Du Bois, Double Consciousness, and the 'Jewish Question'¹

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Abstract

This essay examines whether and how the specter of nineteenth century Western Europe's 'Jewish question' haunts W.E.B. Du Bois's concept of double consciousness. I argue that Du Bois's time as a student at the University of Berlin exposed him to the intellectual and political roots of nineteenth century German antisemitism, and in turn helped shape his theorizing of Black double consciousness in the United States. Attending to this important but to date missing context in the intellectual development of Du Bois helps reveal the consistencies and contingencies between Du Bois's understanding of Western European Jews' duality and that of Black Americans. This context also provides fruitful ways to consider a comparative framework through which to better theorize the relationship between what have often been treated as distinct racial projects: Western European antisemitism and American anti-Black racism.

Introduction

There is a resurgence of scholarly interest in W.E.B. Du Bois as a founding figure in the American sociological tradition (Morris 2017; Wright II 2016). This renewed interest appears guided by two objectives: to center Du Bois's role in establishing an empirically driven social science; and to better examine Du Bois's contributions to contemporary studies of race and racism. Most recently, sociologists Aldon Morris and Earl Wright II independently reveal how Du Bois's scholarship represents the genesis of the American sociological tradition (Morris 2017; Wright II 2016). Elsewhere, the philosopher Anthony Appiah considers how Du Bois's American and German experiences shaped his theory of a race concept (Appiah 2014). Motivated by similar desires, I examine the intellectual underpinnings of Du Bois's most widely cited contribution to the sociology of race: double consciousness. Du Bois's time as a student at the University of Berlin from 1892-1894 exposed him to the intellectual and political roots of nineteenth century German antisemitism. This exposure to antisemitism shapes his theorizing of Black double consciousness in the United States.

By situating Du Bois's concept of double consciousness within the sociopolitical and intellectual contexts of Western European antisemitism, I provide three contributions to the sociology of race, sociological theory, and the sociology of knowledge. First, I add an important and missing historical context to Du Bois's double consciousness. To date, no scholarship that I am aware of fully explores whether and how Du Bois's reflections on antisemitism inform his consideration of Black Americans' duality. Second, my analysis helps advance a comparative framework through which to theorize the relationship between Western European antisemitism and American anti-Black racism. Many scholars examine these racial projects as distinct phenomena (e.g. Feagin 2014; Kendi 2016; Legge Jr. 2003; Prager and Telushkin 2003). Fewer,

however, analyze their connectedness. Yet for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jewish and Black bodies were the primary vehicles through which the political and social interests of white supremacy were advanced. Late nineteenth century German Jews and Black Americans provided the means through which German and American strains of white nationalism expressed themselves. Analyzing the intellectual and sociopolitical roots of Du Bois's concept of double consciousness helps to explain how these two racial projects become conjoined; and offers an entry point for examining how Jews and Black Americans respond similarly and differently to manifestations of white supremacy in Western Europe and the United States. Such comparison is fruitful for enhancing theories of global racial formations and white supremacy; and compliments Du Bois's own insistence on a less provincial sociology of race and racism (Du Bois 1960).

Finally, I compliment recent calls for intellectual reparations owed to marginalized scholars and communities (see Hunter 2015) with my own effort to historicize Du Bois by attending to the sociopolitical and intellectual foundation of double consciousness. Sociologists have long privileged the first generation Chicago School in the establishment of the sociology of race. Yet strong evidence exists for Du Bois having already established it in Atlanta at least a decade prior (see Wright II 2016). Meanwhile, previous scholarship reveals that many early twentieth century sociologists subscribed to and advanced the dominant racialism of their era (McKee 1993; Feagin and Vera 2008). Yet, their works remain centered in the discipline and often at the expense of the contributions of others, including Du Bois. In lieu of an emergent Du Bois studies (e.g. Keller and Fontenot Jr. 2007), there is a need for a proper sociology of Du Boisian knowledge.

