Black authors. By proposing a culturalogical reformulation of Critical Race Theory around the actual theories Africana thinkers have

pursued against Western colonialism, I contend that African American thought can effectively begin inquiring into Black experience.

Unfortunately, however, this call to a new Critical Race Theory faces several institutionalized impediments to its development as a part of philosophical study. The first and most obvious is the conflation of Critical Race Theory with “critical theories of race.” Whereas CRT has defined itself by its insistence on the very real and material existence of racism in the lives of African-descended people and other peoples of color, “critical theories of race” continues to revolve around age old questions concerning the existence of “race” and abstractions about the meaning of “race” as a socially constructed category. However, the second and more pernicious problem is the infiltration of “critical race theory” by whites who continue to use the supposed libratory discourses in race theory to re-inscribe the parameters of the Western philosophical canon. In Chapter 2, I argue that philosophy’s imperial scholarship, whereby white scholars impose upon Black scholars the need to maintain the compatibility between African American thought and the white philosophical canon inevitably dooms concrete investigations into racism—be it institutional, individual, or cultural. Even those works that accurately criticize the white supremacy of the discipline seem to fall back on the possibility of European philosophy, despite its historical racism and current racist inclinations, to be redeemed. I argue that given what we know about implicit bias, Black scholars must leave whites to their own devices, so to speak, and look to the Critical Race Studies model, which is willing to sacrifice white relationships in the pursuit of actually understanding racism, for guidance.

Chapter 3 begins by taking the recommendations of the previous chapter seriously. If Black scholars conceptually disengaged the ideological presuppositions of

American philosophy and Continental thought on questions of race, what type of thought would be relevant to contemporary Black thinking on race and culture and integral to the formation of “new theory?” I argue that Derrick Bell’s philosophy of racial realism, insofar as it forces African-descended people to survey a demystified and demythologized reality, is the first step to creating and grounding a new theoretical foundation for Black thinking. While I am optimistic about the potential of Bell’s perspectives to ground the new direction for CRT, Chapter 3 also acknowledges the need to extricate Bell’s thinking and the philosophical genealogy of his thought from its entanglements with post-civil rights ideology. By boldly laying out the criterion of racial reality—the necessary knowledge African-descended people must have to accurately perceive the world—this chapter aims to contour the perspectives of contemporary theories towards race around the actual existence of racism as experienced by African-descended peoples and not as imagined by white scholars.

Chapter 4 is built on Chapter 3’s racial realist mandate to conceptually disengage equality theory and comparative philosophical anthropology, but aims to take it a step further. If the reader accepts the arguments set forth in previous chapters, then there is almost a necessity to set forth a new type of thinking that is both “historically divergent” from European thought and rooted in the “racial reality” that confronts African-descended people in America. In Chapter 4, I propose this alternative conception of CRT as a theoretical outgrowth of the initial rupture with traditional philosophy, as set forth in Chapter 3. By articulating what I take to be that need for a culturalogical turn within the CRT, I argue that 1) African-descended people can indeed take control of the means of theoretical production by investigating how culturalogics contours and modifies reality

towards a culturally relevant goal, and 2) this culturalogical intervention in theory production can once and for all silence the claim that it is only through racial idealism that racism can be addressed. When it is all said and done, I claim that Derrick Bell's Robesonian inclinations and the imagery he uses in the myth of Afrolantica is in fact a conceptualization of free Africana thought, especially in regard to the United States.

Notes to the Introduction

¹ *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundation of Black Solidarity*, (Cambridge: Belknap Publishers, 2005)

² Throughout this dissertation, I will use the terms Black, African-American, Africana, and African descended to describe the cultural/racial designation of African-descended people in ways that may unfamiliar to some readers. By Black, I mean the racial identity and politicized struggle that African-descended people in American struggle against. African American is a geographical term that describes an African descended person confined to American perspectives, or identity. Africana is an umbrella term to describe African-descended people throughout the diaspora, and I use the term African-descended people as a cultural term that denotes the heritage and culturally centered expression of our existence.

³ The examples of this practice are too numerous to list in the introduction, and will be revisited again in chapter 2. However, I think it is important to highlight some of the more recent works that demonstrate this phenomenon, especially in regard to DuBois. For psycho-analytic readings of DuBois, see Eugene Victor Wolfenstein, *A Gift of the Spirit: Reading the Souls of Black Folks*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007) and Shannon Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006). For the definitive work claiming that DuBois is a Hegelian, see Shamoon Zamir, *Dark Voices: W.E.B. DuBois and American Thought, 1888-1903*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁴ For collections in the Continental tradition, see Andrew Valls (ed.), *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Sara Eigens & Mark J. Larrimore (eds.), *The German Invention of Race* (Albany: SUNY, 2006); Robert Bernasconi & Sybol Cook (eds.), *Race and Racism in Continental Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003); and Robert Bernasconi & Tommy L. Lott, (eds.), *The Idea of Race*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000). For a summation of racism in American philosophy, see Bill E. Lawson and Donald F. Koch (eds.), *Pragmatism and the Problem of Race*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

⁵ I view race as a social construct, but believe it is important to understand the cultural and historical legacies that have formed, do form, and continue to sustain the reality of this term in the lives of African-descended people in America. New genetic evidence by Dr. Rick Kittles dealing with ancestral informative markers (specifically SLC24A5) has the potential to allow Black Americans to trace their genetic inheritances in Africa. While Kittles is clear that he too believes that race is a socio-cultural and legal concept, he nonetheless admits that it is a biological reality for African Americans, because it affects life expectancy, disease, nutrition, and overall health. For a further discussion of Kittles' works, see R.A. Kittles, J. Benn-Torees et. al, "Admixture and Population Stratification in African Caribbean Populations," *Annals of Human Genetics* 72 (2008): 90-98; R.A. Kittles, E. Santos, et. al., "Race, Skin Color, and Genetic Ancestry: Implications for Biomedical Research on Health Disparities," *California Journal of Health Promotion* 5 (2007): 9-23; R.A. Kittles, S. Keita, et.al, "Conceptualizing Human Variation," *Nature Genetics* 36 (2004): 17-20; and R. Kittles, E.J. Parra & M. Shriver, "Implications of correlations between Skin Color and Genetic Ancestry for Bio-medical Research," *Nature Genetics* 36 (2004): 54-60. There was also a mention of the relationship between SLC24A5 and myelin production, but that research and the epistemological consequences of those findings on racial/cultural groups are decades away.

With the advent of new bio-geographic accounts of race, it would seem that the ability for Blacks to trace their African heritage, and the locations of their origin, race will only become a more enriched and culturally relevant term demarcating both the cultural legacy and historical processes by which African-descended people share transatlantic continuities.

⁶ The debate over the proper definition of and the correct conditions by which one can use race is an ancient debate in African American philosophy. See Anthony Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument: DuBois and the Illusion of Race" *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985): 21-37; "The Conservation of 'Race,'" (*Black American Literary Forum* 23 (1989): 37-60; and his 1992 work *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) for the definitive articulation of the racial eliminativist position. For the conservationist response, see Robert Gooding-Williams, "Outlaw, Appiah, and Dubois's 'The Conservation of Races'" in *On Race and Culture*, eds. Bernard W. Bell, Emily R. Grosholz, and James B. Stewart (New York: Routledge, 1996), 39-56, and Lucius Outlaw "Conserve Races: In Defense of W.E.B. DuBois," in *On Race and Culture* (1996), 15-37).

For a more contemporary treatment of the problems of defining race in CRT, see Paul Taylor, *Race: A Philosophical Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004). Paul Taylor has been the most recent theoretician to focus on the metaphysics of race in CRT. Taylor's analysis holds that race and race talk are products of a specific historical organization. "White supremacist societies create the Races they thought they were discovering, and the ongoing political developments in these societies continued to recreate them. ... All of this is to say: our Western races are social constructs. They are the things that we humans create in the transactions that define social life. Specifically, they are the probabilistically defined populations that result from the white supremacist determination to link appearance and ancestry to social location and life changes" (86). This recognition however does not seek to make race itself as barometer of a knowledge claim. Taylor is responding by and large to the eliminativist project and seeks to integrate an answer to the ethical problem of change in his theory of radical constructionism (87). Radical constructivists hold that our social practices create populations as well as breeding groups by connecting certain bodies and bloodlines to certain social locations and modes of treatment. In Taylor's view,

Races are probabilistically defined populations. If we pick out subsets of the U.S population by focusing on bodies and bloodlines in the way that race-thinking suggests, we'll find that the members of these subsets tend to be—tend to be—similarly situated with regard to certain social conditions, including the mechanisms and measures of social stratification. Since these mechanisms assign meaning—a statistical relations to certain measure of social stratification for example—to bodies and bloodlines, we can speak of them as racializing, and of the populations they create as races (117).

This view is helpful in creating a way of speaking about populations that may be suffering from similar historical conditions, but notice the specificity of the definition. Taylor holds that "one must pick out subsets of the U.S population" and then "focus on the bodies and bloodlines" of that population prior to the comparison of the group identity. Is this the way actual knowledge about race works? Do racialized people pick out their group as the group they see as suffering from the same historical conditions created by white supremacy or do racialized people genuinely embrace themselves as a necessary condition of the group they belong to? In other words, when black children claim they are black children, is that identity the process of a careful comparison with other children from similar socio-economic circumstance, or the recognition of one's people. Taylor seeks to avoid any essentialist charges against his definition, and in doing so, he unintentionally turns his definition into an outsider account of race. In Taylor's view, someone always has to look at a population from outside of that group to then speak of that population as a race with statistical or extra racial meanings. People in races do not hold themselves to be the objects of study; they presuppose their existence, as the necessary condition of looking at themselves and speaking their reality. Taylor's view practically invites the study of African/a people as probable configurations of widespread social perception. It fails to draw distinct lines in the participation of perception and knowledge gathering in African/a communities.

Taylor's radical constructionism also introduces the idea of transfiguration, "to call attention to the ways in which racializing practices create distinct contexts of interaction, defined by distinctive relations and dynamics" (117) but this is not culture, "race are not cultural groups as I have defined them. But they are features of the social landscape around which social groups can form" (118) and could never be taken as a basis of identity that is not mitigated by other social circumstances. Taylor continues,

When one emphasizes the reality of race, even, or perhaps especially, in the constructivist manner I've endorse, it is important to be clear about what one's isn't saying. I don't mean to suggest on behalf of radical constructionism that individuals are only or most saliently members of races. One might adduces consideration like the ones raised here for identifying oneself by reference to other principles of social differentiation, like gender or class. The point has been just that the metaphysics of race is a contextual affair, that race-talk highlights the relations, forces, and dynamics that characterize and distinguish certain important contexts, and that individuals who find themselves embedded in and affected by the relevant contexts have reason to attend to the truths, the propositions about existing relations and dynamics, that race-talk talks to. This certainly does not mean that they can't attend to the ways in which they are implicated in and by other

contexts, and by the ways in which their enviring contexts interact and shape each other.

Also, I'm not rejecting the idea that races ought to be abolished, or race-talk ultimately eliminated. Radical constructionism explores the processes that eventuate in the social construction of race; but something, once constructed can certainly be troublesome and worth demolishing (117).

What then is achieved in Taylor's account? Under a radical constructivist picture there is nothing that excludes an eliminativist view, except that admission that when we speak about races we are speaking of groups that have been defined in a way by white supremacist history and are still suffering the consequences of that historical deprivation. Taylor's theory makes oppression primarily a question of social stratification, which limits his analysis to description. Taylor's work can look at a situation and name populations as races in so much their social status and difference marks them a population. But could never speak specifically to how a group existing as a people then responds to racialization. This approach fails to take seriously the current role of white privilege and the systemic regeneration of white supremacist logic that not only marks populations but have been historically targeted against the Black population through racialization.

⁷ I would be remiss if I did not thank Stephen Faison for introducing this phrase to me.

⁸ Barbara J. Fields, "Whiteness, Racism, and Identity," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 60 (2001): 48-56, 48.

⁹ Reading Headley's work really shows the impact CRT has had on his thinking. In "Philosophical Approaches to Racism: A Critique of the Individualist Perspective," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 31 (2000): 223-257, Headley argues for an institutional understanding of racism that looks beyond motivational accounts. Like most race-crits, Headley understands that racism is not about individual perceptions, but institution corroboration with social theories of inequality.

¹⁰ For a discussion of mistaken burden placed on education to solve racism, see Tommy J. Curry, "Saved By the Bell: Derrick Bell's Racial Realism as Pedagogy," *Philosophical Studies in Education* 39 (2008): 35-46.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² This statement may appear essentialist to some, and that appearance would not be an illusion, but the understanding of the role history plays in solidifying identities that have been mistaken as biological and natural are extremely complex, especially in regards to race. According to W.E.B DuBois, the differences of groups that are not biologically determined are still essential because races are historical and cultural. He says,

Human beings are infinite in variety, and when they are agglutinated in groups, great and small, the groups differ as though they too, had integrated souls. But they have not. The soul is still individual if it is free. Race is a cultural, sometimes historical fact....

"But what is this group; and how do you differentiate it; and how can you call it black when admit it is not black?"

I recognize it quite easily and with full legal sanction; the black man is a person who must ride 'Jim Crow' in Georgia (*Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* [New York: Schocken Books, 1968], 153).

¹³ "Preface," in *A Companion to African American Philosophy*, eds. Tommy L. Lott & John P. Pittman (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), xiii-xiv, xiii.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ For a discussion of these ideas, see Fredrick Cooper, "Elevating the Race: The Social Thought of Black Leaders 1827-1850," *American Quarterly* 24 (1972): 604-625; Bella Gross, "Freedom's Journal and the Rights of All," *Journal of Negro History* 17 (1932): 241-286; Eugene Gordon, "The Negro Press," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 140 (1928): 248-256; John L. Burg, "The New York African School, 1827-1836: Conflict over Community Control of Black Education," *Phylon* 44 (1983): 187-197.

¹⁶ For the text of David Young's *Appeal* and Robert Young's *Ethiopian Manifesto*, see Sterling Stuckey, *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972).

¹⁷ See Hosea Easton, *To Heal the Scourge of Prejudice: The Life and Writings of Hosea Easton*, eds. James B. Stewart and George B. Price (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).

¹⁸ For a discussion on the influence of David Walker on Maria Stewart, see Marilyn Richardson, "Introduction," in Maria W. Stewart, *America's First Black Woman Political Writer: Essays and Speeches* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1987), 3-27; 7-8.

¹⁹ I specify Black men, because the dominant frame of Black women's engagement as educators and activists centered on humanist discourses and appeals to moral suasion that were more contested in the works of Black men. For an example of this Enlightenment humanist frame, see Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). I believe this distinction is important (at least in regard to nationalist thought) because, it expresses my deeply held belief that Black male experiences and the disengagement from Americanism (Eurocentrism) that this experience has historically entailed is indeed a viable source of theorization. In contrast to the contemporary "pathological views" of Black masculinity, I believe that the manifestations of oppression, brutality, and sexual exploitation provide a solid basis of theorization.

My work also takes issue with the narrow construction of race and gender as dealing only with an essentialized Black female type. A broader discussion of race, gender and class would reveal much like Michelle Mitchell's *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004) that the dynamics of manhood and womanhood were defined and limited by the science and political orientations of the race. Many contemporary Black feminist readings of works at the turn of the century continue to ignore the anthropological constraints of racial science and race ideology on how gender was actually debated and constructed in favor of abstractions that claim the identities of race, class and gender operate as equals.

²⁰ See Edward Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and Negro Race* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1994). A lesser known work that also played a role in what has come to be known as the African personality is Edward Blyden, *African Life and Customs* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1994).

²¹ For the definitive collection of Henry McNeal Turner's works, see *Respect Black: The Writings and Speeches of Henry McNeal Turner*, ed. Edwin S. Redkey (New York: Arno Press, 1971).

²² For T. Thomas Fortune's labor based analysis of racism at the turn of the century, see *Black and White: Land, Labor and Politics in the South* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2007). For a representative historical work on T. Thomas Fortune, see Emma Lou Thornbrough, *T. Thomas Fortune: Militant Journalist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972). For a contemporary collection of T. Thomas Fortune's works, see Shawn Leigh Alexander, ed. *T. Thomas Fortune: The Afro-American Agitator—A Collection of Writings, 1880-1928* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008).

²³ For two contemporary historical sources on Ida B. Wells, see Paula Giddings, *Ida: A Sword Among Lions—Ida B. Wells and the Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Amistad, 2008); and Mia Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009).

²⁴ It is interesting to note that contrary to Anna Julia Cooper's understanding that membership in the American Negro Academy was only reserved for men, women were allowed to be members of the ANA. An invitation was extended to Maritcha B. Lyons in 1898 and again after Alexander Crummell's death in September of 1898. It should be highlighted though that the ANA was not proactive in recruiting Black women. For a discussion, see Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *The American Negro Academy: Voice of the Talented Tenth* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 78.

²⁵ See Alexander Crummell, "The Attitude of the American Mind Toward the Negro Intellect," in *The American Negro Academy Papers 1-22* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 8-19, 17.

²⁶ See John E. Bruce, *Short Biographical Sketches of Eminent Negro Men and Women in Europe and the United States with Brief Extracts from their Writings and Public Utterances* (New York: Gazette Press, 1910).

²⁷ See William H. Ferris, *The African Abroad or, His Evolution In Western Civilization: Tracing His Development Under Caucasian Milieu*. 2 vols. (New Haven: The Tuttle, Morehouse and Taylor Press, 1913).

²⁸ See Benjamin Brawley, *The Negro Genius: A New Appraisal of the Achievement of the American Negro in Literature and the Fine Arts* (New York: Biblio and Tannen, 1928).

²⁹ See Kelly Miller, *Race Adjustment*, (New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1909)

³⁰ It is especially interesting to note how Charles Victor Roman characterized the race problem in America as a problem of white ignorance. Contrary to popular opinion his 1911 and 1916 works may have been one of the earliest known critiques of white ignorance and the problems with what DuBois would call in 1917 the soul (culture) of white folk. For a discussion of “chromatopsia,” what C.V. Roman used to refer to the color line, see *American Civilization and the Negro: The Afro-American in Relation to National Progress*, (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Company, 1916), 55. For C.V. Roman’s thought on racial solidarity, see *A Knowledge of History is Conducive to Racial Solidarity and Other Writings*, (Nashville: Sunday School Union Print, 1911).

³¹ It is also important to point out that there were many Black thinkers actually trained in philosophy in the first decades of the 20th century. Rev. Thomas Nelson Baker, Eugene Clay Holmes, William Fontaine, and Alain Locke are just a few of the Black authors that remain unexplored in contemporary conversations in American philosophy.

CHAPTER ONE:
The Derelictical Crisis of African American Philosophy and Its
Culturalogical Reformulation: How African American Philosophy Fails to
Contribute to the Study of African-descended People.

Introduction

From its inception, African American philosophy has justified its existence as a philosophical enterprise by claiming to be among the post-modern and post-colonial dissidents of Western modernity. During the 1970's this dissent was convincing, as it was in line with the revolutionary temperament of the times. Because those intellectual productions had an explicit dedication to the racial and cultural advancements of African-descended people, Black Nationalism, the rise of Black Studies programs, and the widespread anti-colonialist disposition of Black intellectuals legitimated the challenges waged against the predominance of traditionally white systems of thought. Today, unfortunately, African American philosophy is dedicated not to the singular advancement of African-descended people, but rather to the global advancement of humanist knowledge that largely ignores the racial makeup and identity performance of those whose very utterances sustain what George Yancy has so adequately termed the "philosophical oracle voice."¹ Guided by the prevailing axiom that the "master's tools can dismantle the master's house," African American philosophy has sustained its marginal disciplinarity as a movement focused on the revision and rehabilitation of the various imperialist theories that have emerged out of the Western philosophical canon. Despite the acknowledgement of the Eurocentric and anti-Black nature of Western philosophy, and hence the limitations of both Continental and American traditions, by authors like Charles Mills and the late Emmanuel Eze,² African American philosophy

largely contents itself in aiming to extend the applicability of white theories molded on a rational European philosophical anthropology to the Black anthropos. This optimistic encounter with Western philosophy and the presumptuous designation of Western thought as the “master’s tools” is not only a major obstacle to the study of the culturally particular perspectives that African-descended people have developed through their engagements with colonial modernity, but an ideological blinder that prevents Black thinkers from perpetuating any viewpoint incompatible with the integrationist ethic that currently dominates racial discourse. While previous Black thinkers have adequately characterized the systematic problems associated with white hegemony in philosophy,³ the alternatives that they have presented to us are found wanting.

As a discipline, philosophy still operates under the implicit assumption that to be philosophical is to be bound by a European philosophical tradition. Currently, Black thinkers function as the racial hypothetical of European thought whereby Black thought is read as the concretization of European reflections turned to the problem of race, and Black thinkers are seen as racial embodiments of white thinkers’ philosophical spirits. In this vein, the most studied Black philosophers are read as the embodiment of their white associates; W.E.B. DuBois is read as the Black Hegel, the Black James, the Black Dewey, and Frantz Fanon as a Black Sartre, or Black Husserl. This daemonization of Black thinkers by the various manifestations of the European logos as necessary to the production of African American philosophy is a serious impediment to the development of a genuine genealogy of the ideas that actually define Africana philosophy’s Diasporic identity. In what follows, I hope to describe the conditions that prevent Africana philosophy from contributing to a Diasporic knowledge of African-descended people,

and convince the reader of the need for a history of ideas (a philosophical genealogy) that legitimately establishes the limits, aims, and scope of African-descended thought concerning the race problematic. What I have termed the *culturalogic view* gives priority to the relations African-descended people have taken up with the world—their historical consciousness—perpetuated by *their* understanding of a racialized reality and more importantly reads them through and towards the aims they anticipated through their scholarship.

The Derelictical Crisis

The most popular works in African American philosophy, those works that set the standard of “Black philosophical rigor” and dictate theoretical advancements in the field, are marred by an unflinching humanist inclination⁴ and anti-essentialism seeking to fulfill the unrealizable goals of integration, namely the recognition of Blacks’ humanity by whites and the eventuation of a peaceful racial coexistence in America. These works, without developing a response to either the resistance of philosophy, as a discipline, to engage Black authors or the unchanging social conditions that have incited Black authors to embrace culturally particular philosophies that disengage the European myth of philosophical parity, are praised by white thinkers for their humanist orientation and calls for more talking, 54 years after the fact, about the “idea” of racial equality. Sustained by an academic reward system that reinforces the tendency of Black scholars to make historic Black thinkers *safe for white consumption* by reading the importance of race and the centrality of culture out of Black thought, African American philosophy functions primarily as academic racial therapy, committed to changing the racist dispositions of whites, rather than advancing the self-understanding of African peoples. This

rehabilitative focus has produced thinkers in African American philosophy concerned more with determining the proper “ethics of disdain”—those ethics concerned with the discourse of racial identification and the etiquette of assaulting colonial white identities—than the investigation into actual Black thought.

Despite the surging interest in African American philosophy produced by the plethora of books, articles, and conversations surrounding the thought of historic Black thinkers, the breadth and depth of these conversations have been limited by the lack of historical figures available to and consulted by philosophical study. For the last 30 years, African American philosophy has revolved around recasting “old Black ideas” under contemporary white academic language. One can see very clear examples of this tendency both in the limited figures accepted by philosophy as suitable for philosophic study, namely: W.E.B DuBois, Fredrick Douglass, the marginalized Alain Locke, or the iconic figure Martin Luther King Jr., as well as the philosophical work on these figures that exclusively emphasizes their continuity with contemporary white thinkers or white schools of thought. Even Black Nationalists like Martin R. Delany, who supported mass emigration and laid the grounds of African-centered historiography, are revised in such a way that their thinking ultimately aims toward integration and racial eliminativism, while other Black Nationalist thinkers who chose to speak exclusively to Black audiences, like Henry McNeal Turner, John Edward Bruce, William H. Ferris, Kelly Miller and Charles Victor Roman, are deemed incompatible with the at-large narratives of Americanism and are categorically ignored.⁵

Despite the acknowledgement by Black thinkers that philosophy is inherently socially and historically contingent,⁶ African American philosophy has failed to inquire

seriously into the culturally particular epistemologies of African-descended people, preferring instead to read into Black thought decidedly European philosophical continuities. This established practice of reading into African American philosophy an epistemological convergence with white philosophical traditions creates not only a methodological dilemma, as to how one should go about studying the historical philosophical insights of African-descended people, but also a normative problematic, in which a prescriptive and fixed racial normativity has predetermined the final aims of African American thought to be integration, humanism, and a more robust American liberalism, prior to any actual investigations of the Black thinkers' thoughts on the matter.

Because the practice of “epistemologically converging” Black thinking into American and Continental thought is so mainstream, the tendency to reward philosophical status to only those Black thinkers who were well-known and prominent in white circles remains unquestioned. Thinkers like W.E.B. DuBois, Frantz Fanon, Fredrick Douglass and Alain Locke are acknowledged for their study and emulation of the popular philosophical traditions of their day, as well as their personal relationships with recognizable white figures, while Black thinkers who chose to speak, educate and develop their thought exclusively in Black communities are seen as unfit for philosophical study.⁷ While popular, this current approach fails to acknowledge the intentional exclusion of whites from Black intellectual productions, and continues to ignore the reality of distinct Black intellectual traditions that have formed the basis of African-descended people's relation to the world. To the extent that African American philosophy chooses to abandon the genealogical patterns of Black thought for

philosophically privileged associations with white thinkers, it neglects its duty to inquiry into the reality of African-descended people.

How the “Master’s Tools” Perpetuate the Problem of Epistemic Convergence

The canonical pressures of assimilation during and after the Civil Rights movement intensified the debate amongst Black scholars over the place integrationism and separatism had in methodology. While other disciplines like psychology and sociology moved to develop specific racial and cultural methodologies (concerning the study of Blacks),⁸ the battle in philosophy was fought over whether or not African American thought lived up to the standards that white questions set as being traditionally philosophical.⁹ In sharp contrast to Lucius Outlaw’s romanticization of the origins of African American philosophy, which maintains that “from the very beginning, efforts to forge Black thought modalities in philosophy were multidisciplinary and decidedly free of the conforming (and potentially distorting) intellectual norms and strategies, and of the modes of disciplinary social organization that prevailed in professionalized academic philosophy,”¹⁰ the first definitions of African American philosophy presented in that famous 1978 edition of the *Philosophical Forum* were in fact overburdened by the need to prove their legitimacy to the white philosophical academy.

Cornel West’s essay entitled “Philosophy and the Afro-American Experience,” for example, claims that Afro-American philosophy begins with the application of “certain philosophical techniques derived from a particular conception of philosophy, [that] can contribute to our understanding of the Afro-American experience.”¹¹ According to West, “the philosophical techniques requisite for an Afro-American philosophy must be derived from a lucid and credible conception of philosophy;”¹² a

conception of philosophy that “expresses displeasure with the ahistorical character of modern philosophy”¹³ found in the writings of Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein and John Dewey. This view that “Afro-American philosophy is the interpretation of Afro-American history, highlighting the cultural heritage and political struggles, which provides desirable norms that should regulate responses to particular challenges presently confronting Afro-Americans,”¹⁴ has historically dominated the work produced from the late 1970’s to now, and continues, despite the recognition of its severe limitations, to influence and justify reading white figures discontent with the products of modernity alongside Black reflections on racism and colonialism, a part of the ongoing effort to fit Africana thought with European projects.

Unfortunately, West’s view that “Afro-American philosophy is the *application* of philosophical techniques of interpretation and justification to the Afro-American experience”¹⁵ is still prevalent in Black philosophical circles and runs rampant among white scholars attempting to specialize in Africana thought. The only difference between now and then is that today, Black thinkers are used as white philosophers’ guilty conscience—a conscience that constantly reminds white philosophy to turn its attention to the problems of race. In fact, this tendency to make Black experience the object of philosophical study has been perhaps the only accepted practice in African American philosophy from its very beginning—white thinkers provide the anthropology and Black thinkers the need for pluralist revision. *The problem with this view is that it fails to fulfill the basic need in the field for organic and visceral connections to the people it seeks to study and theorize about.* When Black thinkers are not seen as the primary theoreticians

of their own thought, the unnamed but powerfully cogent reflections on Blackness are usurped by the established categories of philosophical legitimacy.

In the same journal, William R. Jones provided a different justification for Black philosophy. As is the case with most radical claims in African American philosophy, he begins in a nationalist tone which claims that “black connotes an ethnic or cultural—not a racial—grouping,”¹⁶ whereby

special attention must be give to ‘black’ as a designation of an antagonist. There is a sense in which I formulate a black philosophy because I conclude that a philosophy that reflects and/or endorses the white experience dominates the discipline. Accordingly to call for a black philosophy, from this perspective is to launch an implicit attack on racism in philosophy, especially in its conceptual, research, curricular, and institutional expressions.¹⁷

But ends on a pacifist note that chooses to argue,

in the context of American life, the black cultural heritage assumes the status of a potential crucial experiment. Because the cultural perspective of blacks has been consciously left out of the evolution of philosophy in America, this heritage provides a crucial body of experience by which we can put to the test the usual generalizations that govern the various disciplines. Using this test, we can determine which generalizations actually apply only to the mainstream of Anglo-American thought or are more universal.”¹⁸

At best, Jones introduces Black philosophy as a heuristic to European thought. Because Jones’ work does not “presuppose the intrinsic truth of Afro-American perspectives”¹⁹ and uses philosophical debate to adjudicate its actual truth value, Black thought remained bracketed by the categorical concerns of truth and authority rather than emerging as an independent cultural system of philosophical inquiry. While Jones’ work should be credited for its attempt to give rise to philosophical pluralism, this goal in itself is not commendable, as recently reflections on the dominance of white philosophical hegemony

have highlighted how “contestory voices are appropriated, consumed, and explained away within the natural unfolding of the philosophical oracle’s historical *telos*.”²⁰

This assimilative phenomenon, of which, the reader is given a glimpse in both West’s and Jones’ work, is what is termed “epistemological convergence,” or the phenomenon by which Black cultural perspectives are only given the status of knowledge to the extent that they extend or reify currently maintained traditions of thought in European philosophy. Epistemic convergence maintains that what counts as knowledge is determined not to the extent that it accurately depicts the actual set of relations in the world, but to the extent that it takes up an ideological perspective from which the world is to be viewed. This argument does not necessitate that Black thought derives from European thinkers, but maintains that in order for Black thought to gain a philosophical status, it must be describable by an established European philosophical stream of thought. In other words, Black knowledge is only knowledge insofar as it converges with a higher anthropological order established in the history of European philosophy. Lewis Gordon refers to a similar phenomenon whereby whites create the theories that interpret Black experience as “epistemic colonization,”²¹ but fails to analyze the means through which Black thought is elevated to philosophical status. While the suggestion of epistemic convergence as an explanative mechanism in African American philosophy will no doubt be contentious, the litmus test of its validity is as simple as answering one question: Can Black thinkers be given the academic status of philosophers if their only specializations were in Black thought?

Currently, African American philosophy is deemed philosophical to the extent that it utilizes white philosophical traditions, or legitimizes white philosophy’s tools in its

applications. Following the popularization of African American philosophy, various Black scholars began applying their philosophical training to the Black problem. Analytic philosophy saw Black authors applying European analytic methods to Black social political concerns. Anthony Appiah and Noami Zack, for example, began looking at racial and biracial identity politics, while other thinkers like Bernard Boxill, Howard McGary, Bill Lawson, and Charles Mills conducted investigations into the philosophical and ethical justifications for reparations and the legitimacy of liberal democratic theory and social justice. While these works have certainly been the staple of the African American philosophical tradition, as they amply demonstrate the application of philosophical techniques held to be legitimate by the white academy to Black concerns, they nonetheless fail to supply a necessary and crucial evaluation of the methods employed in the study of African-descended peoples and/or the perspectives from which those peoples view the problems with which they concern themselves.

American philosophy, however, saw the rise of West's prophetic pragmatism—a school of thought aiming to synthesize the religiosity of the Black community with America's organic thinking on the issues of community, freedom, and experience through Marxist historicism and Deweyian pragmatism. While West's thought should be acknowledged as a novel way to emphasize the egalitarian humanism of Martin Luther King's thought that sustained both the "Princeton School" of African American thought and grounded the "Dream Team" at Harvard (Cornel West, Henry Louis Gates, Anthony Appiah) which influenced generations of Black pragmatists who focused on social religious criticism, like Leonard Harris, Micheal Eric Dyson, Victor Anderson, and most recently Eddie Glaude Jr., there is an eery resonance with his thought among white

scholars in philosophy aiming to benefit from the pluralism and the lack of methodological rigor perpetuated by his social criticism. Whereas Black analytic philosophy seeks to study the conceptual concerns of Blacks by applying European techniques to under-theorized areas, prophetic pragmatism is a decidedly creative venture that seeks to invent continuities between American philosophers and Black thinkers because of personal associations and geographic location.

This last tradition is perhaps the greatest contributing factor to the dominance of normative judgments in African American philosophical inquiry, as it mandates that African Americans confine their heritage to America's geography, rather than acknowledge African sources and dialogues with Caribbean and contemporary Africana thinkers. This conceptual incarceration within the confines of white American space binds the Black mind to the problems of existence in the United States, and prevents the intellect of African-descended people from freely moving towards questions involving the retrieval of lost cultural perspectives and heritage in Africana thought. In analytic, American, and Continental traditions, the issue at hand concerns the perspective from which Black concerns are framed.

The Critique of Racial Normativity

According to Gary Peller, "Today the story of the Civil Rights struggle is commonly told in a linear fashion, as if progress in race relations followed a teleological evolution—from an ignorant time when racial status was taken to signify real and meaningful differences between people to the present enlightened time, when race is properly understood in mainstream culture not to make a difference except as vestiges of unfortunate historical oppression or in terms of vague and largely privatized 'ethnic

heritage.”²² In philosophy, this teleological drive is especially insidious as it requires a normative disposition to be taken up in projects seeking to inquire into the facets of Blackness, creating a new problem, one that conflates the study of Blacks with the question of how one should study Blacks whereby the inquirer is forced to take inventory of the ethical prescriptions of American society.

In this problematic, African-descended people are studied not as they are but as they should be in relation to the ideological goals of the investigation. In other words, inquiring into Blackness, or asking the “how should” question performs a negating function that seeks the amelioration of the Black condition and normalizes Blacks, despite their historical circumstance, as a concern of humanity. When we ask “how should we understand race?” or “how should we understand African/Black culture?” or “what is race?” the answers to these questions are conditioned by the teleological impetus to assimilate Blacks into American society—in other words, there is a decidedly political and ideological temperament to our study. For American Blacks this problem is manifested as an aversion to and partial psychological distance from inquiries into the lost culture of Africana peoples. As E. Franklin Frazier so adequately articulated back in 1962, “Since integration has become the official policy of the country they [Black scholars] have shunned more than ever the study of the Negro.”

What we are dealing with is a crisis that not only exposes the ideological agenda of whites in philosophy who attack any hints of a “Black” historical consciousness with charges of essentialism, but also inculcates passivity, indifference and intolerance to the idea of Africanisms in Black philosophers. This was exactly Frazier’s concern in the “Failure of the Negro Intellectual,” namely that Black scholars remain content in

describing “the superficial aspects of the material standard of living among Negroes and the extent to which they enjoy civil rights, and never begins with what slavery has done to the Negro.”²³ The difference between the Black scholar and the African scholar according to Frazier is that “the African intellectual recognizes what colonialism has done to the African, and he sets as his first task the mental, moral, and spiritual rehabilitation of the African, [while] the American Negro intellectual, seduced by dreams of final assimilation has never regarded this as his primary task.”²⁴ While this unfortunate orientation results in a serious distortion in racial research and the agendas behind them by Black scholars, white participation in racial normativity is outright dangerous.

When Playing House Goes Wrong: Diagnostic Malpractice in Philosophical Treatments of Race

Whites asking how Blacks should be studied, invite a context in which the question presumes a schema of skewed possibilities quite distant from actual knowledge. For whites, such questions are always answered comparatively. How do whites know that Blacks are objects of study? Because humans are the objects of sociological and anthropological study. How do whites know they have an ability to study Blacks? Because whites can study anything, they are in possession of presumably “universal” human sciences. We cannot know the extent of these questions nor the claims involved, so to say that any of these are a possibility rests not on our knowledge of them as such, but the normative prescriptions whites place onto them. The danger in this process is that whites have to make judgments that are rooted in the categorical appeal to Black’s humanity—a subject which they have no actual knowledge of, but presume are analogous with previous models of European humanity believed to be universal. So insofar as Blacks are human, or claim their humanity, so too, claims the vulnerable white “I,” must

they subject themselves to the minimal requirements of human inquiry, regardless of its anthropological assumptions? This normative thinking, always already present throughout any inquiry, entombs the possibilities of genuine reflection on the circumstances that create the conditions of racial inquiry, by discounting the historical contingencies that have produced racial identities.

On the hit show *House M.D.*, House is a notorious, crippled misanthrope known for diagnosing patients without even speaking to them. His strategies are largely one of hit and miss—throw everything against the wall and see what sticks. House claims only to be interested in the truth, but the truth is only revealed after he uses his patients like lab rats and pushes them to the brink of death. Philosophy is that bastard House when it deals with people of African descent. Like House, philosophy doesn't talk to African people to find out what may have caused their conditions. The differential diagnosis is largely based on other white patients who have shown similar symptoms, and at any time it is just as likely the patient will die as it is that the patient will be cured.

When philosophy chooses to treat African subjects it conceptually incarcerates them under a diagnosis that was created from lab tests with white subjects. If an African exhibits the similar symptoms then it must be the same problem, or to stick with the analogy, disease. Western philosophy is guilty of malpractice, because it fails to understand that the unnecessary treatments of white conceptual tools are the cause of the infection in otherwise healthy cultural systems. Justifying a theoretical project of investigation on African people on a symptomatic diagnosis assumes the disease, a disease that is hegemonically written on a patient with a clean medical history by philosophical practice.

When philosophers use Marxism, Foucauldian deconstruction, psychoanalysis, these theories fundamentally assume African culture can be reduced to class, or power, or even unconscious pathologies. These are not the tools that African people dealing with Blackness have chosen for themselves, so why should the white scholars? Because, we are told, this philosopher has resources for Black problems. These normative claims force African people to excuse the racism of historical white figures, almost as if by an ethical mandate. Because we are told that these philosophers have resources for Black problems, our intellectual integrity and participation in genuine African American philosophy demands their consideration—creating a trend that has unfortunately spilled over to Black Studies.

How the Derelictical Crisis of African American Philosophy Impacts Current Trends in Africana Studies

Recent paradigmatic challenges written in the *Journal of Black Studies*²⁵ have led various scholars in Black studies to begin looking to Lucius Outlaw's work on Africana philosophy as a reservoir from which reconstructive insights and the theoretical substantiations of social criticism might originate to improve the conditions of African-descended people throughout the Diaspora. Ironically, African-centered thinkers like Reiland Rabaka, Maulana Karenga, and Magnus O. Bassegy have praised Outlaw's position as the means through which African-centered theory can be realized as a critical social commentary on America's political ills.²⁶ Reiland Rabaka, for instance, claims that

Lucius Outlaw's articulation of Africana philosophy emerging out of the discourse of Africana studies and paying particular attention to Asante's Afrocentricity enables Africana critical theory to simultaneously draw from advances in continental and Diasporian philosophy while guarding against and eschewing tendencies among critical theorists to privilege philosophy *prima facie* and uncritically.²⁷

Unfortunately this faith in Outlaw's thought is unfounded and misguided as the extension of African American philosophy's dereliction became global in scope. As Outlaw's theory is rhetorically powerful, it fails to establish any sort of bright line between works simply pertaining to Africana peoples and the cultural productions of African-descended people that should rightly be deemed "Africana philosophy."²⁸

For Outlaw, the general designation of Africana philosophy was the natural evolution of Black philosophy initiated by the expansion of Black/African American concerns with race and colonialism beyond the borders of America's geography during the 1980's,²⁹ and "has become the concept of choice through which to map these transcontinental terrains as well as under which to engage in philosophizing about matters of concern and about persons and peoples African and of African descent."³⁰ In Outlaw's eyes, Africana philosophy is not a determined exploration, but rather a "gathering notion under which to situate the articulations and traditions of the same, of Africans and people of African descent collectively."³¹ These productions, unlike many theoretical tools of African-centered thinking, are not culturally or racially exclusive, since the term is meant to include not only the work of African-descended people, but "the work of those persons who are neither African or of African descent but who recognize the legitimacy and importance of the issues and endeavors that constitute the philosophizing of persons African or African descended..."³² Given the generality of Africana philosophy's label in Outlaw's thinking, the term functions more as "an umbrella notion under which can be gathered a potentially large collection of traditions of practices, agendas and literatures"³³ that *pertain* to Africana people.

While well intentioned, Rabaka's valorization of Outlaw's idea fails to attend to the European elements of Outlaw's thinking that remain unscathed by Rabaka's African-centered reformulation of reason. Outlaw adamantly resists any notion of an ahistorical or fixed historical continuity of ontological commitments. For him, African-centered claims about objectivity and cultural personality are not compatible with the fluid social transformations of race and culture.³⁴ Though Rabaka highlights Outlaw's imperative of Africana philosophy, which is to "identify, reconstruct, and create traditions and repositories of thought by African-descended persons and people, in both oral and written literatures as forms of philosophy,"³⁵ he conveniently ignores Outlaw's commitments to Habermas' communicative action and turns a blind eye to Outlaw's commending of white involvement as part of their successful rehabilitation.³⁶

Unfortunately, Outlaw's acceptance of white involvement in Africana philosophy makes his critical philosophy of race implode as internally contradictory. Outlaw's racial and cultural distinctiveness is framed by a Habermasian politics of difference, and his advocacy of Africana philosophy is not a radical transformation but a "middle passage that participates in the critique of some aspects of Enlightenment projects of modernity while redeeming and refining others, in arguing that the philosophical anthropology of the Enlightenment remains inadequate to the practical tasks of overcoming racism and realizing a just society."³⁷ Much of Outlaw's belief in Habermas' critical reworking of society rests in this sort of idealist vision, and here again we can see racial normativity rear its ugly head. Insofar as Outlaw is compelled by his political and normative desire to enjoy a more just society, he reads those desires into the philosophical anthropology of Blackness under study, so much so that Africana theory is not the account of African-

descended peoples' productions but a foundationalism justifying the belief that communicative reason is the best means to attain a "diverse but unified social world, locally, and or internationally that achieves and secures appropriate degrees of tolerance for diverse lifeworlds that is grounded in a consensus that provides practical universality."³⁸ From Outlaw's position, there follows a cosmopolitan liberal ethic that is anything but African-centered, which establishes cultural unity not from historical geography but from "the commonality in our sufferings and hopes—the modes and sources of our oppressions and in the requirements for a social order that would be devoid of them."³⁹

In the social constructivist era, the claim to philosophical authority rests not in the dismissal of various types of social entities as malicious, but rather in the potential to create social entities through the consensus of a historical people. African American/Africana philosophy has excelled at utilizing charges of social constructionism against the undesirable remnants of modernity; unfortunately, however, the discipline has neglected its ability to *conjure*. "Despite Outlaw's admirable efforts to connect the panorama of elements one can classify under the term 'Africana Philosophy,'" Clevis Headley suggests, "there is also the need to offer a more substantive take on Africana philosophy,"⁴⁰ one that understands

Africana philosophy as also referring to the various metaphors and narratives employed by Africans and peoples of African descent to read and interpret the world. On this view, then, Africana philosophy must be attentive to the root metaphors characteristic of and constitutive of the African based cognitive systems that African and African descent people utilize in structuring and making sense of their existence.⁴¹

Though similar to Outlaw's, Headley's definition of Africana philosophy makes an important distinction, namely, that it is the narratives and metaphors employed by

Africans and people of African descent to make sense of the world that history now places before them. This position, while simplistic, is immensely profound in that it introduces a new paradigmatic consideration into the order of philosophical inquiry. To the extent that African-descended people utilize various concepts and modify or (*contour*) those concepts to speak to their realities, the concepts are culturalogically reformulated and become an element of African-descended peoples' historical consciousness.

The Culturalogical Reformulation

Current readings of Africana thought would have students of the discipline believe that Black thinkers did not share any intellectual indebtedness among themselves. In various graduate departments claiming to either study CRT or African American/Africana thought, students are generally only shown the validity of Black thought as an extension of traditional philosophic figures. In fact, to date there has been no serious attempt to justify, describe, or legitimate the study of the ideas that establish "standard" reading of Black thinkers in the history of African American and Africana thought. It is common practice for scholars, both Black and white, to fashion their careers around the creative renderings of Black thought so that it resembles contemporary social positions.

While deplorable, this practice remains unchecked as there is no established canonical record of the debates, associations, and influences that determined the course of Black thinking over time. In sharp contrast to the figure based comparison of current Africana production that aims to establish convergence and coherence between white thinkers and Black authors on philosophical problems, a culturalogic view approaches the historical integrity of Black thinkers realistically and admits that the rigid social

regulation of slavery, segregation, and colonization did not allow or encourage the relationships that current works on authors like Fanon and DuBois hold so dear.

Many scholars justify the efforts to rehabilitate Western philosophy as an attempt to rescue reason from the clutches of Western thought; I, however, maintain that we should, literally, leave Europeans to their own devices, because our attempts to reconcile the contradictions in applying their methods to our inquiries divert precious time and intellectual resources away from the development of genuine Black philosophical projects. Simply stated, European thought cannot simultaneously be criticized as the myth of white supremacy and valorized as redemptive knowledge. Black scholars either have to accept its foundational, anti-African disposition and create new systems of thought or remain mired in futile attempts to save white thinking from itself. With the colonization of decolonizing activity, the general aim of culturalogics revolves around a conceptual disengagement from the philosophical tropes that debilitate the flourishing of Africana philosophical thought currently.

While it is beyond the scope of this expose to compel or persuade the reader towards an endorsement of what has been historically known as the “African personality,” in the works of Molefi Asante or Maulana Karenga, the culturalogical analysis presented here is informed by this rich debate in Africana philosophy. Various African centered theorists have long documented the existence of a worldview, or a cultural structure that is based on an African cosmology, ontology, epistemology, teleology, and axiological values. Despite my skepticism of the aspects of Afrocentricity that maintain an absolute cultural transcendentalism and an eternal value system rooted in ancient KMT philosophy which is transmitted biogenetically by race, there are

nonetheless contemporary and historical discussions that point to the saliency of an African cultural presence throughout the Diaspora. There is compelling research on Black identity formation and cultural socialization, which has never been addressed by the philosophic community that demonstrates the ability of cultural groups of people to *contour* the constructions of European societies from a culturally organized logic, or what I call culturalogics,⁴² into an identifiable philosophical tradition speaking to the experiences and needs of African-descended peoples the world over.

**From the Ego-logical to the Culturalogical: Fanon and Diop on the Contouring
Conjures of Culture—Handling Race Anew.**

Cheikh Anta Diop has been considered by some to be one of the greatest African thinkers of the 20th century. In 1923, he was born a child of Senegal, the birthplace of many African scholars and historians dedicated to the Africanization of the sciences, history, and humanities. Throughout Diop's life, Pan-Africanism served as both a theoretical anchor and prudent muse in his thought. Unlike Aime Cesaire and Frantz Fanon, Diop was well acquainted with the racial situation in the United States. His visit to Morehouse University and his friendships with American African-centered scholars like John Henrik Clark, Asa Hillard, and Charles Finch gave his writings an application to American race relations that is unparalleled in other post-colonial thinkers. By the time of this death in 1986, Diop had established himself as a leading Egyptologist and the most qualified linguist-historian of Africa to date. In what follows, I hope to share his justifications for a people's cultural, historical consciousness and philosophical contributions to the contouring elements of such awareness.

According to Diop, a people's culture can be studied in three ways, linguistically, historically, and psychically, and of these three only two (the linguistic and the historic)

can be studied scientifically. Whereas Negritude poets reveal the psychological pillars of cultural personality through literature and art, Diop focused primarily on the historical and used the linguistic to support the coherence of various African historical consciousnesses. For most philosophers, Diop's KMT challenges to traditional Egyptology are classified as ideological and essentialistic, but a careful reading of Diop's African historiography reveals a very keen and qualified philosophical personality who rejects, like most Black thinkers, the biological foundations of race and offers an understanding of race as cultural and historically grounded.

Instead of championing an essentialized racial system, Diop believes that "the historical factor is the cultural cement that unifies the disparate elements of a people to make them whole, by the particular slant of the feeling of historical continuity lived by the totality of the collective."⁴³ This collectively for Diop establishes a people's historical consciousness, a historical awareness that not only determines their relationship to the world but conditions the templates of their most visceral experience. For Diop, the concept of "culture" plays an explicit methodological role—since it organizes a people's historical consciousness. According to Diop, "culture is a rampart which protects a people, a collectivity." Culture above all plays a protective role; it ensures the cohesion of the group. Following this line of thinking, the vital function of a body of African human sciences (to which I as Diop would add philosophy) is to develop this sense of collective belonging through a reinforcement of culture.⁴⁴ This seemingly politicized stance is simultaneously epistemological and teleological, as it determines both how one comes to know the world and what purposive ends are necessary to the engagements with the world that create knowing. In short, one's epistemology is simultaneously natural to the

conjuring(s) of the people and normative in the sense of transforming the realities that are alien to the people's historical consciousness.

Headley observes, “consciousness is not a mere passive reflection on the world, but rather it constitutes realities by endowing objects and situations with meaning. Hence, conjuring is more closely connected to immaterial transformations of the world, a notion not always captured in the metaphor of construction to the extent that the latter connotes fabricating artifacts.”⁴⁵ By drawing attention to the metaphysical distinction between construction and conjuring, whereby “‘construction’ implies that there is no world until it is constituted, ‘conjuring’ on the other hand suggests a double implication. It implies both that we conjure up the world in the sense of constituting it, but also that we transform a previously constituted world,”⁴⁶ Headley’s work probably establishes the most valid account of the philosophical implications in African/a thinking for African-descended people. With that said however, Headley’s work remains descriptive, overlooking the two essential aspects of African/a (thinking) consciousness, namely that African-descended people engage the world from a culturalogical perspective, whereby their reality is formulated from—not in contrast to—the narratives, metaphors and foundations that continue the culturally relevant relationships with the world established in their historical knowing of the world, and secondly, African-descended people continue to infuse initially foreign entities (both material and immaterial) into their world with their own cultural telos, so that these once foreign entities are contoured upon the images of African-descended peoples’ own cultural particularities. This historical dynamic is responsible for the transformations described in Headley, but most profoundly articulated in the works of Frantz Fanon.

Over the last decade, Fanon scholarship has revolved around a singular phenomenological axis. This axis, while interesting, frames Fanon's work through his intersection with white thinkers like Jean Paul Sartre and Merleau Ponty, instead of exploring the vastly richer associations Fanon had with thinkers like Leopold Sedar Senghor, Aime Caire, Aloune Diop, or even Cheikh Anta Diop. Even when scholars like Lou Turner do attempt a W(right) reading of Fanon emphasizing his relationships with other Black thinkers, the analysis revolves around the started gaze of the white child that plunges Fanon into the abyss of Blackness.⁴⁷ This niggerology, while popular, fails to contribute to any serious perspective that can serve as the theoretical foundations of Diasporic knowledge beyond the initial reactions African-descended people have towards white framing.

In the opening chapter of Fanon's *Black Skin White Mask* (hereafter BSWM), Fanon admits that he has always "found great interest in following the linguistic studies of Sheikh Anta Diop."⁴⁸ This admiration should be no surprise given the Diopian structure of Fanon's argument in *Black Skin White Masks*. Whereas Diop saw the scientific frame of culture as linguistic and historical, especially insofar as culture is a peoples' historical consciousness, Fanon inverts the Diopian scheme by emphasizing the linguistic. In replying to Diop's emphasis on the historical, Fanon says,

I am not the slave of the Slavery that dehumanized my ancestors. To many colored intellectuals European culture has the quality of exteriority. What is more, in human relationships, the Negro many fell himself a stranger to the Western world. Not wanting to live the part of a poor relative, of an adopted son, of a bastard child, shall he feverishly seek to discover a Negro civilization?

Let us be clearly understood. I am convinced that it would be of the greatest interest to be able to have contact with a Negro literature or architecture of the third century before Christ. I should be very happy to know that a correspondence had flourished between some Negro

philosopher and Plato. But I can absolutely not see how this fact would change anything in the lives of the eight year old children who labor in the cane fields of Martinique or Guadeloupe.⁴⁹

For white thinkers unable to understand or appreciate the contentiousness of various theoretical perspectives among African/a intellectuals, Fanon's skepticism of the Diopian perspective is absolute. According to Robert Bernasconi,

Fanon acknowledges in the first chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks* that he was interested in Cheikh Anta Diop's linguistic studies, but in the same context he acknowledges that the efforts of contemporary Blacks to prove to the white world that there had been a Negro civilization was 'perhaps' a response to the claims that the Black has no culture, no civilization and no historical past. Given the fact that there was never any doubt that this was indeed the motivation of Cheikh Anta Diop and his school, this 'perhaps' is Fanon's way of signaling his suspicion of the whole project.⁵⁰

But Bernasconi, guided by the desire to establish an existential continuity in the crisis of Blackness, misses the transition in Fanon's thought from BSWM to WOTE, where Fanon reneges on his prior inclinations and admits that the "passionate quest for a national culture prior to the colonial era can be justified by the colonized intellectuals' shared interest in stepping back and taking a hard look at the Western culture in which they risk becoming ensnared."⁵¹ Here Fanon's existential concerns are dominated by a cultural logicism that aims to create a people's historical consciousness, "fully aware they are in the process of losing themselves, and consequently of being lost to their people, these men [the colonized intellectuals] work away with raging heart and furious mind to renew contact with the people's oldest inner essence, the farthest removed from colonial times."⁵² Fanon continues in stating what may reverse the existential phenomenological readings of his work:

Let us delve deeper; perhaps this passion and this rage are nurtured or at least guided by the secret hope of discovering beyond the present wretchedness, beyond this self hatred, this abdication and denial, some

magnificent and shining era that redeems us in our own eyes and those of others. *I say that I have decided to delve deeper* [emphasis added]... Reclaiming the past does not only rehabilitate or justify the promise of a national culture. It triggers a change of fundamental importance in the colonized's psycho-affective equilibrium."⁵³

In this moment Fanon admits, alongside Diop, that “the restoration of the historical consciousness of black and African peoples, with all its implications, necessarily leads to a veritable reversal of perspectives and to a fundamental transformation of our cultural relationship with the rest of the world.”⁵⁴ While it is nonetheless true that Fanon resists the status of a past, in which history merely reveals “concrete examples to counter colonialism’s endeavors to distort and depreciate,”⁵⁵ Fanon adamantly maintains that “we must work and struggle in step with the people as to shape the future and prepare the ground where vigorous shoots are already sprouting.”⁵⁶ This historical reconstruction, which aims to establish a cultural narrative of revolution in the art, songs, and stories of a people, rejuvenates the culture of the people that has been lost under colonialism where in culture or, more accurately, national culture, becomes “the collective thought process of a people to describe, justify, and extol the actions whereby they have joined forces and remained strong.”⁵⁷ In this struggle, within one’s people, shielded *from the gaze of the European*, “Negro-African culture grows deeper.”⁵⁸

This struggle and rumination of resistance remains thematic: it is not focused either on the concretization of goals beyond the defining of a people or the apotheosis of a new humanity—it can only fulfill its minimum criterion of existing which is creation. “The development and internal progression of the actual struggle expand the number of directions in which culture can go and hint at new possibilities.”⁵⁹ Just as Diop believed

that “(hu)man’s mission is creation,”⁶⁰ so too does Fanon, but, as Diop warns, without the “internal recovery and psychic self-appraisal, very little can be accomplished.”⁶¹

The exclusive transformation of an African cultural consciousness is not expressed very well at the level of abstraction. As Fanon reminds us, “challenging the colonial world is not a rational confrontation of viewpoints. It is not a discourse of the universal, but the impassioned claim by the colonized that their world is fundamentally different.”⁶² This absolute difference set in the overturning of the colonial condition is what Fanon claims brings about a new humanism. Unlike the Fanonian dialectics, that rely on a nascent transcendentalism, Fanonian humanism is “written into the objectives and methods of the struggle. A struggle, which mobilizes every level of society, which expresses the intentions and expectations of the people, and which is not afraid to rely on their support almost entirely.”⁶³

Fanon announces the core philosophical position at stake in the social constructionist era, namely, that if one accepts that the world is socially (culturally) constructed, one must also accept the possibility that African-descended people have actively engaged, and are engaging in the constructing of their world on behalf of their own historical consciousness. In other words, insofar as social constructionists maintain that meanings and entities are the products of historical groups, this power to build, create, and contour reality cannot be denied to African-descended peoples. The belief in the self-sufficiency and teleological substantiation of the African worldview can no longer be ignored as one of the most central concerns to practically all the challenges made against Eurocentrism. In Fanon’s advocacy of national culture, he reiterates the philosophical positions held by Diop in which the psychical and historical aspects of

African-descended peoples' relationship to the world provide the foundation from which new perspectives can challenge, destroy, and contour the realities presented by Europeans (whites).

Framing a New Critical Race Theory: Towards the Culturalogic Study of African-descended peoples under the Race Construct.

The brute force of normative racial ideations that demand the interpretation of African-descended people alongside the ever burdening demand for the realization of integration and peaceful racial coexistence must be resisted. Whereas African American philosophy has fallen short in demanding the recognition of absolute cultural difference, the foundations of Critical Race Theory can serve as a means to retrieve and develop a cultural consciousness that actually aims to investigate the lives of African-descended people. This is not to say that any study of African-descended people under the modern construction of race will not inevitably encounter normative crossroads, but rather to assert, as did Fanon and Diop, that the answer to any normative question dealing with African-descended people requires the ability to recognize that the method of encountering said people is also a disposition towards the very real existence of those people. Understood this way, the question of "study" is also a question of designation whereby the cultural goals, ideals, and agendas of those under study should be reflected by any inquiry into their lived existence. To the extent that African American philosophy claims to be interested in the experiences, ideas, and root cultural drives of African-descended people, the means through which we encounter ourselves should be formulated on our cultural dispositions, i.e. the method of studying African-descended people should be consistent with what is being studied in philosophical investigation.

Under the racial systems of American thought, to ask “how African-descended people should be studied” is not only a philosophical inquiry, but a political exercise formulated by the need to perpetuate a specific and ideal racial order between Blacks and whites in the United States. Our acknowledgment of this fact serves not only to resist the methodological tyranny of current theoretical frames that assume the study of Blacks as if they are human necessarily makes it so, but also forces us to be courageous in our encounters with a white world committed to our metaphysical erasure. To admit, as most Critical Race theorists do, that “racism is ordinary and normal in American society, and that a culture constructs its own reality,”⁶⁴ is to admit simultaneously that the power to create—to socially construct—to conjure—is the true power of culturalogical creativity. To mold the world in the image of one’s group, to contour the world with cultural meaning is both the historical and philosophical apex of actualized Africana thought. Our consciousness of both what is in the world and how WE should change that world is a realization not currently afforded to African-descended people because of our dependence on European theories and our errant belief in the humanity of whites. As Clevis Headley reminds us,

The root metaphor of Critical Race Theory is “voice”. Voice, in this context, suggests the importance of minorities speaking for themselves instead of having passively to support the hegemonic mindset of the dominant culture. By speaking for themselves, we should understand minorities as structuring the cultural world in terms of their own root metaphors or world hypotheses, to embrace cognitive sovereignty and exclude the possibility of any dependency upon institutionalized styles of thinking that claim objectivity but, in actuality, provide support for elitist interests.⁶⁵

This voice in CRT of which Headley reminds us should not be thought to be unaccompanied, since it resonates alongside African-descended people’s earnest ability

to envision the world without whites—to embrace a world without any dependency on or addictions to the precepts and moralizations that have falsely legitimated the myth of European superiority. By speaking from the conscious position of centuries of accumulated Africana thought and the historic racial insistence of “Black” cultural determinacy, CRT courageously accepts the reality of our permanent racial subordination, while advocating continuous struggle and revolt against the myth that Blackness is only meaningful in its comparison to whiteness. By accepting the lessons of our cultural past amidst our racial circumstance, we force ourselves to contemplate anew—within the (white) world, but not accepting of the illusion that the European ethos is eternal. We look upon ourselves as cultural potentiality rather than racism actualized.

Rather than demand simply the honest admittance of racism or the ability of cultures to create, a new critical race theory embraces the organizational foundations of a people’s thought as a toolshed from which reality can be built. Thus, a culturalogical reformulation of thinking, actually requires thinking—the ability to acknowledge the very real racial circumstances in which African-descended people find themselves—as well as our ability to look beyond our circumstances reflectively in our effort to construct our own culturally-informed reality.

Conclusion

The dominance of anti-essentialist rhetoric and cosmopolitan care ethics in African American philosophy has forced Black scholars to write ahistorical and textually skewed apologetics of historic Black figures as the condition for their acceptance into the canon. By ignoring key texts, inventing illusory continuities with established white philosophical traditions, limiting African American philosophy to applied social/political thought, and

eliminating meaningful discussions of culture with charges of essentialism, philosophy has effectively enforced an anti-Black moratorium on any semblance of thought that could actually address the cultural, social, and political conditions under which African-descended people currently suffer in America.

In this sense, African American philosophy mistakenly believes that there exists objective knowledge about the world that can serve African-descended peoples' interests independent of African-descended people's construction and cultural manipulation of the raw materials which constitute that "objective" reality. No philosophy is free from the cultural conditions that give rise to it. Thus any application of philosophical thought upon a people not involved in the initial constitution of that thought must be met with certain skepticism. Herein lies the derelictical crisis of African American philosophy. Insofar as African American philosophy continues in the main to assume that the biological designation of human similarity overrides the cultural and historical delineations of race, knowledge about African-descended people will always fail by analogy. The lack of a clear and consistent standard as to what counts as philosophical knowledge in the study of Blacks, as well as the tendency of these thinkers to use European anthropologies as the template of racially and culturally diverse people, condemns African American philosophy to a perpetual revisionism in which the theories of historic Black thinkers will have to be conveyed in such a way as to not offend the popular consensus of racial co-existence and humanity.

Unfortunately, this is easier said than done. Currently, the works considered to be advancing the field of "critical race theory" in philosophy are dominated by the totalizing practice of epistemic convergence and the compassion politics of racial normativity.

Because whites scholars continue to define “critical race theory,” to the extent that it is made to incorporate American and Continental European thought, CRT, as originally articulated by Black scholars, remains marginalized and outright ignored as a theoretical resource in contemporary works on race. In the next chapter, I will explore the history of this erroneous conflation between “critical philosophies of race” and Critical Race Theory and hopefully set in motion the much needed divergence of these two traditions.

Notes to Chapter One

¹ For a discussion of the philosophical oracle voice, see George Yancy, “No Philosophical Oracle Voices,” in *Philosophy in Multiple Voices*, ed. George Yancy (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 1-20.

² For further discussion, see Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (ed.), *Post-Colonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader* (Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), and Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* (Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997).

³ Here I am thinking of Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Charles Mills, *The Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), Lewis R. Gordon, *Disciplinary Decadence: Living Thought in Trying Times* (Boulder: Paradigm, 2006), and Lucius Outlaw, *On Race and Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1996)

⁴ It is important to briefly clarify what I mean by the humanist view or humanist inclination when speaking about the following works. My criticism is not that views that describe African-descended people as human beings or as part of humanity are incorrect. Rather, my criticism is that many works in African American philosophy tend to accept a definition of humanity that is accepting of traditional European anthropologies, and usually advocate racial eliminativism, or various types of racial revisions that deny the historical particularity of African-descended people.

The most recent example of this type of thinking is Emmanuel Eze’s work *On Reason: Rationality for a World of Cultural Conflict and Racism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). What is most disturbing about these trends in philosophy is the inclination of Black authors to read themselves and their interests into the “rational diversity” of Western thought, as if disagreements between whites about the nature of reason are the same disagreements African-descended people have with the West.

⁵ It is particularly relevant to note that the acceptance of these conditions is necessary for Black students to get their theses and dissertations approved by mostly white committees.

⁶ According to Lucius Outlaw, “Principle and norms ordering social and individual life that grow out of and are dedicated to serving the life interests of a particular people are always conditioned by and relative to those interests” (*On Race and Philosophy*, 9). From this point of reference, he concludes that “philosophizing—that is, various ways of thinking and discoursing about various things and matters—is a decidedly varied venture engaged in by various persons variously situated, is thus inherently contingent and conditioned socially and historically, thereby epistemologically and normatively. Consequently, any tradition or genre of philosophizing is characterized by diversity” (*On Race and Philosophy*, 14).

⁷ It is interesting to note how aware Black thinkers at the turn of the century were about how they would be remembered. Kelly Miller, for instance, once said that “Dr. DuBois is passionately devoted to the welfare of his race, but he is allowing himself to be exploited in a function for which by nature he is unfit. His highest service will consist in interpreting to the white people the needs and feeling of his race in terms of exact knowledge and nice language, rather than an agitator or promoter of concrete achievement” (Kelly Miller, *Race Adjustment* [New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1909], 17).

⁸ For a discussion of these trends in psychology see Daudi Azibo, “Understanding the proper and improper usage of the comparative research framework,” in *African American Psychology: Theory, Research and Practice*, eds. A.K. H Burlew, W.C. Banks, H.P. McAdoo & D.A. Azibo (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1992), 18-27; Reginald Jones, *Black Psychology*, 3rd. Ed., (Berkeley: Cobb and Henry Publishers, 1991). In sociology, see Joyce A. Ladner, ed., *The Death of White Sociology: Essays on Race and Culture* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1973).

⁹ For a historical account of African American philosophy’s development, see Lucius Outlaw, “What is Africana Philosophy,” in *Philosophy in Multiple Voices*, ed. George Yancy (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 109-144. For examples of Black philosophy’s attempt to read itself into traditional philosophical thinking, see Bill Lawson and Howard McGary, *Between Slavery and Freedom* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992); Leonard Harris, *Philosophy Born of Struggle: Anthology of Afro-American Thought from 1917* (Iowa: Kendall Hunt Publishing, 1984);

¹⁰ Outlaw, “What is Africana Philosophy,” 112.

¹¹ Cornel West, “Philosophy and the Afro-American Experience,” in *A Companion to African-American Philosophy*, eds. Tommy L. Lott and John P. Pittman (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 7-32,7.

¹² *Ibid.*,7.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Ibid., 11.

¹⁵ Ibid., emphasis added.

¹⁶ William R. Jones, "The Legitimacy and Necessity of Black Philosophy," *The Philosophical Forum: A Quarterly* 9, no. 2-3 (1977/78): 149-160, 152.

¹⁷ Ibid., 158.

¹⁸ Ibid., 159.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Yancy, "No Philosophical Oracle Voices,"⁸

²¹ Though un-named this phenomenon is described in Lewis R. Gordon's work as well. According to Gordon,

If the one with experience plays no role in the interpretation of the experience, then a form of epistemic colonization emerges, as we have seen, where there is a dependence on the interpretations from another's or others' experience as the condition of interpreting experience. The more concrete manifestation of this relationship is familiar to my black intellectuals. In most academic institutions, including some, unfortunately, in regions dominated by people of color, the following formula holds: Colored folk offer experience that white folks interpret. In other words, formulating theory is a white affair.

Paraphrasing Arthur De Gobineau, theory is white as experience is black. We see this from even colored theorists who prefer to examine the world of color through Martin Heidegger, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, or Michel Foucault instead of through the resources of thought offered by Anna Julia Cooper, W.E.B. DuBois, C.L.R. James, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Frantz Fanon, V.Y. Mudimbe, James Cone, Sylvia Wynter, George Lamming, Elsa Goveia, Angela Y. Davis, and Paget Henry, to name but several, in addition to the resources of thought offered by the full spectrum of the human species ("African American Philosophy and the Geography of Reason," in *Not Only the Master's Tools: African American Studies in Theory and Practice*, eds. Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon [Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006], 3-50,31.

²² Gary Peller, "Race-Consciousness," in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, eds. Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller and Kendall Thomas. (New York: The New Press, 1995), 127-158, 128.

²³ E. Franklin Frazier, "The Failure of the Negro Intellectual," in Joyce A. Ladner, ed., *The Death of White Sociology: Essays on Race and Culture* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1973), 58.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ For a discussion of Christian's work, see Mark Christian, "The State of Black Studies in the Academy: Introduction to the Special Issue," *Journal of Black Studies* 36 (2006): 643-645; Black Studies in the 21st Century: Longevity has its Place," *Journal of Black Studies* 36 (2006): 698-719; Molefi Asante, "A Discourse on Black Studies: Liberating the Study of African People in the Western Academy," *Journal of Black Studies* 36 (2006): 646-662; James L. Conyers, Jr., "The Evolution of Africology: An Afrocentric Appraisal," *Journal of Black Studies* 34 (2006): 640-652.

²⁶ See Mualana Karenga, "Philosophy in the African Tradition of Resistance: Issues of Human Freedom and Human Flourishing," in *Not Only the Masters Tools: African American Studies in Theory and Practice*, eds. Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon [Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006], 243-272; Magnus O. Bassegy, "What is Africana Critical Theory or Black Existential Philosophy?" *Journal of Black Studies* 37 (2007): 914-935.

²⁷ Reiland Rabaka, "Malcolm X and/as Critical Theory: Philosophy, Radical Politics, and the African American Search for Social Justice," *Journal of Black Studies* 33 (2002):145-165.

²⁸ It is extremely important to point out that Lucius Outlaw's definition of Africana philosophy is not the only one that seeks to connect the contribution of Africana philosophy to Africana Studies. In the early 1990's, Lewis R. Gordon claimed that

African-American existential philosophy is a branch of Africana and black philosophies of existence. By Africana philosophy is meant the philosophical currents that emerged out of the experience of Diasporic Africa. By black philosophy is meant the philosophical

currents that emerged for the question blackness. Black philosophy relates to a terrain that is broader than Africana communities because not all black people are of African descent. Indigenous Australians, whose lived reality is that of being a black philosophy... In African American philosophy, there is focus on the unique features of African-American cultural experiences on the one hand, and the reality that African Americans are a black people and, hence, are impacted by the significance of race and racism. (Lewis R. Gordon, "African-American Existential Philosophy," in *A Companion to African-American Philosophy*, eds. Tommy L. Lott & John P. Pittman [Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003], 33-47, 33.)

Where these earlier definitions seemed to focus specifically on legitimizing the philosophical merit of Black existential phenomenology, Gordon's most recent work defines Africana philosophy under the confines of Africana Studies. In his 2006 works, "African-American Philosophy, Race, and the Geography of Reason," in *Not Only the Master's Tools: African American Studies in Theory and Practice* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2006), 3-50, and his coauthored introduction, "On Working Through a Most Difficult Terrain," in *A Companion to African American Studies*, eds. Lewis R. Gordon & Jane Anna Gordon (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), xx-xxxiv, Gordon is extremely clear that it from the need to inquire into Africana people set in motion by Black/African studies that drove the development of Africana philosophy. Most recently Lewis Gordon has argued that

African-American philosophy has been one of the most recently developed areas of theoretical reflection in African-American Studies. Its emergence is in many ways marked by the realization of many scholars that philosophy offered much to the enterprise of studying the African diaspora, and the unique categories of thought endemic to that diaspora offers many challenges to modern and contemporary philosophy. Central in this development has been the importance of philosophical anthropology in the study of race and the challenges posed by race to our understanding of philosophical anthropology. Added to this insight is the anxiety that is a function of studying Africana communities and the ideas they stimulate. African-American philosophy is an area of Africana philosophy.

By Africana philosophy, I mean the set of philosophical problems and their critical discussion raised by the historical political situation of the African diaspora. African-American philosophy focuses on the New World aspect of that diaspora. (Lewis R. Gordon, "African-American Philosophy, Race, and the Geography of Reason," 3).

²⁹ Outlaw, "What is Africana Philosophy," 109.

³⁰ Outlaw, "What is Africana Philosophy," 118.

³¹ Outlaw, *On Race and Philosophy*, 76.

³² *Ibid.*, 77.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ For a discussion of Lucius Outlaw's views, see Outlaw, *On Race and Philosophy*, ch. 5, 97-134.

³⁵ Outlaw, *On Race and Philosophy*, 63.

³⁶ Outlaw, "What is Africana Philosophy, 109-110. Also see Lucius Outlaw, "Rehabilitate Racial Whiteness," in *What White Looks Like: African American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question*, ed. George Yancy (New York: Routledge, 2004), 159-172. For an example of how damaging Outlaw's work can be in Africana philosophy, see Shannon Sullivan, "Whiteness as Wise Provincialism: Royce and the Rehabilitation of a Racial Category," *Transactions of the Charles Pierce Society* 44 (2008): 236-262. This is further proof that white scholars, given the chance, will continue to theorize about themselves over and above the concrete oppression of Africana people.

³⁷ Outlaw, *On Race and Philosophy*, 60.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 160.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 182.

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- ⁴⁰ Clevis Headley, "Delegitimizing the Normativity of 'Whiteness': A Critical Africana Philosophical Study of the Metaphoricity of 'Whiteness,'" in *What White Looks Like: African American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question*, ed. George Yancy (New York: Routledge, 2004), 87-107, 89.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² For a discussion of the latest neurological psychological studies on the matter, see Trey Hedden et. al, "Cultural Influences on Neural Substrates of Attentional Control," *Psychological Science* 19, no.1 (2008): 12-17. The limitations of this study are apparent as the comparison is between Western and Eastern peoples, however, the study does present very relevant cultural considerations in the passé debate of logical relativism. See Wade W. Nobles, "Ancient african roots of western psychology," in *African psychology: Toward its Reclamation, Reascension and Revitalization* (Oakland, California: A Black Family Institute Publication, 1986). 21-32. Where he argues that, "the development and reascension of African psychology should be viewed as the recovery of a mode of thought and analysis which has laid dormant in the beingness of African (Black) peoples;" also see Wade W. Nobles, *Seeking the Sakhu: Foundational Writings for an African Psychology* (Chicago, Illinois: Third World Press, 2006). See Kobi K.K.Kambon, *African/Black psychology in the american context: An african centered approach* (Tallahassee, Florida: Nubian Nation Publications, 1998). In which the author argues that African self-consciousness and the African world view are particular to people of African descent and epistemologically determine their reality.
- ⁴³ Cheikh Anta Diop, *Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology*, trans. Yaa-Lengi Meema Ngemi, ed. Harold J. Salemson and Marolinh de Jageer (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991), 212.
- ⁴⁴ Shawna Moore, "Interview with Cheikh Anta Diop," in *Great African Thinkers: Cheikh Anta Diop*, ed. Ivan Van Sertima, *Journal of African Civilizations* 8 (1986): 238-248, 238.
- ⁴⁵ Cleavis Headley, "Deligitimizing the Normativity of Whiteness," 91.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ Lou Turner, "Fanon Reading W(right)," in *Race and Racism in Continental Philosophy* (Indiana, Indiana University Press, 151-175).
- ⁴⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 28.
- ⁴⁹ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 230.
- ⁵⁰ Robert Bernasconi, "The Assumption of Negritude: Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon, and the Vicious Circle of Racial Politics," *Parallax* 8 (2002): 69-83, 72.
- ⁵¹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 148.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ Moore, 265.
- ⁵⁵ Fanon, *Wretched*, 168.
- ⁵⁶ Fanon, *Wretched*, 168.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid. 70.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid. 178.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 6.
- ⁶³ Ibid., 178.
- ⁶⁴ Clevis Headley, "Black Studies, Race, and Critical Race Theory," in *A Companion to African American Studies*, eds. Lewis R. Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 340.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 340.

CHAPTER TWO: Will the Real CRT Please Stand Up: The Difference Between CRT and Critical Theories of Race.

Introduction

In recent years, the pop culture status of Critical Race Theory (CRT) has overshadowed the ideological commitments of the movement. In philosophy, a field historically known for its absence of people of African descent, the proliferation of race writings has led various scholars to adopt CRT as its methodological banner, regardless of these thinker's lack of familiarity with CRT as a movement or its primary authors and debates. This trend is evinced by the growing number of white feminists extending their work in gender analogically to questions of race and identity, as well as the unchecked use of the CRT label to describe any works dealing with post-colonial authors like W.E.B. DuBois and Frantz Fanon, or with post-colonial themes of power (Foucault), discourse (Derrida), and hybridity (Delueze) in the social-constructionist era. While this misappropriation of CRT may seem insignificant, and may more adequately be called "critical theories of race," it has been axiomatically driven by the aim to incorporate the study of race under the traditional categories of philosophical thought without any attention to the actual movement of Critical Race Theory started by the works of Derrick Bell.¹ As an endemic American philosophy, CRT deserves to have its authors, its theoretical roots, and its presence recognized in the fields that continue to utilize its name.

The particularity of CRT's development and the specific difficulties that arose in trying to define the movement, have bred a unique disciplinary perspective to which few studies of race can relate. While race-crits are well aware that "the name Critical Race Theory, is now used as interchangeably for race scholarship as Kleenex is used for

tissue,”² there is still a need to preserve and articulate the distinction between general studies of race and CRT. Failing to point out the inaccurate appropriation of the CRT title not only represents a skewing of the field, but in philosophy specifically it results in an erasure of a prominent tradition started by people of color. Despite the various anthologies and scholarly archives that document the intellectual contributions of Critical Race Theorists like Derrick Bell, Kimberle Crenshaw, Cheryl Harris, and Richard Delgado, philosophy, in its attempt to market *Blackness*, continues not to engage the literature or ideas proposed by these legal theorists’ social commentaries, preferring to continue critical commentaries on white thinkers like Kant and Hegel through supposedly radical readings of W.E.B. DuBois and Frantz Fanon. Whereas many works seek to expand the number of race projects described by this term, this chapter’s only aim is to enlighten the philosophical community about CRT’s misappropriation, and the benefits of actually studying race under a Critical Race Studies model.

So what is Critical Race Theory?

Richard Delgado and Jean *Stefancic* have defined CRT as a movement that considers

many of the same issues that conventional civil rights and ethnic studies discourses take up, but places them in a broader perspective that includes economics, history, context, group and self interest, and even feelings and the unconscious. Unlike traditional civil rights, which embraces incrementalism and step by step progress, critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law.³

Unlike many philosophical works on race that demand a more enriched and critical conversation with whites about race, CRT is adamant about its radical activism that challenges not only the idea of white privilege, but the property rights that whites maintain.⁴ Unlike the more apologetic investigations of race in philosophy that thrive by

its constant attempts to draw whites into thinking about race, CRT's racial inquiries are driven by the actual function of racism in American society—not the anti-racist re-socialization of whites.

Guided by the realist light, “Critical Race Theory not only dares to treat race as central to the law and policy of the United States, it dares to look beyond the popular belief that getting rid of racism means simply getting rid of ignorance or encouraging everyone to get along.”⁵ CRT's skepticism to the common sensical approaches of liberalism and integrationist thought reverses many of the issues philosophical investigations of race aim to achieve. Rather than creating a world of peaceful racial co-existence, CRT works from the premise that in American such a world is impossible, and as a consequence racism cannot be studied with its eye on that illusory promise. In short, CRT maintains that race and racism are inextricable manifestations of the American ethos, and as such cannot be cured by a constructive engagement with whites.

As with any intellectual movement, CRT builds its scholarship upon certain theoretical pillars. The first tenet is that “racism is ordinary, not aberrational—normal science; the usual way society does business, the common everyday experience of most people of color in this country.”⁶ The second tenet is commonly known as “interest convergence,”⁷ but it has been newly coined as the two sided dilemma of racial fortuity. According to Bell, interest convergence can be described by two rules:

- 1) the interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when that interest converges with the interests of whites in policy making positions. This convergence is far more important for gaining relief than the degree of harm suffered by blacks or the character of proof to prove that harm.
- 2) Even when interest convergence results in an effective racial remedy, that remedy will be abrogated at the point that policymakers fear the remedial

policy is threatening the superior societal status of whites, particularly those in the middle and upper classes.⁸

These two rules for Bell form the problem of racial fortuity—a two sided coin, where, on one side resides the historical covenants of black sacrifice and, on the other, interest convergence remedies. The third tenet of CRT is the social construction thesis that “holds that race and races are products of social thought and relations. Not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality; races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient.”⁹ The fourth is the process of racial differentiation in which society assigns various roles and privileges to different minority groups to put them in competition with one another, and the last tenet argues that there is a uniqueness to the voices of people of color.¹⁰

While some may contend that these beliefs are shared by various other fields, I would like to continually stress that CRT’s theoretical distinctiveness does not reside in its general interest in the study of race, but rather in the approach and descriptive foundations that lie beneath CRT’s encounter with racism in American society. Because racism is taken to be permanent, CRT maintains that very different strategies be utilized in efforts to combat whiteness. It should be clear by now that these means of combat do not rely on either combating ethically whites’ racist dispositions or claiming that deconstructive elements of discourse can remedy racial biases. Instead, CRT’s contributions lie in its ability to confront whites as whites and nothing more, not as their potential to be better humans, not as their idealization to be more than racist, not even their intentions to be seen as individuals and not part of a colonial heritage. In practically every regard, Critical Race Theory is distinct from the philosophical variety more adequately called “critical theories of race.” Sustained by the errant belief in racial

idealism, which holds that “racism and discrimination are matters of thinking, attitude, categorizations, and discourse,”¹¹ critical theories of race believe it is possible to “erase discrimination by purging the system of its underlying images, words, attitudes, and scripts that convey the message that certain people are less worthy, less virtuous, or less American than others.”¹² Unlike critical theories of race, CRT articulates and acts upon the centers and practitioners of white supremacy without the perpetual emergence of the conflicted white individual—constantly trying, but unable to attain an anti-racist disposition. While critical theories of race may possess some latent theoretical contributions, they remain impotent to challenge racism in its social political and systemic manifestations.

The Origins of the Confusion: How critical theories of race became synonymous with CRT.

In the early 1990’s, various Black thinkers called for a rethinking of race. This movement was a movement against the touted racial essentialism of the 1960’s and was in large part the reaction of Black intellectuals to the dominant dogmas of Black nationalism. In an effort to make race part of philosophical discourses and the object of serious critical investigations, Black philosophers began to study the idea of race as an abstraction that could be analyzed under prominent philosophical theories. By making race an ethical category that existed only in the minds of individuals, Black philosophers sought to use the motifs of philosophical practice to compel people toward social ameliorations. By making race and by extension racism an ethical choice, Black thinkers believed that teaching whites to be more rational and just would consequentially result in less racist individuals and less societal racism. However, by the end of the decade, it had become apparent to a wide range of Black intellectuals, especially the founders of CRT, that the

persistence of race as a social force and an identity politics was not being erased by the integration of the races or the rational and ethical appeals to whites to end racism. Despite the interaction of whites and Blacks in schools, neighborhoods, and college campuses, race remained a stolid social disposition, and racism took up a more virulent and institutionalized temperament.

Black philosophers, convinced of the promises of and potential in integration, took up a new charge against racism, a charge that sought to utilize critical applications of reason and communicative action as a radical resistance to the racist disposition of white individuals and their racial thinking. This approach, much unlike the moral suasion of the previous decades, sought to make race a problematic that could be addressed through the critical tools of various European philosophical canons. One of the most prominent of these projects was the work of Lucius Outlaw presented, in his essay “Toward a Critical Theory of Race.” In this essay, Outlaw contents himself in applying critical theory to the question and challenges of racial thinking.¹³ He says,

In the United States in particular, “race” is a constitutive element of our common sense and thus a key component of our “taken-for-granted valid reference schema” through which we get on in the world. And, as we are constantly burdened by the need to resolve difficulties, posing varying degrees of danger to the social whole, in which “race” is the focal point of contention (or serves as a shorthand explanation for the source of contentious differences), we are likewise constantly reinforced in our assumption that “race” is self-evident.

Here has entered “critical thought: as self-appointed mediator for the resolution of such difficulties by the promotion (and practical effort to realize) a given society’s progressive evolution, that is, its development of new forms of shared understanding—and corresponding forms of social practice—void of the conflicts thought to rest on inappropriate valorization and rationalizations of “race.” Such efforts notwithstanding, however, the “emancipatory project” has foundered on the crucible of “race.” True to the prediction of W.E.B. DuBois, the twentieth century has indeed been dominated by “the problem of the color line.”¹⁴

Though Outlaw admits the lack of a biological salience in the notion of race, he nonetheless maintains, “that ‘race’ is without a scientific basis in biological terms does not mean, thereby, that it is without any social value, racism notwithstanding.”¹⁵ This social importance that race maintains despite its lack of a coherent biological category compels Outlaw to revisit the contributions that critical theory¹⁶ may hold in addressing race as a problem of social theory.

Outlaw recognized that “for a number of complex reasons, the Frankfurt School...was not known initially so much for its theorizing about ‘racial’ problems and their resolution as for its insightful critique of social domination generally,”¹⁷ and the challenges of shifting critical theory’s traditional focus from class concerns to a focus on contemporary racial dynamics in the United States. As a result, Outlaw asked, “would it be helpful for contemporary critical theory to recover the insights of twentieth-century science of ‘race’ and those of the Frankfurt School regarding ‘race,’ ‘prejudice,’ and ‘ethnocentrism’ and join them to recently developed critical theoretic notions of social evolution to assist us in understanding and contributing to the emancipatory transformation of the ‘racial state’ in its present configuration.”¹⁸ His motivation for doing so would be supplemented by an understanding of race rooted in the sociology of race formation in the United States. Outlaw’s “critical theory of race” fully endorsed the then cutting-edge research on race, claiming that Micheal Omi and Howard Winant’s definition of race as “an unstable and decentered complex of social meaning constantly being transformed by political struggle,”¹⁹ had created an arena to which critical theory could potentially contribute. By making race a process of social formation animated by

the tendency towards social domination, Outlaw had successfully pointed the philosophical problem of race to its potential resolution in critical theory.²⁰

In line with the anti-essentialist tones of the times, the notion of racial formation suggested by Omi and Winant provided Outlaw with a way to displace the notion of race “as an essence, as something fixed, concrete, and objective.”²¹ For Outlaw, there was a particular transformative praxis inherent in a project focused on turning critical theory towards race. By aiming to direct race discourse away from the fixed, biological and static notions of a racial identity, Outlaw sought to resituate race on the dynamic pillars of social meanings and political contestation. This seemingly rich alternative would allow Black philosophy not only to affirm the racist rebuttals of biological determinism, but simultaneously to affirm racial identity in the social sphere as important not only to the lived experiences of Blacks, but also to any true understanding of American socio-political dynamics.

What these theorist offer [Omi and Winant] is an important contribution to a revised and much needed critical theory of race for the present and near future. And part of the strength of their theorizing lies in the advance it makes beyond the reductionist thinking of other leftist theorists while preserving the sociohistorical constructivist (socially formed) dimensions of race.

Part of the strength lies, as well, in the resituating of “race” as a “formation.” For what this allows is an appreciation of the historical and socially constructive aspects of “race” within the context of a theory of social evolution where learning is a central feature. Then we would have at our disposal the prospects of an understanding of “race” in keeping the original promises of critical theory: enlightenment leading to emancipation. Social learning regarding “race,” steered by critical social thought, might help us to move beyond racism, without reductionism, to a pluralist socialist democracy.²²

Inspired by Outlaw’s DuBoisian take on race as a social formation, Lewis R. Gordon also began tackling the emerging field of critical theory and race through a

phenomenological lens, maintaining that the focus on law is a limitation of CRT.²³

Lumping the writings of Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, and Kimberle Crenshaw under the title of CLS, Lewis R. Gordon remarks that,

a constraint on the Critical Legal Studies group is the focus on *law*. Quite often, the presumption of their work is that strategies of recognition—powerfully evoking, for instance, an unemployed Latina or black mother’s confrontation with the obstacles posed by the legal system and government bureaucracies, or the situation of a person of color facing juries and other facets of the criminal justice system—will have an impact on the *practice* or *implementation* of justice within the systems of laws available. In effect, the structure of interpretive legal argumentation permits criticisms of the system only to the extent to which the criticisms call for, at best, systemic adjustment. Such an approach renders revolutionary or more radical approaches to questions of law at best "interpretations" worth considering but performatively limited. As a consequence, the form of critical discussions of *race* that emerges in the Critical Legal Studies movement is usually limited by the impact of juridical conceptions of how race will be negotiated in the sphere of litigation and legislation. How about race in civil and often not so civil society?²⁴

It is interesting that Gordon chooses to read CRT as part of the Critical Legal Studies movement despite various works that articulate a clear ideological and political difference between the two streams of thought.²⁵

For Gordon, critical race theory predated the actual movement of CRT for over a century, and is a product of Africana thought and Blacks’ engagement with slavery, rather than a particular movement against post-civil rights ideology. Among the authors of critical race theory, Gordon names Edward Blyden, Julia Anna Cooper, Martin Delany, Fredrick Douglass, and of course W.E.B. DuBois and Frantz Fanon. These authors make the cut, so to speak, because they engage in a critical reflection on racial identity. Gordon is generous enough to recognize this self-reflective disposition as a historic phenomenon rooted in the existential encounters African-descended people have

had with the modern world since their enslavement, but the parameters of such a definition seem exceptionally broad. Gordon, however, maintains that critical race theory can be practiced in various ways with no one methodological orientation. Is this generalization the same for any type of philosophical motif, or are their rules to the game?

In Gordon's view, the "critical" in critical race theory serves three primary functions in Africana thought. For some, "it serves a purely negative function—to determine what must be eliminated or rejected."²⁶ These theorists, contends Gordon, are inclined to reject race on the basis of its being socially constructed. For others, the word "critical" serves as a propaedeutic—"to determine the transcendental conditions of meaning and limits of concepts, in this case, the concept of 'race'."²⁷ Or finally, it can represent, as Gordon's work indicates, a self-engaged phenomenological dimension of the contradictions that emerge in racial identity—its "paradoxes and failures in intentional life."²⁸ These definitions, which seem to be in tension, are unified by Gordon through their normative aspect. He says,

A properly critical race theory must address, in other words, the fact that no human being *is*, nor is able to *live*, one (*and only one*) identity without collapsing into pathology. In addition, a properly critical race theory must be willing to explore the possibility of systemic failure, a failure which may require radical transformations of the matrices through which a society's resources are distributed and through which they are interpreted. From this point of view, liberating practices aim at opening possibilities for more humane forms of social relations. In effect, it argues for "material" and "semiotic" conditions of human possibility. As such, it's a theory that bridges the identity and liberation divide.²⁹

While cogent, this perspective is much too broad to engender any specific methodological approach to the study of race. In short, it fails to differentiate. The admission that no human being is, nor is able to live a single identity can be an existential

problem, just as easily as it can be a post-structural nihilism in which one can never express the coherent understanding of the self. There is nothing that delineates the racial aspect of the self from other categories of post-modern trauma. In an even more dreadful scenario, one has to wonder about the contradictory aspects of placing a construct like “race” next to a modifier like “critical” given the socialized framing of race in America. If Gordon aims for liberatory interpretation, then is such a project negated by the resistance of the racial category to adjust itself outside of its historic reference? Regardless of how one may think about race in America, the word still refers to specific racial subjects and groups of people. How can one escape that?

The problem that emerges in thinking seriously about Gordon’s view is a problem of the *racial proxemic*, or how close Blacks can get to the *inquiry of a racial problem* until one is *abstracted into the inquiry as a racial problem*. Though unnamed this problem has previously been alluded to by the work of Gordon, but remains a question of existential identity in relation to teleological liberation, instead of the question of historical-cultural identity and liberatory action. In “DuBois’s Humanist Philosophy of the Human Sciences,”³⁰ Gordon enters into conversation with DuBois over the existential question of “what I am” in relation to the teleological assignment of liberation. In looking to DuBois’s *The Soul of Black Folk*, Gordon sees DuBois’s pronouncement that the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line, as a hermeneutical as well as political problem. Gordon remarks,

In his 1903 classic *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois made a prognosis that has haunted the twentieth century: "Herein lie buried many things which if read in patience may show the strange meaning of being black here at the dawning of the Twentieth century. This meaning is not without interest to you, Gentle Reader ; for the problem of the Twentieth

Century is the problem of the color line" (1903, 41). When Du Bois wrote "Gentle Reader," he was being more than rhetorical, for this "Reader," for whom there was once presumed a lack of interest and, therefore, (falsely) a lack of relevance, is here alerted that his or her condition, being other than black, was inscribed in the core of the problems in question. The black, whose "strange meaning" and "being" were also called into question as "the Negro problem," represented also a tension in the presumed order. Du Bois did not here write about being black but about its meaning. He announced a hermeneutical turn that would delight even his most zealous philosophical successors. This hermeneutical turn signaled a moment in a complex struggle, a moment marked by its admission of incompleteness and probably impossible closure. The black, subject to interpretation, became a designation that could be held by different groups at different times and as such was both concrete and metaphorical. If the color line is at the mercy of interpretive blackness, then its boundaries carry risks, always, of changing and overlapping.³¹

Gordon correctly points out the tension that emerges from trying both to challenge the social manifestations of racism and racial problems (Negro problems), and to maintain an ontological distance from what it means to be those problems under study. In arguing for an existential sociology that takes "seriously the conditions of objectivity raised by the intersubjective dynamics of the social world and the existential problematic of how human beings live,"³² Gordon believes he remedies the problem raised in the existential absorption of the "I" into the stasis of ontological problems—a fixed racial identity. Unfortunately, however, Gordon believes that what grounds Blacks and prevents us from slipping into the perpetuity of an ontological imprisonment is the self-reflective capacity of our humanity. In Blacks' humanity, a humanized self—a self that knows where its humanity (its transcendental being) begins and the social contingency of its racial identity ends—is transformative, and changes the very conditions of our historical recognition. Instead of being recognized as ontological entities of the world, the asserted humanity of Blacks takes up an agency that participates in and changes the world. In other words,

Black being has an effect upon the world and the society in which Blacks live, instead of being a problem in the terrain.

Gordon's alternative, while compatible with the en vogue complexity of the post-colonial self, is quite distant from the grounded social and cultural perspectives of race that have historically benefited Blacks.³³ Their race and their humanity are indistinguishable and cannot be understood as two separate categories and interacting concepts—these two concepts constitute one another. Blacks assert their humanity in their attempts to secure specific racial rights, privileges, and self-determination for their culture, while simultaneously asserting their racial identity through their humanity, by claiming that Africa had culture and civilization and that African-descended people in America are in fact a historical and cultural people deserving of that acknowledgement. The various abstractions of a raced and splintered ego-logical self fail to convince, as the historical challenges that are now the material of various philosophical banter demonstrate an adamant and convincing cultural dynamism behind the all too familiar abhorrent Black identity of various radical movements.

In Gordon's work there is the tendency to universalize subjectivity as if existential identity transcendently grounds the path towards liberation. Grounding an existentially responsible humanity in a philosophically examined Black identity does not reveal a definite path to liberation; it provides no strategies, no resources, and no acknowledgment of the actual barriers to social, economic, or political justice beyond how we should think about racial identity. Regardless of the risk involved with conflating one's own Blackness with the social reality of Blackness, Blacks must act against the legal, social, and economic oppression sustained by white domination. As scholars we have to be cautious

of philosophical thinking that fails to improve the quality of life for Blacks and impedes the actions that may ameliorate their conditions for the sake of ethical or philosophically interesting alternatives. White supremacy does not retreat in the face of philosophically interesting quibbles: it only abates when it is confronted with its own actual disempowerment.