To be sure, Du Bois's intellectual history – one that spans more than seven decades – presents challenges for scholars interested in what Gilroy (1993) identifies as the 'roots' and 'routes' of Black intellectual thought. Du Bois's thinking and writing involved several significant shifts over his lifetime, as did the sociopolitical environment in which he lived and worked. To remedy, some scholars argue for periodization in the study of Du Bois's intellectual legacy (e.g. Kendhammer 2007; Meer 2019; Reed, Jr. 1985). Periodization strikes me as especially useful for identifying when, where, and why certain Du Boisian ideas emerge. At the same time, understanding the lifecycle of Du Boisian ideas requires following their waves and ripples across the ocean of his corpus. I do not make any claims here about a consistency in Du Boisian thought. Rather, my focus is on a single Du Boisian idea – double consciousness – and its 'roots' and 'routes' through late-nineteenth century Germany and its 'Jewish question' to mid-twentieth century America.

Double Consciousness, in Brief

In March of 1897, twenty-nine year old W.E.B. Du Bois asks his audience at the annual gathering of the American Negro Academy:

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

incessant self-questioning and the hesitation that arises from it, that is making the present period a time of vacillation and contradiction for the American Negro (Du Bois 1971, 90).

Five months later in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Du Bois answers his own questions:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this *double-consciousness*, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self (Du Bois 1897, emphasis mine).

Six years later, he revised this essay for *Souls of Black Folks* to include the addition of “ever” into the line, “One *ever* feels his two-ness,” (Du Bois 1994, 5).

Scholars have since deliberated over the figurative description, social scientific implications, and theoretical underpinnings of this famous passage. Some argue that double

consciousness describes three distinct phenomena: the real power of white stereotypes in Black life; the effects of practical racism that excludes Black Americans from the mainstream; and the internal conflict within Black Americans between what is 'Black' and what is 'American' (Bruce 1992, 301). More recently, sociologists José Itzigsohn and Karida Brown (2015, 7) argue that as a central structural condition of contemporary race relations, double consciousness demonstrates how racialized groups are prohibited from having their full humanity recognized. Others see double consciousness as a dilemma of "two warring ideals" among the Black middle class who must negotiate between their impulse to escape the scorn of white society by living and working as a member of an elite self-segregated from working class Black Americans, and their commitment to bettering their Black communities (Wells 2002, 122). Still others read into double consciousness a *positive* reaction to such constraints. Facing violent segregation and suppression in post-Reconstruction America, double consciousness is an adoptive and adaptive inward orientation meant to strengthen Black institutions and focus Black Americans toward collective uplift (Allen 2002, 27; see also Dennis 2006, 4).

Elsewhere, the cultural theorist Paul Gilroy reads double consciousness as emerging from an "unhappy symbiosis" between three epistemological orientations: one that is racially particularistic; one that derives from Blacks recognizing that they are not-yet-citizens in the nation to which they belong; and one that is diasporic in its linkages to a global Black experience that is always defined through its contrast with white supremacy (Gilroy 1993, 127). Susan Wells compliments Gilroy's analysis, arguing that double consciousness functions as a methodological intervention allowing Du Bois "to build into the structure of *Souls* a recognition that the complexity of Black American life requires more than one perspective," (Wells 2002, 120). Benjamin Browser builds upon this idea of multifocality as a condition of American Blackness,

suggesting that changes in America's social structure may result in "three, four or more distinct racial consciousnesses among Black Americans," (Bowser 2006, 7).

Still elsewhere, the philosopher Bernard Bell argues that for Du Bois double consciousness was both a blessing and a burden, a "biracial, bicultural state of being in the world, an existential site of socialized cultural ambivalence and emancipatory possibilities of personal and social transformation, and a dynamic epistemological mode of critical inquiry for Black Americans," (Bell 2014, 96). Craig Forney compliments Bell's view of duality as both blessing and a curse. On the one hand, the social forces that produce double consciousness enable Black Americans to recognize the power of white supremacy. They transcend ordinary thinking, and gain extraordinary abilities to discern the false ideals of the American dream (Forney 2009, 99). Yet, this gift of second sight can also foster fatalism, as the harsh realities of American racism cause Black Americans to reject hope for a better world (Forney 2009, 100).