Aware of the aforementioned problem of the existentially reflective self in Gordon's work, Charles Mills's work seeks to encounter and challenge the racial polity sustained by the racial contract.³⁴ From Mills perspective, critical race theory was a "term originally associated specifically with minority viewpoints,"³⁵ but is now being used generally to refer to a new paradigm that "takes race, normative whiteness, and white supremacy to be central to U.S, and indeed global history."³⁶ In Mills's interpretation of DuBois, DuBois is advocating a critical race theory against whiteness, one that reflects the property interests and unjust tyranny of white supremacy sustained by a racial polity.³⁷ This is a DuBois convinced of the seriousness of white supremacy, not to the extent that Blacks internalize the existential strife caused by its various manifestations, but to the extent that white supremacy negatively affects Blacks in its various manifestations. While still maintaining an anti-essentialist tone, Mills admits that

The content and boundaries of whiteness will be shifting, politicized, the subject of negotiation and conflict. But the bottom line, the ultimate payoff for structuring the polity around a racial axis, is what W.E.B. DuBois once called "the wages of whiteness." Particularly in the United States, usually viewed as a Lockean polity, a polity of proprietors, whiteness is, as Derrick Bell, Cheryl Harris, George Lipitz, and other have pointed out, property, differential entitlement.³⁸

This entitlement, which is always exploitative, "is not merely full personhood, first-class citizenship, ownership of the aesthetically normative body, membership in the recognized

culture; it is also material benefit, entitlement to differential moral/legal/social treatment, and differential rational expectations of economic success.”³⁹ Though Mills correctly diagnoses the problems in line with CRT, he retreats into the racial idealism so prevalent in critical theories of race the moment he believes that the political/legal/social/moral concretization of whiteness can be remedied in the act of naming, or “the formal recognition of white supremacy.”⁴⁰

These three varieties of critical theories of race represent the development of critical theories of race under the umbrella term “critical race theory.” However, the reader can certainly ascertain very clear if not contradictory trends, not only between CRT and the philosophical variety of critical theories of race, but also among the approaches outlined in the works of Lucius Outlaw, Lewis Gordon, and Charles Mills. These tensions represent a lack of methodological cohesion and fail to sustain any argument for a genuine intellectual movement in philosophy that should overshadow the long tradition of CRT. Well, if you can’t beat’ em, is there any value in critical theories of race joining the ranks of CRT? Or stated differently, does professionalized philosophy contribute anything of theoretical substance to the actual perspectives of CRT?

The Failure to Contribute: How Creative Renderings of DuBois in “critical theories of race” Fall Outside of CRT.

When African American philosophers approach CRT, they usually characterize it as a perspective no different from historical critical treatments of the concept of race in the “the development of Africana thought, which began in the eighteenth century with, ironically, critical efforts to render slavery illegal.”⁴¹ This discussion, while interesting, has failed to make the necessary contributions to CRT as an intellectual and pedagogical movement, because of the persistent conflation of CRT and critical theories of race. No

Black scholar would deny the thematic association of the ideas of CRT and critical theories of race, but to say they are synonymous fails to address the specific demands and intellectual commitments of the CRT movement. Most critical theories of race are focusing on how to understand race and racial experience, not positing, as does mainstream literature in CRT, the reality and unchanging nature of racism in America and the political and social advocacy necessary to combat it. Whereas mainstream philosophy is dedicated to the continuation of rational and ethical suasion, CRT acknowledges the need for radical political and legal activism against whites and whiteness.

Traditionally the philosophical contributions to CRT have focused on the ethics behind the political motivations in a racial identity politics. The most developed work representative of this concern is Shuford's article "Four DuBoisian Contributions to Critical Race Theory."⁴² John Shuford's approach, not unlike Lewis Gordon's before him, reads CRT through a DuBoisian lens. Unfortunately, however, Shuford looks to DuBois's early works, works that DuBois himself admits were written in the midst of a certain intellectual immaturity,⁴³ and not the later works of DuBois, where he confronts *Brown v. Board of Education*, desegregation, and imperialism. By drawing from the more popular interpretations of DuBois that intersect with European phenomenology and the tension between personhood and community so prevalent in early classical American philosophy, Shuford subscribes to the white-washed interpretations of Black philosophy which share no actual connections to either the genealogy or contemporary concerns of CRT.

Shuford continues that Critical Race Theorists should embrace four additional DuBoisian principles to guide their movement. “First, the impossibility of racial eliminativism, second, the worth of races toward liberatory culture making, third, the inescapability of whiteness as an ontological condition of indebtedness, and fourth, a revision of racial gifts discourses to motivate racial redress as gifts of atonement toward mutual healing and delegitimization of racialized commodification practices.”⁴⁴ The weakness in Shuford’s work is not that it is insufficiently correct, but that it is actually impotent against the forces that are actively undermining CRT. Shuford’s work is ultimately not concrete enough to act as a corrective to the problems that plague the study of Black problems. Even in the moments where Shuford tries to address problems that have traditionally concerned CRT, his analysis sounds more like an intellectualization of philosophical multiculturalism, rather than an actual challenge to the property rights that whites claim in their whiteness. Shuford maintains, “Philosophical and political shifts towards a DuBoisian influenced racial revisionism does not require a wholesale rejection of eliminativism,”⁴⁵ or whiteness, since “the liberatory culture making of racial redress and white identity revaluation should involve ongoing atonement as a means of deconstructing ‘whiteness as property,’ as promoting mutual healing through a racial gift exchange, the source of which is ‘whites’ indebtedness.”⁴⁶

But DuBois himself abandoned this avenue of thinking, which appeals to the conscience of white America, in his later works; because he realized that he could not enable whites to see their imperial privilege in whiteness. While Shuford aims to be socially transformative, not one of his claims address either the structural or material reasons why whites may not want to express indebtedness to African-descended people

or address the reality of events like Katrina and the enduring systemic oppression of African people in America as obstacles preventing dialogue. Even if we accept the contention of race theorists like Gordon and Shuford up to this point, how do Blacks respond to material and social oppressions, which take precedence over the moral understandings of white privilege? Whereas CRT gives concrete thinking about policy and social reformation, Gordon and Shuford merely reiterate various euphemisms for social compassion.

Historically, the discipline of philosophy has had problems attracting African/a people to the field and matriculating Black doctorates.⁴⁷ Because of this underrepresentation, African American philosophy is institutionally marginalized and popularly seen as irrelevant to the overall legitimacy of American and Continental traditions. Remarking on the status of African American philosophy, Harvard professor Tommie Shelby writes, “within the broader discipline of philosophy as practiced in the United States, African American philosophy is still largely marginalized. Many philosophers regard it as not real philosophy at all. And when it is considered philosophical, it is given the label applied philosophy, a term often used derisively to denote work that is considered ‘soft’ or only marginally philosophical. Indeed apart from debates about affirmative action, African American issues are rarely given sustained and explicit philosophical treatment in mainstream venues (such as leading journals, college courses, and departmental colloquia.”⁴⁸ Because African American/Africana philosophy still struggles against a consciously enforced marginalization, a unique situation has arisen in the field where African-descended people in philosophy seldom utilize the intellectual resources developed by Black scholars, especially those in CRT, for fear of

stigmatization for being too Black. As discussed in Chapter 1, Black authors have to be continually made safe for white consumption, so the few appeals to Black thought are usually presented in the more accepted idealist version, which enables white scholarship to continue its long-accepted practice of only reading Black thinkers to the extent that they coincide with white philosophical traditions and to imagine, despite its recent ascendancy, that idealism represents the pervasive view of thinking about race amongst Black scholars. This phenomenon is even more complex when we consider the historical Black figures taught and mentioned in philosophical circles: only Black authors compatible with post-structural agendas or cosmopolitan care ethics are included in the mainstream philosophical curricula. Black philosophers are *chosen* not for the profundity of their thought or rigor of their scholarship, but by the potential coalescence their thought has with established white traditions. Given both the imperial copyright placed on Black thinking and the country club exclusion of Black participation, one is hard pressed to see how genuine race theory can emerge from the racial apartheid maintained by philosophical disciplinarity.

Framing Contemporary Voices: Charles Mills's and Emmanuel Eze on the agenda of "critical race theory"

Of the black authors that claim to do critical race theory,⁴⁹ only Charles W. Mills's scholarship demonstrates an actual engagement with the texts that have come to define the realist tradition of CRT. Unlike Eze's marriage to the idealist tendency, which holds that "it is the dialectical and transcendental aspects of our racial concepts or racial experience that make racial discourse of interest to, and in philosophy,"⁵⁰ Mills's work seeks to engage the structural and contractual obligations whiteness places on black bodies and their social existence. This split in the literature is representative not only of

the division present in the movement of CRT itself but also will determine the very ground for future scholarship.

In Eze's view, "philosophy can re-mark the dialectical nature of the systems of thought that managed to articulate and sustain freedom in the modern world while degrading and expropriating the systemic ways the worldviews and cultures of individuals deemed 'black,' in ways that threaten to render black lives unworthy of modern freedom, responsibility and social equality."⁵¹ This view, however, must be accompanied with his disclaimer that he does not want to practice resentment studies, or anti-philosophy. As he states, "I simply wished to contribute to ongoing conversations about the possibilities of a benevolently race conscious critique of figures and texts in the history of philosophy, a critique through which contemporary philosophical traditions might both redeem their past misconceptions about race and Africa as well as contribute meaningfully to progressive and less mythical thinking on the subjects."⁵² This view, while popularly accepted as a vehicle to transport the present consciousness of philosophers toward a possible "postracial idea of humanity,"⁵³ fails to consider the persistence and historical resistance of whiteness in philosophy.⁵⁴ How can philosophy act to correct its racist past if it is uncritical of its racist present? Though some philosophers see criticisms of philosophy's racist past as an effective means of addressing present racism, it must nonetheless be admitted that these criticisms are marginal and for the most part not encountered as part of "true philosophical study." White philosophers have continually failed to bracket the racism and anthropological exclusion of Black people in philosophical texts and have adamantly rejected any attempt at revisionism and apologetics.

In *The Racial Contract*, Mills clearly distinguishes himself both from the racial transcendence of Eze and the essentialist trends in early race theory, but maintains that “critical race theory—of which this book could be seen as an example—adds the adjective specifically to differentiate itself from the essentialist views of the past. Race is sociopolitical rather than biological, but it is nonetheless real.”⁵⁵ This view while seemingly compatible with various sorts of philosophical race scholarship differs in that it sees whiteness not as a color, but as a set of power relations.⁵⁶ In Mills’ view, whiteness becomes the focus of the racial polemic in philosophy, not because it lent to the creation of a racial hierarchy, but because it is that racial hierarchy. This claim severely undercuts Eze’s project because Eze seeks to engage whiteness as an idea, an imaginary construct abstracted from any real power to dictate the very terms of philosophical discourse.⁵⁷

The strength of Mills’s position is that it understands the effect of whiteness as it operates and strives for its own existence in the subjects that possess that identity and the relations that subjectivity forms both for itself and its institutions. Mills recognizes this and seeks to valorize the knowledge of a project that

...locates itself proudly in the long, honorable tradition of oppositional black theory, the theory of those who were denied the capacity to theorize, the cognitions of persons rejecting their official subpersonhood...The Racial Contract pays tribute to the insights of generations of anonymous ‘race men’ (and ‘race women’) who, under the most difficult circumstances, often self-educated, denied access to formal training and the resources of the academy, the object of scorn and contempt from hegemonic white theory, nevertheless managed to forge the concepts necessary to trace the contours of the system oppressing them, defying the massive weight of a white scholarship that either morally justified this oppression or denied its existence.⁵⁸

This project exists in sharp contrast to Eze's philosophical alternative that merely wants to discuss the ills of philosophy as it is without pushing the implications of Black experience and Blackness as a "location of being" in Western philosophical practices. Can we trust philosophy to correct itself after its long historical tendencies of racism and minority exclusion and the unapologetic display of anti-black racism by European authors? Why is the historical record of African/a thought an inadequate account of racism and Eurocentrism? Eze replies,

A postracial philosophy of humanity therefore is not one to which race no longer matters; it does not deny that race is a factor that still plays potent and mostly damaging roles in the lives of individuals and groups historically oppressed for the sake of their race. A postracial philosophy also does not inattentively dream about a future when everyone should look alike in "gross morphology"—a utopian natural colorless compact. It is for us sufficient to indicate as postracial those moments, in thought and in practice, where we acknowledge and work to overcome the explicit and implicit racial social mechanisms operating to thwart opportunities for some and enhance opportunities for others. To transcend race in this modest sense of both recognition and sublations requires that disabling racial labels may no longer be forced upon individuals or groups....To transcend race in the ways I think of it is therefore not an invitation to the oppressed to abandon resistance to racism, but rather a suggestion that this resistance must also be seen to include efforts to overcome the master narrative of race itself. It is to imagine a future when no one is forced into a position in which one must automatically bear the privileges or the cost of a racial tag.⁵⁹

But to what is Blackness relegated? How is it negotiated in the transition to this ideal humanity? Though the idea of a postracial humanity may be possible, surely African/a people must ask if it is desirable in a world where race determines social existence and standing. Talking about overcoming race and a "post-racial humanity" are meaningless in a world where whiteness determines when race is overcome and when Blacks are defined as humans. This wish to transcend race is one sided. If it is the responsibility of oppressed people to overcome the master narrative of race itself, then Blacks must naively assume

that the masters have stopped writing stories in which Black bodies are raced bodies. If Blacks begin from the position that the so-called master continues to perpetuate racial myths, then we assume that it is the work of the oppressed to moralize the master. In both cases, Blackness is relegated to the service of white people's humanity and at the mercy of their power. Those who adopt such a position must seriously ask themselves, "how do the characters in the story change the plot, if one must admit that their very being is already located in the rise and fall of the plot's suspense?"

In Charles Mills's racial contract, this tension between Black humanity and the hope that whites recognize that humanity is of central concern. According to Mills,

Black activists have always recognized white domination, white power, as a political system of exclusion and differential privilege, problematically conceptualized by the categories of either white liberalism or white Marxism. The Racial Contract can thus be regarded as a black vernacular (literally: "the language of the slave") "Signifyin (g)" on the social contract, a "double voiced," "two-toned," "formal revision" that critique (s) the nature of white meaning itself," by demonstrating that "a simultaneous, but negated parallel discursive (ontological, political) universe exists whiting the larger white discursive universe." It is a black demystification of the lies of white theory, an uncovering of the Klan robes beneath the white politician's three piece suit. Ironic, cool hip, above all knowing, the "Racial Contract" speaks from the perspective of the cognizers whose mere presence in the halls of white theory is a cognitive threat because—in the inverted epistemic logic of the racial polity—the "ideal speech situation" requires our absence, since we are, literally, the men and women who know too much, who in that wonderful American expression—know where the bodies are buried (after all, so many of them are our own). It does what black critique has always had to do to be effective: it situates itself in the same space as its adversary and then shows what follows from "writing race" and seeing the difference it makes. As such, it makes it possible for us to connect the two rather than, as at present, have them isolated in two ghettoized spaces, black political theory's ghettoization from mainstream discourse, and white mainstream theory's ghettoization from reality.⁶⁰

Because this type of writing, which emphasizes the actual and contemporary racism of philosophy, is usually discouraged and in many ways censored in philosophical circles,

white philosophers have shifted the race debate towards their idealizations of race, rather than toward how African/a people have experienced racism and molded their realities around that obstacle. Mills's work convincingly demonstrates that the realist tradition could completely overhaul the concepts that white philosophers use to speak about Black people. A realist contextualization of how Black people think about themselves, first as a people and only then as a racialized people, would fundamentally change the direction of scholarship and serve as a much needed corrective. Unfortunately, however, the potential benefits gained by Mills's critique of philosophy and the racial contract are overshadowed by his reliance on the promises of philosophy and rational discourse to dislodge the social and psychological entanglements with supremacy in white minds. Mills's effort to connect Black political theory and white mainstream philosophy throws his critical triumphs upon his unwarranted belief in white compassion and the ill-had faith in reason and moral suasion. Despite one-hundred and thirty one pages supporting the claim that racism is inextricably linked to the white mind and whites' reality, on the last page Mill's asserts that simply "naming this reality brings it into the necessary theoretical focus for these issues to be honestly addressed."⁶¹

Just as Eze's work assumes that exposing white privilege will cause white individuals not to act on the behalf of their whiteness, Mills too engages in this misguided faith. Critically engaging historical constructs of whiteness does not automatically render those interests, based on these white identities, inoperative. His scholarship assumes that white identities and the historical renderings of race from the mouths of white professors are based on their ignorance and not in their interests in preserving privilege. Mills's thesis shows the impossibility of Eze's "postracial idea of humanity" and the dangers of

ignoring the structural and institutional privileging of whiteness, by exposing the institutionalization of white privilege in philosophy departments and the discipline's language to speak of "race," but nonetheless maintains a unsustainable faith in the mechanisms of philosophical discourse to solve a problem that may ultimately require the elimination of those who stubbornly sustain the racist structure.⁶²

While these conversations are the dominate strains of thought in critical theories of race in philosophy, at best, they represent watered down articulations of the radical politics that CRT as a field actually acts upon. Since Black scholars have left African American philosophy and "critical race theory" undefined and intellectually ambiguous—where white participation in these fields is decided more by personal politics than by actual training—white thinkers have begun to usurp these fields by colonizing the terms upon which contemporary discourses in race studies can speak. Because race studies in philosophy are in the business of saving white souls, Black thinkers have allowed Africana thought and "critical theories of race" to remain relegated to efforts aimed at increasing white interest in race, neglecting altogether the question of whether or not whites are actually scholarly competent in Black thought.

When Jungle Fever Gets Dangerous: Sullivan's Epidemic

One of the most recent works supposedly in CRT by a philosopher is by Shannon Sullivan, an Associate Professor of Philosophy and Women's Studies at Penn State University, who was brought to Critical Race Theory (CRT) through her work in feminism. Her book, *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege*,⁶³ continues a conversation with CRT begun in an attempt to understand how "sex, gender, race, male, and white privilege transact in complex ways."⁶⁴ As she says on page 11 of

the Introduction, “my being a woman and a feminist lead me to focus on and hopefully better understand race and white privilege. But another way of explaining this shift in focus is to say that I began to concentrate on race and white privilege because of sexism.” Sullivan’s personal journey to the question of race is the single most clarifying mechanism in the conceptual schema that she develops in this work, as she tries to approach race from her psycho-analytic and pragmatist roots. This view not only defines her approach but renders readings of Black authors so that they are fundamentally rooted in the traditions she justifies through her own white experience.

In her earlier work, “The Unconscious Life of Race: Freudian Resources for Critical Race Theory,” Sullivan paraphrases Mills’s claim that “unlike race theory of the seventeenth through mid-twentieth century, critical race theory theorizes race for the purpose of eliminating racism.”⁶⁵ While Sullivan’s footnote to this passage points the reader to page 126 of Mills’s 1997 work, she does not attend to the source that Mills uses to label himself a critical race theorist. Mills defines his theoretical allegiance to CRT based on the prescriptions outlined in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that formed the Movement*.⁶⁶ Sullivan understands her work as being part of that conversation without seriously investigating the themes of the movement or seriously engaging the question of whether white authors, especially white feminists, can even participate in CRT. This understanding is even more problematic when Sullivan claims that it is “perhaps because of psychoanalysis’ reputation for being apolitical, few critical race theorists have turned to psychoanalysis for help in addressing, the status of the concept of race or devising theoretical tools needed to fight racism.”⁶⁷ The exceptions to this general rule, ironically, are other white feminist thinkers like Elizabeth Abel, Tina Chanter, and

Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, and white male scholars who look at race solely from the psychoanalytic perspective.⁶⁸ This distortion of the field is representative of the problems associated with interpreting critical race theory as a general study of race. Sullivan's work demonstrates what Black scholars know all too well, namely, that whites even in speaking about Blackness will write themselves and the work of those that look like them into the theoretical archives of any movement. By claiming that the work of other white scholars that align with her psycho-analytic feminist orientation are critical race theorists, Sullivan's work props up an illusory community in philosophy supported solely by the politics of their racial compassions as whites willing to speak about race.

Following the model put forth in prior decades by white scholars, like Robert Bernasconi, where whites trained in areas outside of race theory can make themselves experts in the field almost overnight solely based on their new found interest in and compassion towards race questions,⁶⁹ Sullivan's work acts as an erasure of the decades of work done by scholars of color in CRT. By choosing to read historic Black authors in line with her white racial identity, Sullivan's work chooses to "epistemically converge" Black thinkers like W.E.B. DuBois into the established methods of psycho-analytic feminism without any attention to the violence done to Black scholarship by this act of colonization. Rather than deal with concrete issues of racism and oppression, Sullivan's work prefers to give a descriptive account of whiteness as an unconscious habit with ontologically expansive tendencies or those tendencies of white people "to act and think as if all spaces—whether geographical, psychical, linguistic, economic, spiritual, bodily, or otherwise—are or should be available to them to move in and out of as they wish."⁷⁰ It is amazing that Sullivan's work takes such care to describe the phenomenon of

ontological expansiveness, but proceeds without regard to this type of expansiveness in her own use of Black philosophers. While Sullivan is adamant of the role that philosophy can play in performing “subtle emotion work that richly engages the non-reflective aspects of white privilege,” she is ignorant of the politics of whiteness involved in her need to establish convergences with Black thinkers as an indication of the authenticity of her racial compassion.

Are Misinterpretations Contagious?: Epistemic Convergence at Work in Sullivan’s Reading of DuBois.

Sullivan analyzes whiteness as an unconscious habit, not in the traditional psycho-analytic sense, in which a habit is isolated from the conscious mind,⁷¹ but in the sense that a habit is “constitutive of the self.”⁷² Her argument in *Revealing Whiteness* holds that habits, whether those of race or other characteristics of contemporary human existence, such as gender, sexuality, and class are not some sort of veneer lacquered onto a neutral human core. They are dispositions for transacting with the world, and they make up the very beings that humans are.”⁷³ Given Sullivan’s understanding of habits in relation to race, gender and class, it is not surprising that she concludes that “it is important to retain the concept of race even though it originated in practices of racism and white supremacy.”⁷⁴ However, her assertion that race as a concept is needed to understand the relations between groups and the individuals that make up those groups, it seems that Sullivan will inevitably have to confront the dangers of suggesting that a liberatory white identity is not only possible but a fundamental requisite in redefining the idea of race progress in America.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, this perspective focuses then not on the historical traumas associated with the experience of racism, but rather the revelation whites can have in looking to themselves and philosophically interrupting the claims they

individually have to privilege. In fact, Sullivan's most recent work entitled "Whiteness as Wise Provincialism: Royce and the Rehabilitation of a Racial Category,"⁷⁶ goes in this exact direction, arguing that whites can and should retain "whiteness" as a racial identity and use that identity for anti-racist liberatory struggle.

However, it is in the first chapter of Sullivan's 2006 book, *Revealing Whiteness*, that she began articulating the foundational elements in her critical perspective on whiteness. In this work, Sullivan goes for the throat of the standard multiculturalist line arguing that white privileged ignorance, the "ignorance that benefits and supports the domination of white people,"⁷⁷ cannot be overcome by simply filling in white people's gaps in knowledge of racialized peoples. By writing out all the previous work done in the CRT decades before that argue against the idea that whites can be convinced to pursue anti-racist lives, Sullivan credits herself with this novel claim, and announces that the mistake of many people of color is that they believe that the "problems of racism are solvable with straightforward hard work and persuasive rational argumentation."⁷⁸ Sullivan contends that this naivety not only diagnoses the ailment of many critical race theorists, but has been an historic weakness in many African American philosophers' accounts of race, including the hero of her work W.E.B. DuBois.⁷⁹

By Sullivan's account, early in DuBois's career (1897-1910), he held that white people were fundamentally moral and personally good.⁸⁰ This apparently changed in 1920, with DuBois' publication of *Darkwater*. According to Sullivan, DuBois's shift came when he recognized "what had initially seemed to him like an innocent lack of knowledge on white people's part revealed itself to be a malicious production that masked the ugly Terrible of white exploitative ownership of non-white people and

cultures.”⁸¹ This revelation in DuBois’ thought caused him to abandon his faith in liberalism and develop the idea of unconscious racist habits. It is this turn in DuBois’ writings that drive Sullivan’s claim that DuBois use of the term ‘unconscious habit’ is a synthesis of Freudian psycho-analysis and a pragmatist understanding of habit passed on to DuBois from his study of James.⁸²

Needless to say, Sullivan’s interpretation of DuBois is grossly exaggerated and inaccurate. Because Sullivan is ideologically committed to marking a shift from DuBois’s naiveté—his belief in his ability to convince whites rationally of the irrationality of racism—to a Freudian psychoanalytic perspective, her work seriously distorts DuBois’s actual attacks on whiteness. Sullivan’s evidence of a psychoanalytic shift in DuBois is primarily rooted in his acknowledgement of whites’ psychological attachment to a white racial identity in 1920 with his publication of *Darkwater*, but this contention by Sullivan is incorrect. According to Sullivan, it was DuBois’s infamous essay, “The Souls of White Folks,” that signaled his abandonment of the belief that white people were fundamentally good, but this essay was simply the combination two shorter essays entitled “The Soul of White Folk” and “Of the Culture of White Folk,” published in 1910 and 1917 respectively,⁸³ which means that DuBois was engaging the question of whiteness and the fundamental corruption in white culture at least a decade before Sullivan acknowledges. DuBois recognized that whites would not be swayed by rational argument well before 1920,⁸⁴ but chose to pursue a strategy centered on rational persuasion over his initial solution of violent revolt. As DuBois confesses, “there was a time when I thought the only means in which progress could be made in the world was by violence. I thought that the only way that the darker people were going to get recognition was by killing a large

number of white people.”⁸⁵ But when DuBois recognized Blacks would not attain equality “by sheer force of assault, because of our relatively small numbers,”⁸⁶ he turned to an assault on the errant beliefs of white culture. This is when DuBois began to believe that Black equality

could only be gained as the majority of Americans were persuaded of the rightness of our cause and joined us in demanding our recognition as full citizens. This process must deal not only with conscious rational action, but with irrational and unconscious habit, long buried in folkways and custom. Intelligent propaganda, legal enactment and reasoned action must attack the conditioned reflexes of race hate and change them.”⁸⁷

“Slowly but surely, says DuBois, I came to see that for many years, perhaps many generations, we could not count on any such majority,”⁸⁸ as whites throughout the world were set against racial equality. Between 1910 and 1930, DuBois understood the need for Black organization in any effort to challenge racism. With the impossibility of violence, and his inability to curtail unconscious white racism, DuBois began to advocate organized social, political, and economic action against whites. This disposition is what led him to justify violence as a means of self-defense, and to advocate the economic independence of Blacks in “The Negro Nation Within a Nation,”⁸⁹ and in his unpublished manuscript entitled “The Negro and Social Reconstruction”⁹⁰ from 1920 onward as a reaction to his failed attempts to successfully readjust whites.

Some readers will no doubt suggest that Sullivan’s reading of DuBois is nothing more than an innocent misreading of his work. But, this misreading, innocent as it may seem, provides clear evidence that any white reading of Black philosophers is actually a correct reading, because *any philosophical reading of Black thinkers is a fictive exercise*. Since Black thinkers don’t belong to any specific tradition of Black philosophy or any acknowledged historical currents of thought, the current practice of incorporating Black

thinkers under white American and Continental traditions is understood to be an indication of philosophical rigor and pluralism. While Sullivan's scholarly work indicates her lack of proficiency in DuBois's thought and unfamiliarity with her professed area of study in "critical race theory," her perspectives are praised because she "talks about race," and her scholarship is taken as authoritative because she speaks under the auspices of the established philosophical enterprise.⁹¹ Since white scholars still constitute the philosophical audience to which all race theory ultimately must speak, in order to be acceptable to the discipline, there is a uncanny way in which "critical theories of race," are forced, by the sheer nature of the philosophical enterprise, to participate in philosophy's imperial mode.

Imperial Scholarship

What does it mean to erase a whole intellectual movement; to pretend that it does not exist, and replace its contents with an ideology of racial reconciliation? The idealist trends both in philosophy and in CRT's use of Continental thinkers speak to a one-sided academic relationship and the devaluation of Black thinkers as a whole. As I discuss in great detail in Chapter 4, idealist thinkers choose to collapse the practice of CRT down to the application of Continental thinkers and postmodern authors to the mere act of conceptualizing an ethics of Blackness. Even though this tendency is common in contemporary CRT, many philosophers choose not to engage the work of Critical Race Theorists, even when race-crits are citing the very authors, like Kant, Hegel, Marx, Freud, etc., whom the discipline of philosophy claims to pertain discussions about race. Take Sullivan's project for instance. Almost two decades ago, Critical Race Theorist Charles R. Lawrence III remarked, "...a large part of the behavior that produces racial

discrimination is influenced by unconscious racial motivation. There are two explanations for the unconscious nature of our racially discriminatory beliefs and ideas. First, Freudian theory states that the human mind defends itself against the discomfort of guilt by denying or refusing to recognize those ideas, wishes or beliefs that conflict with what the individual has learned is good or right.” And second, “the theory of cognitive psychology states that the culture—including, for example, the media and an individual’s parents, peers, and authority figures—transmit certain beliefs and preferences.”⁹² Stated simply, the suggestion that Sullivan claims as her philosophical contribution to CRT has already been a part of race-crits’ intellectual heritage for the last decade, but as can be expected, Sullivan seems unaware of this work by Lawrence, which was originally published in 1987.

The scholarly irresponsibility of white authors interested in race to acquaint themselves with the large bodies of Black scholarship produced over the decades is nothing new. Black authors are routinely uncited in philosophy journals, ignored in departmental curricula, and largely overlooked in mainstream philosophical training,⁹³ but what we are dealing with in this instance is compounded by the historical reality that CRT was created as a Black philosophical perspective, but is currently being rewritten as a discursive investigation into race that chooses to overlook the material expression of race in the practitioner of the racial inquiry. White authors are allowed to claim areas of specialization in Black thought merely by discussing race without any responsibility to the scholarship done for the last three decades in the arena of CRT, or the centuries of Africana thought stretching back prior to the ancient Greeks. By continually ignoring the autonomy of historical trends in Black thought, philosophy is imperially sketching the

future narratives of intellectual history. By allowing white scholars and the discipline of philosophy to define contemporary theoretical perspectives in Black thought, subsequent generations of Black scholars looking at the genealogy of Black philosophy will not be able to locate the points of epistemic convergence, instead Africana philosophy will appear to have always been derivative from and firmly rooted within the European trajectory of thought.

Whereas the use of Continental philosophy in CRT has historically been problematized and criticized heavily in elite law journals and symposiums around the country, the discipline of philosophy acts as if the usurpation of the intellectual foundations of theory, which threaten the history and integrity of Africana thought, is inconsequential. In CRT, such criticisms are not taken lightly. Even Lawrence's work has been accused of opening the door for various idealist assaults on the realist tradition and, in that light, carefully interpreted as to its standing in the field. As a nonmaterialist strand of CRT, Lawrence sought to apply Freudian psychology to dominant group behavior. In doing so, he sought to show that the differential effects test of racial discrimination burdened blacks with having to show that it was the intent of whites to discriminate against them [blacks]. Lawrence held that this standard was both inaccurate, since most racism is unconscious, and racist, because the victim must bear the weight of seeking racial remedy.

Some scholars would like to suggest that the current trajectory of race theory is actually correct, because it is simply true that race theory is dependent on critical European traditions and that Lawrence's work, despite its realist undertones, in fact demonstrates an example of idealism's triumph over the realist school of CRT—proof

positive that the need for psychoanalytic analyses and other critical approaches to race studies can only be satisfied by appealing to European thought. Needless to say, this view is incorrect. According to Richard Delgado, “Lawrence succeeded in focusing attention on a major irrational feature of the law of racial remedies—namely, the requirement of intent. His article prompted scholars to reexamine the nature of racism, and nonscholars to reflect on how their actions might unintentionally be harming persons of minority races.”⁹⁴ However, it is important to point out that Lawrence’s position is entirely different from the current trends of philosophy that isolate conversations of race to discourse and ignore the material aspects of race as they are concretely experienced by Black people. Critical Race scholars problematize the tension in CRT between realist and idealists, arguing about which one is less desirable and why, whereas mainstream philosophy conducts itself as if it is perfectly normal for critical race investigations to focus only on discourse and exclude any conversations that focus specifically on the group identity of those excluded by the racial system. In philosophy’s engagement with the race question, or more accurately philosophy’s disengagement from race, African/a people have no reason to suppose that Western philosophy should be forgiven and its tools utilized anew, especially when there is both the institutional and individual commitments to write whiteness into the script.

Getting Down with the Kang: How Implicit Bias Refutes Revealing Whiteness

Even more appalling about Sullivan’s research than her outright failure to engage the historical debates concerning unconscious racism in CRT, is her absolute ignorance of the current research by contemporary Critical Race scholars on unconscious habits and

their role in decision-making. Jerry Kang, for instance, claims that the consequences of unconscious racism can be analyzed and better understood through the study of whites' racial mechanics.⁹⁵ Unlike Sullivan's work, which only hypothesizes about the role of the unconscious and habits on behavior, Kang's work actually describes how unconscious racial categories map onto the world and affect social behavior based on empirical research. By understanding race as part of an individuals' schema, or the "cognitive structure that represents knowledge about a concept or type of stimulus, including its attributes and the relations among those attributes,"⁹⁶ Kang claims racial schemas form the root of both conscious interpretation and unconscious reactions to racial outgroups like Blacks, Latinos, and Asians.

Notwithstanding such complexity and the variance among perceivers and environments, the scientific consensus is that racial schemas are not of minor significance. Instead, racial schemas are "chronically accessible" and can be triggered by the target's mere appearance, since we as observers are especially sensitive to visual and physical cues... We may not be colorblind even when we cannot see. Once activated, the racial meanings embedded within the racial schema influence interaction. The apocryphal quotation attributed to Nietzsche, that "there is no immaculate perception," nicely captures how schemas guide what we see, encode into memory, and subsequently recall. At the attentional stage, schemas influence what we notice and immediately reduce information complexity. At the encoding and recall phases, schemas are again influential, although the memory literature is conflicted and qualified. There is now evidence that schemas influence not only interpretation (that is, "social perception"), but also what we actually see and remember seeing ("visual perception").⁹⁷

At the strictly unintentional level,

further research has demonstrated the connection between subliminal priming (through words or pictures) and subsequent tasks, such as evaluations, interpretations, and speed tasks. These findings indicate that schemas operate not only as part of a conscious, rational deliberation that, for example, draws on racial meanings to provide base rates for Bayesian calculations (what social cognitionists might call a "controlled process"). Rather, they also operate automatically - without conscious intention and

outside of our awareness (an "automatic process"). Here we see translation of yet another critical race studies theme, that the "power of race is invisible."⁹⁸

This research is a steadfast refutation of Sullivan's view of the unconscious and the faith she places in engagement with and exposure to African American themes and culture to undo white racist habits in particular. Kang's research demonstrates that whites hold a clear, distinct, implicit bias⁹⁹ against Blacks and other racial groups, a bias that cannot be remedied by thinking more correctly or through the utilization of psychoanalysis. On this matter Kang says,

we may honestly lack introspective access to the racial meanings embedded within our racial schemas. Ignorance, not deception, may be the problem. Relatedly, our explicit normative and political commitments may poorly predict the cognitive processes running beneath the surface. While connected to the automaticity point, this disconnect between explicit and implicit bias raises a different issue: dissociation. The point here is not merely that certain mental processes will execute automatically; rather, it is that those implicit mental processes may draw on racial meanings that, upon conscious consideration, we would expressly disavow. It is as if some "Trojan Horse" virus had hijacked a portion of our brain.¹⁰⁰

Kang's findings suggest that Freudian psychoanalysis is worthless when dealing with the question of race and the underlying racial mechanics that sustain its social construction. Psychoanalysis, the dominant analytical tool in contemporary critical theories of race scholarship, fails to attend to the concrete realities of the white personality. By placing an unsustainable faith in reason, white philosophers claiming to work on race believe that while they may be the patient, they are also the best doctors available. Kang's work demonstrates that this is simply not the case. Even with the concern that whites show explicitly for matters of race, there is no denial of implicit biases that are in tension with, and in some cases absolute contradictions of whites' public persona and social graces. This is a point that cannot be stressed enough, as it raises suspicions regarding the value

and meaning of the various “critical race” projects in which white scholars, such as Sullivan, are currently engaged. Critical theories of race are actively encouraging whites who have simply acknowledged the existence of racism to produce scholarship on race when these very whites are still psychologically affected by their racist dispositions—in short, they are reproducing sick scholarship.

Kang’s research is a clear indication that the admittance of race as a social construct and the placing of racism in the realm of the unconscious does not doom contemporary CRT scholarship to idealist pontifications. Much like Lawrence, Kang utilizes the empirical and theoretical effect of unconscious racism as a motivation for social action and legal activism, a necessary conversation dealing with the implications of racism that critical theories of race have not even begun to enter. In acknowledging the implicit bias of whites against Blacks and other minorities, critical theories of race must come to grips with the reality that, despite their personal relationships with people of color and white attempts to engage the race question, *all whites remain racist, by virtue of the privileges of whiteness, and should be regarded with a certain skepticism*. The reliance then of white authors on other white thinkers like Kant, Hegel, Foucault, and Freud, may then indicate a much deeper and insidious reality beyond the commonly held view that whites are just not exposed to Black thinkers and African American thought. Perhaps the resistance of whites’ to CRT and other genuine Black philosophical productions is an indication of the potential risk “authentic Black thinking” poses to presumed racial détente operating in the background of philosophical conversations in which whites are willing to “participate” in race questions. Either way, encountering CRT places a much needed skepticism on the practice of critical theories of race in philosophy

that rely upon the Eurocentric canon, a skepticism with which critical theories of race must contend if they are to be intellectually responsible and rigorous.

CRS as demonstration of CRT: Forging Canonical Responsibility

In philosophy, the area of study known as critical theories of race is fraught with problems. The lack of familiarity with the canonical forefathers and mothers of the CRT movement among scholars, such as Sullivan, claiming to do CRT, the distortion of Black figures' actual thoughts to make them compatible with Continental and American philosophical traditions, the inability of "critical theories of race" to respond both to the manifestations of racism in society, as well as to the manifestations of racial exclusivity in philosophy and the failure of the field to articulate clear standards of specialization, make one hard pressed to give these largely "unsubstantiated philosophical inquiries of race" a disciplinary status above and beyond the work done for the last two decades in CRT. The voluminous literature presented in the three core anthologies on the scholarship produced by the field,¹⁰¹ as well as the conferences, workshops and widespread acknowledgement by the minority legal community of the movement's status and impact on the study of race amass quite a case against philosophers' continued claim to the name of CRT without engaging any of the debates in the actual field.

Even if one is persuaded by Lewis Gordon's description of critical race theories as residing in the various writings of historic Black thinkers, composed in response to American racism, there is not any graduate program in the country that has devoted a foundational curriculum to the genealogical study of African American thought necessary to trace the development of this aspect of Black thinking in enough detail to warrant its designation as a distinct project in African American thinking. In other words, there

simply is not any institutional guide that guarantees the knowledge of scholars in philosophy claiming to do critical theories of race, nor criteria that indicate what knowledge a scholar claiming this area of study should have. In the two graduate programs that do claim to specialize in race theory, their course listings indicate very few actual opportunities to specialize in race theory, or actually engage with CRT.¹⁰²

Because the philosophical profession is content to give the application of any Continental or American philosophical perspective towards race the title of “critical race theory,” the field in many respects remains thematically oriented rather than grounded in a particular methodological or genealogical approach necessary to substantiate its claim of specialization. Black students, for instance, largely relying on their commitment to investigate the issues that affect them in their daily lives, take on the moralized ideals of European thinking as if the perspectives and methods underpinning the foundations of racial inquiry are themselves isolated from criticism, while white scholars classically trained in the colonialist disposition of (Continental or American) philosophy are rewarded with the status of a specialist for their compassion and progressivism in dealing with racial questions. In both regards, this field in philosophy remains derelict and is largely a devolution of CRT—as it throws the theoretical instruments of inquiry squarely on the back of European rationalism and white benevolence.

In the actual field of CRT, Critical Race Studies has emerged as a disciplinary movement dedicated not only to the formalization of CRT, but as a movement dedicated to training its future scholars amidst the political and social conflicts that necessitate and validate CRT as a field of study. According to Cheryl I. Harris, “the introduction of the Critical Race Studies specialization (CRS) as a field of study represents an important

moment in the evolution of CRT...until recently, there has been scant opportunity to implement formally, in a systematic way, a course of study that takes the insights of CRT as a point of departure for teaching, learning and writing about race and the law.”¹⁰³

Initially sustained by proliferated courses throughout American law schools, the natural evolution of CRT to CRS signals a development in the disciplinarity of CRT that could potentially ground philosophical attempts to engage the race question. “Critical race analysis seeks to foreground the interconnection between races, power and law as a corrective to an incomplete understanding of the terms through the law and legal institutions.”¹⁰⁴ While philosophers would nonetheless like to construe the legal aspects of CRT as a theoretical limitation, the admission of race as “socially constructed is an admission that race is at least partially legally produced,”¹⁰⁵ an area unquestionably lacking in philosophical analyses. In recognizing that race is more than the existential questions of identity, the ontological questions of discursive commitments, and the ethical questions over racial organization, CRS should be celebrated for its abandonment of transcendental concerns. As Harris continues, “through CRS, we are not seeking or claiming ultimate truth; rather our intervention is guided by a commitment to investigate, debate, and understand race as a phenomenon that has played a powerful role in our past and has shaped the present.”¹⁰⁶ In formalizing the perspectives and exposing the ideological commitments of any racial inquiry, CRS emerges as a template on which philosophy can ground and develop its projects.

The Problem of Specialization by Way of Conclusion

Whereas CRT is willing to sacrifice the relationships and approval of whites who cannot relinquish the property value of their whiteness, critical theories of race encourage whites

to participate in discussions of race despite their sincerity or qualifications. This misguided hope, seeking to answer, “Why Can’t We All Just Get Along?” allows whites to claim a specialization and gain professional recognition in a field in which the only requisite is their interest as whites in race. Whereas CRT has evolved into a canonical discipline, philosophy lags behind, because it continues to advance any scholarship dealing with race, regardless of its rigor and theoretical cogency, as “critical race theory.” Since the only criteria for being “critical race theory,” is the belief that race is a formative rather than a fixed construction, many white scholars continue to work as critical race theorists without the slightest acknowledgment or knowledge of Black perspectives. This thematic standard fails to introduce a solid bright line between works that speak to race as a secondary or tertiary concern and as a consequence of some larger thematic interest, and those works that attend to race and the structural imposition of racism primarily. Under the critical theory of race perspective, anything flies, as demonstrated not only by the various works by Black authors that champion liberalism and Enlightenment rationalism, but also the white authors like Sullivan whose work in psychoanalysis is applauded for its peripheral and largely irresponsible appropriation of the CRT label. Until Black philosophers decide upon a rigorous genealogy of their ideas beyond the practically universal and routine concerns historic Black thinkers had of slavery and white racism, the area of study remains vulnerable to anyone’s appropriation and claiming of the specialization. Just as CRT’s development toward CRS demonstrates, there is a legacy and tradition that must be respected.¹⁰⁷

Because Africana philosophy and critical theories of race remain dedicated to fulfilling the promises of integration, current scholarship in these areas of study continue

to ignore systematically the legacy of realist thinking in the writings of historic Black philosophers. While it is nonetheless true that many whites, may not be compelled by a philosophy that takes the permanence of white racism in America as a given, the reclamation of this tradition cannot continue to rely on white sensibilities and concessions or the popularity such research will have in white philosophical circles. As a matter of intellectual integrity, contemporary Black philosophers must accept that the realist tradition has been a central pillar of Black thinkers' perspective since the 18th century. Whereas current research in race studies is compelled by the need to cuddle white associations, the next chapter explores the possibilities that the neglected racial realist perspective has in rupturing white delusions regarding peaceful racial coexistence and in grounding Black inquiries into the phenomenon of race on actual Black thinking.

Notes to Chapter Two

¹ Because of the similarities in name some readers may become confused as to which tradition I am referring. Critical Race Theory or CRT will be used to indicate the legal movement started by Derrick Bell and continued today as Critical Race Studies (CRS) at UCLA law school. Closely related to these two ideas are also my utilization of Critical Race analysis (es) when speaking to the intellectual productions from these studies of race. My utilization of “critical race theory” in lower case, and “critical theories of race” are meant to refer to the philosophical variety that is so popular today in race theorizations that utilize Continental or American philosophical perspectives when looking at the race question.

² Kimberle Crenshaw, “The First Decade: Critical Reflections, or ‘A Foot in the Closing Door,’” in *Crossroads, Directions, and a New Critical Race Theory*, ed(s). Francisco Valdes, Jerome McCristal Culp, and Angela P. Harris, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 20.

³ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

⁴ For a discussion of whiteness and property, see Cheryl Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” *Harvard Law Review* 106 (1993):1707-1791; Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997).

⁵ Angela P. Harris, “Introduction,” in *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, xx.

⁶ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 7.

⁷ For a general discussion of the tradition understanding of interest convergence, see Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 7.

⁸ Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 69.

⁹ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 7.

¹⁰ For a more detailed discussion of racial differentiation, intersectionality, etc, see Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 8-9.

¹¹ Richard Delgado, “Two Ways to Think about Race: Reflections on the Id, the Ego, and Other Reformist Theories of Equal Protection,” *The Georgetown Law Journal* 89, (2000-2001): 2282.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ This tendency to view race under a Frankfurt school lens would become more prevalent in the years that followed. His utilization of Habermasian communicative theory and the promises of critical theory limited his perspectives on race and racism as a rehabilitation of Enlightenment thought. For a demonstration of this inclination in Outlaw’s work, see *On Race and Philosophy*, (New York: Routledge, 1996), esp. chs. 2,7, and 8.

¹⁴ Lucius Outlaw, “Toward a Critical Theory of Race,” in *Anatomy of Racism*, ed. David Theo Goldberg, (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 69-76, 58.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁶ It is ironic that Lucius Outlaw takes such care to distinguish between the critical theory of the Frankfurt School started by Horkheimer, and continued by his students Marcuse and Habermas, the critical theory referred to in literary circles, and idea of critical theory that has become synonymous with Marxism, given that this work is the beginning of the appropriation of CRT. For a discussion of Outlaw’s view on critical theory, see Lucius Outlaw, “Toward a Critical Theory of ‘Race’.”

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁰ White scholars commonly assume that the “critical” in Critical Legal Studies and Critical Race Theory are both species of “critical theory,” and greatly exaggerate the influence of these techniques in CRT. While there is certainly a direct link between CLS and the Frankfurt school of thought that drives many of CLS’ perspectives, the same case cannot be made for CRT. In fact, the conscious break of many ethnic minorities from CLS signals a turn to new intellectual paradigms.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 77. For a fuller discussion of the process of racial formation and its micro and macro properties, see Micheal Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960’s to the 1980’s*, (New York: Routledge, 1986).

²² *Ibid.*, 77.

²³ In correspondence between myself and Lewis Gordon (Jan.10,2007), Gordon confirmed this disposition claiming, "With regard to CRT, it's unfortunate that Delgado and Bell et.al chose that term, for what they really mean is " 'critical race legal theory'."

²⁴ Lewis R. Gordon, "A Short History of the 'Critical' in Critical Race Theory," *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience* 98 (1999), available online at <<http://www.apaonline.org/apa/archive/newsletters/v98n2/lawblack/gordon.asp>> , (accessed January 4, 2008).

²⁵ For a discussion of this division, see "Introduction," in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, eds. Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendell Thomas, (New York: New Press, 1995), xiv-xxxii; Richard Delgado, "The Ethereal Scholar: Does Critical Legal Studies have What Minorities Want," *Harvard Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Law Review* 22 (1987): 301-322, 315; Angela Harris, "The Jurisprudence of Reconstruction," *California Law Review* 82 (1994); Harlon L. Dalton, "The Clouded Prism: Minority Critique of the Critical Legal Studies Movement," in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, 80-84.

²⁶ Gordon, "A Short History of the 'Critical' in Critical Race Theory."

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Lewis R. Gordon, "DuBois Humanist Philosophy of Human Sciences," *Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science* 568, (2000): 265-280.

³¹ Ibid., 266.

³² Ibid., 278.

³³ Because race was scientifically solidified, and anthropologically driven by evolutionary accounts that thought different races have distinct racial destinies, historically, Blacks at the turn of the century did not manifest the types of insights that many philosophers credit them with. Race, because it was a historically fixed boundary, determined the "racial gifts," and the agendas of racial advancement. This idea was accepted, not disowned as many contemporary Black thinkers would have us believe.

³⁴ Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

³⁵ Charles Mills, "The Racial Polity," in *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*, ed. Charles Mills, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 119.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ For a discussion of Mills' take on DuBois and whiteness, see "The Racial Polity," esp. pp. 130-137.

³⁸ Ibid., 135.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 137.

⁴¹ Gordon, "A Short History of the 'Critical' in Critical Race Theory."

⁴² John Shuford, "Four DuBoisian Contributions to Critical Race Theory," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 37, (2001):301-337.

⁴³ In W.E.B. DuBois's *A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century: The Autobiography of W.E.B. DuBois*, (New York: International Publishers, 1968). A reading of DuBois's last autobiographical expression reveals quite a different view of double consciousness and the centrality of this argument to DuBois' actual thought. DuBois remarks of the 1890's ,

I tried to isolate myself in the ivory tower of race. I wanted to explain the difficulties of race and the ways in which these difficulties caused political and economic troubles. It was this concentration of thought and action and effort that really, in the end saved my scientific accuracy and search for truth. But first came a period of three years, when I was casting about to find a way of applying science to the race problem. The partition, domination, and exploitation of Africa gradually entered my thought as part of my problem of race. I saw in Asia and the West Indies the results of race discrimination while right here in America came the wild foray of the exasperated Negro soldier at Brownsville and the political economic riot at Atlanta" (208-9).

DuBois continues in ch. 12 of this work describing the shift of his work from 1910-1920 towards a critique of colonialism. A thesis clearly developed in his 1946 work *The World and Africa* (New York:

International Publishers, 1946). In fact, in a rare and practically uncited speech by DuBois on April 1, 1960 entitled "W.E.B. DuBois: An Address to the Black Academic Community," ed. George Breathett, (*Journal of Negro History* 60, [1975]), DuBois argues that the future of the Black race does not reside in the idea of equality that emerges from desegregation. This is the DuBois that influences CRT and can be seen in some of the earliest works of Derrick Bell, a civil rights attorney, particularly interested in the challenges of desegregations. For textual evidence of this use of DuBois, see Derrick Bell, "The Legacy of W.E.B. DuBois: A Rational Model for Achieving Public School Equity for America's Black Children," *Creighton Law Review* 11 (1978).

⁴⁴ Shuford, "Four DuBoisian Contributions to Critical Race Theory," 301-302.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 330.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 328.

⁴⁷ See Leonard Harris, "Believe it or not, or the Klu Klux Klan and American Philosophy Exposed," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 68, no. 5 (1995), arguing that philosophy as a discipline perpetuates the exclusion, denigration and racist practices of ignoring people of color to an extent that is both comparable and desirable by the KKK.

⁴⁸ Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2005), 13-14.

⁴⁹ The list of African American/ Africana philosophers claiming to do critical race theory or CRT is thin. Based on posted areas of specialization and works claiming the method, Emmanuel Eze, associate professor at DePaul and author of *Achieving our Humanity*, Charles W. Mills, a distinguished professor at the University of Illinois Chicago, author of the *Racial Contract*; Darrell Moore, an associate professor at DePaul, whose only published work found is "The Frame of Discourse: Sexuality, Power, and the Incitement to Race", with no references to critical race theory or CRT; Dr. Lewis Gordon, who does not claim a specialization in critical race theory or CRT but has written on it in the past; Lucius Outlaw, who does not claim critical race theory or CRT, but has quoted Derrick Bell and reflected on the themes of CRT in *On Race and Philosophy*. Stated simply, of the three authors claiming areas of specialization in critical race theory only one Charles W. Mills who has both claimed CRT as an area of specialization and referred to the works of these authors in his writings. Clevis Headley is also an emerging philosopher who has referred to various works by actual CRT writers.

⁵⁰ Emmanuel C. Eze, *Achieving Our Humanity: The Idea of the PostRacial Future*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 221.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, 222.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁵⁴ See Emmanuel C. Eze, *Race and Enlightenment* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996). Eze contends that enlightenment philosophy was always spoken from an anti-black anthropological stance of the authors. According to Eze, the racism of Kant, Hume, and Hegel largely go unacknowledged and ignored in scholarly work involving their thought. This is also the stance taken in his essay, "The Color of Reason: the Idea of 'Race' in Kant's Anthropology, in *PostColonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 103-140. It is clear that what Kant settled upon as the "essence" of humanity, that which one ought to become in order to deserve human dignity, sounds very much like Kant himself: "white," European, and male. More broadly speaking, Kant's philosophical anthropology reveals itself as the guardian of Europe's self-image of itself as superior and the rest of the world barbaric (130). Eze continues these themes in the section one (Arguing with the Past) of his 2001 work *Achieving our Humanity*. In "The Modern Invention of Race," "Hume, Race and Reason," and "Race: A Transcendental," Eze claims that throughout the history of modern philosophical thought, the idea of race has permeated European thinking, and was used as the philosophical justification for domination and colonialism.

⁵⁵ Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 126.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁵⁷ There was an interesting debate over the actual philosophical thrust of Mills' work *The Racial Contract* in *Philosophia Africana* in 2001/2002. Some theorists held that it was a less sophisticated version of Eze's work on post-racial humanity and sought to discredit the historical descriptions of Mills' work as philosophically tangential to concrete thinking about race because it was merely hypothetical. For the central piece in this criticism, see J.L.A. Garcia, "The Racial Contract Hypothesis," *Philosophia Africana* 4

(2001): 27-42. For Mills' response to Garcia, see "The Racial Contract as Methodology (Not Hypothesis), *Philosophia Africana* 5 (2002): 75-99.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 131.

⁵⁹ Eze, *Achieving Our Humanity*, 223.

⁶⁰ Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 132.

⁶¹ Ibid., 132.

⁶² For a discussion of the failure of philosophy in addressing race and the need for radical social action, see Tommy J. Curry, "Please Don't Make Me Touch 'Em: Toward a Critical Race Fanonianism as a Possible Justification for Violence against Whiteness." *Radical Philosophy Today* 5 (2007): 133-158.

⁶³ Shannon Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

⁶⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 197.

⁶⁶ See Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 126. Footnote 75 reads "For representative works in legal theory, the original home of the term, see Delgado, *Critical Race Theory*; and Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, eds., *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* (New York: New Press, 1995). The term, however, is now beginning to be used more widely" (Ibid., 60). Here Mills credits *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* for his definition. Sullivan on the other hand only reads Mill's singular work and as such fails to grasp the long intellectual traditions associated with CRT and its debate about the unconscious aspects of white racism. It is also relevant to note that Charles Lawrence's famous essay "The Id, the Ego, and Equal Protection" is presented in its entirety in this anthology.

⁶⁷ Sullivan's arguments suggest a level of ignorance on the part of Critical Race Theorists that is undeserved. CRT has rejected psychoanalysis because it did not work in CLS and race-crits do not feel that it can work for them. Critical Legal Scholars have traditionally sought answer from psychoanalysis and Marxist traditions, CRT made a conscious break from these modes of analysis. See Richard Delgado, "The Ethereal Scholar: Does Critical Legal Studies Have What Minorities Want?," *Harvard Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Law Review* (1987).

⁶⁸ See Shannon Sullivan, "The Unconscious Life of Race", in *Rereading Freud: Psychoanalysis through Philosophy*, ed. Jon Mills (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004), 195-218, 197, esp. footnote 7.

⁶⁹ One of the earliest publications representing Robert Bernasconi's approach to African/a philosophy and race is "African Philosophy's Challenge to Continental Philosophy," in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1997). While this essay should be commended for its acknowledgement of the differing cultural perspective of African philosophy, it is a blatant example of how a Continental philosopher specializing in Heidegger can easily use traditional tools and concepts as a bridge between mainstream philosophy and race theory. In another essay by Robert Bernasconi entitled "Waking Up White and in Memphis," in *White on White/ Black on Black*, ed. George Yancy (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 17-25, Bernasconi tells of his experience of not knowing he was white, despite coming from Britain—the nation most responsible for America's racial taxonomy, until he came to Memphis. It is interesting to compare Bernasconi's accounts of "whiteness" to the scholarship of Black scholars from the U.K. like Paul Gilroy and Mark Christian.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 10.

⁷¹ Ibid., 8.

⁷² Ibid., 2.

⁷³ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁵ In fact, she states that "I currently am working on what it might mean to transform whiteness into something other than a category of racial oppression." For more information on Shannon Sullivan see, <http://philosophy.la.psu.edu/faculty/profiles/sullivan.shtml>.

⁷⁶ Shannon Sullivan, "Whiteness as Wise Provincialism: Royce and the Rehabilitation of a Racial Category," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 44.2 (2008): 236-262

⁷⁷ Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness*, 18.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁷⁹ What is most disturbing about Sullivan's work is her interpretation of Critical Race Theory. Throughout her book the reader is never given a definition or tradition to gauge Sullivan's self proclaimed conversation with Critical Race Theory. Even a preliminary survey of the two foundational anthologies in CRT— *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* and *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* give the reader a very different account of whiteness than Sullivan presents. Derrick Bell's "Racial Realism," Gary Peller's "Race-Consciousness" and Dudziak's "Desegregation as Cold War Imperative" illustrate a vision of whiteness and white benevolence that is questioned at the very beginning of Critical Race Theory's investigations. A quick read of the introduction of *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (2001) paints a similar picture. CRT as a method presupposes whiteness and racism as a permanent and unchanging American tradition. Sullivan's work seeks to contribute to C.R.T, by writing out its methodological and philosophical underpinnings.

⁸⁰ Sullivan, *Revealing Whiteness*, 20.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 21.

⁸³ See W.E.B. DuBois, "The Souls of White Folk," *Independent* 69 (1910): 339-442, and W.E.B. DuBois, "Of the Culture of White Folk," *Journal of Race Development* 7 (1917):434-447.

⁸⁴ As early as 1909, DuBois recognized the evolving dynamics of white racism, see W.E.B. DuBois, "The Evolution of the Race Problem," in *W.E.B. DuBois Speaks: Speeches and Addresses 1890-1919*, ed. Philip S. Foner, (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), 196-210.

⁸⁵ W.E.B. DuBois, "Interview with Dr. DuBois," in *The Seventh Son: The Thoughts and Writing of DuBois*, vol. 2, ed. Julius Lester (New York: Random House, 1971), 700-708, 702. It is also worthwhile to note this was a constant issue of struggle for DuBois: he was constantly wavering between advocating peace and supporting war. Of this tension he says,

As I look back on my own attitude toward war during the last 70 years, I see repeated contradiction. In my youth, nourished as I was on fairy tales, including some called History, I quite naturally regarded war as a necessary step toward progress. I believed that if my people ever gained freedom and equality, it would be by killing white people. Then, as a young man in the great afflatus of the late nineteenth century, I came to believe in peace. No more war. I signed the current pledge never to take part in war. Yet during the First World War, "the war to stop war," I was swept into the national maelstrom. (W.E.B. DuBois, "Will the Great Ghandi Live Again," in *Newspaper Columns*, vol.2, ed. Herbert Aptheker [White Plains, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited, 1986], 983-984.

⁸⁶ W.E.B. DuBois, *A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century: The Autobiography of W.E.B. DuBois* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 295.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ W.E.B. DuBois, "A Negro Nation Within A Nation," *Current History* 42 (1935): 265-270.

⁹⁰ W.E.B. DuBois, "The Negro and Social Reconstruction," in *Against Racism: Unpublished Essays, Papers, Addresses, 1887-1961*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985[1936]), 104-158. What is particularly interesting about this manuscript is its detail and its controversial history. According to Aptheker, this essay was not published because of radical elements and nationalist inclinations. As contemporary scholarship on DuBois is in need of clarification and direction, this essay serves as a welcomed comprehensive articulation of his thinking throughout the 1930's.

⁹¹ For example of the praise bestowed to Sullivan's work, see Blanche Radford Curry, "Review of Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habit of Racial Privilege," *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience* 7.1 (2007). The article can be found online at <<http://www.apa.udel.edu/apa/publications/newsletters/v07n1/Black/04.asp>> (retrieved June 28th, 2008). Blanche Curry's review is in stark contrast to the other Curry's review, see Tommy J. Curry, "And They Said This was Critical Race Theory: Reflections on Revealing Whiteness by Shannon Sullivan." *SAAP Newsletter*, No. 105 (2006): 43-47

⁹² Charles Lawrence III, "The Id, the Ego and Equal Protection: Reckoning with Unconscious Racism," *Stanford Law Review* 39.2 (1987), 322-323.

⁹³ See Leonard Harris, "Believe it or not or the Klu Klux Klan and American Philosophy Exposed."

⁹⁴ Delgado, "Two Ways to Think About Race," 2280.

⁹⁵ Jerry Kang says, "I have coined the term 'racial mechanics' to describe how race alters interpersonal interactions. My model draws heavily from the field of social cognition, with emphasis on the recent implicit bias literature. For most lawyers and legal academics, this science will be jaw-dropping. For social cognitionists, what will be eye-opening is the theoretical translation of social cognitive findings to themes in critical race studies and the practical translation to potential legal and policy reforms." For a discussion of this theory, see Jerry Kang, "Trojan Horses of Race," *Harvard Law Review* 118 (2005):1497-1505.

⁹⁶ Kang, "Trojan Horses of Race," 1498.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1502-1504.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1505-1506.

⁹⁹ This term is further developed by Jerry Kang and Mahzarin R. Banaji in a subsequent article entitled, "Fair Measures: A Behavioral Realist Revision of 'Affirmative Action,'" *California Law Review* (2006): 1063-1118. It is interesting to note that Kang is advocating a behavioral realist interpretation of affirmative action based in implicit social cognition. In forcing law, and other academic fields to confront the scientific findings of social psychology and race, Kang pushes the standard for responsible scholarship in this area. It is also important to mention the work of Philip Atiba Goff, "Not Yet Human: Implicit Knowledge, Historical Dehumanization, and Contemporary Consequences," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 94.2 (2008): 292-306 here as well.

¹⁰⁰ Jerry Kang, "Trojan Horses of Race," 1508.

¹⁰¹ The three anthologies recognized as constituting the key works of the field are: *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, ed(s). Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, Kendall Thomas (New York: The New Press, 1995); *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, ed(s), Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000); and *Crossroads, Directions, and a New Critical Race Theory*, ed(s). Franciscano Valdes, Jerome McCristal Culp, and Angela P. Harris (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002).

¹⁰² Here I am referring to the work being done at DePaul and the University of Memphis. Looking through the past course list at DePaul one sees an actual stream dedicated to critical race theory up to 2004; afterwards the various classes that comprised that critical race theory stream are listed as social political thought. It is also interesting to note that classes on Foucault, cosmopolitanism, post-structuralism and post-colonialism are considered by DePaul to be CRT. At Memphis the situation is even direr. Despite being the Mecca of Black philosophy graduates, in the last seven years Memphis has only offered four classes specifically dedicated to race theory since 2001. One class on race theory was offered three times between the spring of 2001 to the fall of 2006, and Africana philosophy was taught only once. Thus, a student claiming a specialization only has an opportunity to get six hours of course work in their field of study compared to the fifty hours generally accumulated in the Continental or Analytic traditions. A survey of the dissertations produced by the students of these institutions is also reflective of this trend as the key figures in race theory are isolated to: Foucault, Frantz Fanon, Jean-Paul Sartre, Hannah Arendt, and various combinations of post-colonialism and feminism.

¹⁰³ Cheryl I. Harris, "Critical Race Studies: An Introduction," *UCLA Law Review* 49 (2001-2002): 1215.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 1234.

¹⁰⁵ Ian Haney Lopez, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 10).

¹⁰⁶ Harris, *Critical Race Studies: An Introduction*, 1235.

¹⁰⁷ It is interesting to note that unlike philosophy, in the various fields that claim CRT, most notably education, there is a reverence for and familiarity with the works of Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, Cheryl Harris, and Kimberle Crenshaw. For examples, see Gloria Ladson Billings, "The Evolving Role of Critical Race Theory in Educational Scholarship," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 8, (2005): 115-119; Gloria Ladson Billings and William F. Tate IV, "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," *Teacher's College Record* 97, (1998):48-68; William F. Tate IV, "Critical Race Theory and Education: History, Theory and Implications," *Review of Research in Education* 22, (1997):195-247; Adrienne Dixson and Celia Rousseau, "And We Still Are Not Saved: Critical Race Theory in Education, Ten Years Later," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 8, (2005): 7-27.

CHAPTER THREE: We Who Must Fight in the Shade: The Philosophy of Racial Realism

A rather curious change of emphasis has caught my attention recently. Negroes are being accused of racism, that is, of unduly emphasizing racial differences and of advocating racial separation. This would be laughable if it did not have so serious a side. A shattered and almost fatally divided world now making desperate effort to envision humanity bound together in peace and at least with some approach to brotherhood is being warned that its worst victims are contemplating resurgence of race hate!

W.E.B. DuBois—1962¹

Introduction

Despite the irrefutable failure of integration and multiculturalism, race theory in philosophy continues to endorse the eventuation of color-blindness, and an unsustainable hope in liberal democracy that ignores the historic and systemic racism of American society.² Currently, theories about race focus largely on its socially constructed nature—its contingency, rather than the effects it has had on African-descended people’s political orientation in America and the cultural heritage with which various African thinkers have infused the term over the centuries. In philosophy, this tendency is particularly worrisome as current writings on the question of race aim to fulfill the still unrealized promises of integration. Ignoring the various social and legal manifestations of anti-Black racism that show the regression of race relations in America, rather than progress,³ this dogma calls for a peaceful coexistence between Blacks and whites in which the long denied humanity of Black people is recognized in exchange for Black’s interiorizing the liberal essence of American citizenship.

Instead of reacting against the liberal idealizations of American race relations in philosophy, various Black authors have begun re-theorizing Black Nationalism’s liberal contributions, if any, to obtaining equal rights. Drawing from various 19th century thinkers, current scholars have focused their efforts on reconstructive projects dedicated to showing the compatibility of Black Nationalism and the liberal principles of American democracy. However,

these theorizations are not without difficulty, as the ideological perspectives that current scholars hold vary to great degree from the views of race presented in the works of ante-bellum Black thinkers. As I have argued elsewhere, “Black philosophers primarily rely on the promises of American liberalism and the hopes of democracy in the post-Civil rights era to fundamentally change the racial context of the United States and remedy individual attachments to racial loyalties,”⁴ instead of accepting the seeming permanence of American racism and working from there.

Over a decade ago, Derrick Bell introduced a seemingly radical thesis to a white academic community convinced that the Civil Rights Movement had effectively eliminated racism. According to Bell,

Black people will never gain full equality in this country. Even those Herculean efforts we hail as successful will produce no more than temporary “peaks of progress,” short-lived victories that slide into irrelevance as racial patterns adapt in ways that maintain white dominance. This is a hard-to-accept fact that all history verifies. We must acknowledge it and move on to adopt policies based on what I call: “Racial Realism.” This mind-set or philosophy requires us to acknowledge the permanence of our subordinate status.⁵

Despite the seemingly nihilistic tone of Bell’s announcement, this idea—that racism is permanent—can be found in most of the writings of the Black emigrationists and Black nationalists of the mid-1800’s. Historically, the admittance of racism’s permanence has been the hallmark of Black thought in America. Despite the attention that integrationist ideas have received in contemporary works of Black political thought,⁶ there has been a constant and more richly developed strand of Black thought that maintains the impossibility of persuading whites of Black people’s humanity and accepts the permanence of American anti-Black racism and white supremacy.

Today, however, most thinkers dealing with the race question are motivated by the Pyrrhic successes of Brown versus the Board of Education and the Civil Rights Era,⁷ choosing to read into historic Black works contemporary ideas of integrationism and racial ethics, as if the insights of Black authors who wrote during slavery and Reconstruction illuminate current racial issues in America only insofar as they enrich the racial success stories of liberalism and the possibility of racial amelioration under American democracy. If Black political theory is to move beyond the current apologetic revisionism of historic Black thinkers—a revisionism set on depicting even the most adamant nationalists as closet integrationists—Black political theory must begin to exert new energies toward theorizing about the political and social inequality that Blacks currently endure, which means both creating a discussion in Black social political philosophy open to the possibility of permanent racial inequality in the United States, and engaging in a more diligent and earnest reading of historic Black figures outside of the *political aims* of American liberalism and integration’s racial moralizations.

Frustrated by the single-mindedness of current Black theorizations that make all Black political thinking on racism, regardless of its timeframe or historical (dis)content, compatible with the integrationist ethics of the status quo, my work is dedicated to theorizing from the underbelly—the dark side—of Black political thought. What would it mean to think about racism as a never-ending story; to theorize about equality from the admittance of permanent racial inequality, to abandon the unrealized mantra that our hope and strife for racial equality will bring it about? To produce such genuine scholarship would mean a commitment to the daily acknowledgment of the *actual* racial circumstances that Blacks currently find themselves in and a mustering of the courage and intellectual veracity to write with this political and philosophical reality in view. Influenced largely by my engagement with the racial realist perspective of CRT,

I am interested in showing that the basic concepts articulated by Black thinkers like Martin R. Delany are in fact antecedents to the racial realist foundations of Critical Race Theory.

Keepin' It Real: How Reality is philosophically Relevant to Discussions on Race.

Over the last several decades, Black scholars like Paul Gilroy, Tommie Shelby, and K. Anthony Appiah have built their careers around disavowing racialism, a central idea in the cultural and political unit commonly referred to as the Black community, as part of a larger humanitarian effort to dismantle the various apparitions of partiality and racial solidarity in America.⁸ Despite the various intellectualizations against a Black racial identity,⁹ Blackness and its emergent identities have become a constitutive element in the psychology and self-understanding of most African Americans.¹⁰ This relationship is so determinative that most African American thinking on race, both historically and in contemporary politics, is framed by racial identity, making the popular but haughty intellectualizations of racial eliminativists both impractical and experientially alien to most Blacks.

This etiquette-- so pervasive that virtually every philosophical treatment of race follows suit—depicts race as an obstacle to the realization of a liberal social order in America and its seeming natural mandate of cosmopolitan care ethics. More concerned with the “central ideal of liberal theory, the moral person,”¹¹ than the systemic concretizations of racism, current scholarship has reveled over the ethical implications of racialism instead of the actual conditions, both legal and social, that make racial thinking necessary. For many Black philosophers, the promises of liberal thought and the symbolic gesture of integration marked by *Brown v. Board of Education* represents progress in American race relations, and an abandonment of the troublesome racial identity that only impeded Blacks’ long sought after goal of true Americanism. Unfortunately, however, this hope in the eventuation of a colorblind and just

liberal America has the effect of dictating race theory to such an extent that the reality of American racism has lost all philosophical relevance—as if the mere imagining of a new racial order necessarily conjures up its materialization.

Despite the admittance by various white liberal theorists that liberalism does not speak to the issues raised by race and minority rights,¹² most Black political theorists still pledge an undying allegiance to the unfulfilled promises of liberalism and political equality in the United States. This allegiance censors Black political theory to such an extent that Black theories that are not charitable to the possibilities of liberalism are immediately castigated and seen as not contributing anything worthwhile to Black social political thinking. In this regard, no other type of thinking has been as ostracized in Black philosophical thinking as Critical Race Theory.

For the last three decades, scholars of African descent have been responding to Anthony Appiah's "The Uncompleted Argument: DuBois and the Illusion of Race."¹³ This work established both Appiah's aversion to any use of racial categories and his ascendancy in the academy because of his cosmopolitan and humanist views. According to Appiah, "it should seem a strange idea, even to those of us who live in a world formed by racial ideology, that your freedom from cruelties I have never known should spur me on in my fight for freedom because we are of the same color."¹⁴ This view has become the hallmark of the divide between eliminativists and social constructionists who believe that race serves some liberatory function. The eliminativist view holds that "the truth is that there are no races: there is nothing in the world that can do all we ask race to do for us,"¹⁵ and as such race should be eliminated in our speech, thought, and worldview, because it does not refer to anything in the world. The second group of social constructivists, which I will call conservationists, argues, as does Outlaw, that

both the struggle against racism and invidious ethnocentrism, as well as the struggles on the part of persons of various races and ethnies to create, preserve, refine, and of particular importance share their messages or cultural productions with other humans, require that we understand how the constantly evolving groups we refer to as “races” can be conserved in democratic political communities which value and promote cultural pluralism constrained by liberal principles.¹⁶

While these two positions represent the tenor of contemporary conversations over race in philosophy, the debate itself is what misses the mark. In regard to race and racism, an ethical life is of no consequence under oppression, as any means to eliminate that oppression can be deemed ethical. My contention is that the basis on which these schools have been arguing for the last several decades is spurious at best, and should be replaced with a concept of race as a type of necessary knowledge through which the validity of the term, both as an identity and analytical tool, is measured by the degree to which it reflects the *actual conditions* of the American landscape.

Critical Race Theory has long held that race is a social construct born not of any natural necessity, but created from the historical events that formed our current sociopolitical reality. The focus of this scholarship has been primarily directed at countering the scientific racism. According to Robert Chang, “the social construction in the earlier era (pre 1964) tried to establish the basic sameness of human beings so that racially discriminatory treatment could no longer be justified or sanctioned by law.”¹⁷ This admission however does not require that race be eliminated nor does it require us to question whether Blacks who embrace the existence of racism as a fundamental reality define themselves strictly on the notion that “race happens.” “Today, in the era of colorblind jurisprudence and the new racialism, social construction must be argued to establish that individuals and institutions have acted in concert to create differences in the material conditions of racial minorities and that this requires or justifies remedies that

necessarily entail racially different treatment.”¹⁸ The recognition of the shift needed to account for racism and racial difference is of a fundamentally different kind than the traditional arguments raised by eliminativists and conservationists. The necessary knowledge thesis revolves around a very simple epistemological question. It simply asks whether or not one can ever have a *correct knowledge* about the world as it *actually exists* without the concept of race.

Chastising the Idealism of *Brown v. Board of Education*

“In its first words, on the subject of citizenship, Congress in 1790 limited naturalization to ‘white persons.’ Though the requirements for naturalization changed frequently thereafter, this racial prerequisite to citizenship endured for over a century and a half, remaining in force until 1952”.¹⁹ Even today, “America is at best a desegregated society,”²⁰ where desegregation is largely not true in most cities in the U.S. Though many liberal thinkers hold on to the possibility of asserting equality in the socio-legal structures of American society, the truth of the matter is that most courts, legal scholars, and institutions are explicitly rejecting the message and reformist impressions of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Despite the moral conscience that the *Brown* decision has allegedly awakened in the minds of whites, *Brown* was never meant to identify or punish whites who maintained communal segregation and social discrimination on a racial basis. Even in its second adjudication the Supreme Court reified its long standing principles that law, especially the Fourteenth amendment, should not dictate the right of whites’ association or eradicate racism.²¹

The Court’s reluctance to mandate desegregation against the interests of whites made Alexander Bickel’s opinions on *Brown* prophetic—as a legal precedent *Brown* was indeed slipping into irrelevance. Whites were not seen as criminals, racism was not prohibited, and the re-socialization of whites from racists to “morally competent citizens” fell on the shoulders of

compulsory education.²² According to Bell, “viewed from the perspective provided by four decades, the Court says now that *Brown* was basically a call for a higher morality rather than a judicial decree authorizing Congress to coerce behavior allegedly unjust to blacks...”²³ Despite the moralizations that now accompany discussions of race and racism in American, it must be admitted that the patterns of white supremacy and the institutions necessary for its enforcement remain unaffected by the graces of racial etiquette. As Robert L. Carter remarked a decade after *Brown*,

Brown's indirect consequences, therefore, have been awesome. It has completely altered the style, the spirit, and the stance of race relations. Yet the pre-existing pattern of white superiority and black subordination remains unchanged; indeed, it is now revealed as a national rather than a regional phenomenon. Thus, *Brown* has promised more than it could give, and therefore has contributed to black alienation and bitterness, to a loss of confidence in white institutions, and to the growing racial polarization of our society... Few in the country, black or white, understood in 1954 that racial segregation was merely a symptom, not the disease; that the real sickness is that our society in all of its manifestations is geared to the maintenance of white superiority.²⁴

Carter's comments should come as no surprise given the political interests motivating desegregation in the 1950's. *Brown*, rather than being an indication of America's evolution in social conscience, was an anticommunist decision superficially “aimed at eliminating the constitutional justification of state-sponsored racial segregation”²⁵ in recognition of the “nation's need to strengthen its argument that democratic government was superior to its communist alternative.”²⁶ According to Mary Dudziak, both Justice William O. Douglas and Chief Justice Earl Warren were well aware of the international implications of the *Brown* decision.²⁷ The unanimous decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* was a political concession geared towards the preservation of U.S. credibility and U.S. soft power during the Cold War.

One need not look far to find vintage '50s Cold War ideology in primary historical documents relating to *Brown*. For example, the amicus brief filed in *Brown* by the U.S. Justice Department argued that desegregation was in the national interest in part due to foreign policy concerns. According to the Department, the case was

important because "[t]he United States is trying to prove to the people of the world, of every nationality, race and color, that a free democracy is the most civilized and most secure form of government yet devised by man." Following the decision, newspapers in the United States and throughout the world celebrated *Brown* as a "blow to communism" and as a vindication of American democratic principles. As was true in so many other contexts during the Cold War era, anticommunist ideology was so pervasive that it set the terms of the debate on all sides of the civil rights issue.

In addition to its important consequences for U.S. race relations, *Brown* served U.S. foreign policy interests. The value of a clear Supreme Court statement that segregation was unconstitutional was recognized by the State Department. Federal government policy on civil rights issues during the Truman Administration was framed with the international implications of U.S. racial problems in mind. And through a series of amicus briefs detailing the effect of racial segregation on U.S. foreign policy interests, the Administration impressed upon the Supreme Court the necessity for world peace and national security of upholding black civil rights at home.²⁸

Within one hour of the decision in *Brown*, Voice of America was sending out news casts stating that the issue was settled under democratic processes of law rather than dictatorial fiat, confirming not only the superficial nature of the decision but pointing to the interest convergence of white political appeals. Juicing *Brown* for all the propaganda it was worth, the United States Information Service had even arranged to have films showing Blacks and whites going to school together in India. According to Dudziak, "U.S. State Department files from the period are full of reports from the field that racial problems in the United States harmed U.S. relations with particular nations and compromised the nation's Cold War objectives."²⁹ Even though we may admit the introduction of new equality rhetoric in American race relations, it must nonetheless be admitted that "Cold War concerns provided a motive beyond equality itself for the federal government, including the president and the courts, to act on civil rights when it did."³⁰ This admittance fundamentally changes the status of political equality and changes the place of the measure attending to this progress. While Bell compels Blacks to recognize *Brown* as an illusion that is at best a symbolic gesture, Dudziak ultimately concludes that her work is simply a

contribution to the academic historiography of the decision. Her most recent essay on *Brown* was “a long way of saying that *Brown* belongs in the Cold War chapter of American legal history...It also helps us see...an important element to look for elsewhere...other border points where the domestic and foreign become intertwined, other moments when judicial moorings in domestic affairs shifted when moved by international currents.”³¹ Though many of Dudziak’s works have been championed as cutting edge in the history of jurisprudence, it is Bell’s analysis of *Brown* that deserves more consideration in philosophical treatments of race.

For Bell, the contradictions in the agendas of American civil rights reveal the stratagems of American jurisprudence; exposing civil rights legislation for what it is—the sporadic deployment of racial symbols to pacify Blacks. Racial symbols “have been the mainstay of blacks’ faith that some day they will truly be free in this land of freedom. Not just holidays, but most of our civil rights statues and court decisions have been more symbol than enforceable law.”³² These laws, while praised for their racial enlightenment, are hardly enforceable and never seem to live up to their promises of social transformation. To assume then that the nature of race relations has fundamentally changed or can be challenged on the basis of democratic ideals and good faith individuals is to ignore the legacy of “racial progress” in line with practical white values and political interests in this country and to impose, uncritically, the gradualist narrative on a people suffering from racism as if the future of promise lies in their ability to see the moments of amelioration proleptically.

Recognizing the illusion of *Brown v. Board* and the delusional content of integrationism is necessary to make genuine attempts at political and social transformation from the position of Blacks in the United States. Despite popular proclamations, “racism and liberalism are,” as Jennifer Hoschild notes, “intertwined in American history as they are antithetical.”³³ Whereas

many Black scholars still believe in the anomaly thesis or the idea that “Americans are all good people; whites are slowly changing their ways, and Negroes are slowly coming into full possession of their liberal democratic heritage,”³⁴ Critical Race Theorists urge Black thinkers to reconsider the naiveté held in failing to acknowledge the normalness of American racism. As Hoschild reminds us,

...the anomaly thesis and its hopeful prognosis are themselves embattled. Some argue that racism is not simply an excrescence on a fundamentally healthy liberal democratic body but is part of what shapes and energizes the body. In this view, liberal democracy and racism in the United States are historically, even inherently reinforcing; American society as we know it exists only because of its foundation in racially based slavery, and it thrives only because racial discrimination continues. The apparent anomaly is an actual symbiosis.³⁵

Because the *Brown* decision is celebrated as the triumph of legal liberalism and has unjustifiably framed the foundations many Black political philosophers take as “necessary” to our thought, our theorizations about the actual conditions of racism continue to be dependent on the idea that courts can lead social change, and that Black civil rights struggles for civil rights translates into a societal effort towards anti-discrimination. According to legal historian Dr. Kenneth W. Mack,

The *Brown* litigation has become the lodestar for a “legal liberal” interpretation of civil rights history. Its core elements have become familiar: courts as the primary engines of social transformation; formal conceptual categories such as rights and formal remedies such as school desegregation decrees, as the principal mechanisms for accomplishing that change; and a focus on reforming public institutions (or, in some versions, public and private institutions without much distinction) as a means of transforming the larger society. Legal liberalism, of course, is an ideal type, and scholars have given varying emphases to its core elements in their accounts of civil rights law and politics. Nonetheless, the legal history of civil rights has been written with the *Brown* decision at its centerpiece, telling the story, in effect, of the antecedents and consequences of *Brown*. Civil rights history remains, at its core, the story of how African-American communities, and the lawyers and organizations that supported them, struggled to overturn *Plessy v. Ferguson*,⁴ attack de jure segregation, produce the triumph of legal liberalism in *Brown*, and effectively implement *Brown's* antidiscrimination mandate.³⁶

While many readers may decide the historical evidence given here differently, Bell's exposure of interest convergence in *Brown v. Board* challenges the basis of how Black social political philosophy operates, since it is on the celebrated interpretation of racial transformation and the triumphalism of the civil rights movement that most of our contemporary works are based.

The Necessary Knowledge Thesis

Looking at race outside of its traditional ethical scope, as a necessary knowledge of the American universe, requires our attention to two synergistic aspects of American social life. The first aspect is the structural dynamics of American racism—the extent to which racism is reified in the cultural, ideological, and institutional entities of American society, while the second and more familiar aspect of racism is of course the extent to which whites still maintain and exhibit racist ideas of Blacks. An investigation into American racism that takes both of these aspects into account would immediately recognize, as Robert L. Carter did almost three decades ago, that “white supremacy, with or without formalized public discrimination, is the pervasive evil—the unyielding and persistent deterrent to fulfillment of the aims of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments.”³⁷ This is absolutely necessary to properly understanding the social political dynamics of American society. This truth is so powerful that it virtually renders all social political philosophy that does not encounter it irrelevant. Because race is a fact and socially reproduced property of American society, the reflections on democracy, politics, law, and justice necessarily involve racial dynamics or the erasures of racialized peoples.

According to Joe R. Feagin, a white sociologist, “the unjust, deeply institutionalized, ongoing intergenerational reproduction of white wealth, power and privilege is never the center of in-depth mainstream analyses and is rarely seriously discussed.”³⁸ As a whole, philosophical scholarship pays very little attention to the work done in other fields, and in particular race

scholars fail to take Racial Realism seriously.³⁹ Most social/political thinking focuses on the role that the great European ideals of democracy, liberty, and equality play in the lives and choices of whites, without any serious acknowledgement of racism's barrier to the realization of these ideals. Institutionally, racism is carried out by the opinions of American courts, the decrees from the White House, and the paranoia perpetuated by the media.⁴⁰ These legal and political entities sustain the intergenerational permissions whites use to enforce the socioeconomic conditions that perpetuate the racial bonding of whites. Joe R. Feagin, following the insights of great Black thinkers ranging from W.E.B. DuBois and Oliver Cox to Frantz Fanon and Derrick Bell, coined "systemic racism" as the term to express the "diverse assortment of racist practices; the unjustly gained economic and political power of whites; the continuing resource inequalities; and the white racist ideologies, attitudes and institutions created to preserve white advantages and power."⁴¹ Feagin continues, "one can accurately describe the United States as a total racist society in which every aspect of life is shaped to some degree by the core racist realities,"⁴² but this argument is not encountered in the most radical circles of philosophy in the United States despite the hordes of empirical research that confirm this reality. Suspiciously, philosophical works that claim to be interested in the nature of race constantly ignore the presence of this scholarship, opting instead to prefer feel-good multicultural communication and reason as solutions to racism. Because of the "deep underlying reality of this society, all racial-ethnic relationships and events, past and present, must be placed within that racial oppression context in order to be well understood."⁴³ This position is not a philosophical debate—it is the closest actual truth that philosophy can approach. It is an actual set of tangible relations that exist, that are reified, and that are enforced in American society, and it is the responsibility of Black scholars to hold white scholarship culpable for its (often deliberate) ignorance in this regard.

Because race is usually approached with an overburdening emotionalism, most scholars, both Black and white, have sought to employ class and gender analyses as diversifying mechanisms in racial inquiry. This contemporary approach has had the effect of allowing various white thinkers to contribute to race scholarship regardless of their proficiency and knowledge of race. “White and black oppression is an independent social reality that cannot be reduced to other social realities such as class stratification, though all major forms of oppression do interact and intersect with it historically.”⁴⁴ While these considerations are relevant, they do not take away the reality that whites—male and female, rich and poor, regardless of gender or sexual orientation—benefit from and participate in white oppression.

In most mainstream analyses of “race and ethnic relations,” whites as a group often seem to be just one of many contending racial-ethnic groups. Whites are typically included in demographic comparisons of racial-ethnic groups’ socioeconomic status and are often noted as the more advantaged group, especially in comparisons with black Americans and Latinos, yet rarely are whites seen as currently the central propagators and agents in a persisting system of racial discrimination and other racial oppression.⁴⁵

Here again the most recent research in this area is philosophically relevant. According to Eduardo Bonilla-Silva,

Most whites proclaim to be color-blind and express their wish to live in a society where race does not matter at all. Yet whites tend to navigate every day a ‘white habitus’ and seem to be rather ‘color conscious in terms of their choice of significant others (close friends and romantic partners). When confronted with these apparent contradictions between what they believe and what they do, whites argue that ‘it’s economics, not race,’ ‘the evidence is not clear,’ ‘it’s just the way things are,’ or ‘it’s natural for people to gravitate toward likeness.’”⁴⁶

“In the post-civil rights era whites articulate their race related views as ‘reasonable racists,’”⁴⁷ or racists that justify their practices by the contemporary social graces of economic and political liberalism. These whites focus on individual choices, equal opportunity, and competition as the

arbitrators of their racial advantage and Black racial disadvantages, but as Bonilla-Silva maintains this “abstract liberalism” is nothing more than racist rationalism.⁴⁸

The most recent sociological evidence in this area reports that racism in America has not decreased at all since the civil rights era. White racism, recognizing the social pressures to conform to racial etiquette, has only retreated into backstage arenas, or those “spaces or places where they are only with those who appear to be white.”⁴⁹ While blatant racist utterings are usually censored in frontstage spaces, or those “spaces or places with diverse or multiracial populations,” this research nonetheless demonstrates the need to evaluate whites’ racism as an intrinsic part of their allegedly immaculate individuality. “Whites tend to have ‘two faces’...they tend to frequently present themselves as innocent of racism in the frontstage, indeed as colorblind, even as they clearly show their racist framing of the world in their backstage comments, emotions, and actions.”⁵⁰ This white racial (racist) frame is socialized in all whites—it is not a contingent social phenomenon, rather it is “an organized set of racialized ideas, stereotypes, emotions, and inclinations to discriminate.”⁵¹ This inclination is perpetuated by institutions and reified by white cultural ideology, and it makes the recognition of these patterns of white behaviors toward and white thinking about Blacks central to racial theorizations.

The Necessary Knowledge thesis recognizes that seeing race is not an issue of whether it exists as real or not real, but rather that it exists and has explanative power in knowing the world. The admission by both schools of thought that race exists, eliminates the need for hypothetical questions that deal only with whether race should or should not exist. I simply argue that the existence of race is itself justification for race to be known and responded to as something in the world that has effects and detriments. This knowledge then determines the way in which systems

and persons possessing whiteness are to be thought of in relation to and by effect of people of color.⁵²

Is Racial Realism Philosophically Grounded: The Origins of Martin R. Delany's Racial Realism.

In *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (hereafter *The Condition*), Delany conveyed his infamous message to the world—that Blacks were a “nation within a nation”⁵³ depicting Blacks as these “classes of people who have been deprived of equal privileges, political, religious and social... and who have been looked upon as inferior by their oppressors”.⁵⁴ Immediately, the reader is grasped by Delany's perception of the historical tenure of this caste oppression, in which he maintains, “there have in all ages, in almost every nation, existed a nation within a nation—a people who although forming part and parcel of the population, yet [who] were from force of circumstances known by the peculiar position they occupied, forming in fact, by the deprivation of political equality with others”.⁵⁵

Delany's understanding of the conditions of Blacks in these terms was largely predicated on the previous knowledge of Black intellectuals during the Convention movement, which found that white claims of Black inferiority were “a matter of policy not nature”.⁵⁶ Delany's was a common opinion that many Black theorists held during the mid-1800's prior to the official denouncement of racial determinism by white scholars almost a century later. Delany understood that race, as it was depicted in the United States as a matter of inferiority, was socially constructed and rooted in the justification of white authority in a United States intended to be a white republic. What is most interesting about Delany's spin on this knowledge, which was passed on to him from his predecessors, was that he understood that there was simply no “hope of redemption among those who oppress [Blacks].”⁵⁷ While this was certainly a major impetus in Delany's justifications for pursuing emigration,⁵⁸ Delany's works reveal an independent analysis

of an unchanging reality that contemporary theorists have yet to confront—namely the fact that equality is impossible to achieve in the United States given that the legal and political concept of race was so deeply intertwined in its cultural geography.

Delany, like Bell, believed moral suasion is useless on whites and is absolutely impotent as a political strategy for equality.⁵⁹ Only in the most philosophically abstract moments can one maintain that all things, or in Delany's case, all people were created equal; but in society, "there is such a thing as the inferiority of things"⁶⁰ insofar as the society has made it so. This understanding, which posits racial inferiority as an invention of whites that sustains their interests, can only be termed racial realism. Delany's conviction in this position is incontrovertible during his authorship of *The Condition* and would influence his writings for years to come. In a letter to William Lloyd Garrison written May 14th of 1852, Delany says, "I have no hopes in this country—no confidence in the American people—with few excellent exceptions—therefore I have written as I have done. Heathenism and Liberty, before Christianity and Slavery."⁶¹ "Thus between 1850 and 1852," says Cyril Griffith, "Delany finally reached the conclusion that equality for black people in America was unattainable."⁶²

This line of thinking propelled Delany's reflections in "The Political Destiny of the Colored Race" in 1854 (hereafter "The Political Destiny"), where he transformed Black degradation from a policy distinction into an ontological distinction. In the United States, skin color marked a social category that conditioned the possibilities of being fit for citizenship; but what Delany also realized, which holds true as much then as now, is that once Black degradation was legally determined beyond the opinions and beliefs of the public: it was inscribed by blood—in the presumption of difference by birth. Delany realized that the identities constructed by societies were more than thoughts or ignorant beliefs: they were social ontologies in which

the corruption of blood is equated to the process by which a Black person is degraded and deprived of rights common to the enfranchised citizen.⁶³ If it is assumed that Blacks were inferior from birth, then it is understood that to be Black *is* to be inferior. Delany knew that these designations of inferiority in societies endure despite their socially constructed origins. So even in light of the fact that Black inferiority arises from a conflation between the social, legal and political creations of white interests that mistake the socially constructed reality for a natural reality, the assumed inferiority of Blackness persists because it is in the interests of those who created the myth of Black inferiority in order to benefit from its meaning and existence. Delany writes:

In the United States, among the whites, their color is made, by law and custom the mark of distinction and superiority, while the color of the blacks is a badge of degradation, acknowledged by statute, organic law, and the common consent of the people. With this view of the case—which we hold to be correct—to elevate to equality the degraded subject of law and custom, ... can only be done... by an entire destruction of the identity of the former applicant. Even were this desirable, *which we by no means admit*, (emphasis added) with the deep-seated prejudices engendered by oppression, with which we have to contend, ages incalculable might reasonably be expected to roll around before this could honorably be accomplished.⁶⁴

Delany's formulation of Black oppression in the United States has a special relevance for contemporary theories of race that rest on the difference between white myths of racial inferiority and Black utilizations of race. Race, when created by whites, is based on the corruption of blood—a corruption rooted in the political ideology of white supremacy—but taken as a fact of nature which presumes that Blacks are inferior to whites by birth. This reality that whites have made for themselves is not the only attitude that should or can inform African-descended peoples' thinking on Blackness. Just as whites have created meanings to maintain and sustain their legacies of peoplehood, so too have Blacks in the contouring of racial identity. However, our [Black's] understanding of this creative process rests in our ability to reconcile our

emotive disdain for race and our unfounded assertions of a shared humanity. Racial identity, in being a socially constructed category, has a particular historical and cultural content, because race has been inextricably tied to a particular historical and cultural context which gives it meanings. Despite its socially constructed nature, race points to and permanently distinguishes specific groups of people.

As a distinct racial class, or as Delany phrases it, “a nation within a nation,” our subordinate status is permanent. In Black thinkers’ inability to stomach this pessimistic rendering of Blackness in the United States, some have argued that we should abandon race thinking and the idea of a common racial identity altogether. This surrendering of Blackness, the dominant trend in philosophical engagements with race theory today, fails to attend to the way in which Blacks have used a common racial identity to resist white racism. In an effort to mark distinction and separate themselves from the anthropological inclinations of European “humanity” and the domination that inevitably follows, Blacks have embraced their difference over any similarities with whites. This maintained difference of the Black “nation” within the United States is a crucial aspect of Delany’s thinking. Delany strongly maintains that Blacks should keep their racial identity and develop their race’s “native characteristics” for the betterment of their people. He says,

Our friends in this and other countries, anxious for our elevation, have for years been erroneously urging us to lose our identity as a distinct race, declaring we were the same as other people; while at the very same time their own representative was traversing the world, and propagating the doctrine in favor of a universal Anglo-Saxon predominance... The truth is, we are not identical with the Anglo-Saxon or any other race of the Caucasian or pure white type of the human family, and the sooner we know and acknowledge this truth the better for ourselves and posterity.⁶⁵

In a previous work, I have argued that Delany is working within a nationalist tradition—a historic and cultural perspective that champions racial solidarity and embraces the idea that “Black

people—in the United States or throughout the world—have a culture, or style of life, cosmology, approach to the problems of existence and aesthetic values distinct from that of white Americans in particular and white Europeans or Westerners in general,”⁶⁶ while simultaneously admitting that political and racial equality in the United States is impossible.⁶⁷ In sharp contrast to the revisionism of Tommie Shelby and the criticism Eddie Glaude, Jr. wages against the sixties brand of Black nationalism, nationism, unlike nationalism, does not aim to fulfill the promises of liberalism, or the hopes of American democracy, nor does it strive towards integrationism’s unfulfilled and illusion-ed goal of political equality. Instead nationism aims for the racial disempowerment of whites and a cultural disengagement from the values, beliefs, and practices that support integration and liberal political thought.

Following Delany’s insistence that “we must believe nothing” of what our oppressors tell us, since white “politicians, religionists, colonizationists, and abolitionists, have each and all, at different times, presumed to *think* for, dictate to, and know better what suited colored people, than they knew for themselves...”⁶⁸ In a previous work, I have argued that scholars should consider the possibility that Delany’s philosophical nation-ism is a viable political alternative to the revisionist liberal projects running rampant in the academy today. Unfortunately, the most recent work on Delany goes the opposite direction, erroneously seeking to vindicate his attachment to race, racial thinking, and Africa.