While Du Bois drew upon a wide variety of sources in formulating double consciousness, most scholars agree that his use is indebted to two discursive strains: a figurative language influenced by European Romanticism and American Transcendentalism, and a medical language carried forward by the emergent field of psychology (Appiah 2014; Bruce 1992; Porte 1968; Rampersad 1990). For much of the nineteenth century, the Western philosophical tradition gave great consideration to the self as a contingent duality threatened by the forces of industrialization, urbanization, and corresponding cultural changes requiring new modes of sociality. Well trained in the classic liberal arts of his day, Du Bois was no stranger to this understanding of the self. For example, Du Bois's use of 'strivings' (German *streben*) borrows from a figurative tradition that stretches from seventeenth century Lutheran Pietists through the early nineteenth century writings of the German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte; and evokes

“the process in which the self overcomes the resistance of the external world,” (Appiah 2014, 55).

Across the Atlantic, the essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson uses double consciousness to draw attention toward a growing awareness of subjectivity and the divided self as dangerous byproducts of a rapidly modernizing world (Porte 1968). This influence of Transcendentalism is most evident where Du Bois uses double consciousness to describe what happens as Black Americans are increasingly pulled into the center of the narrative of post-Emancipation America, yet never truly embraced as co-authors of this narrative (Bruce 1992). Drawn into the center of the narrative creates a growing awareness of Blacks' centrality to America's story; yet this awareness is juxtaposed with their denial of full citizenship in post-Reconstruction America.

While these intellectual influences remain important, my interests are in double consciousness's sociopolitical 'roots', and its 'routes' from Du Bois's time in Germany through his mid-twentieth century writings on Black duality. I argue that Du Bois's fellowship in Germany from 1892 to 1894 and his exposure to Western European antisemitism while there shaped his theorizing of Black double consciousness in the United States.

Du Bois in Germany

Du Bois arrives in Germany in 1892 after completing his MA in history at Harvard University. At Harvard Du Bois was mentored by Albert Bushell Hart, regarded by many as the founder of modern historical studies. Du Bois had set his sites on studying at the Freidrich-Wilhelms-Universität, then known as the University of Berlin (and renamed Humboldt University after World War II.) At the time the University of Berlin was the largest university within the German academic system. Du Bois's arrival in Berlin was part of a broader transatlantic academic

migration between 1820-1920 that saw as many as nine thousand American students and scholars study abroad in Germany, including Hart and the pragmatist philosopher William James, another of Du Bois's mentors (Lemke 2000, 46). For Du Bois, "The German universities were at the top of their reputation. Any American scholar who wanted preferment went to Germany for study," (Du Bois 1968, 50).

Late nineteenth century Germany was both the best of times and the worst of times. On the one hand Germany was on the tail end of unprecedented reforms to its economic and political landscape. During Du Bois's two-year stay, Germany completed a decade of state-sponsored economic and labor reform that had no historical parallel (Barkin 2000, 95–96). Like much of Western Europe, Germany was also undergoing rapid industrialization and urbanization. During Du Bois's tenure Germany passed from a predominantly rural to an urban demographic base, as rural farmers from poor, eastern provinces flooded German cities in search of wage labor (Barkin 2000, 81). These transitions significantly reshaped the German political system. By 1890 Germany's Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (German Social Democratic Party) had more power and support than in any previous period.