Doing the Right Think: Refuting Shelby’s Pragmatic Nationalism

For better or for worse, Martin R. Delany’s statement that “we [Blacks] are a nation within a nation” has become the most familiar axiom of Delany’s thought in African American philosophy. These words have spurred the interest of Tommie Shelby’s investigations into Black solidarity in *We Who Are Dark*, a project that seems to have grown from the revision and

rumination over two previous articles, one a 2003 work entitled “Two Concepts of Black Nationalism: Martin Delany on the Meaning of Black Political Solidarity,”⁶⁹ and the other a work published in 2002, entitled “Foundations of Black solidarity: Collective Identity or Common Oppression?”⁷⁰ Tommie Shelby, a recently tenured professor of philosophy at Harvard University, has drawn from Delany a notion of Black solidarity and Black political theory that is both compatible with liberalism and an anti-essentialist understanding of racial identity in the United States. Tommie Shelby’s work is very much in line with the popular trend in African American philosophy that focuses on the innovative renderings of Black thinkers that negotiate the racist legacy of American liberalism and European philosophy with conciliatory theories of diversity and racial compassion, rather than their actual thought. Tommie Shelby’s work is marked by a subtle intellectual dishonesty that fails to break convincingly from or contribute to the standard Black political theories established in African American philosophical circles and, worst yet, continues the apologetic revisionism of Black authors toward white idealizations of liberalism and anti-essentialism that simply were not present in the mid- to late- 1800’s.

In *We Who Are Dark*, Shelby wants to read Martin R. Delany, and to a lesser extent W.E.B. Dubois, as “pragmatic nationalists.” Pragmatic nationalism is “the view that black solidarity is merely a contingent strategy for creating greater freedom and social equality for blacks, a pragmatic yet principled way of achieving racial justice.”⁷¹ According to Shelby, “Black political culture is still weighted with outmoded and reactionary strands of Black Nationalism, and too many progressives regard this tradition as inherently problematic.”⁷² The problematic to which Shelby refers is the inability of Black political culture to acknowledge adequately the “loss of race as a viable concept in the biological sciences and anthropology”⁷³

and to address the ethnic, cultural, and gendered diversity of Black people under a racial identity politics.

In an attempt to abandon the “demand for a common Black identity” and to deny the ethno-racial cultural continuity lurking within classical Black Nationalism in favor of practical political utilizations, Shelby contends, “in America today, people can publicly identify as black, in the thin sense, without believing that the designation says anything deep about whom they are. Black political solidarity, understood within the normative framework of pragmatic nationalism, uses this classification scheme, not for positive identity-construction, but to unite those racially designated as black.”⁷⁴ Motivated by what Shelby calls a commonsense view—the view that “Blacks know that they all want to live in a society where being (regarded as) black is not a disadvantage,”⁷⁵ Shelby argues that Blacks should base their solidarity on the ideals of racial equality, anti-poverty, and tolerance. We should reject, says Shelby, a “thick concept of blackness,” wherein race has ‘both descriptive and normative content’...and typically entails claims about what blackness is and what it ought to be.”⁷⁶ Instead, claims Shelby, “racial blackness should be understood in terms of one’s vulnerability to anti-black racism,” or what Shelby refers to as a thin concept of race.⁷⁷

For Tommie Shelby, the use of race can only be understood as a motivating term for social action in which “the mutual identification among blacks can be rooted, in part, in the shared experiences of anti-black racism.”⁷⁸ For Shelby, the use of Black solidarity for anything but racial equality can be counterproductive.⁷⁹ While this view is popular in contemporary African American political theory, Shelby’s work denies the historically grounded cultural foundations of Black Nationalism to such a great extent that it forces the African American into an existential shock. By valorizing what it means to *be* a problem, Shelby perpetuates the reification of

Blackness as “Other-ed” and unwelcomed. Insofar as Blackness is the socially constructed shadow of existing in the world, the world sees that shadow as both the haunting specter of white actuality and its necessary companion. Shelby assumes premises that are very likely not true – that equality is a realizable goal in the United States, and that whites when confronted with organized coalitions will surrender racial privilege. Working from this assumption, Shelby contends that “once racial justice is achieved ... future generations could take pride in being descendents of a people who achieved black freedom.”⁸⁰ But what if that freedom never comes? What are Blacks to become if equality is never attained? Are Blacks simply “historical strife” personified, oppressed “proto-humans” who have not ascended into humanity, or simply the problems that whites see them as? Is there no Black history, no Black culture, and no Black music?— What of our people remains in this new found world of equality?

The Kymlicka Dilemma

While Shelby certainly proposes a theory worthy of further consideration,⁸¹ it is certainly not the understanding of race and solidarity that Delany endorsed in *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (1852). According to Shelby, Delany was correct in regarding Blacks as oppressed, or even a “stigmatized class,” but “it is less obvious, and even somewhat puzzling, why he would chose to characterize them as a nation.”⁸² “If we were to use Will Kymlicka’s well-known criteria for a ‘national minority’,” continues Shelby, “...then it is not at all clear that Black Americans in Delany’s time (much less now) should be described as an internal nation.”⁸³ Given the historical gap between Kymlicka and Delany, since Kymlicka is writing in the 21st century and Delany in the 19th, it seems irresponsibly anachronistic to use Kymlicka’s understanding of a national minority as a “previously self governing, territorially concentrated, institutionally complete, cohesive cultural

group that has been incorporated into a larger state but maintains its cultural distinctiveness and independence from the majority culture,” to gauge Delany’s theory of Blacks as a nation within a nation, when Delany’s understanding of a “nation within a nation” centered on the inability of Blacks to establish a self-governing, territorially concentrated, cohesive cultural group in the United States because of slavery. Kymlicka’s definition can potentially offer some insights into the ethnic divisions in modern states, but it certainly fails to illuminate the understanding Black thinkers had on the political situation and racial outlook of their times during the 1800’s or the outlook Black thinkers should have now.

According to Shelby, Will Kymlicka’s definition of a national minority accurately describes the situation of African Americans in the United States. In fact, Shelby is so convinced by Kymlicka’s insights that he proposes the definition as a corrective to Delany’s argument that Blacks are a nation within a nation. In striving to move beyond Delany’s “pithy and influential slogan,”⁸⁴ Shelby attempts to refute Delany’s contention that “Black Americans in his [Delany’s] time (much less now) should be described as an internal nation.”⁸⁵ Although Shelby recognizes the incongruity of the immigration model of assimilation, because of the Atlantic slave trade, he nonetheless maintains Kymlicka’s definition of a national minority to describe African Americans. However, when one goes to the actual writings of Kymlicka that Shelby references,⁸⁶ one encounters a very different argument by Kymlicka in regard to the status of African Americans in the United States, an argument that contradicts the argument that Shelby presents in support of his revision of Delany’s thought.

According to Kymlicka, the category of “national minority” does not apply to African Americans.⁸⁷ In resisting Anglo-conformity and the resulting polyethnicity, the situation of

African Americans in the United States raises distinctive problems for liberal political theorization.

In particular, the situation of African-Americans is quite distinct. They do not fit the voluntary immigrant's pattern, not only because they were brought to America involuntarily as slaves, but also because they were prevented (rather than encouraged) from integrating into the institutions of the majority culture (e.g. racial segregation; laws against miscegenation and the teaching of literacy). *Nor do they fit the national minority pattern* (emphasis added), since they do not have a homeland in America or a common historical language. They came from a variety of African cultures, with different languages, and no attempt was made to keep together those with a common ethnic background. On the contrary, people from the same culture (even from the same family) were typically split up once in America. Moreover, they were legally prohibited from trying to recreate their own culture (e.g. all forms of black association, except churches, were illegal).⁸⁸

Marred by this severe misinterpretation of African Americans' place in the United States, Shelby's work is immediately marked by a concerted dishonesty,⁸⁹ a dishonesty that knowingly imposes an unjustifiable integrationist interpretation on Delany and establishes liberalism as the necessary enlightenment by which historic Black thinkers should be gauged, regardless of the historical positions that these thinkers held in relation to the development of liberal thought. Shelby does not come to Delany's scholarship honestly: instead of reading Delany's text rigorously, he misappropriates the ideology of liberalism and integration through definitions and contemporary rhetoric to introduce a popular reading of Delany's nationalist works.

Blacks have not been assimilated into American culture and have culturally resisted such attempts. This incongruence seriously threatens Shelby's position. Even if Blacks were treated equally and granted absolute political equality, the historical tensions and racial animosity between racial groups are not accounted for by Shelby's theory. Even if we grant Shelby's utopianism and imagine a world where Blacks no longer refer to themselves by their Blackness, what means does Shelby provide to deracialize whites? As various scholars have reminded us, racism is a *white* problem, to which, Shelby, despite his optimism and moral lecturing to Blacks,

fails to attend. No matter how much Shelby agrees with integration he cannot make Delany into an Americanist by using Kymlicka's term.

Is Delany a Pragmatic Nationalist?

Much of Tommie Shelby's work on Delany is an effort to prove that Delany was in fact a Black nationalist committed to integrationism and not to the emigrationism that is traditionally attributed to him. Unfortunately, however, too much of Shelby's work on Delany is based on conjecture rather than on textual support. For example, Shelby argues,

Yet perhaps the clearest evidence in support of the claim that Delany was really a pragmatic nationalist is that after the Civil War he ceased to advocate mass black emigration and instead worked for a "union of the two races" in the United States especially the South. If we read him as a pragmatic nationalist, then this change is perfectly consistent with his fundamental political and moral principles. Black political solidarity and group separatism were never ends in themselves but merely strategies for realizing the most cherished values—social equality, democratic, citizenship, self-government and manhood. These goals seemed more achievable within the United States after the war, as of course they did to most blacks at the time.⁹⁰

But Shelby has not done the historical research or the philosophical work to make a case for this shift in Delany's thinking beyond his rendering of Delany's *Blake*. In following Nell Irvin Painter's narration of Delany's life, Shelby understands Delany's post-Civil War activities as the validation of his pragmatic nationalism. For Shelby, Delany's various political attempts to acquire American citizenship and striving for Black political equality were clear signs that Delany had indeed given up his emigrationist stance. However, this contention tells the reader more about Shelby's goals in reading Delany than what Delany actually thought to be the case. Shelby's tendency to remove historic Black thinkers from their historical conditions and from the philosophical influences upon the thinker causes not only an insufferable harm to Delany's thought, but irreparable damage to the attempts of future scholars to build from this position. After 1865, various Black thinkers still maintained the philosophical disposition of cultural

nationalism. By no means did the Civil War signal the dedicated integrationism that Shelby maintains. Henry McNeal Turner, Edward Blyden, James Theodore Holly and John E. Bruce are but a few Black thinkers who still maintained the need for cultural nationalism and African emigrationist positions.⁹¹

In support of his argument, that Delany was ultimately an integrationist, Shelby only references one source, Painter's biographical work on Delany, and fails to do any serious historical work to verify Painter's conclusion. Other historians have concluded that Delany never surrendered his nationalist commitments but was still dedicated to racial solidarity and emigration after vying for political office.⁹² Floyd Miller, for instance, maintains that "although neither Martin R. Delany nor any other black emigrationist would explore West Africa against during the 1860's, the African emigrationist movement did not simply disappear on Delany's returned to North America... Rather, both Delany and the Civilization Society's Henry Highland Garnet still hoped that British and American philanthropy might underwrite the costs of emigration of American and Canadian blacks to West Africa."⁹³ Victor Ullman contends,

All through the Hampton years—in fact for the rest of his life—he watched American apartheid take its present shape. He did not make his compromises with the structure after Hampton had gone to the Senate... Economically, he again returned to the practice of medicine; emotionally, he again turned to Africa. Intellectually, he continued to fight the whites. He could not, like Fredrick Douglass and Booker T. Washington, accept as final for his lifetime the dictate that he and his people were inferior to any and all whites. He refused to agree that there are natural or social limitations inherent in blackness. He continued to dispute, as he had since the 1830's, any compromise with equality of opportunity in a democracy such as this country claimed to be.⁹⁴

Admittedly very little is known about Delany after the Civil War. However, this lack of knowledge should not be seen as a justification for Shelby's creative interpretation of Delany as committed integrationist. Based on Nell Irvin Painter's selection of quotes from Delany, which read as "a union of the two races... in one common interest in the state,"⁹⁵ interested scholars

have very little evidence to support Painter's and Shelby's argument about Delany's abandonment of emigrationism. As late as 1878, Delany was still involved in Black emigrationist organizations like the Liberian Exodus Joint Stock Steam Ship Company⁹⁶ and personally financed the sailing of the *Azor*.

Against Shelby's reading, Delany presents himself as a thinker who recognized the need to work with white interests only insofar as they could potentially benefit Blacks. Even at the apex of his political career in 1874, "I do not intend to lower my standard of manhood in regard to the claims of my race one single step," says Delany.⁹⁷ While Shelby is correct that Delany was committed to equal rights after slavery, this did not undercut his belief in the primacy of racial solidarity. Under Shelby's perspective, Delany believed in race secondarily, as an obstacle to his optimum fulfillment as a human being, but everything scholars actually know of Delany indicates the exact opposite. According to John E. Bruce, a student of Delany, Delany's pride of birth was inseparable from his pride of race.⁹⁸ This view of Delany, which most closely mirrors his views until his death, shows that his humanity is represented only insofar as that humanity is saturated through and through with Africa. What is most dangerous about Shelby's brand of revisionism, even in its philosophical variety, is that it assumes that despite slavery, lynching, and the various attempts to exterminate and deport Blacks, being American was the most important ideological goal of Black resistance. In order to remedy this tendency in Black political thought careful attention must be paid to the indebtedness Black thinkers owed to their intellectual progenitors. This is the only way to ensure the accuracy of their philosophical positions.

Delany is not a Pragmatic Nationalist: Delany's Indebtedness to Reverend Lewis Woodson's Understanding of Races and Nations.

Besides Shelby's blatant misrepresentation of Kymlicka's work, one is still hard pressed to understand how or why Shelby believes that Kymlicka's definition of a national minority is equally translatable to Delany's idea of Blacks as a "nation within a nation." This point is highlighted even more when we consider the philosophical origins of Delany's argument that Blacks are a nation within a nation and look to Delany's actual definition of "nation" from his works in the 1840's. In the appendix to *The Condition*, Delany repeats the definition of a "nation within a nation" given in Section I of this work. He says,

Every people should be the originators of their own designs, the projector of their own schemes, and creators of the events that lead to their destiny—the consummation of their desires... We have native hearts and virtues, just as other nations; which in their pristine purity are noble, potent, and worthy of example. We are a nation within a nation—as the Poles in Russia, the Hungarians in Austria, the Welsh, Irish and Scotch in British dominions... Being distinguished by complexion, we are still singled out as a distinct nation of people."⁹⁹

Notice the language Delany uses to convey self-determination—"we have native hearts and virtues." This is not simply political rhetoric. Delany genuinely believes that a people must create itself on the journey towards its destiny. Thus, the political stake one has in freedom or equality is not as important as the development of the designs and schemes that will define the Black nation.

Delany continues in the appendix to *The Condition* that Blacks in America are a broken people, because their oppressors have corrupted their native characteristics and despoiled their purity. Delany, in his whole-hearted belief in race and the divine origin of African people, viewed American racism to be a permanently corrupting force, politically and spiritually. With such an understanding, it becomes impractical to hold Delany to Shelby's understanding of an "internal nation" since Delany's definitions and historical references to "nations within nations" refer to "a people who although forming part and parcel of the population, yet were from force of

circumstances known by the peculiar position they occupied, forming in fact, by the deprivation of political equality with others.”¹⁰⁰ From this definition of a “nation within a nation,” given in Section I of *The Condition*, it would make sense to say that Blacks are indeed a “nation” in the United States, since Blacks have been deprived of political equality.

Just as his mentor Rev. Lewis Woodson,¹⁰¹ Delany understood a nation within a nation as a “distinct class”¹⁰² that sought to establish a national character of fixed aims or goals.¹⁰³ Delany understood that race and the color of African-descended people permanently marked their distinction, but instead of seeking to abandon their scarring difference, Delany held that it was the duty of a people to develop their national characteristics over time and establish a historical legacy. It is ironic, to say the least, that Shelby ignores Woodson’s contribution to Delany’s thought, given the long-standing contention of Floyd J. Miller that Reverend Lewis Woodson was the “real father of Black Nationalism,” and the more recent work of Gayle T. Tate,¹⁰⁴ which claims Rev. Lewis Woodson was the first to author a program of pragmatic nationalism. According to Miller,¹⁰⁵ Woodson’s political thought on the nationalist question predates Delany’s by almost two decades. During this time, it was Woodson, says Gayle Tate, who would “expand the ideological discourse of Black Nationalism as well as its pragmatic applications by offering a systematic and comprehensive theory on the collective elevation of African Americans to achieve political, economic and social liberation.”¹⁰⁶

Although Shelby’s work freely chooses to engage the thought of Delany as the starting point of Black Nationalism, one has to wonder what justification he has for doing so. If it is true that Delany has an intellectual indebtedness to Woodson, as the works of Miller and Tate claim, then how can Shelby justify plucking Delany’s thought out of its historical and philosophical context without acknowledging the genealogy of Delany’s philosophical basis for declaring

Blacks a “nation within a nation”? In fact, one has to wonder why Shelby chooses to complicate Delany’s description, when Delany plainly defines what nations are in an essay entitled “Political Economy” (1849). In that essay, Delany claims that “nations are but great families...which have some great fixed principle as a general rule of conduct.”¹⁰⁷ This practically mirrors Woodson’s understanding of nations, and continued Woodson’s belief that it was the task of a people to develop the characteristics and the legacies by which they will be known throughout history. Delany continues in that essay,

As it is with families, so it is with nations. Whatever characteristics distinguish a nation, each citizen or inhabitant thereof should more or less partake of this character. Each citizen of a nation should bear the same resemblance to the great leading traits which mark the enterprise of that people, as the individual members do to the family to which they belong.¹⁰⁸

Delany’s statement in 1854, that “a people to be free must necessarily be their own rulers; that is, each individual must, in himself, embody the essential ingredient... the sovereign principle which composes the true basis of his liberty,” is an extension of his 1849 definition of a nation. “What is true of the individual is true of a family and that which is true of a family is true of a whole people.”¹⁰⁹ Thus the development of individual characteristics must be in line with the determinations of the people toward their representative aims and goals. Towards the end of Delany’s life “nation” became synonymous with the idea of “race”.

Delany’s last major work, *Principia of Ethnology: The Origins of Race and Color* (Hereafter *Principia*) was his most definitive articulation of race.¹¹⁰ According to Delany, race is God’s method. It is the key to God’s design for man to “scatter abroad upon the face of the whole earth and to multiply and replenish it.”¹¹¹ In doing so, God marked men with a distinction that would “fix in the people a desire to be separated by reason of race affinity.”¹¹² This racial affinity was not simply a natural or essential designation, rather it was a process through which

racess—the historical groups of people—co-authored the world in a way that seeks to develop the world according to their own design. A reading of Delany’s *Principia* demonstrates Delany’s conviction in the racial and spiritual potentiality of Africa’s people. As is the case with most historic Black thinkers, this claim to civilization rests on retrieving the great civilizations of Ethiopia and Egypt. Delany was adamant that “the Negro people comprised the whole native population and ruling people of the upper and lower region of the Nile—Ethiopia and Egypt”¹¹³ and that the knowledge produced by these African people represented philosophical insights capable of only the highest of civilizations. “There is little doubt, for Delany, as to the Ethiopians having been the first people in propagating an advanced civilization in morals, religion, arts, science and literature—Egyptians of the same race being co-operative, and probably co-ordinate.”¹¹⁴

According to historian Mario Beatty, Delany’s *Principia* is an Africanist response to the American school of Egyptology, one that “in refuting the arguments posited by Gliddon utilizing Egyptian hieroglyphs, provided an ancestral reference point for the humanity of African people that transcended the racial theories that posited the enduring inferiority of African people since antiquity.”¹¹⁵ Whereas Shelby is committed to describing Delany’s *Principia* as a text committed to the idea that “race is only skin deep,”¹¹⁶ Beatty makes a strong case, through the translation of Delany’s hieroglyphs, for an Africanist and racialist interpretation of Delany’s text, an interpretation that should guide future scholars’ understanding of Delany’s post-war thinking since, the *Principia* is practically the only surviving text of Delany in the late 1800’s.

For Delany, echoes of the ancestral past were reintegrated into present historical understandings and contexts to provide the necessary foundation for the creativity and ingenuity that would “regenerate the African race” in the face of the exponential racist theory and external, oppressive societal forces that daily threatened the lives of African Americans. Delany’s use of Egyptian hieroglyphs in *Principia of Ethnology* was mapped onto the grid of his prior knowledge and

understanding in such a way that it extended the boundaries of his past work and explicitly encoded for the first time hieroglyphic understandings to help point the way toward no only an understanding of the African past, but a more salient political future for African Americans.¹¹⁷

Towards a Conceptual Disengagement: Embracing Inequality

Naturally this world treatment of men with Black skin embittered them and made them resentful of the assumptions of white men. In my own writing, I have often expressed this feeling. Today, my resentment at the doctrine of race superiority, as preached and practiced by the white world for the last 250 years has been pointed to with sharp criticism and contrasted with the charity of Gandhi and of the colored minister [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.] who lead the recent boycott in Alabama. I am quite frank: I do not pretend to "love white people." I think that as a race they are the most selfish of any on earth. I think that the history of the world for the last thousand years proves this beyond doubt...

W.E.B. DuBois—1962¹¹⁸

To the extent that Blacks recognize the racism of whites, we also earnestly perceive their inhumanity. This reality, while harsh, is the pedagogy of history, and despite our emotional disdain for its lessons, we are nonetheless subject to its truths. An honest recognition of the racial dynamics of the United States is not simply the intellectualization of the political theories or social forces that support the practices of racism. It is also the acceptance of the participation of these aforementioned dynamics in the identities and cultural perpetuations of the individuals that comprise the white race. If we just be “real” about it, then there is no escaping the inevitable tension that arises from our desire to be American and our lives as American citizens. The challenge laid before Blacks, then, is to consider the possibility of an America birthed in the shade of our Blackness. Unlike various “soul-making” techniques that aim for a creative engagement with the raw materials of individualism and Americanism, I suggest a conceptual disengagement with the practices that have solidified the American dream in the imaginations of Blacks. In short, we must stop thinking of ourselves as equal to and envious of the social privileges of whites. We must accept whites as they are and what history has show them to be and work from there.

As a philosophical perspective, racial realism points to the need for a continuing struggle and a deep-seated dissatisfaction with both the progress of liberalist integrationism, and the reality of anti- Black racism, Black poverty, and Black vulnerability to white interests. According to Derrick Bell, resistance must be grounded in struggle: “the realization, as our slave forebears, that the struggle for freedom is, at the bottom, a manifestation of our humanity that survives and grows stronger through resistance to oppression, even if that oppression is never overcome.”¹¹⁹ But does Bell’s insistence truly free us to imagine a world not confined to the limitations of our oppression? Can we actually conceptualize political theory under the burden of permanent inequality? The tools required to activate the imagination under this permanent inequality are not as radical as one may think; it simply requires an intellectually rigorous commitment to the common phrase uttered at many Black Sunday dinners, “*Blacks, as a people, need to...*” African-descended people (ADP) must begin a process of nation-al construction beyond the rhetoric that seeks to persuade whites of the importance of acknowledging their mistakes. Struggle must move beyond the contestation of Western modernity toward the concretization of the reality that African-descended people seek to build from their understandings of the American context, and reject whites as the standard both of humanity and the sought-after American dream. Of central concern in this disengagement is the rejection of equality as a central objective.

Liberalism assumes that an equal moral worth and a basic rational capacity ground each individual’s claim to social equality and political rights.¹²⁰ This illusion is largely a product of Enlightenment thinking, which assumes a universal anthropology determined by reason. Contemporary liberals, in privileging the individual over collective social contexts, like culture or race, that produce individuals, reinforce the illusion that a strong, rational individuality can

overcome and should not be intimately subsumed within the historical contexts that produce their reality. What is most peculiar about the persistence of liberalism in the age of social constructionist analysis is that liberal political thinkers are willing to claim that individuals are rationally determined, but are not willing to see how the rational creations of the liberal individual result in the social constructs African-descended people confront daily. Liberalism pretends that the creations of race, poverty, and the numerous theories of cultural deprivation exist as a product of ignorance, and not the systemization of structures that perpetuate the myth of European superiority. “Liberalism will not acknowledge, and yet is perpetually fascinated by its creations. Liberalism makes a fetish of its abstract equalities and pays no attention to the material inequalities that give them the power to make their fantasies about us [Blacks] a reality.”¹²¹ Our potential to rupture this liberal grasp on ADP can only be achieved through the rejection of the Enlightenment commitment to a rationalist anthropology, which places the reasoning individual at the center of Black theorizations. Black resistance and national development does not rest on the moralization of how Blacks speak about themselves. Our resistance resides in struggle and the reality birthed from it.

Equality, in creating both the measure of humanity and the desire of Blacks to be included into that humanity, can only be unveiled through African-descended people’s surrender of their historical and culture orientation—their peoplehood. As Bell writes, “In our anxiety to identify [with whites], we are attracted to the obvious and the superficial, the least worthy characteristics of the dominant group.”¹²² In this moment of mystification, African-descended people replace the reality of racial distinction with a paradoxical contemplation, in which we (ADP) seek to remedy our confrontation with the racial reality of the U.S by negating the validity of our reality that speaks from and articulates our experience of American racism. As

such, identifying with the oppressor is an ontological act. It replaces the existence of a people with the caricatures of that people embraced by the imagination of whites. The danger in the idea of equality is that it seduces the Black imagination into believing in the possibility of extinguishing its own existence. As Anthony Paul Farley tells us, “there is no outside of the color-line”:

Everybody at some level believes in it. It’s a deeply seductive image. The image that we all want as oppressed people is an image of our master finally loving us and recognizing our humanity. It is this image that keeps prostitutes with their pimps, colonized with their colonizers and battered women with their batterers. Everyone dreams of one day being safe.¹²³

Equality only serves as an imaginative allure—a fantasy—and this is the reality that must be conceptually disengaged. The demand for equality is a request to be recognized by whites as the rational, as the individual, as the ahistorical, and, of course, the un-Blackened. The longing for equality forces Blacks to mistake humanity as an analytic truth, in which we mistakenly assume that our birth as a human necessarily gives us our “humanity.” But this is an errant basis to begin theorizations of Black resistance; genuine Black resistance is not based in the analytics of humanity; it is not a purely intellectual activity. Regardless of Black appeals to genetic similarity, or our religious appeals to the infamous theme that “God created all men equal,” race will continue to reference our non-humanity. Instead of trying to meet the criterion whites have placed on humanity, genuine Black resistance must be rooted in the right to develop and assert a new cultural world.

This revelation brings about empowerment, since Blacks, in recognizing the “Matrix” of racial complacency maintained by the allure of equality, reject this mystification in favor of experiential and empirical evidence on American race relations. Following Delany and Bell,

Blacks must recognize whites and whites' choice to maintain their racial dominance for what they are. Embracing Bell's racial realism frees Blacks to

think and plan within a context of reality rather than idealism. The reality is that blacks still suffer disproportionately higher rates of poverty, joblessness, and insufficient health care than other ethnic populations in the United States. The ideal is that law through racial equality, can lift them out of this trap...Casting off the burden of equality ideology will lift the sights, providing a bird's eye view of situations that are distorted by race. From this broadened perspective on events and problems, we can better appreciate and cope with racial subordination.¹²⁴

In leaving behind the illusory reality mandated by whites' need to explain away racism, Black's disengagement from the narratives that sustain white dominance throws Blacks upon their own devices—it forces Blacks to engage reality and produce narratives that are focused on their experience of oppression, absent the censoring eyes of white America. We can only delegitimize racism to the extent that we can accurately pinpoint and acknowledge its presence— to the extent that we acknowledge that racism “lies at the center not the periphery; in the permanent, not in the fleeting; in the real lives of black and white people, not the sentimental caverns of the mind.”¹²⁵

Challenging Lawson's Bell

While this is certainly not the first essay (it's the second) to consider the parallels between the thought of Derrick Bell and Martin R. Delany, the strength of this reflection is that it reads the aforementioned authors as political thinkers in the integrity of their own traditions, instead of revising their thought to fit the popular liberal idealizations of today. The previous work on the parallels between Delany and Bell, by Bill Lawson, argued that both were liberal thinkers.

According to Lawson, Delany was a libertarian who held fast to the doctrine that “every person is the owner of his own life...and consequently has the right to act in accordance with his own choices, unless those actions infringe on the equal liberty of other human beings to act in accordance with their choices.”¹²⁶ Though Lawson believes that Delany's affinity toward this

concept of justice should come as no surprise, I am a little shocked. Delany did not think that Black liberation could be achieved in America. His vision of Black liberation was not rooted in gaining personal liberty for Blacks; rather he believed that Black liberation, or at least the degree attainable in America, was based in racial determination—the ability of the Black race to lay a claim to civilization and develop towards its own ends. The problem with Lawson’s interpretation of Delany, which also extends to his engagement with Bell, is that he cannot think outside of the liberal box, so to speak. He cannot think about these thinkers as if they are conversing within their own traditions which rest solely on the preservation and advancement of their racial integrity.

Lawson claims that Bell, despite his public denunciations of liberal political thinking, nonetheless is working within the liberal framework. But Lawson’s argument *assumes* this position with absolutely no textual evidence to support his claim. According to Lawson, liberal theory is that “social and political theory that places weight on respect for the individual and a civil society committed to respecting the rights and liberty of the individual.”¹²⁷ However, Bell adamantly resists this tradition because Bell concerns himself specifically with racism’s impediments to civil rights. Nowhere in Bell’s scholarship does one find the individual rights language on which Lawson’s argument is so set. Bell is much more concerned with the emerging evidence of racial retrogression—“the worsening conditions of Black people.”¹²⁸ Bell is

convinced that there is something real out there in America for Black people. It is not the romantic love of integration—though like romance, we may seek and sometimes experience it. It is surely *not* (emphasis added) the long sought after goal of equality under the law—though we must maintain struggle against racism to prevent the erosion of rights from becoming worse than it now is.¹²⁹

Bell does not believe that Blacks can gain rights that genuinely benefit them without serving the interest of whites, so instead Blacks must seek to retain what little protections they currently

have. This is a very different logic than that of liberal thinking. There is not a teleological impetus towards equality; if anything it is the exact opposite. For Bell, Blacks should not try to gain more rights, but impede, in what ways they can, their erosion. Bell insists that this perspective is not a question of pragmatism or idealism, rather “it is a question of both the recognition of the futility of action (where action is more civil rights strategies that are destined to fail) and the unbelievable conviction that something must be done, that action must be taken.”¹³⁰

Contrary to Lawson’s depiction of Bell as a liberal thinker, Bell does not believe that there are individual rights or protections for those rights to be had in America. According to Bell, “the commonly held view of racial advancement as a slow but steady surge forward is wrong. It is a belief sustained by a long held faith and unabashed fantasy...that is more reassuring, than accurate...In this country, civil rights are gained and lost in response to economic and political developments over which African Americans have little or no control.”¹³¹ In contrast to Lawson, Bell’s interest is civil rights, not individual rights, and as such practically all of Bell’s scholarship attends to the racial dynamics of civil rights cycles for African Americans (as a group) rather than racism’s implications for Black individuals. Rights are whimsical creations subject to the interests and politics of whites; they are not entities in themselves that should be held as dear or seen as irrevocable.¹³²

Lawson’s misreading of Bell is not only limited to Bell’s political philosophy—it extends throughout Lawson’s reading of Bell’s work. Because Lawson only attends to Bell’s popular works,¹³³ he fails to engage Bell’s work as a comprehensive narration of racism’s permanence in America. Nowhere is this misinterpretation more evident than in Lawson’s description of racial realism. According to Lawson, Bell’s conclusion concerning racism’s permanence relies on

historical determinism; “that is, whites have generally disrespected Blacks in the past. Whites generally disrespect Blacks today. There is no reason to believe whites will not disrespect Blacks in the future.”¹³⁴ While Bell does believe that history verifies that racial patterns adapt to maintain white dominance, a lesson he learned from Robert L. Carter, this fact in itself does not condemn Bell to the narrow logic of historical determinism. In fact, Bell resists this interpretation explicitly, since “empiricism is a crucial aspect of racial realism.”¹³⁵ Instead of making universal or abstract judgments about racism, Bell follows the Legal Realists in focusing on the function of law rather than its promises. By looking to statistics and empirical evidence concerning the quality of life for Blacks, Bell believes that continued Black oppression is confirmed. This revelation makes Black oppression a question of what is going on in the world and not the remedial instantiations of white emotionalism.

While Lawson should be acknowledged for his attempt to introduce Bell to philosophy, his analysis ignores Bell’s whole-hearted rejection of the possibility that racial equality can be attained in America. Bell simply does not believe that the ideas that define liberalism can be realized in America’s racist legal system, and he resists attempts to categorize his work under the liberal category.¹³⁶ For Lawson, even Bell’s discontent and rejection of liberalism falls under the auspices of the liberal tradition, as if this political theory, despite the conscious efforts of Black scholars to disown it, is their undeniable birth right.

The Nation-ist Label

Given the tendency to read Black thinkers even into traditions they vehemently abhor, it is necessary to name the unique position that we find in the writings of Martin R. Delany, John E. Bruce, W.E.B. DuBois, Paul Robeson, and most recently Derrick Bell. Instead of trying to modify the thinking of Black authors so that they appear compatible with the predominant

thinking of whites on race (epistemically converging their thought), *nationism* is an accurate depiction of the very real cultural and racial solidarity to which Blacks in America have historically appealed for their survival, while maintaining the reality of American racism. Unlike the works of Bill Lawson and Tommie Shelby, nationism does not seek to gain intellectual currency by drawing parallels between white political theories and historic Black thought. There is a definite historical strain of Black political thought that accepts the impossibility of racial equality in the United States and instead concentrates on the survival of Blacks' cultural and racial consciousness. This tradition is not comparable to anything in European political theory, as it aims to fulfill the cultural realization of African-descended people in America rather than encourage their devolution through the emulation of whites.¹³⁷ Simply stated,

Nation-ism, as an attempt to bring about African-descended people's cultural vision of the world, is mutually exclusive to the contemporary understandings of liberty and equality. Black political unity and the identity that precedes the demand for organization are cultural artifacts that declare an agency and self-determining resistance to the terms whites have used to constrain and label African-descended people.¹³⁸

The resistance against white colonization and anti-Black racism is not a change in the terms that convey the discourse of resistance; instead the resistance against white colonization and anti-Black racism is a change in the very context that terms of discourse seek to describe. The nation, the culture, the narratives, and the history that arise from racial construction are foundational elements that contour the medium through which ADP understand the world around them. The nation, insofar as it serves as a unifying concept for ADP, is a product of the struggle against the terms used to confine Blacks in America. Unlike Black Nationalism, which seeks to reverse the oppressive matrix through a universalizing consciousness of racial ontology, whereby Blackness becomes the fixed entity of all that is African, nation-ism reformulates the race question beyond its traditional ontological dimensions. Nation-ism asks, rather, an

epistemological question concerning the relationship one has to Blackness and is interested in how this relationship frames how one comes to know the “Black.” The nation-ist, recognizing both the permanent subordination of the racial label and the cultural contour of Blackness, takes both seriously and concludes that the meanings whites have assigned to “race” to convey inferiority do not need to be the same meanings utilized by ADP; the two ideas of race are fundamentally distinct and must be evaluated differently.

The commitment African-descended people have shown to the ideas of distinction, be it racial, cultural, or metaphysical, is a purposive resistance to the bastardized constructions of racial modernity. The complexities of ADP’s existence in America have not been resolved under the current attempt to synthesize European understandings of the rational moral agent or American ideals of the contextualized inquirer. For African-descended people in America, the question, “what does it mean to be both the product of slavery and its greatest dissenter?” takes on a metaphysical connotation beyond the traditions presented in mainstream philosophy. In our battle for equality, Blacks have, literally, mistaken the identity of the captives. Our plight in America has not been to recognize our own humanity, but rather to get whites to recognize and value our humanity as they do their own. But this process, the process of living up to the criterion of the dominant group, only reaffirms the illusion that race, or in this case Blackness, is a contingent social form that inevitably gives way to a true humanity. How are ADP to take our “newly unveiled” humanity? Are we to take pride in the history of colonization, since it is colonization that allows us to be the proud members of a civilized human family? Do we celebrate slavery as that necessary journey from the barbarism of Africa to the civility of America? Do we have to condemn the terms that have been shaped within our people’s history and prefer the definitions given to us by whites, as the treasured indicator of progress?

Confronted with these questions, we are forced to struggle with the starting point of our theorizations about race, our identity, and the world. Regardless of our intellectual choices and our deconstructive tendencies, we are confronted by a world created against our existence and should not romanticize “equality” with its creators.

In our attempts to empower Blacks, our motivations must be grounded in a logic that supersedes political gains. Blacks’ demands for better schools, better economic gains, and less crime cannot be ends in themselves. They must be the tools through which ADP seek to create, develop, and sustain an alternate vision of the world sought through struggle. ADP’s revolt against the narratives of domination should not be valued because they suggest a different way to think about the creations of colonization; rather, our revolt should be a conceptual replacement of the categories that organize thinking. The nation-ist reformulates the *telos* of Black unity: Black unity is necessary for both the existence of the people and the implicit development that people attain through their own “creating.” In contrast to Black Nationalism, Black nation-ism does not unite under the glorification of cultural or racial reification to demand ascension into the arms of humanity and the bosom of whiteness. The nation-ist rejects “universal humanity,” is averse to liberal democracy, and recognizes *his/her own humanity* as the basis of *his/her people’s existence*. The nation-ist accepts the inevitable clash of his/her civilization with that of the whites as the unavoidable consequence of anti-Black racism.

Conclusion

In both Delany and Bell, we are given a glimpse of a world in the cooling shade of honesty and earnestness, where the pretense of racial harmony and the end of racism should not direct how Blacks think about the world—but inspire Black thinking about the world. Black people are still dying at the hand of racism. Black men are incarcerated and murdered without legal recourse.

Black women are unmarried, impoverished and rearing Black families in systematized cycles of despair and poverty. All this exists in an America of which white scholars demand Blacks be a part. What is it in admitting that America and the whites who comprise it are racist that so frightens Black intellectuals? What does this acknowledgment cost?

As long as Blacks are victimized and socialized into their racial identities through the Creolization of suffering, we cannot acquiesce to the call of Americanism. “Equality” seduces Blacks to desire and emulate whites, because in America being white is the necessary condition by which one determines, interprets, and escapes racial suffering. But this is not an ethical issue, as it is so usually treated. It is an epistemological one. Despite Blacks’ cries for citizenship, equality, and the basic recognition of their humanity, whites have ignored their cries, choosing instead to embrace the institutionalized legacy of America as a white republic. In speaking to Black thinkers over this issue—whether or not we live in the delusions of our imagination or confront the reality that stands before us, I am reminded of a passage from DuBois in which he declares, “for it is certain that all human striving must recognize the hard limits of natural law, and that any striving, no matter how intense and earnest which is against the constitution of the world, is vain.”¹³⁹ And it is within this reality, within my own impassioned cognizance of the raced world that I argue in my final chapter that it is possible to acknowledge the permanence of racism without extinguishing libertory thinking about cultural possibilities. In my attempt to extend the racial realist insights beyond its historical salience towards a functioning theoretical orientation that can ground future Critical Race Theory scholarship, I hope to forever silence the derelictical crisis that arose from the idealist tradition in Critical Race investigations.

Notes to Chapter Three

¹ W.E.B. DuBois, "Whites in Africa After Negro Autonomy," in *W.E.B. DuBois: The Oxford Reader*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 667-675, 667.

² White on black oppression is systemic and has persisted over several centuries without the broad and foundational racial transformations that many social analysts suggest should have happened. While some significant changes have certainly taken place, systemic racism today retains the numerous basic features that perpetuate the racial views, proclivities, actions and intentions of many earlier white generations, including white founders like Thomas Jefferson. Because of its power and centrality in this still racially hierarchical society, white-on-black oppression has shaped considerably all other types of racial oppression that whites later developed within this still white controlled society... In addition, white-on-black oppression is an independent social reality that cannot be reduced to other social realities such as class stratification, though all major forms of oppression do interact and intersect with it historically (Joe R. Feagin, *Systemic Racism: A Theory of Oppression*. New York: Routledge, 2006:7). For an historical explanation of racial development in the United States, see Joe R. Feagin, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities and Future Reparations* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

For a recent comparison of Black/white economic disparities, see Julia B. Isaacs, *Economic Mobility of black and white families* (Washington D.C., Brookings Institute, 2008) and Dedrick Muhammad, *40 Years Later: The Unrealized American Dream* (Washington D.C., Institute for Policy Studies, 2008). In a recent article exposing the fallacy of post-racial thinking in America, it was found that for every dollar whites have, Blacks only have ten cents. See Meizhu Lui, "Even Further Behind the Jones," *The Root.com*, (April 17, 2009) <<http://theroot.com/views/even-further-behind-joneses>> (Accessed April 10, 2009).

While some whites may take this fact to be unsettling, it is nonetheless true that integration has failed to improve the quality of life of Blacks in America. The resistance of many Blacks to integration is a central feature of Black political thought that has only been ignored after the Civil Rights movement. Whites seek to ignore this reality as a way to maintain the illusion of racial progress and comfort themselves into believing that their liberal orientations toward race can absolve them of their perpetuations of racism.

³ The murder of Black men in the United States continues to be seen as normal. Black men are identified as thugs, and their death it is seen to be a justifiable consequence of the thug life Newsweek, "The Search for Thugs," (November 10, 2007) <<http://www.newsweek.com/id/73347/>> (Accessed November 10, 2008). For a discussion of the continuing murder of Black men, see Cyril Josh Barker, "Oct 22 Coalition Holds Anti-Police Brutality Rally," *New York Amsterdam News*, Oct 25-27, 2007, 3; Alton H. Maddox Jr., "The Sean Bell fiasco in Black and White," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 8, 2007, 12-28. For a discussion of the racial inequality involved in the Jena Six case, see Micheal Eric Dyson, "Its Not only the Jena Six, You Could Be Next," *Ebony*, December 2007, 58. For a discussion of the tragedy that befell Megan Williams, see Francie Latour, "Hell on Earth," *Essence*, November 2007, 210,214,242.

The dereliction of the United States government during Hurricane Katrina is also an indication of the continuing colonial condition in America. For a discussion of this relationship, see Ahati N.N. Toure, "Reflection on Paradigms in Power: Imperial and Americanization as a Modal Relationship Explaining the Treatment of Afrikans in the United States During and After Hurricane Katrina," *Thurgood Marshall Law Review* 31 (2006): 427-462 and Tommy J. Curry, "Please Don't Make Touch Em: Towards a Critical Race Fanonianism as a Possible Justification for Violence against Whiteness," *Radical Philosophy Today* 5 (2007).

⁴ Tommy J. Curry, "Who K (new): The Nation-ist Contour of Racial Identity in the Thought of Martin R. Delany and John E. Bruce," *Journal of Pan-African Studies* 1 (2007), 43.

⁵ Derrick Bell, "Racial Realism," *Connecticut Law Review* 24 (1992): 373-374.

⁶ In recent years, there has been a new interest in the issue of Black solidarity. Eddie Glaude Jr.'s, *Exodus: Religion, Race, and Nation in Early Nineteenth Century Black America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), as well as Eddie Glaude Jr.'s, *Is it Nation Time: Contemporary Essays in Black Power and Nationalism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). Unfortunately however, these works aim to extend the ideas of pragmatism and liberalism to the original concepts of Black racial solidarity, thus criticizing the Black Nationalism for its narrow racial essentialism rather than attacking the continuing conditions that have historically justified nationalist thought.

⁷ Integration has failed on several fronts. The historical work in this area has convincingly demonstrated that *Brown v. Board* (1954) was nothing more than a political agenda pushed to increase American soft power during the Cold War Era, see Mary Dudziak, "Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative," *Stanford Law Review* 41 (1988): 61; Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002). The idea of racial equality is fundamentally bankrupt, see Derrick Bell, *And We Are Not Saved: The*

Elusive Quest for Racial Justice (New York: Basic Books, 1987); Derrick Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism* (New York: Basic Books, 1992). And desegregation worsened the education and economic viability of Black communities, see Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfilled Hopes for Racial Reform* (New York: Oxford, 2004).

For a discussion on the errant belief that education and multicultural associations through education are the barometer of racial progress, see Tommy J. Curry, "Saved by the Bell: Racial Realism as Pedagogy," *Philosophical Studies in Education* 39 (2008): 35-46.

⁸ For a discussion of these ideas, see Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2000), Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005), and Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁹ It is interesting to point out that the aforementioned authors have extensive writings on the ethics of a Black racial identity, but have very little engagement or scholarship on the insidious persistence of white racial identity or white racism.

¹⁰ The research in this area delivers a staggering blow to cosmopolitanism and racial eliminativism in philosophy. According to Dr. Robert Sellars, "African American racial identity has stable and situational properties" that dictates the ways in which particular situations are interpreted and perceived. Racial salience, the component of Sellar's Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity through which the stable constructs of racial centrality, racial regard, and racial ideology influence the behavior of individuals in particular situations, maintains that in a racial or racist social environment the social categories used to define an individual may trigger the emphasis of the stable properties of an African American identity. In short, if Blacks are in a situation that devalues their group or individual race, they become cognizant of their racial identity. Sellars's research shows that racial identity is more than an ethical choice, it is psychological constitutive of an African American existence. For a discussion of Sellar's research, see Robert Sellars and J.Nicole Shelton, "Situational Stability and Variability in African American Racial Identity," *Journal of Black Psychology* 26 (2000): 27-50; Robert Sellars, Stephanie Rowley, et. al., "Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity: A Preliminary Investigation of Reliability and Construct Validity," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 73 (1997): 805-815; Robert Sellars and J.Nicole Shelton, "The Role of Racial Identity in Perceived Racial Discrimination," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84 (2003):1079-1092. For the more traditional account of Black identity formation, see William E. Cross, Thomas A. Parham, and Janet Helms, "The Stages of Black Identity Development: Nigrescence Models," in *Black Psychology*, 3rd ed, ed. Reginald Jones (Berkeley: Cobb and Henry Publishers, 1991), 319-338. For the cutting edge sociological perspective on racial identity as a product of cultural trauma, see Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹¹ Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, 230.

¹² Various white thinkers have conceded the weakness of liberalism as a political philosophy to speak to the burgeoning issues of race, racism, and Black Americans in the United States. For a discussion of these arguments outside of CRT circles, see Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), esp. the Introduction, ch. 6 and ch.7. For a genealogy of the debate of minority rights in liberal political theory, see Will Kymlicka's chapter entitled "The New Debate over Minority Rights," in his book, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 17-38, and Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

¹³ See Kwame Anthony Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument: DuBois and the Illusion of Race," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no.1. (1985): 21-37. For responses to Appiah's claim, see Robert Gooding-Williams, "Outlaw, Appiah, and DuBois's 'The Conservation of Races' in *On Race and Culture*, eds. Bernard W. Bell, Emily R. Grosholz, and James B. Stewart (New York: Routledge, 1996), 39-56, and Lucius Outlaw "Conserve Races: In Defense of W.E.B. DuBois." in *On Race and Culture* (1996), 15-37.

¹⁴ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House*, 45.

¹⁵ Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument," 35.

¹⁶ Outlaw, "Conserve Races," 34.

¹⁷ Robert S. Chang, "Critiquing Race and Its Uses: Critical Race Theory's Uncompleted Argument," in *Crossroads, Directions, and a New Critical Race Theory*, eds. Francisco Valdes, Jerome McCristal Culp, and Angela P. Harris (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 87-96, 95.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ian Haney Lopez, *White by Law* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 1.

²⁰ Jeffrey Wallace, "John Bingham and the Meaning of the 14th Amendment Ideology v. Reality: The Myth of Equal Opportunity in a Color-Blind Society," *Akron Law Review* 36 (2003): 693

²¹ For a discussion of these issues, see *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), and *Brown v. Board of Education II*, 349 U.S. 294 (1955). In *Brown II*, the reader is given a subtle reminder of *Plessy v. Ferguson* 163 U.S. 537 (1896) where Justice Brown giving the opinion of the court said

If the two races are to meet upon terms of social equality, it must be the result of natural affinities, a mutual appreciation of each other's merits and a voluntary consent of individuals. As was said by the Court of Appeals of New York in *People v. Gallagher*, 93 N.Y. 438, 448, "this end can neither be accomplished nor promoted by laws which conflict with the general sentiment of the community upon whom they are designed to operate. When the government, therefore, has secured to each of its citizens equal rights before the law and equal opportunities for improvement and progress, it has accomplished the end for which it was organized and performed all of the functions respecting social advantages with which it is endowed." Legislation is powerless to eradicate racial instincts or to abolish distinctions based upon physical differences, and the attempt to do so can only result in accentuating the difficulties of the present situation. If the civil and political rights of both races be equal one cannot be inferior to the other civilly or politically. If one race be inferior to the other socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane.