On the other hand, Du Bois's arrival coincided with a spike in political antisemitism that was unmatched until Hitler's Third Reich. The 1878 elections brought a significant increase in Conservative members to the Reichstag, including the newly formed Christlich-soziale Partei (Christian Social Party). The CSP was antisemitic from its birth. Its 1878 election platform declared, "We respect the Jews as fellow citizens and honor Judaism as the lower stage of divine revelation, but we firmly believe that no Jew can be a leader of Christian workers in either a religious or economic capacity." By the 1880s, the CSP's platform linked anti-capitalism with hatred toward Jews, and promoted a global Jewish conspiracy to exterminate the German *volk*

(Pulzer 1988). By 1892, public meetings in which Jews were denounced as a menace to German society were a near daily occurrence and in 1893 a sharp economic recession resulted in the largest vote for political antisemitism in the history of the German Empire. Despite the collapse of most antisemitic parties in the next election, German Jews, a highly assimilated group as it was, remained under constant attacks that questioned their patriotism and loyalty (Barkin 2000, 81–82).

I argue this sociopolitical context provided Du Bois with an important comparison to the experience of Black Americans, and shaped his theorizing of double consciousness. Elsewhere, Kendhammer (2007, 55) argues that rather than Du Bois's thinking on nationalism, colonialism, and political theory being influenced by his ideas on race, it is the other way around. Du Bois's thinking on race and other key issues was shaped by his consideration of the role of the nation-state, and the national 'spirit', or ethos. I argue from a similar perspective. For Du Bois, double consciousness is more than a theory of race or racism; it is a political theory, in that double consciousness results from minority groups' uneven efforts to incorporate into a racialized nation-state. This is evident in Du Bois's writings while in Germany, as well as his reflections decades later.

By the mid-to-late nineteenth century, German intellectuals' growing academic and political interest in *Volkskunde* (folklore) had developed a reactionary quality against "societal contrasts...those uniquely created 'village histories' of Germanophilia, Frankophobia, and anti-Semitism that were produced in large numbers as early as the 1840s," (Jacobeit 1991, 79). It is during this period in which the popular antisemitic slogan "Blut und Boden (blood and soil)" was seeded and even took on legal meaning (Jacobeit 1991). By the late nineteenth century, German

notions of a unified *Volk* were increasingly defined through collective hatred toward Germany's Jews (see Mosse 1999).

Du Bois recognizes this tendency within German nationalism in his 1893 essay:

German industry is largely in the hands of the Jews, and this brings into the strife something of class and race antipathies...It may surprise one at first to see a recrudescence of anti-Jewish feeling in a civilized state at this late day. One must learn however that the basis of the neo-antisemitism is economic and its end socialism. Only its present motive force is racial hatred (Du Bois 1998, 174-75).

Though antisemitism manifests as racial hatred, Du Bois saw it as misplaced class antagonism. Du Bois believed that socialist economic reforms would resolve those class antagonisms, leading to a reduction in antisemitism and the incorporation of the Jew into the German body politic. Du Bois carries this general thread into his ground-breaking historiography, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*. Here, however, it is the failure of those reforms which lead to the resurgence of anti-Black racism. In the antebellum American South, calls for a revolt over the white planter class "were nullified by deep-rooted antagonism to the Negro, whether slave or free...the poor whites and their leaders could not for a moment contemplate a fight of united white and Black labor against the exploiters," (Du Bois 2014, 21). Slavery, at its root, was a system for the exploitation of labor (Fields 2001). Though Emancipation offered hope for a united proletariat, post-Emancipation labor interests "were represented by four sets of people: the freed Negro, the Southern poor white, and the Northern skilled and common laborer. These groups never came to see their common interests, and the financiers and the capitalists easily

kept the upper hand,” (Du Bois 2014, 177). The historian Barbara J. Fields convincingly draws parallels between Reconstruction and efforts taking place elsewhere, including Germany, writing that Reconstruction

was the representation in legal form of an enterprise of national unification—the same one that was taking place nearly simultaneously in other nations of what was to become the capitalist world: Japan, Germany, and Italy...It was much more fundamental to the historic task of Reconstruction to define the proper relation of...the citizen to the national government, than it was to supervise relations between the ex-slaves and the ex-masters (Fields 1982, 163–64).

Du Bois recognizes while in Germany, and later in *Black Reconstruction* (2014), that in redefining the relationship between citizen and nation, neither ‘citizen’ nor ‘nation’ intend to incorporate the Black collective.

Decades later, Du Bois reflects upon late nineteenth century German nationalism in his autobiography, penned sometime around 1961 and published posthumously in 1968. Compared to his New England upbringing, where patriotism “was cool and intellectual”, Du Bois was taken aback by “the pageantry and patriotism of Germany in 1892,” (Du Bois 1968, 127):

When I heard my German companions sing ‘Deutschland, Deutschland ueber Alles, umber Alles in der Welt [trans. “Germany, Germany above all else, above all else in the world”]’ I realized that they felt something I had never felt and perhaps never would...*I began to feel the dichotomy which all my life has*

characterized my thought: how far can love for my oppressed race accord with love for the oppressing country? And when these loyalties diverge, where shall my soul find refuge? (Du Bois 1968, 127 emphasis mine)

Du Bois recognizes among his German companions a singular collective consciousness; and contrasts that with his own internal conflict between love for the Black collective and love for the country that oppresses it. Indeed, to be Black in post-Emancipation America is to ever feel one's two-ness; or, as he puts it, "the Black man is a person who must ride 'Jim Crow' in Georgia," (1923, 60).

Of course Du Bois acknowledges differences remain between Germany's Jews and Black Americans. Writing in his diary while returning to the United States in 1894, Du Bois admits that "[the Jews'] national development is over widely different obstacles than those of my nation," (Du Bois 1894). Yet, both Jews and Black Americans face similar challenges in fully incorporating into their respective nation-states. The German Jew, like the Black American, lacks opportunities to develop a cultured and economically secure middle class, but for different, albeit no less unfortunate, reasons (see Barkin 2000). In his autobiography, Du Bois suggests a more immutable and irreconcilable antagonism: that between a national German *volk* built upon racial and ethnic homogeneity, and a Jewish *volk* derived from the experiences of always and forever positioned outside and against the spirit, or soul, of the nation (see Du Bois 1968, 127).

The University of Berlin as the Incubator for Du Boisian Double-Consciousness

If the sociopolitical climate of late nineteenth century Germany provided Du Bois with a comparative lens through which to consider Black double-consciousness, his time at the University of Berlin provided a critical distance from the color-line that was impossible within the racial caste system of nineteenth century America. At the same time, the University of Berlin was an incubator of some of the strongest currents of racialism anywhere in the Western world, including 'scientific' antisemitism. These dual contexts give new meaning to Du Bois's own account of his German academic adventures, where he writes, "Under these teachers and in this social setting, I began to see the race problem in America, the problem of the peoples of Africa and Asia, and the political development of Europe *as one*," (Du Bois 1983, 47 emphasis mine).

The impact of University of Berlin on Du Bois's intellectual development has been the subject of several examinations (e.g. Appiah 2014; Barkin 2000; Lemke 2000). Yet few locate this intellectual development within the context of widespread German antisemitism. The University of Berlin, and German academia more generally, was somewhat of a 'ground zero' for nineteenth century medical and social scientific discourse on Jewish inferiority. Many of Western Europe's prominent racialists were located within Germany's system of higher education, and there was scientific consensus on Jews' predisposition to madness and inability to acculturate into European ways of life (see Pulzer 1988).

Even so-called academic progressives contributed to antisemitism's scientific rationale. Indeed, what set apart self-avowed antisemites from those who did not consider themselves antisemitic was not their *perceptions* of Jewish inferiority, but rather what should be done about it (Fischer 2007, xiii). Rudolf Virchow, for example, was rector at the University of Berlin during

Du Bois's stay, and well regarded for his progressive politics. Virchow often contended with accusations that he was too 'philosemitic', that he had too much appreciation for the Jewish people (see Du Bois 1998, 182). Yet, in his own anthropological writings, Virchow had concluded that Jews were a distinct racial stock and inferior to Germans (Baum 2008).