²² For a discussion of these opinions, see Alexander Bickel, *The Supreme Court and the Idea of Progress* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), and Alexander Bickel, *The Least Dangerous Branch: The Supreme Court at the Bar of Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986)

²³ Derrick Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 51.

²⁴ Robert Carter, "The Warren Court and Desegregation," *Michigan Law Review* 67 (1968): 237-248, 243.

²⁵ Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 59.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ See Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 104-106.

²⁸ Mary Dudziak, "Desegregation as Cold War Imperative," *Stanford Law Review* 41 (1988): 61-120, 64-65.

²⁹ Mary Dudziak, "Brown as Cold War Case," *Journal of American History* 1 (2004):32-42, 34.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

³² Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, 23.

³³ Jennifer L. Hirsch, *The New American Dilemma: Liberal Democracy and School Desegregation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁶ Kenneth W. Mack, "Rethinking Civil Rights Lawyering and Politics in the Era Before Brown," *The Yale Law Journal* 115 (2006): 256-351, 258.

³⁷ Carter, "The Warren Court and Desegregation," 242.

³⁸ Joe R. Feagin, *Systemic Racism: A Theory of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 4.

³⁹ See Derrick Bell, "Racial Realism," *Connecticut Law Review* 24 (1992), 373-374. Where he states that "we begin this review with a statement many will wish to deny, but none can refute."

Black people will never gain full equality in this country. Even those Herculean efforts we hail as successful will produce no more than temporary "peaks of progress," short lived victories that slide into irrelevance as racial patterns adapt in way that maintain white dominance. This is a hard-to-accept fact that all history verifies. We must acknowledge it and move on to adopt policies based on what I call: "Racial Realism" This mind-set or philosophy requires us to acknowledge the permanence of our subordinate status. That acknowledgement enables us to avoid despair, and frees us to imagine and implement racial strategies that can bring fulfillment and even triumph.

⁴⁰ Derrick Bell, "The Racism is Permanent Thesis: Courageous Revelation or Unconscious Denial of Genocide," *Capital University Law Review* 22 (1993):571-588,574.

⁴¹ Joe R. Feagin, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities and Future Reparations* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 16.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Feagin, *Systemic Racism*, 7.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁶ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 141.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ For a discussion of Bonilla-Silva's position, see Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, 141-147. For research on the actual psychology of color-blindness, see Germaine Awad, Kevin Cokely, and Joseph Ravitch, "Attitudes Toward Affirmative Action: A Comparison of Colorblind Versus Modern Racist Attitudes," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 35, (2005):1384-1399, and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Carla Goar, and David G. Embrick, "When Whites Flock Together: The Social Psychology of White Habitus," *Critical Sociology* 32 (2006): 229-253.

⁴⁹ Leslie H. Picca and Joe R. Feagin, *Two-Faced Racism: Whites in the Backstage and Frontstage* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 16.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 19.

⁵¹ Feagin, *Systemic Racism*, 25.

⁵² My necessary knowledge thesis references the work of Joe R. Feagin's use of systemic racism to account for Black oppression. He develops this theory in his 2001 work, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities and Future Reparations*, and his 2006 work, *Systemic Racism: A Theory of Oppression*. The difference in between my thesis and Feagin's is that I believe the reality of white racism must be placed in a Racial Realist framework in which the question is not whether or not it is a valuable way to analyze race relations in the United States but rather a question over whether this theory contributes to an accurate knowledge of the world, which can only be had in how Black people who experience race explain the world. Feagin's project seeks to introduce systemic racism as an alternative interpretation of how social scientists should see race against the dominant racial formation theory of Micheal Omi and Howard Winant. Feagin is largely attempting to show that we can read history under a systemic racist lens by pulling out the institutional forms of oppression that are experienced in Blacks everyday lives. My thesis simply states that as Black people, our experience is already knowledge not only about the world but specifically and more importantly about our group as raced beings in the world. The necessary knowledge thesis simply removes the need to abstract a theory from the account a group makes in designating the causes of its historical circumstance, and says that to know the world accurately is to know the role of white supremacy in designating Blackness. I see the "necessary knowledge thesis as a synthesis of Bell's Racial Realism and Feagin's Systemic Racism as a knowledge claim, this is not a competing interpretation, but the only knowledge of the world. It is also important to note the necessary knowledge thesis is not looking towards a Marxist analysis of sociological development, when the systemic racist account is.

⁵³ Martin R. Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*, (New York: Humanity Books, 2004[1852]), 41-42, 221.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 41.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 42.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 42.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 43.

⁵⁸ Martin R. Delany, "The Political Destiny of the Colored Race," in *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism*, ed. Sterling Stuckey (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972 [1854]), 195-236, 199; Delany, *The Condition*, 216-220.

⁵⁹ Delany, *The Condition*, 67.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Martin R. Delany, "Letter to William Lloyd Garrison," in *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader*, (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 219-220, 220.

⁶² Cyril E. Griffith, *The African Dream: Martin R. Delany and the Emergence of Pan-African Thought*. (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975), 16.

⁶³ Delany, *The Condition*, 170.

⁶⁴ Delany, "The Political Destiny," 199.

⁶⁵ Delany, "The Political Destiny," 202.

⁶⁶ John H. Bracey, August Meier, and Elliot Rudwick, eds., *Black Nationalism in America* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co, 1970), xxvi-xxvii.

⁶⁷ For a discussion of this view, see Tommy J. Curry, “Who K(new):The Nation-ist Contour of Racial Identity in the Thought of Martin R. Delany and John E. Bruce,” *Journal of Pan-African Studies* 1 (2007), 41-61.

⁶⁸ Delany, *The Condition*, 38.

⁶⁹ Tommie Shelby, “Two Conceptions of Black Nationalism: Martin Delany on the Meaning of Black Political Solidarity,” *Political Theory* 31 (2003):664-692.

⁷⁰ Tommie Shelby, “Foundation of Black Solidarity: Collective Identity or Common Oppression,” *Ethics* 112 (2002): 231-266.

⁷¹ Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (Cambridge: Belkap Press, 2005), 10.

⁷² Shelby, *We Who Are Dark*, 255.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 244-245.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 254.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 255.

⁸¹ I say further here because Shelby is not the first theorist to propose this idea. Various authors in Critical Race Theory have taken up the issue of race as identity and race as a cause of action. See E.Christi Cunningham, “The ‘Racing’ Cause of Action and the Identity formally known as Race: The Road to Tamazhunchale,” *Rutgers Law Journal* 30 (1998-1999): 707-729, or Richard T. Ford, “Race as Culture? Why Not?,” *U.C.L.A. Law Review* 47 (1999-2000):1803-1814. What Critical Race Theorists highlight much more clearly than Shelby is that race and racism, as political and legal forms of American society, impact and determine the legal treatments of Blacks. Shelby creates a theoretical avenue whereby equality looms over the horizon and in some sense ignores the intimate relationship that the category of race shares with notions of justice and law.

⁸² Shelby, *We Who Are Dark*, 27.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Shelby, *We Who Are Dark*, 27.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ In the notes to pp.26-28 where Shelby references Will Kymlicka’s definition of a national minority, Shelby cites Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 10-26.

⁸⁷ Kymlicka goes through great trouble to define and list the groups in the United States he considers a national minority. According to Kymlicka,

One source of cultural diversity is the coexistence within a given state of more than one nation, where ‘nation’ means a historical community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language or culture. A ‘nation’ in this sociological sense is closely related to the idea of a ‘people’ or –a culture—indeed, these concepts are often defined in terms of each other. A country which contains more than one nation is, therefore, not a nation-state, but a multi-nation state, and the smaller cultures form national minorities. The incorporation of different national into a single state may be involuntary, as occurs when on cultural community is invaded and conquered by another, or is ceded from one imperial power to another, or white its homeland is overrun by colonizing settlers. But the formation of a multination state may also be voluntary, when different cultures agree to form a federation for mutual benefit.

Many Western democracies are multinational. For example, there are a number of national minorities in the United States including the American Indians, Puerto Ricans, the descendents of Mexicans (Chicanos)...native Hawaiians, the Chamorros of Guam, and various other Pacific Islanders (Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 11).

⁸⁸ Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 24.

⁸⁹ According to Kymlicka,

Various attempts have been made to redefine African Americans as either an immigrant group or a national minority... To achieve this, many American liberals have hoped that the immigration model of integration can be made to work for African Americans, and this was the underlying presupposition of the Civil Rights Movement. But that too has proven unrealistic, given the profound historical differences between voluntary immigrants and African Americans, and it is increasingly accepted that some new model of integration will have to be worked out.

So we should not expect policies which are appropriate for either voluntary immigrants or national minorities to be appropriate for African Americans and vice versa (Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 24-25).

⁹⁰ Shelby, *We Who Are Dark*, 53.

⁹¹ For a discussion of these thinkers ideas on the matter of African culture, see Henry McNeal Turner, *Respect Black: The Writings and Speeches of Henry McNeal Turner*, ed., Edwin S. Redkey (New York: Arno Press, 1971); John E. Bruce, *The Selected Writings of John Edward Bruce: Militant Black Journalist*, ed. Peter Gilbert (New York: Arno Press, 1971), Edward W. Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1994 [1888]), and Edward W. Blyden, *African Life and Customs* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1994 [1908]).

⁹² Ralph Crowder gives a very interesting depiction of Black political participation after the Civil War. According to Crowder, there were various affluent Black communities throughout the North, especially in Ohio and Washington D.C., that drew the attention of Black nationalist like Henry Garnet and Martin R. Delany, and encouraged Black participation in national politics. By Crowder's account Delany's political participation in no way contradicts or signals a shift in Delany's politics. It is also interesting to note that John E. Bruce met Martin Delany as a young man circa 1865-1866 during one of Delany's political tours in Washington. From this meeting, Bruce recounts Delany's pride for race For a more in-depth discussion, see Ralph Crowder, *John Edward Bruce: Politician, Journalist, and Self-Trained Historian of the African Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), esp ch. 1, and Tommy J. Curry, "Who K(new):The Nation-ist Contour of Racial Identity in the Thought of Martin R. Delany and John E. Bruce," *Journal of Pan-African Studies* 1 (2007): 41-61, for a discussion of the influence of Martin R. Delany on John Edward Bruce.

⁹³ Floyd J. Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization: 1787-1863* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1975), 251.

⁹⁴ Victor Ullman, *Martin R. Delany: The Beginnings of Black Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 507.

⁹⁵ For Nell Irvin Painter's discussion of Delany and the origin of this quote, see "Martin R. Delany: Elitism and Black Nationalism," in *Black Leaders of the 19th Century*, eds., Leon Litwack and August Meier (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 149-171, 168. These two quotes actually come from Delany's letter of endorsement for Wade Hampton. It was published as an article entitled "Delany for Hampton" in 1876. The statement actually reads,

When my race were in bondage I did not hesitate in using my judgment in aiding to free them. Now that they are free I shall not hesitate in using that judgment in aiding to preserve that freedom and promote their happiness. What I did and desired for my own race, I desire and would do if duty required for any other race. The exercise of all their rights unimpaired and unobstructed is that desire.

I have then but one life of duty left me, and that is, to aid that effort which in my judgment best tends to bring about a union of the two races, white and black (by black I mean all colored people) in one common interest in the State, with all the rights and privileges of each inviolable and sacredly respected ("Delany for Hampton," in *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader*, ed. Robert S. Levine [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003], 452-455,453).

⁹⁶ See "The African Exodus," in *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader*, ed. Robert S. Levine (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 466-467.

⁹⁷ See "Delany for Lieutenant Governor, South Carolina State Election of 1874: Two Speeches," in *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader*, ed. Robert S. Levine (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 442-447,444.

⁹⁸ One of the most sincere historical accounts of Delany was by his pupil, John Edward Bruce. Where Bruce quotes Delany as saying

“While in America I would be a republican, strictly democratic, conforming to the letter of the law in every requirement of a republican government, in a monarchy I would as strictly conform to its requirements, having no scruples at titles, or objection to royalty, believing only in impartial and equitable laws, let that government be what it might; believing that only preferable under just laws which is best adapted to the genius of the people.”

“I would not advocate monarchy in the United States, or republicanism in Europe; yet I would be either king or president consistently with the form of government in which I was called to act. But I would be neither president nor king except to promote the happiness, advance and secure the rights and liberty of the people on the basis of justice, equality and impartiality before the law.” Such are the principles to which he adheres. Unpopular as they were, they did not unfit him for the duties of a republican citizen, owing to his ready adaptation to the circumstances in which he happened to be placed for promoting the interests of his race, for next to *his pride of birth-and almost inseparable from it--comes his pride of race*, (emphasis added) which serves to distinguish him from the noted colored men of his day. The following -an apt illustration-is a remark made by the distinguished Douglass. Said he: "I thank God for making me a man simply; but De Laney always thanks Him for making him a black man (John Edward Bruce, *Short Biographical Sketches of Eminent Negro Men and Women in Europe and the United States* [Yonkers, NY: Gazette Press, 1910], 41).

Contrary to Shelby, John E. Bruce's comments show that Delany was not committed to any particular philosophical or political traditions outside of his commitment for racial advancement. It is also important to recognize Delany's continued racial identification as a core motivation for his politics. There is no support to Shelby's claim that Delany would ever surrender his racial identity for equality.

⁹⁹ Delany, *The Condition*, 221.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁰¹ It is interesting to note out that sixty one years before Floyd J. Miller pointed out Martin R. Delany's indebtedness to Rev. Lewis Woodson, Delany's pupil John E. Bruce published an encyclopedia entry outlining Delany's tutelage under Lewis Woodson. For a look at this entry, see John E. Bruce, *Short Biographical Sketches of Eminent Negro Men and Women in Europe and the United States* (New York: Gazette Press, 1910), 43.

¹⁰² Rev. Lewis Woodson (Augustine), "Ten Letters," in *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 118-148, 135.

¹⁰³ Woodson, "Ten Letters," 121.

¹⁰⁴ Gayle T. Tate, "Prophesy and Transformation: The Contours of Lewis Woodson's Nationalism," *Journal of Black Studies* 29 (1998): 209-233.

¹⁰⁵ Floyd J. Miller, "The Father of Black Nationalism: Another Contender," *Civil War History* 17, no. 4, (1971): 310-319.

¹⁰⁶ Tate, "Prophesy and Transformation," 213.

¹⁰⁷ Martin R. Delany, "Political Economy," in *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader*, ed. Robert S. Levine (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 149-150, 149.

¹⁰⁸ Delany, "Political Economy," 150.

¹⁰⁹ Delany, "The Political Destiny," 197.

¹¹⁰ Martin R. Delany, *Principia of Ethnology: The Origin of Races and Color with an Archeological Compendium of Ethiopian and Egyptian Civilization from Years of Careful Examination and Enquiry* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1991 [1879]).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 16

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 27.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹¹⁵ Mario H. Beatty, "Martin Delany: The First African-American to Translate Egyptian Hieroglyphs," *International Journal of Africana Studies* 11 (2005): 131-153, 143.

¹¹⁶ Shelby, *We Who Are Dark*, 45. Shelby's reasoning over this question revolves around very weak philosophical assumptions made without consulting the historical record. According to Shelby,

Moreover, though Delany presents a detailed account of the origin of color differences between the "original" continental populations, he provided no argument or evidence for the existence of a racial essence that casually explains both skin color and inherent behavior dispositions. On the contrary, he sometimes emphasized that Africa's natural environment and physical peculiarities were especially conducive to the rapid development of human faculties, which could explain why, on Delany's own account, the African race was the first to establish civilization. Indeed, advocating a racialist argument about innate black characteristics would be incompatible with his vision of spreading the positive values of African civilization throughout the world. How could he expect other races to properly emulate the black race if the intellectual and practical achievements of the latter were the result of natural endowment that other racial groups did not share? (45).

But during the 1800's, the race concept was not subject to the skepticism it is met with today. Just as DuBois revealed in *Dusk of Dawn*, the race concept was definite, not fluid. Delany presupposed the racial science of his day. Throughout the *Principia*, Delany cites the various ethnological works of the Duke of Argyll, George Gliddon, Josiah Nott, and Jean Francois Champollion. To say then as Shelby does, that Delany present no evidence of a racialist account is false. Furthermore Delany's study in the *Principia* is motivated by what he claims to be the indestructibility of *pure* or *sterling* races.

A comparison of Delany's text to other works of philosophical anthropology and Egyptology from the same time period reveals this legitimacy of this perspective. Antenor Firmin, for example, the Haitian anthropologist adhered to Blumenbach's classification of five racial varieties. Firmin, like other Black thinkers that are engaged in refuting the science of their time, is a product of his time. Being an anthropologist, Firmin saw no need to try to refute the naturalist understanding of races as "the varieties of a given species when these varieties have been fixed through reproduction, with particularities which are at first imprecise or idiosyncratic, but which later become consistent and transmissible through heredity without violating the general laws of the species" (Antenor Firmin, *The Equality of the Human Races*, trans. Asselin Charles (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 87).

¹¹⁷ Beatty, "Martin Delany: The First African-American to Translate Egyptian Hieroglyphs," 144.

¹¹⁸ W.E.B. DuBois, "Whites in Africa After Negro Autonomy," in the *Oxford W.E.B. DuBois Reader*, ed. Eric Sundquist (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996 [1962]), 667-675, 669.

¹¹⁹ Derrick Bell, "Racial Realism," 378.

¹²⁰ David Carroll Cochran, *The Color of Freedom: Race and Contemporary American Liberalism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 5-6.

¹²¹ Anthony Paul Farley, "Thirteen Stories," *Touro Law Review* 15 (1998-1999): 544-655, 620.

¹²² Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 200.

¹²³ Anthony Paul Farley, "Thirteen Stories," *Touro Law Review* 15, (1998-1999): 621.

¹²⁴ Bell, "Racial Realism," 377-378.

¹²⁵ Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, 198.

¹²⁶ Bill Lawson, "Fredrick Douglass and African American Social Progress: Does Race Matter at the Bottom of the Well," in *Fredrick Douglass: A Critical Reader*, eds. Bill E. Lawson and Frank M. Kirkland (Malden, Ma: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), 365-391, 383.

¹²⁷ Bill Lawson, "Self-deceived Hope or Despair: King and Bell on the Ending of Racism" (Working Paper, 2007).

¹²⁸ Derrick Bell, "Racism is Here to Stay" *Howard Law Journal* 35 (1991-1992): 79-93, 84.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹³¹ Derrick Bell, "Foreword: The Final Civil Rights Act," *California Law Review* 79 (1991): 579-611, 597.

¹³² For a discussion of revocable rights, see Derrick Bell, "Revocable Rights and a People's Faith: Plessy's Past in Our Future," *Rutgers Race and Law Journal* 1 (1998-1999): 347-356.

¹³³ In two publications, Lawson only cites three of Bell's works: *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, *Silent Covenants*, and selected works from *The Derrick Bell Reader*. Because Lawson does not attend to the 30 years of Bell's intellectual production he fails to articulate a tenable philosophical interpretation of Bell's work.

¹³⁴ Lawson, "Fredrick Douglass and African American Social Progress: Does Race Matter at the Bottom of the Well," 376.

¹³⁵ Bell, "Racial Realism," 365.

¹³⁶ Derrick Bell, email message to the author, November 20, 2007. Given Lawson's reliance on Bell's *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, I am somewhat confused as to how he could label Bell a liberal thinker. Liberal theorists deny reality, according to Bell, and the mainstay of racial realism is a focus on the reality of American race relations. For Bell's opinions of liberal thought, see Derrick Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), esp. ch.5 "Divining a Racial Realism Theory." Though Lawson's piece is challenged quite seriously here, his work should nonetheless be commended for starting a conversation that no one has taken up since. In this regard, his scholarship is indeed trailblazing.

¹³⁷ For a discussion of the comparative notion of equality, see Tommy J. Curry, "From Rousseau's Theory of Natural Equality to the Resistance of the Historical Inequality of Races," *C.L.R. James Journal* (forthcoming)

¹³⁸ Curry, "Who Knew," 55.

¹³⁹ W.E.B. DuBois, "The Conservation of Races," 39.

CHAPTER FOUR: Shut Your Mouth when You're Talking to Me: Silencing the Idealist School of Critical Race Theory through the Culturalogical Turn

Introduction

No intellectual historian can deny the impact of Critical Race Theory [CRT] on the discourse of race and racism in the later part of the 20th century. Critical Race Theory began in the late sixties, in the aftermath of the civil rights movement, with a series of writings by Derrick Bell. These writings focused specifically on the arrest of civil rights era gains thought to be won in 1964 and the roll back of the political guarantees of desegregation set forth in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).¹ In its inception, CRT offered a withering critique of integrationism and exposed the hope of racial equality for Blacks in America as nothing more than a mere illusion.

Largely inspired by the Black Nationalist movements of pre-integrationist America and revolutionary Black authors like W.E.B. DuBois and Frantz Fanon, Bell developed two theories which laid the theoretical foundations of the CRT movement. The first, racial realism, recognized the onerous racial reality of the United States and held that “Black Americans are by no means equal... and that racial equality is, in fact not a realistic goal.”² For Bell, the law was an instrument that whites use to preserve and perpetuate a racial caste system. Under a racial realist account, law only periodically served to protect oppressed peoples, and only then when minority gains aligned themselves with dominant white interests. Interest convergence, Bell’s second foundational theory of CRT, explained not only the futility of Blacks’ efforts to gain legal rights through the law, but also the slowpaced social and political reforms dictated by legal doctrine in the name of racial progress. From the theoretical groundwork laid by Bell and others, CRT became a pioneering critical perspective in jurisprudence. It maintained that both race, as a

social construct made by the history of European domination, and racism, “which translates into a societal vulnerability of black people...in which the ‘racial bonding’ of whites would always commit to the practice of using Blacks as scapegoats for failed economic, political policies,”³ were permanent features of the American landscape. For Bell and the racial realists that followed, the historical contingency of the social construction of race did not change the sempiternal reality of anti-black racism in America.

Unfortunately, the tide of CRT soon turned. Though the philosophical perspectives that eventually came to define CRT as a movement were well developed and debated among scholars of color in the early 1980’s, it was not until 1989 at the first CRT conference in Madison, Wisconsin that Kimberle Crenshaw officially named the work started by her Harvard mentor, Derrick Bell, Critical Race Theory. The Madison conference, consisting of 24 law students and legal scholars of color dissatisfied with the distortion of race discourse in traditional legal scholarship and the absence of discourse about racism in the emerging field of Critical Legal Studies, was the first organized attempt to define the movement. Ironically, however, this conference would also popularize what to that point had been a largely underground and nationalist movement in law schools, and create new disciplinary challenges in legal scholarship.

Because CRT exhibited mordant polemics against and an earnest disregard toward white standards of merit, reason and legal education, it quickly became the target of a major academic campaign to de-radicalize the movement; what was merely a mild discomfort caused by CRT’s popularization in the legal academy, had progressed by the mid-1990’s into a full-fledged allergic reaction against the movement’s theoretical perspectives. This reaction to CRT took the form of an ideologically charged backlash in intentionally well publicized forums over the intellectual integrity and legitimacy of the movement. A further difficulty arose when Critical

Race Theory's notoriety led to attempts by various disciplines to incorporate CRT as a "cutting edge" perspective without fully embracing CRT's fundamental suppositions. For example, the notoriety of CRT caused many educators to accept that race was an issue that deserved greater attention, but those educators ignored the role that white privilege and the social reification of individual white identities played in maintaining white supremacy when speaking about and analogizing race. By the mid-1990's, it was apparent that CRT had started to abandon its realist roots. A new, younger generation of scholars, amicable to Ivy League deans and tenure committees, began writing works that "carried into the study of race, habits of speech and analysis that they had learned elsewhere [in their undergraduate and graduate studies] and that placed texts, narratives, scripts, stereotypes, and Freudian entities at the center of analysis."⁴ This idealist turn, in no small part influenced by the charges against CRT a decade earlier, was largely the result of CRT's cooptation by white elite institutions and resulted in the ideological thinning of Critical Race Theory, both in jurisprudence and areas outside legal institutions, like philosophy.

The realist school holds a colonial perspective of race, according to which "racism is a means by which our system allocates privilege, status and wealth," and acknowledges that the "West did not demonize black or native populations until it determined to conquer and exploit them and that media images in every period shift to accommodate the interests of the majority group,"⁵ the idealist school holds that

Race and discrimination are largely functions of attitude and social formation. For these thinkers, race is a social construction created out of words, symbols, stereotypes and categories. As such, we may purge discrimination by ridding ourselves of the texts, narrative, ideas, and meanings that give rise to it and that convey the message that people of other racial groups are unworthy, lazy, and dangerous.⁶

This division in CRT created a tension in the study of law and the socio-political contexts that give rise to it. Unfortunately, the resolution of this tension has not progressed from Angela P. Harris's "The Jurisprudence of Reconstruction," which sought to carve out a theory of possibility that would lay to rest the charges from "critics of Critical Race Theory" that CRT is more concerned with deconstruction than reconstruction. This debate prompted Harris to acknowledge, "a tension ... exists within CRT... that, properly understood, is a source of strength. "The success," says Harris, "of what I call a 'jurisprudence of reconstruction' lies in CRT's ability to recognize this tension and use it in ways that are creative rather than paralyzing."⁷ Sadly the choice to inhabit, what Harris calls, the tension between modernity and post-modernity only results in a sequestered vision of Black subjectivity, a vision that will inevitably be thrown back on the autonomous white rationalizations of modern philosophers thinking about race in such a way that it demands that Black subjectivity be replaced by the free thinking reason of white humanity. While the idealist school is aware of the danger in appealing to "reason," these theorists have nonetheless assumed that "universal reason," rooted in the *anthropos* of the European persona and reared on the bosom of modernity, can, in expressing its postmodern discontent with itself through deconstruction, be a critical instrument in distancing "reason" from its white imperial past—a past driven by the very racialized reasoning CRT seeks to combat. What is at stake in this analysis is not the concept of reason itself, but rather the constructions of the world to which the cultural manifestations of "reason" are committed.

This final chapter then is an attempt to resolve the tensions that arise in CRT, from its conversation with Continental philosophy and Critical Legal Studies [CLS], over the "problem of the subject." In an attempt to respond to both to Angela P. Harris's call for a "jurisprudence of reconstruction" and her reliance on inadequate Eurocentric conceptualizations of subjectivity that

lay between a modern and postmodern racial schizophrenia, I argue that CRT, while skeptical of “reason,” fails to take seriously the role that Eurocentric anthropology plays in determining the inclinations of the thinking individual. By failing to acknowledge the inextricable cultural determinism of “reason,” CRT commits itself to the same modern dispositions of European thought it seeks to criticize, effectually reducing Black subjectivity to a polemic of discontent, instead of supporting the movement as a sustainable critique against Euro-centrism.

The acknowledgment that “reason” is nothing more than a particular reflection upon the world rather than an innate universal human faculty can potentially help CRT recognize the possible theoretical contributions of Derrick Bell’s Robesonian view of culture. Both Bell and Paul Robeson believe that Black self-reliance and African cultural continuity should form the epistemic basis of Blacks worldview. Bell’s recognition that one’s process of thinking about the world cannot be separated from the racial interest one has in constructing it is a valuable philosophical insight ignored by many racial idealists. In an attempt to develop a plausible notion of cultural subjectivity in the racial realist tradition that initially ground CRT, I propose a theory of culturalogics which argues that constructs, like race, law, and the alleged transcendental values that sustain them, are modified—contoured—through infusions of cultural meaning. By creating a conversation between the metaphysical possibilities of cultural constructivism and the structural analysis of American racism so prominent in the realist tradition of CRT, I hope to sustain both a radical social theory and culturalogical perspective that will invigorate the realist contribution to CRT.

This chapter proceeds in three parts. In part I, I will discuss the flaws of the idealist turn in CRT. Recent idealist literature in CRT has called both for the abandonment of race and for the contemplation of a freer, non-raced subjectivity, what I call an “anthropological dependence,”

rooted either in Kant's autonomous subject, Hegel's self-conscious self, or Freudian psychoanalysis. This tendency ultimately relegates Black authors to mute guides who merely point white philosophical techniques like deconstruction to the problem of race without earnestly considering of how Black authors have thought historically about that problem. In Part II, I consider the role of the subject in jurisprudence which remains the dominant question in the CRT and CLS tradition. Contemporary debates in jurisprudence have become dominated by theories that focus on how individuals determined by their culture and their society use laws to reinvent their own values and reify the social meanings of their life world. Unfortunately, the idealist emergence has failed to clarify both what is meant by a "rational actor" and the implications of thinking about race under the theories given through the prior work of CLS, inevitably falling back on transcendental values rooted in the legal and social matrices of Euro-centricity. In Part III, I propose a theory of culturalogics that establishes a coherent social theory, rooted in the metaphysics of an African worldview, to explain how people of African descent think about the raw materials of reality used in the construction of society. The utilization of this theory in jurisprudence, or what I am referring to as the culturalogical turn, could free the subject in contemporary Critical Race Theory. A decade ago, Kenneth B. Nunn claimed, "To successfully resist Euro-centricity, African people must interpret law in light of their own cultural perspectives."⁸ Unfortunately, this call has not been heeded and in most circles ignored in the growing idealist traditions coming to dominate CRT.

Culturalogics seeks to answer Nunn's call by devising a fundamentally different approach to racial epistemology—one that challenges the Euro-centric foundations of jurisprudential reason that dominate current CRT literature. In this article, I argue for a particularism through which the culturalogical (the epistemological relationship people of

African descent have taken up with the world) can modify the social constructions of European modernity towards culturally oriented goals. Culturalogics proposes a way of thinking about the world that takes up the law as a social construction of European culture.⁹ Because society entails the relationships a people have historically taken up in knowing the world,¹⁰ the challenging of Europe's world-view must begin with the articulation of specific culturally subversive ways of knowing and constructing the world outside of Europe's grasp.¹¹

The Flaws of the Idealist School

The originators of Critical Race Theory held that CRT could not be understood as an abstract set of ideas or principles, since “among its basic theoretical themes is that of privileging contextual and historical descriptions over transhistorical or purely abstract ones.”¹²

For these theorists, CRT consists of six identifying elements: (1) CRT recognizes that racism is endemic to American life. Thus the question is not how racial discrimination can be eliminated while maintaining the integrity of other interests implicated in the status quo... Instead we ask how these traditional interests and values serve as vessels of racial subordination, (2) CRT expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy, (3) CRT challenges ahistoricism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law, (4) CRT insists on the recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society, (5) CRT is interdisciplinary and eclectic, and (6) CRT works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression.¹³

Based in the experiences of people of color these criterion have guided the movement's growth over the years under a system of racism and domination. The realist tradition sought to mark boundaries that would both protect and learn from the perspectives of Blacks and other people of color unapologetically.

This was not the case for the idealist scholars. This new generation of race-crits saw the promise of CRT “as a theory that would link the methods of CLS with the political commitments of ‘traditional civil rights scholarship’ in a way that would both revitalize legal scholarship on

race and the deconstructive excesses of CLS.”¹⁴ Many “old school” theorists acknowledge that the movement had predecessors in CLS and Continental social/political thought, but point out that CRT “derives its inspiration from the American civil rights tradition, as represented by such leaders as Martin Luther King, W.E.B. DuBois, Rosa Parks, Cesar Chavez, and from nationalist movements, as manifested by such figures as Malcolm X and the Black Panthers.”¹⁵ This shift away from the deconstructivist tendencies of CLS allowed Black scholars to develop a deeper understanding of Black experience and focus on the theoretical consequences that experience had on jurisprudence. Unfortunately the tide changed before the realist theories of subjectivity took hold and a true culturalist perspective emerged.

This shift exposes two problems in the current movement. The first is the idealists’ focus on the critical methods employed by CLS, especially deconstruction, in their study of race. The second and somewhat more dangerous problem resides in the use of white philosophical figures as the basis of idealist scholarship in both philosophy and contemporary CRT literature on jurisprudence which urges Blacks to become liberated thinkers molded by the inclinations of Hegelian, Kantian or Freudian personalities in an attempt to balance modernist faith with post-modern discontent.¹⁶

The Baggage of the CLS Bandwagon

Under the “idealist turn,” a new problem quickly emerged: How can Black scholars justify using white philosophers to speak about the problems of race and racism, when these philosophers both believed that the Negro was inferior and that only the white race possessed reason? The focus once again turned to deconstruction for an answer. Deconstruction began as a series of rhetorical techniques in the writings of Jacques Derrida. “Although deconstructive arguments appear in critical race theory, feminist, and post-modern legal scholarship, deconstruction first

emerged most clearly in the work of the Critical Legal Studies movement.”¹⁷ Deconstruction held that all texts and social structures were unstable, indeterminate, and largely rooted in the contexts of societies and the language societies use to speak about the world. These techniques mapped out ways in which philosophy could both examine the role language plays in determining our thoughts about the world and the relationship thought has in contouring the meaning of language through philosophical engagement with text and cultural contexts. CLS used deconstruction to show that “something other than legal reasoning—like political judgment— lay behind legal decision-making,” that “legal consciousness was based on the ‘false necessity’ of social and legal structures that seemed reasonable in theory but were oppressive in practice,” and that “texts undermined their own logic and had multiple conflicting meanings.”¹⁸

Having a home primarily in Continental philosophy and literature, deconstruction sought to expand its horizons and eventually won acceptance in law schools across the country. These two arenas applied deconstruction to the laws, texts, and the language one uses to speak about the world. Unfortunately in its transitions between disciplines, “deconstruction became wrongly associated with the improbable claim that texts mean whatever readers want them to mean.”¹⁹ (As such, deconstruction has been used as the “wonder drug” by white authors to claim that they now think differently about their whiteness and want to use their enlightenment for the betterment of the Black race, and by Black thinkers to claim that simply not thinking about race or transcending its social construct altogether will eliminate racism.

This is a misguided faith in deconstruction’s usefulness in CRT. To date deconstruction has only asked burdening questions that inevitably collapse at the feet of Enlightenment thinkers. Deconstructionist thought holds that people are products of language and socio-cultural circumstances, and thus the meanings we attach to the world are largely contingent and socially

constructed. But to then assume that one can change the features of the very structures that make one whole is presumptuous to say the least. “Social structures and legal doctrines might be ‘contingent’ in the sense that they did not have to take any particular form, but once they were in play they would not melt away by an act of will.”²⁰ The social constructions in place would appear legitimate to the individuals in the given social settings, “moreover, changes and reforms would have to be implemented using the social meanings and social structures already in place,”²¹ reifying the idea that these constructed structures actually describe something real in society. It is not as easy as deconstructionist rhetoric makes it seem; “individuals who had been socially conditioned to see existing social structures and legal categories would not easily be able to transcend the limits of their perspectives,”²² since it is their perspectives of the existing social and legal categories that form the world and allow them to frame and possibly address the social practices in need of change.

One cannot escape from the social situations that form the very templates of thought and the very basis of critical thinking about a particular problem. And no matter how many times “idealists” throw around the rhetorical stratagem that “race is a social construction,” we must remember “social construction caused individuals to understand the world in ways that made it difficult for them to envision alternative ways of ordering law and society,”²³ and regards to race, it has created the mechanism in society that not only preserves and enforces the dominance over minorities, but perpetuates the conditions that seek to justify the dogmas of racial inferiority.

Although CLS purports to be a radical theory, minorities have not flocked to it because it has failed to seriously consider the role that racial identity plays in the lives of people of color. According to Richard Delgado, “CLS lacks a political and psychological theory of racism,”²⁴ since “the principle approaches are psychoanalytic theories, which explain prejudice in terms of

unconscious forces and deep-seated syndromes, such as the authoritarian personality.”²⁵ For CLS authors wholeheartedly devoted to social constructionism, race is merely a socially constructed identity that should have no bearing on the fundamental nature of the human personality, which for most of these scholars is largely rooted Freud’s Oedipal Complex. What Critical Legal scholars fail to understand is that the recognition of the race as a social construct is a demonstration of the veiled operations of privilege and power that determine most American social practices. In fact, it is this veiled dynamic that sustains the privilege of CLS not to have developed explanations of race and to propose egalitarian solutions that envision a utopia with no safeguards for racial minorities. “The CLS choice of structure for the post-revolutionary community is neutral and based on those arrangements with the greatest potential for humanity. However, that choice is not value free. Utopian society would empower whites giving them satisfaction currently denied and disempower blacks making life even less secure than it is today.”²⁶

The Idealist school in “Doped Up on White Smack”—The Anthropological Dependence of the Idealist School

Under the idealist tradition, Black thinkers emerge as inadequate philosophical sources of insight about race. The idealist school assumes that the reason of Black subjects’, struggling under the weight of racial oppression, is cloudy and that their “being” is burdened to such an extent that it becomes impossible for that subject to think about race as a free soul and lucid reasoner. Thus idealists turn to white (European) thinkers outside of and unaffected by the racial problematic to lend their unbiased (untainted) views to Black problems, since their free, rational lives depict the ideal conditions of an unwretched Black experience.²⁷ This is what I am calling an “anthropological dependency.” Because Blackness is thought by idealists to de-rationalize the

people under the racial label, these idealist scholars turn to European theories of humanity that claim to be freer than the “reason of the oppressed.”

Over the last decade, various writings have appeared contesting the method of idealist versus realist conceptualizations of the subject. The idealist school in drawing theoretical legitimacy from philosophy has sought to reinvent itself in the mirror image of its intellectual heroes by giving accounts of subjects (thinking “I’s”) that are based in the works of Hegel, Kant and the French deconstructionists. “In its commitment to the liberation of people of color, CRT work demonstrates a deep commitment to concepts of reason and truth, transcendental subjects, and ‘really-out-there’ objects. Thus, in its optimistic moments, CRT engages in ‘modernist narratives.’”²⁸ This modernist thought that is the background of the idealist tradition, and it is only questioned when these authors cannot reconcile the contradictions between the European traditions and their racist legacy. “A faith in reason has sustained efforts to educate people into critical thinking and to engage in debate rather than violence”²⁹ and it is in this commitment by CRT that “aims not to topple enlightenment, but to make its promises real.”³⁰ Because the idealist perspective fails to attack the philosophic practices that sustain, perpetuate and empower white thinking, the reconstructive elements of CRT remain limited. Having failed to name, describe and attack the conceptual entities of white supremacy, critical race theories, utilized in CRT, remain ignorant of the cultural drives sustaining “reason” and the concretization of these cultural dispositions in politics. As long as CRT continues to act as if the theoretical obstacles Blacks encounter are not manifested as the obstacles to the advancement of our social revolt, CRT will remain theoretical impotent and philosophically insipid.

Reggie, Please Reggie don't go into the WHITE!: Why Robinson's Articulation of a Kantian Subject Fails to Escape Racialization

No Critical Race Theorist embodies the delusion in the promises of Enlightenment thought more than Reginald Robinson. In holding that Blacks should transcend race, and embrace a universal reason, Robinson maintains that liberation is ultimately to be found in a Kantian notion of subjectivity.

...powerfully ordinary people are like Kant's autonomous subject, and they are not too different from the latest find in physics and neuroscience. Kant's autonomous subject legislates for herself. Not minding human anthropology, this subject acts according to her idea of law. Accordingly, this subject guides herself according to principles that can be universally valid for every rational agent. By acting according to these self-given but universally valid rules, an ordinary person becomes Kant's autonomous subject.³¹

For Robinson and other idealists like him, the rejection of race and the contemplation of a universal humanity is ultimately the path to liberation. These authors hold that the universal values discovered by human reason are the same for everyone. Robinson's position is a product of the modernist/post-modernist split. In saying that his readers should transcend race, Robinson's work is post-modernist, but in liberating the racialized subject he seeks to replace it with a Kantian subjectivity that is a little more autonomous and a great deal whiter. Robinson's reading of Immanuel Kant is ultimately a misreading. Autonomous subjects are only so to the extent that they can pragmatically develop themselves as moral beings, and in a Kantian view this moral development is necessarily determined by a people's physical geography and their pragmatic anthropology, or race.³² For Kant, Blackness was an indication of stupidity.³³ As he put it : "the Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling...although many of them have been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praise worthy quality."³⁴

Robinson's utilization of Kant as a pure, rational philosopher without the mar of the race concept is quite puzzling. Robinson consistently ignores both Kant's role in the development of the race concept and Kant's belief that reason was exclusively and *essentially* connected to European whiteness. In Kant's first attempt to give a scientifically and philosophical sound definition of race in "Of Different Human Races," he argued that "races are deviations that are constantly preserved over many generations and come about as a consequence of migration, or interbreeding with other deviations of the same line of descent, which always produces half-breed offspring."³⁵ Though Kant believes that Blacks and whites do not comprise different species of human beings, he does believe that "they [Negroes and whites] comprise different races"³⁶ which owe their origins to different capacities made permanent by their climate—what he describes as seeds. According to Kant,

human beings were created in such a way that they might live in every climate and endure each and every condition of the land. Consequently, numerous seeds and natural dispositions must lie ready in human beings either to be developed or held back in such a way that we might become fitted to a particular place in the world. These seeds and natural predispositions appear to be inborn and made for these conditions through an ongoing process of reproduction.³⁷

Robinson may reply that Kant's anthropological writings on race have little to do with his critical philosophy, but Kant's critical philosophy, especially his *Critique of Judgment* are largely framed by his philosophical perspectives on race. While many scholars, including Robinson, use Kant's first critique—the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and Kant's second critique—the *Critique of Practical Reason* to mark his contributions to Enlightenment thinking, it is no longer deniable that Kant's pre-Critical philosophy, and his third critique—the *Critique of Judgment* are inextricably tied to his anthropological research on race and racial characteristics conducted throughout his career. In fact, Kant's last work, his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, written in 1798 argues all knowledge of the world (philosophical included) is

acquired through anthropology and serves to develop the human being, because “the human being is his own final end.”³⁸ For Kant, all knowledge starts with the observation of natural phenomena and the theorization of what that phenomena means for the human being. Philosophy is merely the act of thinking about this phenomena and itself falls under his ideas of a pragmatic anthropology.

In this regard Robinson grossly misunderstands the idea of an “autonomous subject” in Kant’s philosophy. A subject is autonomous only in the sense that the human being (Robinson’s ordinary person) is pragmatic, and this pragmatic capacity, which is “the investigation of what man as a free-acting being makes of himself, or can and should make of himself”³⁹ belongs to pragmatic anthropology—critical teleological judgments concerning the goal of humanity and the moral steps individuals take to fulfill that goal. Not surprisingly, the use of reason as an autonomous subject is racial, since the patterns of thinking that are reproduced from one generation to the next aim to perpetuate the mentality of specific geographic peoples.

In man (as the sole rational creature on earth) those natural capacities directed toward the use of his reason are to be developed only in the species not in the individual. Reason in a creature is a faculty to extend the rules and objectives of the use of all of its powers far beyond natural instinct, and it knows no limits to its projects. However, reason itself does not operate on instinct, but requires trial, practice, and instruction in order gradually to progress from one stage of insight to another. Therefore, each individual man would have to live excessively long if he were to make complete use of all of his natural capacities; or if nature has given him only a short lease on life (as is actually the case), she requires a perhaps incalculable sequence of generations, each passing its enlightenment on to the next, to bring its seeds in our species to the stage of development that completely fulfills nature’s objective.⁴⁰

This quote, taken from Kant’s “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent,” reflects Kant’s long standing belief that races, or the “seeds in our species,” utilize reason to fulfill nature’s objective. This is not a universal reason with one unalterable aim but a reason molded to the capacities of a race and fixed by its environment. Unfortunately, however, Africa only

permitted Negroes to be “lazy, indolent and dawdling,”⁴¹ and incapable of the rational inclinations possessed by the more temperately balanced European.

This faith in modernity and the possibility of an un-raced pure thinker inevitably leads to attacks on the competence of Black authors who spoke honestly about the role race and culture play in our thinking about the world. For example, Robinson argues DuBois’ double consciousness becomes a racial identity that undermines self-awareness and freedom, through which African Americans “reject their essential selves”⁴² and “miss their true self conscious as divine humans.”⁴³ Simply put, double consciousness is not consciousness for Robinson in the truer, whiter, more Hegelian sense of the word. As a result, Robinson is willing to cast aside the genuine contributions of a Black scholar for the Hegelian dialectic, but in Hegel’s use of the master/ slave dialectic, subjects become self-conscious through domination. Hegel used this justification unapologetically as a justification for colonization, proclaiming that “Negroes are to be regarded as a race of children who remain immersed in their state of uninterested naiveté. They are sold and let themselves be sold without any reflection on the rights or wrongs of the matter.”⁴⁴ Similarly to Kant, Hegel believed it was only whites who “have for their principle and character the concrete universal, self-determining thought...” after all, “the principle of the European mind is...self-conscious Reason.”⁴⁵ No matter the extent of Black scholars’ revisionism, Hegel’s original thoughts on the matter of race will remain unchanged. For Hegel, Africans and their descendents simply could not become self-conscious human beings.

Ultimately, the recent embracing of a transcendental subject by race-crits is misplaced. This appeal to the *knowing I* forces oppressed people of African descent to think of themselves as if they possessed the reason and values of those who created the systems that oppress them. This revisionism asks Blacks to think of themselves as possessing the same fundamental nature

as those who have created, justified, and perpetuated colonialism, as if these inclinations are what determine the basis of Blacks' humanity. At best, Robinson's valorizations of Enlightenment philosophy make him a heretical Critical Race Theorist; at worst; his reading and interpretation of these Enlightenment thinkers are ideologically driven and simply dishonest.

Misplaced Loyalties: The Errant Association of Racial Discontent with Post-Modernity

Angela Harris admits that CRT is pessimistic about "reason," and turns to postmodern narratives to express CRT's discontent and suspicion of the very "reason" that is presumed to unveil the racism of modernist constructions. However, her adoption of the post-structural disposition, whereby "intellectual movements are practices: games where rules are always evolving, played by communities with fuzzy boundaries,"⁴⁶ limits CRT to discursive gambles whereby various rhetorical flares are utilized in a struggle for social recognition. This mood, instead of bolstering CRT's ability to overthrow the dominant forms of imperial thinking, makes the movement vulnerable to them. This vying for discursive currency is perhaps the best explanation for why Harris and other idealists choose to read CRT into the tradition of postmodern discontent.

Harris contends that postmodernism, as law professors understand the term,

... suggests that what has been presented in our social, political and our intellectual traditions as knowledge, truth, objectivity, and reason are actually merely the effects of a particular form of social power, the victory of a particular way of representing the world that then presents itself as beyond mere interpretation, as truth itself.⁴⁷

It is interesting that Harris describes postmodernism as a "mood of profound doubt and skepticism,"⁴⁸ rather than a specific movement that arose in response to the advances of modernity, instead of its collapse.⁴⁹ In so far as CRT adopts this mood, Harris believes that CRT takes up the postmodern charge. This position however is extremely limiting given the historical discontent people of African descent have expressed against Europe at the apex of modernity. In

choosing to place Black discontent under the rubric of postmodernism, Harris reads people of African descent into a tradition quite separate from their historical position. The events of slavery, segregation, lynching and the continuation of racism into the 21st century are the demonstrative failures of Enlightenment thinking—the concrete demonstration, rather than the abstract hypothesization, of modernity’s failure. Under Harris’s reading we cannot meaningfully distinguish among the different reasons various historical subjects may have for being discontent with the products of modernity, since Harris assumes that all modern discontent belongs to postmodern concern.⁵⁰

For people of African descent, what has been termed the “postmodern crisis,” exists for quite a different reason. According to DuBois,

The collapse of Europe is to us the more astounding because of the boundless faith which we have had in European civilization. We have long believed without argument or reflection that the cultural status of the people of Europe and of North America represented not only the best civilization which the world had ever known, but also a goal of human effort destined to go on from triumph to triumph until the perfect accomplishment was reached. Our present nervous breakdown, nameless fear, and often despair, comes from the sudden facing of this faith with calamity.