Other professors whom Du Bois encountered, like Heinrich von Treitschke, were far less civil. Treitschke was a historian and "by far the most interesting of the professors" under whom Du Bois studied (Du Bois 1968). By 1892, Treitschke had become somewhat of a German institution. His lectures frequently drew the largest audience of any course taught at the University. Yet Treitschke was also a proto-Aryan nationalist (Barkin 2000, 83). He had been an avid supporter of the Christian Social party, and by the 1870s was on record criticizing Germany's Jews as an "element of national decomposition" that wrecked havoc upon an emergent German nationalism (Barkin 2000, 85). In an 1879 political pamphlet, Treitschke writes, "In the circles of educated Germans, who would protest indignantly against the charge of religious and national intolerance, one single cry is heard, 'The Jews are our misfortune'." This phrase would become a popular rallying cry for antisemitism in later decades.

As Treitschke's biographer claims, "It is a measure of his magnetism that Jewish students could not help being fascinated by the forcefulness of his oratory despite his antisemitic outbursts," (Dorpalen 1957). This declaration suggests that Jews' exposure to antisemitism was commonplace at the University of Berlin, and that Treitschke did not hide his antisemitic politics from the classroom in which Du Bois frequented. Even at the university of his dreams, then, Du Bois could have no illusions that it was free from prejudice. Indeed, one of Du Bois's most memorable and influential courses was his political economy seminar, taught by Gustav von Schmoller and Adolf Wagner. Yet, Wagner was a member of the aforementioned CSP, and an

even more vocal proponent of a cultural German nationalism than Treitschke, "[insisting] upon the forcible Germanization of inferior cultures," including Jews (Clark 1940, 379).

Du Bois's private letters and notes reveal his grappling with what similarities, if any, German antisemitism shared with anti-Black racism. In his letter providing an update on his academic progress to the Slater Fund in 1893, Du Bois writes, "Besides my regular work I have been following the political movements of the country. The rise of anti-semitism, which has much in common with our own race question and is of considerable interest to me." Later, in a draft of what would become his posthumous autobiography, Du Bois recalls an incident as a student:

The Independent Student Association has been holding a number of meetings lately in the auditorium of the University. The Jews, who are not admitted into the *Verbindungen* [social clubs], and the socialist students, captured one of the meetings and had things their own way. This aroused a perfect furor among the German nationalist students, among whom a strong and even bitter anti-Semitic feeling is developing. They called a meeting in the same hall, but Rector Virchow refused to allow it, fearing that the breach among the students would become too great. Whereupon the honored professor received some disrespectful manifestations in his recitation room and the meeting was called in an outside hall... There were upwards of 700 students present, seated along rows of tables, smoking and drinking beer. The meeting opened with a 'Hoch' to the Emperor, and then the assembly disported itself in condemning Jews in no uncertain terms, even showing marked discourtesy to several speakers who sought to defend them.

The meeting ended in smoke and song and afterward I went to a Socialist meeting as a fit conclusion to the day (Du Bois 1953, 125–26).

What is striking about these accounts is that despite his reporting of widespread antisemitism, Du Bois described Germany as “the land where I first met white folk who treated me as a human being,” (Appiah 2014, 29). To be clear, Du Bois’s Blackness was not absent to his German interlocutors. Lewis (1994), for example, recounts a train ride in which Du Bois noticed several young girls giggling at the color of his skin. Upon arriving at his destination, Du Bois was followed through the streets by men, women, and children who stared and whispered behind him. Still, Germany represented “a greater, broader sense of humanity and world-fellowship. I felt myself standing, not against the world, but simply against American narrowness and color prejudice, with the greater, finer world at my back urging me on,” (Du Bois 1999, 9).

Du Bois’s optimism deserves some skepticism. The historical record is clear that late nineteenth century Germany was not free from anti-Black prejudice. While Du Bois was studying at the University of Berlin, the city’s zoo was playing host to a traveling human exhibit (Lemke 2000). These human zoos were made popular in the 1870s by Germany’s Carl Hagenbeck, who took his *Tierpark Hagenbeck* across Europe and later to the United States to showcase “savages in a natural state,” (Bancel et al. 2009). In his memoir, the Black German Theodor Michael recalls his experience as a part of these exhibits: “we embodied Europeans perception of 'Africans' in the 1920s and 30s - uneducated savages wearing raffia skirts...[strangers] would smell me to check if I was real and talked to me in broken German or with signs,” (Michael 2017). Indeed, the 1895 Great Industrial Exposition of Berlin featured a Colonial Exhibition complete with more than one hundred East Africans.

How should we understand this contradiction between Du Bois's glowing reflections on Germany and its larger historical record? For someone who spent their youth growing up within the American racial caste system, Du Bois's observations and experiences in Berlin brought with them a certain stigma that echoed the feelings he had both as a youth in Massachusetts, and later as a Black student at Harvard. Taking Du Bois at his own word, the University of Berlin provided Du Bois with critical distance from the duality that marked his own Black American experience. In his personal notebook on February 23 of 1894, shortly before he returned to the United States, Du Bois writes,

I am here free from most of those iron bands that bound me at home [away] from the physical provincialism of America and the psychological provincialism of my rather narrow race problem into which I was born and which seemed to me the essence of life...this momentary escape from my own social problems [is] an introduction to new cultural patterns (from Woodard 1976, 26).

In *Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois describes how as a student in Europe he did not feel the presence of the veil, and that he was therefore able to rise above the color line (Du Bois 1994). Decades later in his canonical *Dusk of Dawn*, Du Bois reveals again how his desire to understand the color-line, and the plight of Black Americans, was seeded during his studies in Germany (Du Bois 1983, 47).

The Souls of Black Folk as The Souls of Jews?

There is no question that the period in which Du Bois studied in Germany was one in which German antisemitism was at a fever pitch. Furthermore, Du Bois's own accounts of his time in Germany, including at the University of Berlin, show that he was actively considering Germany's 'Jewish question', including what parallels if any it had with late nineteenth century America's 'Negro question.'

Du Bois understood that there was a double problem in German nationalism of the late nineteenth century. On the one hand German nationalism enabled Jews to function in German society as part of a desire to see a strong, unified Germany. On the other hand, German nationalism prevented Jews from being seen as *real* Germans. Du Bois, then, sees the success of German Jews in the face of antisemitism as *both* the source of a Jewish *volksgeist* and an antisemitic German *volksgeist* with which the Jewish psyche must contend (see Appiah 2014). In his 1893 essay on German politics, Du Bois writes,

It must be ever remembered that the great capitalists of Germany, the great leaders of industry are Jews; moreover, banded together by oppression in the past, they work for each other, and aided by the vast power of their wealth, and their great natural abilities, they have forced citadel after citadel ... This of course is a menace to the newly nationalized country (Du Bois 1998b, 175).

Rather than posit Jews as an inferior racial stock like so many of his contemporaries, Du Bois saw in them a kind of 'striving', including a modicum of success, in spite of prevailing antisemitism.

The problem of German nationalism, then, lay not with the German Jew, but rather in the condition of the German psyche. Du Bois writes in that same 1893 essay:

An all-pervading restless pessimism exhibits itself, now in a beautiful impractical idealism, now in a caring cynicism. The whole nation in spite of excellent qualities seems largely to lack that robust faith in itself which builds men and peoples...Instead of a boundlessly optimistic state founded on individual freedom, we have a restlessly pessimistic state founded on obedience (Du Bois 1998b, 171).