In such a case, what we need above all is calm appraisal of the situation, the application of cold common sense. What in reality is the nature of the catastrophe? To what pattern of human culture does it apply? And, finally, why did it happen? In this search for reason we must seek not simply current facts or facts within the memory of living men, but we must also, and especially in this case, seek lessons from history...the habit, long fostered of forgetting and detracting from the thought and acts of the people of Africa is not only a direct cause of our present plight, but will continue to cause trouble until we face the facts.⁵¹

Unlike Harris, DuBois understands that a lost in the faith of Europe’s anthropological certainty cannot be restored by an appeal to Europe’s rethinking of (the hu)man. DuBois asks, “To what pattern of human culture does it apply?” calling out, so to speak, the limitations of Europe’s historical record and its anthropological reach; recognizing that Europe’s thoughts on humanity

are just that—Europe’s thought. In looking to Africa, DuBois communicates a very clear division between the myth that emerged as “the doctrine of the Superior Race” and the new anthropology in the cultural knowledge of African peoples.

The failures of Europe’s ideas tell us nothing about the state of human knowledge, only where European thinking is false. Because the ideas of knowledge, truth, and objectivity are sustained by the illusion of white superiority and European anthropological legitimacy, the erosion of Europe’s presumed universality exposes its inadequacy. This crisis has nothing to do with knowledge, but everything to do with myth. Because the historical production of knowledge by Europe aimed to sustain the doctrine of the Superior Race, or “the theory that a minority of people of Europe are by birth and natural gift the rulers of mankind; rulers of their own suppressed labor classes and, without doubt, heaven-sent rulers of yellow, brown, and black people,”⁵² the postmodern crisis of knowledge is nothing more than the failure of Europe’s claim that its knowledge is the template for humanity.

Reading DuBois beyond his traditional appropriation of double consciousness reveals a much deeper understanding of modernity’s collapse; an understanding of modernity that implicates all European forms of knowledge in its perpetuation. DuBois understood, “in order to establish the righteousness of this point of view, science and religion, government and industry, were wheeled into line,”⁵³ where knowledge was no longer a question of seeking truth but sustaining myth. Modernity then arose from the distortion of the European mind—its culture—from the deleterious effects of African slavery and the intellectual and spiritual energies put forth to solidify the legitimacy of the African slave trade. According to DuBois, this convenient fiction was totalizing.

Everything great, everything fine, everything really successful in human culture, was white... Without the winking of an eye, printing, gunpowder, the smelting of iron, the beginnings of social organization, not to mention political life and democracy were attributed exclusively to the white race and to Nordic Europe. Religion sighed with relief when it could base its denial of the ethics of Christ and the brotherhood of men upon the science of Darwin, Gobineau and Reisner.⁵⁴

DuBois understood that European thought always existed as an entanglement of contradictions that could not be answered by the appeals to the reason and culture immersed in crisis. He continues,

This way of thinking gave rise to many paradoxes, and it was characteristic of the era that men did not face paradoxes with any plan to solve them. There was the religious paradox: the contradiction between the Golden Rule and the use of force to keep human beings in their appointed places; the doctrine of the White Man's Burden and the conversion of the heathen, faced by the actuality of famine, pestilence, and caste. There was the assumption of the absolute necessity of poverty for the majority of men in order to save civilization for the minority, for that aristocracy of mankind which was at the same time the chief beneficiary of culture.

There was the frustration of democracy: lip service was paid to the idea of the rule of the people; but at the same time the mass of people were kept so poor, and through their poverty so diseased and ignorant, that they could not carry on successfully a modern state or modern industry. There was the paradox peace: I remember before World War I stopping in at the Hotel Astar to hear Andrew Carnegie talk to his peace society. War had begun between Italy and Turkey but, said Mr. Carnegie blandly, we are not talking about peace among unimportant people; we are talking about peace among the great states of the world... Here knew lay tragedy, ... for the great states went to war in jealousy over the ownership of the little people.⁵⁵

The concern for knowledge and the inquiry into knowledge's limitations were never resolved against the cultural inclination of Europe to dominate. There always remained a very clear racial division among the voices of discontent.

People of African descent had long realized that the historical accumulation of the myth of European superiority created paradoxes that could not be sustained by a blanket appeal to reason, regardless of the attempts of science, religion, history, and philosophy to substantiate whites' unquestioned access to the foundations of reality. Because Africa and the people it

birthed were not human, their dissent and resistance to modernity's colonial domination went unheard and remained unnamed. Throughout the 1800's Black thinkers resisted modernity, rebuking the idea that European civilization was in fact the test of humanity.⁵⁶ What is unsettling about Harris's approach is that she mistakes the historical moment at which the dissent of Black people in America coincides with the concerns of whites as the valorization of postmodernism, when in fact postmodernism is nothing more than Europeans' discontent with Europe not living up to all the hype. CRT must resist the inclination to take advantage of its current historical position where whites are willing to tolerate Black voices among its dissident cries against modernity. White acknowledgement of Black discontent does not form the basis of or give legitimacy to the historical and intellectual presence of Black resistance.

This situation that has emerged as "the crisis of human knowledge" is built on the fiction of European superiority—its failure to fulfill the promises of its white narration. Thus the problem of contemporary theoretical positions in CRT, and Harris's in particular, is that they are reacting to the failure of European thought as if it were a universal problem of human knowledge, and not Europe's realization that its story was a lie. What CRT needs is an acknowledgment that race is not at the periphery of modern discontent like class or gender, as Harris would have us believe, but rather that race and European domination are the organizing force directing and seeking to reclaim the plot of Western intellectual hegemony. This acknowledgment particularizes Europe's failure and allows a necessary separation between European thought and the actual crisis of knowledge as it affects African-descended peoples.

This postmodern tendency to view the theoretical aspect of knowledge (postmodernism) as separate from the materialization of knowledge (the colonial conditions that spurred and supported the technological and industrial advances of Europe) reinforces the idea that CRT can

utilize the thinking of the colonizer without embracing the manifestations of colonial thought. This quandary is where Harris's criticism falls flat. "For race-crits," Harris argues, "racism is not only a matter of individual prejudice and everyday practice; rather race is deeply imbedded in language, perceptions, and perhaps even 'reason' itself,"⁵⁷ but we never really get to see how this suspicion of reason's role in racism is ever addressed in the course of a "jurisprudence of reconstruction." She continues, "The postmodernist critique is congenial to race-crits, who had already drawn from history the lesson that "racism" is no superficial matter of ignorance, conscious error or bigotry, but rather lies at the heart of American—and western—culture,"⁵⁸ yet fails to distinguish the privilege and ontological status of whiteness necessary to criticize the forms of knowledge endemic to the postmodern critique, or explain why postmodernism is immune to criticism. If postmodernity is the outgrowth of modernity is it not just as susceptible to the racism of Western culture? Instead of creating a foundational theory, Harris opts for a theoretical schizophrenia between modern and postmodern narratives. In fact, Harris calls these mood swings the definitive characteristic of a jurisprudence of reconstruction, whose "task should not be to try to somehow resolve the philosophical tension between modernism and postmodernism, but rather consciously inhabit that very tension."⁵⁹ But that inhabitation locates CRT between two traditions, neither of which was created with racial experience or African cultural dispositions in mind. Over a decade later we can see Harris's project has failed as contemporary critical race theorists are still trying to figure out exactly what it means to "inhabit that very tension" that results from CRT's "desire to integrate post-modern skepticism within a modern framework of law and reason."⁶⁰

The critical perspective of reason initiated by a jurisprudence of reconstruction is unfortunately as shallow as it is vague. It is not possible to build a cohesive theory of Black

subjectivity through modernism by insisting that all humans are part of the same transcendental subjectivity, endowed with the same gifts of reason and values, and then claiming a post-modern slant when the theories of European philosophers do not speak to a crucial part of Black people's experience. As it stands now, CRT has placed the fate of Black people's account of the world squarely on the backs of European philosophers through a revisionism that seeks to lure European theorists into a conversation on the condition of Blacks and other people of color in America, a world in which CRT is only post-modern when its scholars are discontent with the lack of attention given to the issues of racism in modern philosophical discourse. CRT cannot continue to content itself with participating in colonial discourse and complain only when it is not allowed to play.

The Jurisprudence of the subject; the “Problem of the subject as Jurisprudence” in post-modern critiques of law.

In contemporary CLS and CRT circles, it is largely agreed that what we know as the law is nothing more than politics. Instead of the law being a moral order ordained by God (natural law), or the general will of a society, CLS and CRT believe, as the legal realists before them, that the law comes about through the personal and political articulations of values that judges, policy-makers, and decision-makers take as truth. This theory takes issue with Langdellian formalism which holds that the law is an autonomous system of truths that endure beyond the intervention of culture or social context.⁶¹ As a result, jurisprudence became a sociology of law that focused on how subjects create the values and knowledge we call law.

This breakthrough forced scholars to think about jurisprudence as the ways subjects think about “thinking about law.” “Crits argued that legal categories, by creating and maintaining certain descriptions of social and legal arrangements, foreclose other ways of thinking about and organizing human life.”⁶² CRT was not far behind this line of thinking.

In echoing themes in other progressive legal discourses, primarily CLS, Critical Race Theorists argued that law reinforces racial hierarchy, reflects the views of privileged classes, serves as a weak vehicle for social change, is indeterminate and unable to provide fixed predictable outcomes for civil rights litigants, and is inherently non-neutral (and biased toward the protection of social privilege).⁶³

CRT, however, broke with CLS when the members of the movement could not ignore the “historical role that law has played in the advancement of the material and social status of persons of color...”⁶⁴ Under CRT, this has been referred to as a “dual consciousness,” in which people of color who are discontent with the legal institutions and the dispersment of legal rights nonetheless hold a faith in the ultimate promise of the system’s idea of justice and equality. In current CRT scholarship, this dual consciousness embodies a “dual commitment to anti-racist critique and the distinctive cultures formed in part by the concepts of race,”⁶⁵ or what she calls a politics of difference, but this commitment both for the ideal and unrealized principles of the legal system and the experiences of oppression by the people of color at the hands of the same system suggest a problem that cannot be handled merely at the level of how one chooses to engage the politics of the legal system. The “politics of difference” fails to explain how identity politics can change the constraints placed on oppressed people and does not address how this contradiction affects the psychology of oppressed people. These scholars want to maintain that identity is a “complex and changing interaction between individual agency and structures of power,”⁶⁶ but fail to clarify what is at work in individuals’ conception of the world that allows them to construct actions, or determine the value of those actions in a hostile world. Are all oppressed people really sexually repressed Oedipal subjects who turn their attention to racism. Or, are they really Hegelian personalities who seek to dominate the other for recognition of their position as master, and are just discontent with their political marginalization as the slave? Either

way, CRT has failed to define the racial personality and the metaphysical commitments of that racial personality in its attempts to speak of a racialized subjectivity.

The Transcendental Path of Legal Subjectivity

CLS ran into a problem of the subject well before it became an issue for CRT, but J.M. Balkin's essay, "Understanding Legal Understanding," brought Critical Theorists one step closer to solving it. In the early 1990's, Balkin developed a theory of subjectivity that would take into account the motivations and ideological dispositions of a socially constructed individual in law. Balkin sought to transform "the subject of jurisprudence into a jurisprudence of the subject—a jurisprudence that recognizes that questions about the nature of law must equally be concerned with the ideological, sociological, and psychological feature of our understanding the legal system."⁶⁷ For Balkin the recognition that the subject is socially constructed changed the concerns he had with the traditional understanding of "subject" and "subjectivity."

Surely each of us brings something distinctive to our experience of the social world. Yet any theory of ideology presumes that many individuals will share a great deal in their beliefs, attitudes and modes of understanding. Thus "subjectivity involves an individual experience that results in part from internalization of cultural norms and shared frameworks of understanding. These cultural norms and frameworks are not simply superimposed on an individual's preexisting beliefs; they constitute her and form part of what makes her an individual. Subjectivity is what the individual subject brings to the act of understanding; it is what allows her to construct the object of her interpretation so she can understand it."⁶⁸

Balkin calls this process "rational reconstruction," the particular activity of understanding that creates judgments of legal coherence. Subjects create a world, specifically a legal world, by making principles, objects and goals cohere in their eyes. For Balkin, a subject is so to the extent that it (the subject) is persistently constructing the world. "Because judgments of coherence and incoherence rest upon the nature of the self, they are also shaped by the self's psychological needs."⁶⁹ But what if an external constraint on both the ability to create the necessary principles

to make the law cohere as well as constraints limits the ability to satisfy one's psychological needs?

Unfortunately, Balkin's theory cannot account for cultural constructs that act independently of the individual minds that legitimate their existence.

Our subjectivity contributes to, but does not create the cultural objects we comprehend. This is the dialectic between the subjective and objective aspects of social life—between individual thought and belief and action on the one hand and language, ideology, culture, conventions, and social institutions on the other... Language, ideology, culture, conventions, and social institutions construct and constitute the individual's subjectivity; yet language, ideology, culture, conventions, and social institutions exist only as instantiated in the thoughts, beliefs and actions of individuals.⁷⁰

Balkin's account is too rationalist to consider the effects of socio-cultural contexts on the ways in which one knows objects in the world. For Balkin, race or culture would be a secondary identity ordered by the rational reconstruction of the social landscape. Reason would make the world cohere in ways that would address the needs of the self, but that creation is a rational encounter with social factors that have nothing to do with cultural identity as an epistemological source. Even if we take the race-crits seriously, none of their accounts of subjectivity could work as a postmodern or modernist project, or answer the questions raised from a serious encounter with Balkin's theory of the subject. Even though certain kinds of objects exist only as thoughts, beliefs, and actions of individuals, Balkin fails to give an explanation of what happens when groups, societies, and institutions, moved by their subjective belief and individual actions, have determined a course of law, society, and thought, not as competing individuals but as racialized groups. Only recently has Balkin clarified his stance and developed a theory of transcendental deconstruction that presupposes "the existence of transcendental human values articulated in culture but never adequately captured by culture,"⁷¹ but here again this account rests on assuming that all people share the same ontological perspectives as a consequence of their innate

rationality and that this rational humanism serves as the basis for social and legal construction. Clearly, CRT needs a fundamental overhaul to eliminate the pretension of this “one size fits all” transcendentalism.

The Problem of Euro-centric Reification—Law as the Expression of European Cultural Constructivism

Any attempt to escape the philosophical problem of “thinking” in the jurisprudence of the subject is doomed, because the subject, in seeking to create, is creating on a canvas that is historical and insidiously Eurocentric. “Law is the creation of a particular type of culture;”⁷² it is “a creation of a particular set of historical and political realities and of a particular mindset or world-view.”⁷³

This particular world-view is fundamentally Euro-centric. Law and the rationalizations that sustain the legal enterprise are the result of the specific historical and cultural relations European peoples have taken up with the world. These relations— what is mistakenly understand as manifestations of a universal and transcendental reason—define, create, and reproduce the cultural landscape that we know as law and has constructed American society around “law as a Euro-centric enterprise.”⁷⁴

According to Arthur De Gobineau, “A people obviously adapts its institutions to its wants and interests and will beware of laying down any rule which may thwart the one or the other.”⁷⁵ Beyond the realist description that law is political lays a historic dynamic of racialized culture. This impetus forces the Critical Race Theorist to concede that at its essence, the law is rooted in the logics of cultural despotism, and politics, the name given to the science of government, is driven by the impetus to dominate the cultural other. Gobineau is adamant that “the laws, always emanate from the people; not generally because it has a direct for making them, but because in order to be good laws they must be based upon a people’ point of view.”⁷⁶

This point of view that a people have of the world determines the normative perspectives of

those governed by that people. Thus resistance against social reality is also the revolt against the perspective the ruling people impose on the world. Inevitably, this revolt is a contestation of the existence and historical legacy of the ruling people involved.⁷⁷

The American concept of law, because of its intimate European ideological kinship,⁷⁸ colonizes critical race theorizations of subjectivity. The very act of legal reasoning reduces the subject to its rational drives and its search for rational coherence in the social and incarcerates thought in a European penitentiary. Reasoning about law then distracts the subject from thinking about the white cultural hegemony and supremacy of European traditions implied in encountering law through this very Western thought.⁷⁹ Legal reasoning, in convincing the subject that there is an applied and objective method found through European philosophical analysis, persuades the subject that “reasoning” is not a particular cultural enterprise. In this process, modern subjectivity— that subjectivity intimately constituted by a transcendental reason— lacks the resources to question Euro-centrism, since it is Euro-centrism and its cultural predominance that bestows reason upon the subject. Inevitably, operating under the illusion of a transcendental or universal reason dooms the subject to take up the cultural relations that Europeans have established with the world; and in doing so, the racialized (Black) subject dismisses the cultural potentiality of Africinity,⁸⁰ choosing to be colonized once again by the seduction of Euro-centric norms masquerading as universal. “The law supports Euro-centricity through its false universalism and its privileging of the European historical experience. Euro-centric law presents itself as rational, transcendent, objective without ideological content and applicable to all.”⁸¹ Thus, subjective jurisprudence is the rediscovery of law’s ethereal quality through reason, a reason that establishes rational coherence in the construction of reality, which under the

European worldviews, in turn, establishes a rational justification for dehumanizing people of African descent.

How, then, do we make reason Negro-friendly? A subject's attempts to sort out the post-modern problematics of race that emerge from a politics of difference, and the discontents that arise from the essentialized racial label, inevitably fall back upon a modernist reason—a universal human reason—to negotiate and clarify the relationship of the untainted self to the historically mired self encased in Blackness. The task for CRT lies not in the continual deconstruction of European modes of thinking as inadequate methods for Black subjectivity—we already know that to be the case. The task for CRT is to create new ways to think about the thought of an anthropologically different people who possess a fundamentally different culture.

Towards the Culturalogical Turn in Critical Race Theory

Derrick Bell has taken up a conspicuous place among Black thinkers in history. As one of the few Black thinkers adamant about preferring Black thinkers like Paul Robeson, W.E.B. DuBois, Ralph Bunche, and Frantz Fanon over the insipid white thinkers like Marx, Nietzsche, or Foucault on race,⁸² Bell demonstrates an intellectual acuity perfected in the historical ruminations of African-descended people over Blackness. As a legal theorist, a philosopher, and the renowned father of Critical Race Theory, Bell's work occupies a profound lacuna between Black reality and African American philosophy. While some works reference his well known adages,⁸³ there is not a single project that has engaged in a systematic study of Bell's thought as a philosophical corpus, or a unified thinking about racial problems in jurisprudence. Bell insists that Blacks can and should sustain a cultural and racial engagement with the world beyond the promises of equality rooted in white delusions of America's racial landscape, thus, Bell's Robesonian and DuBoisian influences are rich starting points for philosophical inquiry into his

declarations of cultural independence.⁸⁴ While Bell's writings do not possess the vocabulary of a culturalogical perspective, his works nonetheless point to a need to name these critical reflections on American jurisprudence.

Bell's Articulation of Cultural Distinctiveness

Cultural independence and mental decolonization has always been a central concern of Bell's thought on American racism.⁸⁵ In utilizing the term "cultural independence" I mean to convey that Bell has always conceptualized African culture in America as capable of creating, governing, and sustaining its own civilization. Much like Robeson and DuBois before him, Bell has maintained the survival and perseverance of African culture in Black American thinking since slavery.⁸⁶ Throughout Bell's corpus, Bell has paid careful attention to the idea that Africans stolen from Africa and brought to America formed a new people, and that this new people in their struggle and dedication to live fundamentally altered (contoured) the landscapes around them. The mythical island of Afrolantica is Bell's representation of Black's cultural independence and distinction from the colonial world sustained by whiteness.

The first oceanographers to report unusual rumblings in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean...speculated that some sort of land mass was rising up from the ocean bottom. For several weeks, the area was cloaked in boiling-hot steam and impenetrable mist. When the air finally cleared, observers...saw a new land...with tall mountains...fertile valley and rich plains...and substantial deposits of precious minerals, including gold and silver.

The United States and several other countries wasted no time in dispatching delegations to claim the land or portions of it. The first explorers, an American force...landed by helicopter. They barely escaped with their lives. The crew members had a hard time breathing and managed to take off just as they were beginning to lose consciousness...On the new continent, the air pressure—estimated at twice the levels existing at the bottom of the sea—threatened human life...Not even the world's most advanced technology allowed human beings to survive on those strange shores.

Then a team of four U.S. Navy divers tried to reach the new land under water. ...All seemed go well until, a few hundred yards up the river the divers suddenly began to experience the breathing difficulties that had thwarted earlier explorers...and began to lose consciousness. The crew chief, Ensign Martin

Shufford, managed to like the three groggy team members together with a slender cable and to tow them back to the submarine. When the divers recovered, they hailed Shufford as a hero. He declined the honor, insisting that he had not had trouble breathing—that, in fact, he'd felt really invigorated by the new land's water's. The only difference between Shufford and the other members of the crew (and, indeed, all those who had tried previously to land on Atlantis) was race. Martin Shufford was an American black man.

Initially, neither the military nor government officials view this fact as significant. After all, peoples of color from other countries, including Africa, had tried to land on the new land with the usual near-fatal results...African Americans did appear immune to the strange air pressures that rendered impossible other human life on the new Atlantis.

In an effort to determine whether other African Americans could survive on Atlantis—a possibility man believed, given the new land's importance, highly inappropriate—the next helicopter expedition carried on board three African-American men and, as pilot, an African American woman...After a cautious first few steps,...the party felt exhilarated and euphoric—feelings they explained upon their reluctant return (in defiance of orders, they spent several days exploring the new land) as unlike any alcohol-or-drug induced sensations of escape. Rather, it was an invigorating experience of heightened self esteem, of liberation, of waking up. All four agreed that, while exploring what the media were now referring to as “Afrolantica,” they felt free.⁸⁷

Afrolantica, the Black Atlantis, is the land given to Blacks in America by divinity—a land where only Black Americans can live. Bell uses this geography to represent the potential to be found in a world where Blacks conceptualize their freedom, first, as their ability to leave behind the white world of America and embrace their Blackness culturally, and secondly as the ability to conceptualize an America that they themselves have the power to create. For Bell, this represents a possibility of self realization, a world that challenges Blacks to rethink their allegiance to the normal burdens of race that branded them Americans. In Bell's narrative, the appearance of Afrolantica unveiled the dormant debates over Black emigration and Black Americanism. This awakening, as Bell refers to it, should not be understood to represent the physical release from the oppressive bounds of the country we call America. Rather the Afrolantica awakening should be understood as the psychic break from the dependency of Blacks on the sustaining ethic of white America—an awakening of the Black understanding's power to create its own reality.

According to Bell, African-descended people have *always* maintained their humanity and exemplified that humanity in their contouring of their American environment. Even during their enslavement, “knowing there was no escape, no way out, the slaves, nonetheless continued to engage themselves. To carve out a humanity. To defy the murder of self-hood. Their lives were brutally shackled, certainly—but not without meaning despite their imprisonment.”⁸⁸ In their living, the lives of Blacks were rooted in the various innovations spawned through the cultural engagement of their own African pluralities. “Though they lived and died as captives within a system of slave labor, they produced worlds of music, poetry and art. They reshaped a Christian cosmology to fit their spirits and their needs, transforming Protestantism along the way. They produced a single people out of what had been many.”⁸⁹ Just as Robeson before him, Bell realized that in creating a people, Blacks sustained a type of cultural thinking—a thinking indelibly marked by its steadfast orientation towards cultural freedom.

“If I strive as a Negro, am I not perpetuating the very cleft that threatens and separates Black and White America?”⁹⁰ DuBois asked this question over a hundred years ago and even today its answer remains just as ideologically charged. The advocacy of Black cultural racial empowerment is almost always certain to bring about white backlash and the charging of Blacks with perpetuating racism. Insofar as Blacks claim to be Americans, they are expected to jettison their pride in race and disassociate themselves with any notion of an African cultural legacy, despite the clear connection between African colonization and Black enslavement and oppression in America. Today, even in light of the contradictions held in accepting an African American identity, Black’s Americanism is ethicized and inscribed into the identity etiquettes of America. In bringing Africa back into Black discussion of racism, Bell reintroduces a much needed skepticism of the wholesale American identity currently held by many Blacks. Because

Bell draws from the later writings of DuBois, his thought is not clouded by the dominate mis-readings of DuBois' thought under phenomenology and pragmatism's humanist inclinations that emphasize political equality, and he offers testament to DuBois's prophetic insight into integration's cultural threat to Blacks. Bell, like DuBois, understands that the struggle of Blacks is not a struggle for equality, but the struggle for "the possibility of black folk and their cultural patterns existing in America without discrimination."⁹¹

DuBois recognized that integration was just the beginning of more serious contestations over the saliency of Black culture, in which the desire to become American would fuel Blacks' complacency over their African heritage and further the assimilation of white ideals. "What will be our aims and ideals," asked DuBois, "and what will we have to do with the selecting of these aims and ideals. Are we to assume that we would simply adopt the ideals of Americans, and become what they are or want to be? Will we have in this process no ideals of our own?"⁹²

DuBois understood that the journey of Blacks towards equal citizenship had a socializing effect on how Blacks thought about themselves in relation to Africa. As Blacks strive to live up to the American ideal, they learn "from their environment to think less and less of their fatherland and its folk."⁹³ To the extent that we embrace Black culture's imitation of whites we encourage its self-destructiveness. "We would lose our memory of Negro history, and of those racial peculiarities with which we have been long associated,"⁹⁴ ceasing to acknowledge "any greater tie with Africa than with England or Germany."⁹⁵ For DuBois and the subsequent generations of Blacks that have followed it is clear: the quest for political equality in America comes at too high a price. Thus, Bell's racial realism compels his call for an Afrolantica awakening.

But what would such an *awakening* entail? To answer this question Bell leaves DuBois's critical assessments of integration to embrace Paul Robeson's cultural idealism.⁹⁶ In connecting

the status of Africa in the minds of American Blacks to the imperial conquests of non-European peoples, Bell creates a point of rupture in the classic Black American narrative. Bell urges Blacks to see that insofar as there is an acknowledgement of the anti-Black nature of American politics, there should also be an acknowledgement of the anti-African nature of American imperialism. To challenge whiteness, Black's must conceptually disengage the dominant European narrative. This disengagement is not to be confused with a theoretical polemicization of whiteness or Eurocentrism, rather it is the demand for a cultural struggle waged against the legitimacy of the European narration of logocentrism. In Bell, this disengagement is a call for the non-recognition of whiteness.

It is Black's recognition of whiteness that gives whiteness its legitimacy; "without black people in America, what would it mean to be white?"⁹⁷ Bell's conceptual disengagement from the racial themes that sustain the white American narrative indicates an earnest and philosophically interesting Robesonian moment in the development of Bell's cultural philosophy. For Robeson, Africa is the cultural locus of the Negro race, and its languages, its music, and its arts provided the cultural foundations for a radically different version of humanity completely outside of Europe's legacy.⁹⁸ While Robeson did believe in the self-sufficiency of African knowledge and a genuine Black culture, it should not be assumed that this was a categorical or essentialist description. In fact, it was very much a culturalogical articulation of Black culture, whereby the cultural essence of a people can grasp onto the world and ergonomically contour the chaos of modernity to its historical consciousness. As Robeson says, "mechanical technique can be borrowed because it is an external thing—but culture is the essence and expression of a man's own soul."⁹⁹

Robeson recognized that “there was a logic to this cultural struggle...For the question loomed of itself: If African culture was what I insisted it was, what happens to the claim that it would take 1,000 years for Africans to be capable of self rule.”¹⁰⁰ If African culture can satisfy the intellectual, social, and spiritual demands of African people in America, why do Blacks have such faith in liberalism, Enlightenment rationality, and white people’s goodwill? Robeson’s answer is that Blacks are kept ignorant of who the real primitives are.

Africa, like the countries of the East, has a culture—a distinctive culture—which is ancient, but not barbarous...In the past, African communities developed along their own lines, in their own way, to reach a point of order and stability which may be the envy of the world to-day.

...the whole system was balance and simplified to an extent quite unknown to the White world...In my people there is a fundamental quality, a kind of inner logic I call it...a trait common to the older nations of the world. A quality by which they ignore, or take little account of, the Western ideals of intellect and science and the power to reason logically, and depend on emotionalism and feeling. I, as an African, feel things rather than comprehend them, and this instinct...has convinced me that our race is utterly wrong in its tendency to become Westernized.¹⁰¹

This is the cultural realization had in the Afrolantica awakening: the belief in cultural sufficiency. In recognizing the inadequacy of European thought to speak to their reality, Blacks simultaneously admit their power to create reality anew. Whereas postmodernism aims to reform the dehumanizing addiction of Western thought, culturalogics simply dismisses the idea that Western thinking could ever contribute to Black knowledge. In preserving the possibility, or rather the necessity of cultural and social creativity, culturalogics admits the potential of radical social transformation at the hands of Black peoples.

When the mythical island disappears, Blacks are transformed. Instead of seeing America as the glaring white republic of old, America is illuminated by the shadows of its Blackness, which inspires not only the empowerment of Blacks, but their capacities of creation—a realization that Black culture can sustain America. Even without the land known as Afrolantica,

Bell maintains that the vision of a place ruled and inhabited only by Blacks inspires “a liberation, not of place, but of mind.”¹⁰²

As the armada steamed back to America, people recalled the words of Fredrick Douglass that opponents of emigration had cited to support their position: “We are Americans. We are not aliens. We are a component of the nation. We have no disposition to renounce our nationality.” Even though they had rejected that argument, it had its truth. And it was possible to affirm it, and return to America, because they understood they need no longer act as the victims of centuries of oppression. They could act on their own, *as their own people* [emphasis added], as they had demonstrated to themselves and other blacks in their preparations to settle Afrolantica.

Their faces glowed with self-confidence, as they walked erect and proud, down the gangplanks the next day when the ships returned to their home ports. The black men and women waiting to greet them, expecting to commiserate with them, were instead inspired. The spirit of cooperation that had engaged a few hundred thousand blacks spread to others, as they recalled the tenacity for humane life which had enabled generations of blacks to survive all efforts to dehumanize or obliterate them. Infectious, their renewed tenacity reinforced their sense of possessing themselves. Blacks held fast, like a talisman, the quiet conviction that Afrolantica had not been mere mirage—that somewhere in the word America, somewhere irrevocable and profound, there is as well the word Afrolantica.¹⁰³

Just as Blacks possess the raw materials for resistance, so to do they possess the raw materials for the constructing of cultural realities. Just as Robeson before him, Bell believes he is American, but a citizen of an America that is Black through and through; an America whose systems of thought and spirit is defined not by its blind allegiance to its imperial legacy but guided by the fully recognized cultural freedom of its African descendents. But how do we achieve a conceptualization of America founded on Blacks *thinking for* and *creating from* themselves? What effect would this cultural freedom have on the constructing of social, political, and legal systems in America?

From Culture to Culturalogic

Logic, has long been defined as the science of reasoning and outlining the principles by which this science may proceed to think correctly about thought.¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately, however, there is

very little scholarship that speaks to activity by which culture logically births reality upon the world,¹⁰⁵ and absolutely none that discusses the roles that Africana culture plays in organizing concepts and bringing about the materialization of those concepts under a social constructivist lens. Unlike previous thinkers on the matter of logic(s) and culture, I contend that logic(s) refers to a systemic way of thinking about the relationship concepts share in such a way that the actions, values and meanings that extend from these relations appear to naturally follow. In a world that is a product of a culture's social construction, these logic(s) refers to the ways in which the concepts of a people's thinking are reflected in the structures, and more importantly, the relationships they take up with the structures they create in their society. In the social constructivist era, it is important to realize that a people creates the structures, the institutions and the values that sustain their social life in ways that reflect the beliefs and historical consciousness of that people. And in the process, they determine a rational way of seeing the world and their logical structure.

Giving culture this type of epistemological weight fundamentally alters how CRT conceptualizes the historical contingency of race, the meaning of freedom, the value justice, or the existence of law itself. It changes the rules of the game, so to speak. Even as victims of physical and psychical subjugation, Blacks have *historically acted* against the stories that whites have told themselves. Instead of admitting to being murderous rapists and lynchers, whites maintain that they were civilizing African barbarism, and this narrative, while known to be false, is rarely challenged in the routine discussions of American rule of law. While CRT has reminded social, political and legal theorists of this historical fact, the movement has ignored the conceptual alternatives revealed in Black resistance to *the idea that Black culture (African barbarism) is not capable of producing civilization*. Propelled by the cultural impetus of its own

realization, Black resistance possesses a prescriptive dimension, a dimension that concretely demonstrates how a people's cultural action can contour the seemingly objective (social) constructions of America, unveiling the possibility that resistance is not only the refusal to submit to dominance but the constitution of alternative realities amidst domination. Because CRT concerns itself with the contestation of European objectivism, rather than simply dismissing it as irrelevant myth, CRT has overlooked the possibility that the various modes of consciousness grounded in racial experience are actually the prolepses of various cultural realities that have escaped the grasp of European thinking.

A culturalogical perspective aims to theorize about legal subjectivity beyond the decadence of contemporary conversations dedicated to the ego-logical capacity of a self to attain rational transcendence. Despite the critical inclinations of CLS and the idealist tradition of CRT, the individual's motivations for understanding the world rely on the imperatives of rational engagement. For Blacks, however, their encounters with American jurisprudence and the politics that have sustained their legal disadvantage cannot be characterized as simply rational choices that any rational person would make given the same situations. There has to be recognition that what is rational is also culturally normative, in so far as all rationally justified or logical actions necessarily imply the fulfillment of their teleological or purposive aims. For Blacks in America, rational choices are made on the basis of considerations outside of the self. The struggle for Civil Rights, for example, was not made for the advantages it gave to the individual during the struggle, but for the generations of the Blacks that would come after. As a Black person, am I interested in the elimination of a particular harm, or the conditions that sustain that harm, the injury or the dispositions that perpetuate it? Because of race and the historical targeting of African-descended people in America, the logics involved in reaching a rational conclusion in

any socio-legal situation involves the acknowledging of the historico-political reality of legal oppression towards Blacks.

European reason, in its compulsive obsession with absolutes and universals cannot adequately describe the historical inductions of Black people. The change in Blacks' understanding of concepts like justice, fairness, and equality from generation to generation confounds such reason. Unable to comprehend this Black logic, because of its generational situatedness, European reason deems it contingent and irrelevant. But it is reason's imperialism that prevents it from examining itself. What CRT has come to know as "reason" is nothing more than a normative conscience—the universalization of the European historical consciousness as all that is good, ethical, and proper—where a particular people's consciousness, or the awareness that people have historically taken up with the world, become conscience by the sustaining laws of logic that command the members of that people to perpetuate the relationships their people have with the world as their duty of group membership. The quaint skepticism of reason sustained by race-crits is simply not enough to remove fully colonial rationality.

Within the critical tradition, any discussion of jurisprudence will necessarily involve a discussion about the role that the subject plays in rationally forming and interpreting the social world. Culturalogical jurisprudence, as participating in this discussion, not only suggests that jurisprudence should take into consideration the realist mantra that law is politics, but adds that a true understanding of law requires understanding the cultural dynamics involved in the creation and the reification of law's associations with social entities. Culturalogical jurisprudence contributions to CRT, then, lay in presenting a meaningful social theory that tells us how African people in America formulate their social environment based on the nature and psychological needs of their cultural selves, beyond the polemics of systemic racism. As a social theory, a

culturalogical jurisprudence tells us how the subject sees all socially constructed phenomenon, including law, and gives us a description of what African subjects in America bring to the objects they seek to interpret. If Balkin is correct, that "...the coherence of law is ultimately based on the coherence of the world and that the coherence of the world is ultimately based upon the coherence of ourselves,"¹⁰⁶ then the implication of culturalogics extends beyond the mere consideration of cultural norms in understanding values and the meaning of concepts: it is how one's cultural orientation writes into the world the aims towards which one creates or constructs entities. Thus it is the earnestness one devotes toward creating structures, environments, and the narratives that socialize other populations to uphold the values and perspective that ground the individual and make the world cohere; this phenomenon cannot be limited to a singular function of the individual's transcendental reason.

The use of the culturalogical subject presents a fundamental shift in debates centered on the problem of the subject. CRT should not retreat from the glimpse of illumination held in the aisles of sterile European theories, especially when the last decade of such experiments have only yielded more external attacks and postulations from scholars like Robinson. Centering the discourse of subjectivity on culture allows CRT to better respond to the postmodern/modern tension by packing up that tension's bags and moving. There no longer needs to be an account that asks a hypothetical "how would a dialectical or autonomous subject deal with racism?" because under a culturalogical perspective the subject is already dealing with racism. To view a people under a social construct is to view the theory of a people's strategies for negotiation and survival in their practice.

The Culturalogical as Social Theory

The analysis of a people's social theory, namely, "those principles that determine the relationship of a people to one another (i.e. collective self), to other humans, (i.e., those who are other than 'self'), and to nature,"¹⁰⁷ is an analysis of the particular logics a people use to mediate and direct the socio-historical context toward their own understanding. Race, then, as a socio-historical and legal construct lends itself to an analysis of how African-descended people in America mediate the social context of the race construct toward an understanding of themselves, and their survival. According to Dr. Daudi Azibo,

A people's social theory is, in turn reflected and realized in their "survival thrust," which may be defined as the characteristic ways a people negotiate the environment (i.e., to extract material sustenance from the physical universe). A more erudite definition is that survival thrust is "the condition and process of survival maintenance that is indigenous to and thus characterizes a racial-cultural group's genetic and geo-historical pattern under gird by their Cosmology."¹⁰⁸

The manipulation of a social construct then is a guided modification. This modification reflects a culturalogical theory of the social (how a people see society as the reflection of their culture's historical relations), and "establishes a people's guidelines of life including their values, rituals and ways of dealing with 'the other.' Therefore, a people's authentic social theory is essential to their basic philosophical and consequent psychological orientations."¹⁰⁹ Current investigations in philosophy proper and CRT have failed to understand how cultures use conceptual constructs not only in identity politics but also as a means to articulate and protect their cultural properties in a racist and anti-black society. An analysis of race cannot then look at race outside of its inherent cultural fusion with African-descended people's cultural and philosophical tenets. Blacks, as a people, understand themselves differently than mainstream investigations that look at race as a social construct reveal, because those "racial investigations" are not looking at how "race, specifically Blackness" functions as a cultural construction.

Black is beautiful. Why? Because the oppressive and inescapable burden of the label, “Black,” has been placed on a people despite their resistance, but this people, utilizing their cultural conscience and historical memory, has contoured the term so that it can be fitted to meet and address their contemporary needs and narrations.¹¹⁰ Simply stated, a people’s engagements with the world (their constructions in it) are meant not only to satisfy their material needs, but also the psychological demands of their historical consciousness. This analysis is particularly relevant in our attempt to understand how a racialized subject can take hold of a racial construct placed upon him and transform that construct toward the goals of his particular cultural community. What we are talking about is the ability of the African to meet the world in a process that co-authors meaning as well as the best available strategies for cultural survival. Even in the confrontation of culture and European constructions like race, culture infuses and transforms the construct.

The problem of philosophical investigations of racial subjectivity resides in the inability of authors, despite what they see before them, to attribute functionality to both the racial constructs and the relations those racial constructs entail. For some, it seems close to impossible to think of racial beliefs as the product of the racialized and oppressed cultural communities that have been burdened by racism. Black subjectivity is not the way a thinking “I” navigates the racialized social landscape as a rationally motivated “self”. Black subjectivity is not ego-logically driven; it is a culturally (communally) enduring existence, but entails a historical conscience articulating itself through an individual identity and attempting to fulfill its cultural aims.

If it is true that legal theories of coherence are based on how subjects see the world, then it seems reasonable to suggest that a racial subject responding to racism through its cultural

subjectivity would give both the most effective account of the conditions that give rise to racism and the agendas that culture determines it needs as remedies. Struggle is not extra-cultural nor outside the realm of the subject for African people, because it is the necessary act of culturally defining race for one's people in an effort to survive against the constant onslaught of white supremacy, which holds Blackness to be evil, immoral, etc. Politics, in CRT then becomes fundamental to a socially constructed and culturally respondent actor because any necessitated action would be the social and communal activism of the oppressed culture as a whole, or what the culturalogist would say holds substitute for the "subject;" and a solid basis for jurisprudential conceptualizations of cultural actions and actors. There are no fixed and objective social entities, such as "race," outside of the cultural and social perspectives responsible for their construction.

Conclusion

It's not modern, it's not postmodern; it's culturalogic. To preserve the integrity and original realist account of CRT, a culturalogical account of the subject is necessary. The derelictions of present scholars in the movement to develop a theory of a subject and prevent the conceptual incarceration of Black experience demand a new theoretical course of action. We can no longer believe the characters played by historical European philosophers covered in "blackface," as if their playing dressup speaks to the "lived experience" of Blackness. CRT must draw the line somewhere; it can no longer afford to give credence to philosophers like Kant, Hegel, and en vogue French deconstructionists who have to be modified and absolved of acts that were anti-black. Black thinkers have always been struggling against racism just as we (Blacks) are today. There is no need to resurrect the ideas of a dilapidated and diseased European thought to attempt to rectify a situation that is outside of its cultural and conceptual frame. CRT can no longer take comfort in "inhabiting the tension of modern/postmodern" traditions. The

African subject under Blackness (the race construct) is not a subject torn, but a subject in struggle— this is the strength of locating a functioning cultural subject in the lived experience of the Black rather than claiming it is produced dialectically from the lived experience of the Black. The subject is always culturally orienting Black life toward a culturally meaningful product, whereas European thought treats the subject as if it is in conflict with itself over its own existence. European conceptualizations of subjectivity are simply inadequate when dealing with the complexities of cultural realities, especially when those realities are counter-hegemonic struggles against the very epistemological processes that undergird the socially constructed reality of the European world-view.

The shift to culturalogics in jurisprudence can never happen as a result of the accumulations of arguments or subsequent moments of revelation, but what this theory can do in its affirmation is empower the culturalogical agenda of African people as the most serious attempt at systematic and conceptual rupture from Eurocentric accounts of social and legal reality, moving African people one step closer towards liberation. As Kenneth Nunn says, “contesting Euro-centricity is a primarily cultural struggle. It calls for the creation of a separate cultural base that values and responds to a different cultural logic than does Euro-centricity.”¹¹¹ This contestation is not a question of how we think about the world, but rather the assertion of new questioning that creates its answers in the *how* of African people’s thinking in the world. Values like freedom, liberty, individuality, democracy, fairness, justice, or concepts of reason, humanity, or life itself are the products of a specific people’s culturalogical orientation. To the extent that the world is socially constructed, so too are the entities in the world that represent the finished productions of the concretization of a people’s ideals. A reconstruction of jurisprudence, then, should focus not on the amelioration of Black conditions under colonization, but the

creation of a social landscape separate from the colonial condition, on which African-descended people can create. Though the journey through America's colonial wilderness requires race, the cultural aspect of how Blacks think of themselves and how they [Blacks] conceptualize their world without whites is the vision toward which CRT should strive.

Notes to Chapter Four

¹ See Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, "Introduction to Critical Race Theory," in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* 2nd edition, eds. Richard Delgado & Jean Stefancic, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), xv-xix. Crenshaw argues that, Critical Race Theory sprang up in the mid-1970's with the early work of Derrick Bell (an African American) and Alan Freeman (a white), both of whom were deeply distressed over the slow pace of racial reform in the United States. It seemed to them—and they were quickly joined by others—that the civil rights movement of the 1960's had stalled, and indeed that many of its gains were being rolled back. New approaches were needed to understand and come to grips with the more subtle, but just as deeply entrenched varieties of racism that characterize our times. Old approaches—filing amicus briefs, marching, coining new litigation strategies, writing articles in legal and popular journals exhorting our fellow citizens to exercise moral leadership in the search for racial justice—were yielding smaller and smaller returns. (xvi).

² Derrick Bell, "Racial Realism," *Connecticut Law Review* 24 (1992): 363-379, 363.

³ *Ibid.*, 377.

⁴ Richard Delgado, "Crossroads and Blind Alleys: A Critical Examination of Recent Writings about Race," *Texas Law Review* 82 (2004): 121-152, 145.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 123. For a more in depth discussion of the realist-idealist split in CRT and its origins, see Richard Delgado, "Two Ways to Think About Race: Reflections on the Id, the Ego, and Other Reformist Theories of Equal Protection," *Georgetown Law Journal* 89 (2000-2001): 2279-2296.

⁷ Angela Harris, "The Jurisprudence of Reconstruction," *California Law Review* 82 (1994): 741-785, 743.

⁸ Kenneth B. Nunn, "Law as Eurocentric Enterprise," *Law and Inequality Journal* 15 (1997): 323-371, 370.

⁹ See Joel Kovel, *White Racism: A Psychohistory*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970). Kovel makes a compelling historical argument that analyzes white racism as part of a larger cultural world-view that creates distinctions and dichotomies in the world. This world-view is fraught with an over concern for materialism, property, and superiority. Also see Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997) where Mills links the link between Euro-centrism and the establishment of the racial contract. Instead of following his descriptive analysis to its logical conclusion, Mills reverts to an unjustified faith in reason and philosophy to adjudicate the issue of race.

¹⁰ Social constructionism is the new kid on the block for many disciplines. My work grants that traditional concepts like race, law, freedom, etc are socially constructed, however, I believe there is a more fundamental question in social construction that has not been asked, that question is "what are the ways that historical groups of people create their social reality?" The social manifests the relations of what is known in the world, and it is the relations that support this social reality that I am interested in looking at through culturalogics.

¹¹ For a full discussion of the distinction between the European world-view and the African world-view in its social manifestations see: Marimba Ani, *Yurugu: An African-centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior*. (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1994).

¹² Mari Matsuda, Charles Lawrence, Kimberle Crenshaw, and Richard Delgado, *Words that Wound: Critical Race Theory, Assaultive Speech, and the First Amendment* (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 1993), 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴ Harris, "The Jurisprudence of Reconstruction," 741.

¹⁵ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), xvi.

¹⁶ There is a wide body of evidence that speaks to the failure of CLS and post-modernism when dealing with the problems created by modernity. See Jerry Leonard, "Foucault and (the Ideology of) Genealogical Legal Theory," *Legal Studies as Cultural Studies: A Reader in (Post) Modern Critical Theory*, ed. Jerry Leonard (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 133-154. Also see Costas Douzinas and Ronnie Washington, "A Well-founded Fear of Justice: Law and Ethics in Postmodernity," in *Legal studies as Cultural Studies: A Reader in (Post) Modern Critical Theory*, ed. Jerry D. Leonard (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 197-230. See Peter Goodrich, "Sleeping with the Enemy: An Essay on the Politics of Critical Legal Studies in America," *Legal Studies as Cultural Studies: A Reader in (Post) modern Critical Theory*, ed. Jerry D. Leonard, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 299-344.

¹⁷ J.M. Balkin, "Deconstruction's Legal Career," *Cardozo Law Review* 27 (2006):719-740, 734.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 719.

²⁰ Ibid., 735.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 737.

²⁴ Richard Delgado, "The Ethereal Scholar: Does Critical Legal Studies have What Minorities Want," *Harvard Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Law Review* 22 (1987):301-322, 315.

²⁵ Ibid., 316.

²⁶ Ibid., 314.

²⁷ See Robert Bernasconi, "African Philosophy's Challenge to Continental Philosophy," in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Eze (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 183-196. According to Bernasconi, the question of "who is speaking?" is one that has been outlawed from philosophy because it seemed to set up an opposition between the authority of the author and universal reason. The deafness of neutral reason arises from its proud boast that it refuses to give weight to the identity of the speaker or writer. However, the powerful critiques of Western philosophy by African and African American philosophers exceed Western philosophy and cannot be simply reinscribed within it, even when they rely on the idiom of Western philosophy for their presentation. This is because these critiques spring from the pre-philosophical experience of racism and colonialism to which neutral reason is inevitably deaf, just as it is deaf to the role of tradition within philosophy. If Continental philosophers would open themselves to a tradition seen from the outside, they would find that the hegemonic concept of reason had been displaced, and they would be better placed to learn to respect other traditions, including those that are not African (192).

²⁸ Harris, "The Jurisprudence of Reconstruction," 751.

²⁹ Ibid., 754.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Reginald Robinson, "Human Agency, Negated Subjectivity, and White Structural Oppression: An Analysis of Critical Race Practice/Praxis," *American University Law Review* 53 (2004): 1361-1419, 1414.

³² It is important to recognize the role Enlightenment (modern) philosophers play in Robinson's work. In choosing to disregard race as a cultural maker and epistemological determinate, Robinson wants to claim that European philosophy speaks to a truer human self. As a consequence of this thinking Robinson will argue that Kant describes a true human self that is free to create and understand the world as he or she pleases. This interpretation of Kant is incorrect and thin in light of his work on pragmatic anthropology and historical fact that Kant was instrumental in the creation of the modern concept of race. Kant's view of race is at the center of the general move of enlightenment thinkers to develop philosophically rigorous notions of race that move beyond description towards metaphysics and scientism (see Emmanuel Eze, ed., *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, [Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1997]). Kant was especially important in this development as he was the originator of the modern concept of race (see Robert Bernasconi, Who Invented the Concept of Race? Kant's role in the Enlightenment Construction of Race, in Robert Bernasconi, ed., *Race*, [Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2001], 11-36). This notion of race developed by Kant was a teleological principle (see Immanuel Kant, *On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy*, in Robert Bernasconi, ed., *Race*, [Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2001], 37-56) that was specifically defined by a geographical people's *keime* or original seed (See Immanuel Kant, "Of the Different Human Races," in *The Idea of Race*, ed (s), Robert Bernasconi & Tommy Lott, [Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing, 2000], 8-22). In recent years, there has been an explosion of scholarship that has reversed the cosmopolitan humanism of Kant and revealed the undeniable fact that Kant's anthropological writings on race created the context of reason's attention to itself and morality (see Emmanuel Eze, "The Color of Reason: the Idea of Race in Kant's Anthropology," in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, ed., Emmanuel Eze, [Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1997], 103-140); see Sara Eigen and Mark Larrimore (Eds.), *The German Invention of Race*, [Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2006]). A reading of Kant's *Anthropology for a pragmatic point of view*, which is his original work on the question of race and anthropology would also show that the ability of an individual to make themselves moral beings and truly free is tied to character and race.

³³ Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, trans. John T. Goldwraith, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960), 113.

³⁴ Ibid., 110-111.

³⁵ Immanuel Kant, "Of the Different Human Races," in *The Idea of Race*, ed(s), Robert Bernasconi and Tommy Lott, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000), 9.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 14.

³⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ed. Robert B. Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent," in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983[1784]), 29-40,30.

⁴¹ Kant, "Of the Different Human Races," 17.

⁴² Reginald Robinson, "The Shifting Race Conscious Matrix and the Multicultural Multicultural Category Movement: A Critical Reply to Professor Hernandez," *Boston College Third World Law Journal* 20 (2000): 231-289, 245.

⁴³ Ibid., 246.

⁴⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, "Anthropology from the Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences," in *The Idea of Race*, ed(s) Robert Bernasconi and Tommy Lott (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing, 2000), 38-44,41.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁶ Harris, "The Jurisprudence of Reconstruction," 745.

⁴⁷ Harris, "The Jurisprudence of Reconstruction," 748.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ While postmodernism was a revolutionary idea in the western metaphysical tradition, CRT must admit that it was in the western metaphysical tradition, and thus separate from the racialized isolation of Africa and the thought that develop from the enslavement of African people. In Lyotard's first explorations of postmodernism, which at that time he called paganism, there was an anti-universalism that sought to root all judgment in plurality and particularity. This movement was a reaction to the dominance of categorical knowledge in the West, a reaction rooted in the philosophical traditions of knowledge that grounds transcendental knowledge and an attempt to abandon formal rules in judgment (*Just Gaming*, trans. Wlad Godzick, [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985]) However, it was not until the *Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984]) that Lyotard introduces the term postmodernism, which he understood as an 'incredulity towards metanarratives' as a resistance to the technological dominance of human knowledge. In both cases, the alienation from modernity is an intellectualization of the crisis phenomenology, and transcendentalism have in speaking to reality, whereas the alienation people of African descent experience come from the inability of modernity to explain or account for Black existence.

⁵⁰ Angela Harris' work demonstrates a serious misunderstanding of postmodernism and what her alleged postmodern commitments commit her too. Harris errantly wants to isolate postmodernism to a mood, a disposition that questions fixed modern principles, whereas postmodernism behaves as a dynamic seeking to introduce the inenarrable into narrative. According to Jean-Francois Lyotard, "A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant" (*The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984], 79). What Harris takes to be a movement that overthrows modernity is merely the assertion of new narratives against the grand metanarrative in an effort to become the new modernity. This commitment to postmodernism as a birthing of modernism is also explicitly communicated by Lyotard.

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the inpresentable in presentation itself...it must be clear that it is our business not to supply reality but to invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented. And it is not to be expected that this task will effect the last reconciliation between language games (which, under the name of faculties, Kant knew to be separated by a chasm), and that only the transcendental illusion (that of Hegel) can hope to totalize them into a real unity. But Kant also knew that the price to pay for such an illusion is terror. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have given us as much terror as we can take. We have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one, for the reconciliation of the concept and the sensible, of the transparent and the communicable experience. Under the general demand for slackening and for appeasement, we can hear the mutterings of the desire for a return of terror, for the realization of the fantasy to seize reality. The answer is: Let us wage a war on totality, let us be witnesses to the unrepresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name (Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 81-83).

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- ⁵¹ W.E.B. DuBois, *The World and Africa*, (New York: International Publishers, 1946), 1-2.
- ⁵² DuBois, *The World and Africa*, 17.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, 20.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 20
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.
- ⁵⁶ For examples of prominent Black dissents to European thinking, see Martin R. Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States and Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party*, (New York: Humanity Books, 2004 [1852]); Martin R. Delany, *The Origin of Races and Color*, (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1991 [1879]); Edward W. Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1994 [1888]), esp. ch.4, “The Aims and Methods of a Liberal Education for Africans;” and Anténor Firmin, *The Equality of the Human Races*, trans. Asselin Charles (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).
- ⁵⁷ Harris, “The Jurisprudence of Reconstruction,” 743.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 749.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 760.
- ⁶⁰ Darren Hutchinson, “Critical Race Histories: In and Out,” *American University Law Review* 53 (2004): 1188-1214, 1193.
- ⁶¹ Positive law was the result of Enlightenment thinking and placed reason, objectivity, and transcendence at the heart of jurisprudence and legal thinking. According to Nunn (1997), “Positivism superseded natural law as the culture of Europe took a more rationalistic, modern turn. The Eurocentric mindset demanded a positive concept of law. It was the European urge for unity, coherence and closure that produced positive law” (p.341). This should be contextualized against the emerging “law as context” schools of thought which would include post-modern and critical movements like CRT, CLS and Feminist Jurisprudence (Nunn, 1997, pp. 339-344).
- ⁶² Harris, “The Jurisprudence of Reconstruction,” 746.
- ⁶³ Darren Hutchinson, “Critical Race Histories: In and Out,” 1192.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁵ Harris, “The Jurisprudence of Reconstruction,” 760. For a discussion of dual consciousness in CRT, see Robin D. Barnes, “Race Consciousness: The Thematic Content of Racial Distinctiveness in Critical Race Scholarship,” *Harvard Law Review* 103 (1990):1864-1871.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 761.
- ⁶⁷ J.M. Balkin, “Understanding Legal Understanding: The Legal Subject and the Problem of Legal Coherence,” *Yale Law Journal* 103 (1993): 105.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.
- ⁷¹ J.M. Balkin, “Deconstruction’s Legal Career,” *Cardozo Law Review* 27 (2006): 719-740, 740.
- ⁷² Nunn, “Law as Eurocentric Enterprise,” 324.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*, 325..
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 325-7.
- ⁷⁵ Arthur De Gobineau, *The Inequality of Races*, trans. Adrian Collins, (New York: G.P. Putman, 1915 [1855]).
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁷ For a further discussion of this matter, see Tommy J. Curry, “Please Don’t Make Me Touch Em: Towards a Critical Race Fanonianism as a Possible Justification for Violence against Whiteness,” *Radical Philosophy Today* 5 (2007).
- ⁷⁸ See Kenneth B. Nunn, “Law as Eurocentric Enterprise, 358-363, where he argues that American law is a cultural derivative of European Enlightenment and common law traditions.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 364
- ⁸⁰ The idea that African culture can modify and contour modernity is reflected in John Mbiti. *African Religions and Philosophy*, (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1969), as well as, Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization*. (New York, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964).
- ⁸¹ Nunn, “Law as Eurocentric Enterprise,” 358.
- ⁸² This interpretation of Bell’s work is supported by Bell himself. In correspondence dated October 2nd, 2007, in which I claimed that his work should be understood as a continuation of Black thought, exclusive of white influence, Bell replied,

[Tommy] You have it exactly right. I consider myself the academic counterpart of Errol Garner, the late jazz pianist from my hometown, Pittsburgh, who never learned to read music fearing, as I understand it, that it would ruin his style. I think there must be value in Marxist and other writings, but I did not really read them in college and have had little time since. I am writing this in Pittsburgh where I have been celebrating my 50th law school reunion from Pitt Law School. I do care more about the thought and writings and actions of Du Bois, Robeson, Douglass, et al. I think during my talk at UCLA, I read from the 1935 essay by Ralph Bunche about the futility of using law to overcome racism. It made more sense than so much of the theoretical writings on law, past and present, that I can barely understand and have great difficulty connecting with my experience. And you are right. At almost 77, I do not care to write in ways that whites can vindicate. My view is like that of a dear friend, Jean Fairfax. I told her back in the 1960s that she looked like a black Joan Crawford. She replied, I think you mean that Joan Crawford looks like a white Jean Fairfax.

Notice how Bell resolves the looming existential question so prevalent in current phenomenological investigations of race. In Jean Fairfax's reply, what many philosophers and legal thinkers would call subjectivity is already conceptualized in the redefinition of her white counterpart. Jean's subjectivity *is* and asserts itself in redefining and challenging the incongruity of the white world. In her Blackness, there is a necessary impetus to describe the world from that standpoint. Bell's narrative demonstrates, just as his corpus, that there is a fundamentally Black and cultural standpoint from which to theorize the world absent white commentary. A standpoint that stands to be corrupted if influenced by white thought.

⁸³ Here I am thinking of Lucius Outlaw Jr.'s (*On Race and Philosophy*, [New York: Routledge, 1996], 38) citing of Bell's *And We Are Not Saved: The Elusive Quest for Racial Justice* (New York: Basic Books, 1987) and Lewis R. Gordon's reference to Bell's theory that racism is permanent in *Existential Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 63.

⁸⁴ Bell has constantly affirmed his admiration of W.E.B. DuBois and Paul Robeson. In *Ethical Ambitions: Living a Life of Meaning and Worth*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2002), esp. ch. 5 "Ethical Inspirations", pp.127-154, Bell talks about his reason for naming his sons Carter Robeson Bell and Douglass DuBois Bell. In *Afrolantica Legacies* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1998), Bell dedicates a whole chapter to Robeson, arguing "Paul Robeson's life, like great art, is treasured as much for the images it evokes as for the story it portrays. At one level, one can view the obvious parallel of Robeson's contributions with those of other well-known blacks who paid a large price for their outspoken challenges to racial injustice. At another level, with *Robeson's life as model*, [emphasis added] the significant but less well-known sacrifice of other blacks can be more easily recognized and appreciated" (111).

In a lesser known work, Bell has argued that "Paul Robeson's life, like great art, is treasured as much for the images it evokes as for the story it portrays" (Derrick Bell, "Doing the State Some Service: Paul Robeson and the Endless Quest for Racial Justice," in *Robeson: Artist and Citizen*, ed, Jeffrey Stewart, [New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998], 49-60, 49).

⁸⁵ Bell's most thorough treatments of decolonization can be found in *Afrolantica Legacies* (1998), esp. ch.9 "The Black Seditious Papers," pp.137-154, and ch.9 entitled "The Right to Decolonize Black Minds: The Chronicles of the Slave Scrolls," in *And We Are Not Saved* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 215-235.

⁸⁶ Derrick Bell's protests against racism and his Black pride have always been sustained by his religiosity and valorization of his African heritage. In the prologue of *Afrolantica Legacies*, Bell writes

The determined humanity of our enslaved forebears is the foundation of the Afrolantica Legacies. It is not a gift that came with their color. It is the hard earned efforts to make their way in a culture everlastingly hostile to their color. It is the quest for freedom and equality that has made survival possible and salvation achievable. An aspect of that survival one that stretches toward the divine, is a perspective, an insight, and for some a prophetic power about this land and its people that is unique, a component of black art, an element of black character, a mainstay of black lives (Derrick Bell, *Afrolantica Legacies*, xiii).

Bell's belief in the legacy of African humanity is asserted throughout his writings. In *And We Are Not Saved*, (ch. 9: "The Right to Decolonize Black Minds"), Bell speaks of the lesson learned in the Chronicles of the Slave Scrolls. These scrolls are the legacies of perseverance passed down from our African ancestors to guide Blacks in America through the at times seemingly unbearable racism and oppression at the hands of whites.

Mainly the scrolls taught the readily available but seldom read history of slavery in America—a history gory, brutal, filled with more murder, mutilation, rape, and brutality than most of us can imagine or easily comprehend.

But the humanity of our ancestors survived, as *the spirituals prove* [emphasis added]. In the healing group sessions, black people discovered this proud survival and experienced the secular equivalent of being “born again.” Those who completed the healing process began to wear wide metal bands on their right wrist to help them remember what their forebears had endured and survived. Blacks left the healing groups fired with a determination to achieve in ways that would forever justify the faith of the slaves who hoped when there was no reason for hope. If revenge was a component of their drive, it was not the retaliatory “we will get them” but the competitive “we will show them” (217).

Bell’s religiosity and belief in the survival of Africanisms in America is nothing new in Black thought. For Bell’s most detailed treatments of Black religiosity and its effect on his political outlooks, see Derrick Bell, *Gospel Choirs: Psalms of Survival in an Alien Land Called Home*, (New York: Basic Books, 1996); Derrick Bell, *Ethical Ambitions*, esp. ch. 3. For a contemporary discussion of Bell’s religiosity, see George H. Taylor, “Racism as ‘The Nation’s Crucial Sin’: Theology and Derrick Bell,” *Michigan Journal of Race and Law* 9 (2004): 1-56. Bell’s position should be looked at through the long tradition of Black thought before him. As early as 1897, W.E.B. DuBois maintained

We are Americans, not only by birth and citizenship, but by our political ideals, our language, and our religion. Farther than that, our Americanism does not go. At that point, we are Negroes, members of a vast historic race that from the very dawn of creation has slept, but half-awakening in the dark forests of its African fatherland. We are the first fruits of this new nation, the harbinger of that black to-morrow which is yet destined to soften the whiteness of the Teutonic today. We are that people whose subtle sense of soul has given America its only American music, its only American fairy tales, its only touch of pathos and humor amidst its mad money-getting plutocracy. As such, it is our duty to conserve our physical powers, our intellectual endowments, and our spiritual ideals; as a race we must strive by race organization, by race solidarity, by race unity to the realization of that broader humanity which freely recognizes differences in men, but sternly deprecates inequality in their opportunities of development (“The Conservation of Races,” in *W.E.B. DuBois: The Oxford Reader*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996], 44).

DuBois continued in the *Gift Of Black Folks*,

Above and beyond all that we have mentioned, perhaps least tangible but just as true, is the peculiar spiritual quality which the Negro has injected into American life and civilization. It is hard to define or characterize it—a certain spiritual joyousness; a sensuous, tropical love of, in vivid contrast to the cool and cautious New England reason; a slow and dreamful conception of the universe; a drawling and slurring of speech, an intense sensitiveness to spiritual values—all these things and others like to them, tell of the imprint of Africa on Europe in America (New York: AMS Press, 1971[1924]), 320.

Paul Robeson, much like DuBois, also saw the spirituality of African people in America through the spirituals. In the 1930’s Robeson became adamant that Negro spirituals were the religious sensibility of the Negro made manifest and insisted on performing these exemplifications of Black art and intellect throughout the world. He remarks,

[Negro spirituals] are to negro culture what the works of the great poets are to English culture: they are the soul of the race made manifest. No matter in what part of the world you may find him the negro has retained his direct emotional response to outside stimuli—he is constantly aware of an external power which guides his destiny. (“The Culture of the Negro,” in *Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings, Speeches, Interviews, 1918-1974*, ed. Philip S. Foner, (Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel Press, 1978), 86-87, 86.

⁸⁷ This abridged narrative of Bell's is from a chapter entitled "Afrolantica Awakening," in *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism*, (New York, Basic Books, 1992), 32-35.

⁸⁸ Derrick Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism*, (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 197.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ W.E.B. DuBois, "The Conservation of Races," in *W.E.B. DuBois: Oxford Reader*, ed. Eric Sundquist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 38-47, 43.

⁹¹ Derrick Bell, "The Legacy of W.E.B. DuBois: A Rational Model for Achieving Public School Equity for America's Black Children," *Creighton Law Review* 11 (1978): 409-431, 417.

⁹² W.E.B. DuBois, "An Address to the Black Academic Community," ed. George Brethett, *Journal of Negro History* 60 (1975): 45-52, 46.

⁹³ W.E.B. DuBois, "American Negroes and Africa's Rise to Freedom," in *The World and Africa: An Inquiry Into the Part Which African Has Played in World History* (New York: International Publishers, 2003[1946]), 334-338, 334.

⁹⁴ DuBois, "An Address to the Black Community," 46.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ I use the term cultural idealism here to indicate the development of Robeson's ideas set forth in his 1919 commencement speech entitled "The New Idealism," In that essay he says,

We of this less favored race realize that our future lies chiefly in our own hands. On ourselves alone will depend the preservation of our liberties and the transmission of them in their integrity to those who will come after us...neither the old-time slavery, nor continued prejudice need extinguish self-respect, crush manly ambition or paralyze effort...no power outside himself can prevent man from sustaining an honorable character and a useful relation to his day and generation. We know that neither institutions nor friends can make a race stand unless it has strength in its own foundations; that races like individuals must stand or fall by their own merit; that to fully succeed they must practice their virtues of self-reliance, self-respect, industry, perseverance and economy

... We, too, of this younger race have a part in this new American Idealism. We too have felt the great thrill of what it means to sacrifice for other than the material. We revere our honored ones as belonging to the martyrs who died, not for personal gain, but for adherence to moral principles, principles which through the baptism of their blood reached a fruition otherwise impossible, giving as they did a broader conception to our national life. Each one of us will endeavor to catch their noble spirit and together in the consciousness of their great sacrifice consecrate ourselves with whatever power we may possess to the furtherance of the great motives for which they gave their lives (in *Paul Robeson Speaks*, 62-65, 64).

For a discussion of Paul Robeson's discovery of Africa, its languages, cultures, and philosophy, and how this knowledge sustained his cultural idealism and nationalism, see Sterling Stuckey, "I Want to be African: Paul Robeson and the Ends of Nationalist Theory and Practice, 1919-1945," *Afro-American Studies Monograph* 6 (1976): 1-45.

⁹⁷ Derrick Bell, *Afrolantica Legacies*, xi.

⁹⁸ It is interesting that Robeson looks to Asian philosophical traditions, specifically Chinese thought as sharing in the emotive elements that describe the African psyche. Robeson also believes that Black people would find a spiritual and intellectual kinship in Asian philosophy.

I believe that Negro students who wrestle vainly with Plato would find a spiritual father in Confucius or Lao-tze. I believe that when they find cultures which command world-wide respect, yet which do not deny the emotional and intuitive approach which is typically Eastern and African, there will not only be world-famous Negro sculptors, writers, and musicians, but you will have a race which understands the whole art of living—fully, deeply, and efficiently. (Paul Robeson, "Negroes Don't Ape the Whites," in *Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings, Speeches, Interviews, 1918-1974*, ed. Philip S. Foner [Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1978], 91-94, 93).

In other essays published throughout his life, Robeson articulated what he saw as the kinship between African and Asian thought. For a discussion of these views, see Paul Robeson, "Primitives," in *Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings*,

Speeches, Interviews, 1918-1974, ed. Philip S. Foner [Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1978], 109-113); Paul Robeson, *Here I Stand*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), esp. ch.1.

⁹⁹ Paul Robeson, "I Want Negro Culture," in *Paul Robeson Speaks*, 96-98, 97.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Robeson, *Here I Stand*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 35.

¹⁰¹ Paul Robeson, "An Exclusive Interview with Paul Robeson," in *Paul Robeson Speaks*, 113-115, 114.

¹⁰² Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism*, 46.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ This common usage of the term "logic" should not be controversial to the reader. Various philosophers have defined logic along the lines of scientism and systemization for quite some time. Joseph G. Anderson, for example, defined logic as "the science of things; that is in an objective and not a subjective science; that it treats of things, and not of the thoughts or ideas, or notion of them in the human mind" ("What is Logic?", *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 9 [1875]: 417-422). John Stuart Mill in wavering between considerations of logic as an art or a science, defined logic as the "science of operations of the understanding which are subservient to the estimation of evidence: both the process of advancing from known truths to unknown, and all other intellectual operations in so far as auxiliary to this" (*A System of Logic: Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*, [London: Longmans and Green Co, 1889]). R.W.Sellers is another example of this scientification of logic, since he defines logic as "the science of the principles of correct thinking." (*The Essentials of Logic*, [Chicago: Riverside Press, 1917], 1).

¹⁰⁵ The debate over logical relativism is considered passé, among many logicians. This dispute has routinely been a conversation around the Azande and whether or not their culture adheres to the three primary laws of logic: 1) The Law of Identity: X is X; 2) The Law of Non-Contradiction: X is not both X and not X; and The Law of Excluded Middle: X or Not X. This debate arose from the various challenges to western metaphysics and the advocacy of cultural relativism in various fields like anthropology, sociology and psychology. In philosophy, however, these debates over logical relativism are very isolated. For a discussion of the logical relativism and culture debates, see Timm Triplett, "Azande Logic vs. Western Logics?", *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 39 (1988):361-366; for a reply to Triplett, see Richard C. Jennings, "Zande Logic and Western Logic," *The British Journal of Science* 40 (1989): 275-289; for more contemporary revisions to the origin arguments, see Timm Triplett, "Is There Anthropological Evidence that Logic is Culturally Relative? Remarks on Bloor, Jennings and Evans-Pritchard," *The British Journal of Science* 45 (1994): 746-760. For a discussion of whether or not there is psychological evidence against the universal adherence to the law of non-contradiction, see Bill Huss, "Cultural Difference and the Law of Non-Contradiction: Some Criteria for Further Research," *Philosophical Psychology* 17 (2004): 325-389.

African philosophers have also taken up this debate, for a discussion of several prominent ideas by African authors on the matter of culture and logic, see P.H. Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux, ed(s)., *The African Philosophy Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 1998), esp. ch. 1 and 5, respectively. It would also be helpful for those interested in this problem to look at Kwasi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), esp. ch. 1-4 which deal with the existence of cultural universals.

This statement is not to ignore the work done by historical figures like Max Scheler, Karl Manneheim, and Karl Marx in the sociology of knowledge, or the more popular works of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Anchor House, 1966), Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), or the recent anthology edited by Fredrick F. Schmitt entitled *Socializing Metaphysics: The Nature of Social Reality*, (Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003). However, it is important to point out that these works are descriptive analyses of how "social and historical patterns of life" become knowledge. My arguments differ in that I am interested in how cultures constitute the world under racialized systems in such a way that reality emerges amidst colonial dominance.

¹⁰⁶ Balkin, "Understanding Legal Understanding," 143.

¹⁰⁷ Daudi Azibo, "Africentric Conceptualization as the Pathway to African Liberation," *International Journal of Africana Studies* 5 (1999): 1.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ While distinct from my project, there is very interesting and recent literature on cultural trauma that speaks about the role of memory and narration in African American identity formation. See Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), esp. ch. 1 entitled "Cultural Trauma and Collective Memory."

¹¹¹ Nunn, "Law as Eurocentric Enterprise," 365.

CONCLUSION:

The Underview of Theory: Re-Politicizing Thought amidst the Demise of Critical Race Therapy.¹

It is my belief that the integrationist ethic has subverted and blocked America's underlying tendency toward what I would call democratic ethnic pluralism in our society. The ethic has been a historical tendency stimulated both by Anglo-Saxon political ideology, rampant industrialism, racism, and an Americanism whose implied goal has been the nullification of all competing subcultures indigenous to North America. It is my belief that both black and white scholarly rationalization have historically supported the integrationist ethic in pursuit of the ideal American creed. This approach was obviously predicated on an intellectual consensus which held that the political, economic, and cultural values of the Anglo-American tradition were sufficiently creative and viable enough to sustain the American progression to realization of its ultimate potential. But the present internal social and racial crisis we are experiencing proves beyond a doubt the failure of this integrationist ethic. As a result of this failure ...we have no viable black philosophy on which to base much needed black studies programs.

Harold Cruse--1969²

The thinking of an earnest philosopher is not a fountainhead from which theory and method freely flow, unshaped by the geography of reason, and unmolded by the stakes of a people's claim to reality.³ This account of the origin of theory, as either being given to the world as a functioning of reason, or being formed within the world by rationalizations of human existence, has been contested and conceptualized beyond its usefulness for centuries. These contests, between modernists and postmodernists, anti-essentialists and essentialists, traditionalists and post-colonialists, over questions of race announce a remarkable profundity, namely that theory and the illusion of philosophical rigor are all reducible to the uncanny ability of political interests to define the schema and processes by which seemingly natural moral considerations demarcate reality. Because theory, as the formalization of ideology and origin of methodological justification, requires theorizing to be about something(s), there is a conscious social program that accompanies inquiry.

When dealing with race, this social program and the philosophical engagement of *the raced* tend towards the post-racial eventuation of American society. Thus, theorizing about racial oppression commits the theorist to endless normative considerations about the world absent

oppression, or dare I say a world of equality. Unfortunately, however, this thinking about race happens well before the inquiry and is built into the moral considerations that compel the sentiments of the thinker towards the initial investigation into the race problem to begin with. While this affair between theorization and “theorizing about,” is rumored to be speculative and remains unspoken, except in its most exceptional moments—whereby theoretical ideals become manifest, like, for example, when a prominent Africana philosopher can claim that Africana philosophy inculcated whites with the necessary racial sensibilities that made voting for Barack Obama a reality—the drive to theorize about Blacks as part of the white imagination’s narrative of American exceptionalism shows that social sensibilities of theory nonetheless exist and reside behind every philosophical encounter with race. As we are now aware, the derelictical crisis of Black philosophy exists precisely because of this treacherous love affair between inquiry and the idealizations that inquiry aims to achieve socially.

This social agenda of philosophical engagements with race inevitably leads to the conflation between what Blacks “are” and what Blacks “should be” in the minds of whites and has operated in Africana philosophy for far too long without scrutiny. In fact, it has been upon this basis alone—the motivation of changing whites’ view of Blacks—that contemporary philosophers define and defend the need for Africana philosophy and the social importance of popularizing critical race theories. Unfortunately, however, such a pronouncement only dooms philosophical engagements with race to remain critical race *therapies*, since it is on the basis of philosophy’s diagnosis as racist that the pluralization of the discipline and the exposure of texts as historically anti-Black make sense as a viable treatment. Because Africana philosophy and critical theories of race, as they currently exist, necessarily depend on the pathology of the discipline, there is very little thought about the state of race theory outside of the systemic

pathology which demands a critical race therapy. The task of this dissertation has been to substantiate Critical Race Theory without any apologetics to white sensibilities toward racism. Regardless of whether or not whites think that racism exists, racism, as experienced by the oppressed, demands newly conceptualized approaches, which require philosophical perspectives that do not condemn the experience and historical existence of African-descended people to contingencies in the grand white narrative of American triumphalism. In the end, this dissertation argues for the political reformulation of theory and method around African-descended people's cultural particularity by conceptually disengaging current race theory practices that continue to interpret America's integrationist ethic as the basis of current humanist revisions in Black philosophy.

Is the “Epoch of Obama” an Obstacle to a Culturalogical Perspective?

Unlike most social political philosophers, who are allowed to maintain the illusion of rigor by the extent to which they can resist the pull away from objectivity towards personal political ideologies and contemporary political battles, race theorists are seen as rigorous to the extent that their work remains optimistic about America's “progressive” stance on race relations and reads any political or social advancement on race alongside whites' desires to be understood as moral post-racial individuals. Whereas other philosophers interested in social problems are known for their ability to theorize about the values, rules, and thought by which a society operates, race-critics are criticized for the inability of their structural analyses, which look at the historical systems of race's operation in law, economics and politics, to account for the popular consensus by whites that they are, in fact, not racists. This insistence by whites to be congratulated for their new found racial compassion has unquestionably affected the works allowed to be called “philosophical thinking about race.” Because this censoring dynamic is so firmly rooted in the

discipline of philosophy, it is not hard to understand why many contemporary philosophical engagements with race offer little more than empty adulations of post-racialism that dismiss the concrete reality of racial oppression in favor of an audience with the oppressors.

The institutionalized force of this dynamic places race-crits at the brink of an historical epoch in race theory, in which racial realist critiques of American jurisprudence and social thinking will be met with one axiomatic utterance—the name of—Barack Obama. "For the first time in human history," says Shelby Steele, "a largely white nation has elected a black man to be its paramount leader. And the cultural meaning of this unprecedented convergence of dark skin and ultimate power will likely become -- at least for a time -- a national obsession."⁴ In an article written the day of Obama's historical achievement entitled "In Our Lifetime," Henry Louis Gates Jr. claimed that "From toiling as White House slaves to President-elect Barack Obama, we have crossed the ultimate color line."⁵ In less than 24 hours after the election of a Black man to the White House, Black scholars had already begun to read Obama's presidential victory as the accumulation of struggles against white supremacy since slavery, and the end of the infamous color line that DuBois announced in 1903 as the seemingly permanent divide between Black and white Americans. While Gates can only be applauded for his enthusiasm about such an historical moment, his rationalization of the eradication of the color line is misleading and dangerously idealistic. In a presumptive questioning, Gates asks,

How many of our ancestors have given their lives—how many millions of slaves toiled in the fields in endlessly thankless and mindless labor—before this generation could live to see a black person become president? "How long, Lord?" the spiritual goes; "not long!" is the resounding response. What would Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. Du Bois say if they could know what our people had at long last achieved? What would Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman say? What would Dr. King himself say? Would they say that all those lost hours of brutalizing toil and labor leading to spent, half-fulfilled lives, all those humiliations that our ancestors had to suffer through each and every day, all those slights and rebuffs and recriminations, all those rapes and murders, lynchings and

assassinations, all those Jim Crow laws and protest marches, those snarling dogs and bone-breaking water hoses, all of those beatings and all of those killings, all of those black collective dreams deferred—that the unbearable pain of all of those tragedies had, in the end, been assuaged at least somewhat through Barack Obama's election? This certainly doesn't wipe that bloody slate clean. His victory is not redemption for all of this suffering; rather, it is the symbolic culmination of the black freedom struggle, the grand achievement of a great, collective dream. Would they say that surviving these horrors, hope against hope, was the price we had to pay to become truly free, to live to see—exactly 389 years after the first African slaves landed on these shores—that "great gettin' up morning" in 2008 when a black man—Barack Hussein Obama—was elected the first African-American president of the United States?

I think they would, resoundingly and with one voice proclaim, "Yes! Yes! And yes, again!" I believe they would tell us that it had been worth the price that we, collectively, have had to pay—the price of President-elect Obama's ticket.⁶

Gates assumes without historical justification that every resistance, every revolt, every protest against racial equality can be understood by Black people's desire to be defined purely by their Americanism. Rather than measure the color line by the social, economic, and political oppression that thousands of Blacks suffer because of racism, Gates claims, almost instinctively, that the symbolism of a Black person who represents the will and ideals of white Americans has single handedly eradicated Black's historical obstacles to equality. In Gates' mind, Obama has shown that once Blacks are accepted beyond their "Blackness," as human, they too can represent the ideals that have only been traditionally embodied as "whiteness."

For Gates, Blackness does not represent any pronounced historical distinction that cannot be understood within the context of Blacks struggling for the attainment of American ideals. Black history, then, is not particular, but rather supplementary to the broader struggles for recognition occurring throughout America's geography. While this position may seem persuasive and in line with contemporary racial sensibilities that credit whites for their progressive stances on racial identity, his reasoning assumes unapologetically that it is whites, by their unquestioned power to recognize racial others, that determine the duration of Blacks'

struggle for freedom (if we assume as Gates does that the ability to represent whites is the apex of Blacks' freedom struggle). What Gates' writing unfortunately demonstrates is that the need for racism to be interpreted solely as a function of racial identity is necessary to not upset the balance with "good" and "liberal" white folk, who want to see America's race problem as a thing of the past. While Gates praises Obama's symbolic representation, he erroneously ignores the political ideology that Obama consciously adopted so that he would not alienate whites by his Blackness. Gates presumes that Obama's victory was a transcendence of the color line without attending to the ways that Obama was forced to separate himself from Blacks who still believed racism still existed.

According to Shelby Steele, Barack Obama is a bargainer "—a black who says to whites, 'I will never presume that you are racist if you will not hold my race against me.'" ⁷ Obama's post-racial idealism told whites the one thing they most wanted to hear: America had essentially contained the evil of racism to the point at which it was no longer a serious barrier to black advancement."⁸ While some readers will consider this as an obvious political analysis, Steele makes a profound observation that strikes at the core of Gates' romantic revision of Black resistance, namely, that to the extent that Obama frees whites from the racial legacy of whiteness by negating the its role in the degradation of Blackness, he consents to popular white racial narrative that allows individual whites to remain innocent of racism. We can see the philosophical relevance of this political narrative in the Jeremiah Wright controversy earlier in Obama's campaign.

For Reverend Jeremiah Wright, America is racist because it undertakes institutional and political actions to oppress Black Americans. According to Wright, "American gives them the drugs, builds bigger prisons, passes a three-strike law and then wants us to sing 'God Bless

America.' No, no, no. God damn America, that's in the Bible for killing innocent people...God damn America for treating our citizens as less than human. God damn America for as long as she acts like she is God and she is supreme."⁹ Given Obama's post-racial politics, his response was typical: he claimed that "he [Wright] has a lot of the...baggage of those times."¹⁰ Whereas many white Americans believe that Rev. Wright is stuck in a time warp, "Wright's opinions are well within the mainstream of those of black America. As public opinion researchers know, the problem is that despite all the oratory about racial unity and transcending race, this country remains deeply racially divided, especially in the realm of politics."¹¹

It is of the utmost importance for Black scholars to realize whose politics they are advocating when they champion the "transcendence of race." According to Michael C. Dawson, "most white people and the mainstream media tend to be horrified (in a titillating voyeuristic type of way), when they 'look under the hood' to see what's really on blacks folks' mind. Two thirds of whites believe that blacks have achieved or will soon achieve racial equality, [whereas] nearly eighty percent of blacks believe that racial justice for blacks will not be achieved either in their lifetime or at all in the U.S."¹² Despite the rhetorical allure of Gates' account and the currency afforded the idea of racial progress in America, it is the structural manifestations of racism, not the popular representations of racial identities that maintain the infamous color line. In our attempts to theoretically ground our interpretations of racism, race theory must resist the tendency to accommodate the possibility of white innocence as a prerequisite for rigorous theorization. It is these types of political moments that resonate within the white imagination that inevitably determine the course of therapeutic critical theories of race. Insofar as race theory continues to allow the sensibilities of whites to drive its investigations, it will remain

marginalized and isolated to those few discourses and traditions that are seen as compatible with the ideas whites have of themselves and American race relations.

Because culturalogics insists on the cultural understandings articulated by African-descended people within America's geography, the triumph narrative of Barack Obama that presents itself as a testament to the dawning post-racialism of the United States is fundamentally at odds with the experiential accounts of anti-Black racism by Blacks in America. Whereas scholars like Gates are willing to allow whites to define the historiographic accounts of Black struggles against racism, a culturalogical perspective holds that it is only the historical group struggling under oppression that can describe and articulate its existence in the world. What idealists miss about Obama's alleged transcendence of race is the extent to which his notions of post-racialism converge with the interests of whites to see themselves as moral anti-racists. Because Gates' description of Black history is unnatural and rooted in the disowning of "Blackness," to the extent that Obama cannot be like other "angry Black people," his claims about racial transcendence are incorrect. He simply cannot maintain that Obama transcends the color line, when it is precisely Obama's ability to reify the color line alongside dominant white views of race that allows him to escape it. Even amidst epochs of racial contestation, race theory remains vulnerable to racial normativity and various other attempts by whites to ethicize the political as the teleological.

The Accumulation of the Culturalogic Process

As I envision it, culturalogics exists as a two-tiered system of analysis. In its first aspect, culturalogics is decidedly conceptual. By that I mean to say it is concerned with the ways by which historical groups of people use culture—those meaning-endowing practices that grasp onto, inject into, and contour reality—to cast into the world its shadows, those inevitable

imprints onto the world offering testament to that people's existence, what we currently know as social constructs. Culturalogics describes the process of co-authorship, where epistemological and ontological distinctions collapse. How we know, our culture, the historical relations that make our culture particular, and how we continue these epistemic relationships in that world that sustain what our ancestors have left us generations before, are of central concern for the culturalogical thinker. The second aspect of this approach is historical, a philosophical genealogy of a people's thought, so to speak. Because historical groups of peoples have cast themselves into the world, --a culturalogical perspective simply advances the idea that their thinking about the world and the constructs they use in creating the world necessarily depend on one another.

As a philosophical perspective geared towards the study of African-descended people, culturalogics rejects the notion that the political inclusion of Blacks into American citizenry and the mid-20th century recognition of Blacks as part of humanity extends, by analogy, the anthropological assumptions of (white) humanity to Blacks, who for centuries have been excluded from the formulations of such assumptions. Simply put, as theorists interested in Africana thought and the study of racism, we cannot assume that the narrative of humanity defined by whites to the detriment of Blacks, can suddenly, almost by an historical whim, serve as the best and only means by which African-descended people can be understood. Because culturalogics recognizes the inextricable relationship between politics (expressed by the desirability to fulfill the integrationist ethics) and theory (those assumptions used to launch inquiry into racial peoples), the conceptual disengagement of the humanist mandates within contemporary American racial discourse becomes necessary to avoid the problem of analogy—whereby Blacks, because whites have acknowledged their humanity, are enough like whites to be studied *as whites*.

This disengagement is necessarily political. Recognizing the “act of philosophizing” as a means through which individuals of racial and cultural groups sustain their cultural representations in the world is not without consequence. Since the concepts, the symbols, the thoughts, and the practices that articulate a people’s existence are ergonomic expressions of that people’s existence, any study of a historical group of people by those outside “the examinee’s” cultural condition is doomed to commit certain misunderstandings. This is of particular concern for whites who continue to approach Africana thought comparatively through convergences with mainstream European traditions. For whites dedicated to this aforementioned approach, culturalogics immediately constrains their ability to positively contribute to the study of “racial others.” Because whites understand Blacks within their own white cultural narratives, white analyses present an unnecessary risk to the non-whites they wish to inquire about by “framing” or rather “conceptually incarcerating” Blacks within the boundaries of colonial explanations. This hypothetical theorization about Blackness from the perspective of whites necessarily commits the type of convergences that trap African-descended people within white attempts to justify their European legacies, despite the dehumanizing atrocities committed against non-European peoples. Under this colonialism, Blacks are forced to speak, think and describe the world from the worldview of their oppressor, since it is only their oppressor who possesses actual knowledge. Insofar as African-descended people concede their power to actively construct the world, they become objects in the narrative of European ideals—victims of a colonized reality.

As a corroborating theorization analyzing the systemic dangers of conceptual incarceration, Kenneth Stickers argues that

Among the conditions of colonialism is that the colonized must speak, if they are allowed to speak publicly at all, through the language and conceptual schemas of

the colonizer; they must thereby validate, as a prerequisite for speaking publicly, both in form and in substance, the colonizer's intellectual enframing of the world, reinforce the colonizer's worldview and rationality as *the* universally valid ones. That is, in order to speak publicly the colonized must flatter the colonizer and in the process, simultaneously, denigrate his or her own cultural traditions.¹³

Whereas Stickers is only willing to speak of this phenomenon in the most general aspects of philosophical approaches to the study of African-American philosophy, especially the work of DuBois, it is absolutely necessary to point out that it is the systemic privileges of whiteness that allow whites to define theory and enact specific methodological techniques that condemn African-descended people to this enframing. Because whites necessarily embody the historical legacy of their colonial forefathers and foremothers, their approaches to the world objectify African-descended people and actively seek to erase their culturally specific accounts of reality. Unfortunately, the colonial disposition of whites is totalizing.

As the king presumes to speak for his entire kingdom, so colonizers presume to speak for all humanity, that the way they see and order things is the way in which all creatures who wish to be deemed "rational" and "civilized" must see and order things: the eyes and mind of the colonizer are assumed to be the eyes and mind for all (rational) humanity. Moreover, colonizing minds proceed in a prior fashion; that is, they feel no need to verify empirically their universal judgments, no need even to ask those of other cultures, "How does the world appear to you? How do *you* order and structure it?" prior to making their sweeping pronouncements: after all, they, as the presumed vanguards of universal reason, are the measures of all things.¹⁴

Because culturalogics, both as a philosophical perspective and an historical system of analysis, depends on the ability of African-descended people to actively co-author their own culturally relevant reality, white participation is not an option. To the extent that whites embody the colonial practices and imperial legacies of Euro-centrism, their encounters with non-Europeans maintain their infamous colonizing impulse. White culture is firmly rooted in European colonialism, and this colonizing disposition cannot be remedied through rational persuasion. As Joel Kovel reminds us, "Culture is an organism and nothing goes on within it without regulative

effect on all else. Whatever exists within a culture has a function: we may leap ethical condemnation upon it, but the ethical condemnation has a function insofar as it is derived from the main sources of cultural power and serves to regulate the evil, not to replace it... Culture then adapts only to maintain its potency, otherwise it will not change.”¹⁵ In practice, this colonizing impulse results in the diversification of figures through an adoption of Black thinkers only as proof of the infallibility of European thought. If one Black thinker can be touted as a Hegelian, Kantian, Derridian, etc., white philosophers claim that any racial or cultural problem can be accounted for within the plurality of European thought, thus increasing the potency and universalizing scope of white culture. As the alleged racial descendents of logos, whites presumptively act as if they have been ordained to speak for and unify all cultural outliers under the banner of (European) humanism. This obsession ultimately means that whites can only hope to diminish their colonizing tendencies through their non-participation in Critical Race Theory.¹⁶

Final thoughts

In the social constructionist era, Black scholars must muster the courage to look beyond the historical monuments that have come to define the racial landscape of America by contesting not only the visible obstacles to equality but also the errant motivations (be they philosophical, political, social, or economic) behind equality’s allure. As long as Black scholars continue to epistemically converge their thinking with the narration of humanity’s development—and concede their social reality to the dominate integrationist ethic –Africana thought will remain impotent to meaningfully challenge, adamantly resist, or forcefully overthrow the Eurocentric orientation of philosophical reflections about racism. Black scholars cannot continue to ignore the incongruities of current theorizations that demand the erasure of Black dissent against modernity and post-modernity. The appeals to a romantic philosophical humanism that can only

account for racial differences by inevitably ignoring Blacks suffering under racism do not address the actual oppression of African-descended people in the United States. Whereas current projects in race theory continue “critical race therapies,” that indulge whites belief that they can become non-racists by being better humanists, the culturalogical grounding of CRT dismisses the possibility of an anti-racist white racial identity.

Just as Martin R. Delany, W.E.B. DuBois, Paul Robeson and Derrick Bell dared to theorize about the world courageously, so to should we, as Black scholars, as African-descended thinkers, as Critical Race Theorists, challenge the assumption that it is only Europeans throughout history that have cast the world upon their shadows. At the very least, a culturalogical perspective acknowledges the need to think about this reality, demystified by the illusion of social equality and cultural parity for Blacks in America. Given the colonial burden of current theorizations about race, it would seem that the very possibility of introducing culturalogics as a philosophical approach justifies its adoption.

Notes to the Conclusion

¹ I would like to thank Mrs. Gwenetta Denise Curry and Ms. Brittney C. Cooper for their creativity and support in coming up with the title for this section.

² Harold Cruse, "The Integrationist Ethic as a Basis for Scholarly Endeavors," in *Black Studies in the University*, eds. Armstead Robinson, Craig Foster, and Donald Ogilvie, (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), 4-12, 4.

³ For a discussion of this idea of theory and method, see W.C. Banks, "The Theoretical and Methodological Crisis of the Africentric Conception," *The Journal of Negro Education* 61(1992):260-272, and W. Curtis Banks, "Theory and Method in the Growth of African American Psychology, in *Advances in African American Psychology*, ed. R. L. Jones, (Virginia:Cobb and Henry Publishers, 1999), 3-8.

⁴ Shelby Steele, "Obama's Post-Racial Promise," *LA Times.com* (November 5, 2008). <<http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/opinion/la-oe-steele5-2008nov05,0,1642069.story>> (Accessed December 5, 2008).

⁵ Henry Louis Gates, "In Our Lifetime," *The Root.com* (November 4, 2008) <<http://www.theroot.com/id/48731>> (Accessed November 5, 2008).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Shelby Steele, "Obama's Post-Racial Promise," *LA Times.com* (November 5, 2008) <<http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/opinion/la-oe-steele5-2008nov05,0,1642069.story>> (Accessed December 5, 2008).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Brian Ross and Rehab El-Buri, "Jeremiah Wright quoted in "Obama's Paster: God Damn America, U.S. to Blame for 9/11" *ABC News.com* (March 13, 2008) <<http://www.abcnews.go.com/blotter/story?id=4443788>>(Accessed December 5, 2008).

¹⁰ Michael C. Dawson, "Is Obama Wrong about Wright?" *The Root.com* (March 17, 2008) <<http://www.theroot.com/id/45302>> (Accessed December 5, 2008).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Kenneth Stickers, "Methodological Afrocentrism, with Particular Application to the Thought of W.E.B. DuBois," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 22 (2008): 40-49, 40.

¹⁴ Ibid., 41.

¹⁵ Joel Kovel, *White Racism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), 27-28.

¹⁶ I want to take a moment to clarify my position on Kenneth Stikker's "Methodological Afrocentrism." As a critical philosophical intervention in Africana philosophy, methodological afrocentrism is the application of the culturalogical perspective to whites' inability to actively participate in the formulation and practice Africana philosophy and Critical Race Theory. Because whites tend to "epistemically converge" all non-European accounts of reality with European theory, philosophical theorizations about race and non-whites in the academy tend to erase the cultural particulars of Black theory and choose instead to read Black authors as the raced extensions of heroic white thinkers. While the culturalogical perspective, both in its conceptual analysis and its philosophical genealogy, maintains that whites are unable to positively contribute to theorizations about Blacks, "Methodological Afrocentrism" argues that whites can use the philosophical genealogy of a culturalogical system (its historical analysis) to challenge the "converging" tendency of whites' disposition towards intellectual colonization. While I remain skeptical of such optimistic applications of culturalogics, I think it demonstrates the richness of the theory and the possibility for concrete changes in the ways that African-descended people are studied in philosophy.

Whereas other white scholars like Shannon Sullivan, Robert Bernasconi, and Anna Stubblefield, adamantly defend their ability to contribute to Africana thought and practice critical race theory, regardless of their "colonizing framings" of Blacks, Ken Stickers' position highlights the benefits of whites not relying on themselves to cure their own pathologies. Since I met Dr. Stickers back in 1999, he has always been earnest about his limitations in understanding the burdens of Blackness. It is in this regard that I think it necessary to commend his utilization of his epistemic limitations as the basis for "Methodological Afrocentrism," and the philosophical profundity of his radicalism, which allowed him to use the perspective from which I and other African centered scholars understand historic Black figures, as the starting place of radical race work.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Kenneth Stickers for the opportunity to build curricula around my culturalogical perspective in our co-taught graduate courses at SIUC in 2006 and 2007. It was here that we first started to discuss/debate the problems of framing Black authors as extensions of white thinkers, and the need for African-centered formulations of African-American texts that considered the relationships that Black

thinkers had with each other over and above their isolated interactions with whites. It was also here that Kenneth Stickers was able to employ what he would later develop as Methodological Afrocentrism since it was his recognition (through the constant contests over how he as a white man and I as a Black man saw the texts) that the way he framed Black authors as extensions or counterparts was in fact colonizing. In this process, he had to reflect upon why I saw the Black relationships that DuBois, Crummell, etc. shared as being more philosophically relevant than the relationships his philosophical training highlighted. What is most profound about his theorization of culturalogics, is his recognition of the white mind's limitation in regards to race and racism.

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