German Jews' economic success, in spite of antisemitism, becomes the well from which further antisemitic German nationalist feelings spring. Du Bois writes, "All that Marx, Blanc, or Bellamy ever laid at the door of capitalism is, by the German Antisemitic Party, charged upon the Jew because the Jew happens to be the great capitalist of Germany," (Du Bois 1998a, 175)

Du Bois sees in the status of German Jews the economic, political, and social factors that he later defines as central to the status of Blacks in the United States in his 1899 *The Philadelphia Negro*; and key to the formation and duration of double consciousness in *Souls* (Du Bois 1995; 1994). The Jew, for Du Bois, strives in all these areas thus fulfilling the requirements for German nationalism; yet as Jews they remain the focus of a collective German character that articulates its difference in the form of antisemitism. Decades later, in his *Winds of Time* column for the *Chicago Defender*, Du Bois would write similarly of Black Americans fighting abroad in World War II on behalf of an America that thanked them for their service by insisting upon their unequal status. Noting the many accomplishments of Black American service men, the number

of Black Americans enrolled in college, and the accumulation of Black Americans' wealth, Du Bois writes, "But when with joyful faces we turn from this, we turn to a world still persisting in the discrimination which we know all too well," (Du Bois 1945).

While Du Bois's reflections on Germany's 'Jewish question' show clear parallels with his reflections on the challenges facing Black Americans, important differences remain. Despite Jews' inability to assimilate, Du Bois notes they achieved some economic success; and had achieved political emancipation, including suffrage, nearly three decades prior to his stay. It is not unreasonable to conclude that Jewish duality in late nineteenth century Germany is conditioned by a German nationalism that resents Jews' success; whereas Black Americans' duality results from an American nationalism that prevents them from obtaining any economic or political power.

Yet, if German nationalism arises from a collective resentment of Jews' success, it still rests upon an underlying assumption that this success is undeserved because Jews are not really German. Similarly, Black Americans' inability to achieve full citizenship in the post-Emancipation United States rests upon a similar underlying assumption that their Blackness makes them unworthy of incorporation. In both instances, Jews and Black Americans serve as racialized Others through which German and American nationalism express themselves against. It is this political quality of 'two-ness' that structures Du Bois's theorizing of double consciousness, post-Berlin. Having been a student of Germany since his days at Fisk, Du Bois already recognized the parallels. As an M.A candidate at Harvard, Du Bois argued that the racial caste system of the American South "differs in degree only from that in Germany, England, or even in Massachusetts," (Du Bois 1891, 3).

Taking in the political, social, and intellectual climate of late nineteenth century Germany allowed Du Bois, even if only temporarily, to remove his own Veil. Such an opportunity to take stock of his Blackness as belonging to the larger human condition was impossible within America. The opportunity Berlin afforded Du Bois to play the role of critical-distant observer no doubt developed an analytical lens through which he could examine the Jewish question in Europe and draw comparisons with the plight of Black Americans. In notes to his autobiography, Du Bois writes,

We studied history and politics almost exclusively from the point of view of ancient German freedom, English and New England democracy, and the development of the white United States. Here, however, I could bring criticism from what I knew and saw touching the Negro (Du Bois 1953, 108).

Indeed, the impossibility of such criticism in his own country is made clear in Du Bois's return to the United States in 1894 when his funding from the Slater Foundation ran dry. He describes

a disturbed world in which I landed; 1892 saw the high tide of lynching in the United States; Cleveland had entered his second term in 1893 and the Chicago Exposition had taken place. The Dreyfus case had opened in France with his conviction and imprisonment, and he was destined for twelve years to suffer martyrdom (Du Bois 1983, 48).

For Du Bois, whatever reprieve Germany offered him from wearing his Veil was lifted upon his return to America. No doubt a gift of “second-sight”, Du Bois’s experiences in late nineteenth century Germany influenced how he later characterized Black Americans’ own internal battle between “deadly hostile selves”.

Double Consciousness, Post-*Souls*

It has become commonplace to assert Du Bois never returns to his concept of double consciousness post-*Souls* (Dennis 1996a; 1996b; 2015; Rampersad 1990). Yet post-*Souls* Du Bois routinely returns to the structural features of double-consciousness that define the conditions of post-Emancipation Black America: the Veil; duality, or two-ness; and second sight (see Itzigsohn and Brown 2015). Meanwhile, despite the rapid resurgence of violent antisemitism post World War I and Hitler’s attempted genocide of Jews during World War II, Du Bois’s reflections upon antisemitism were uneven in the post-*Souls* period. It isn’t until after Du Bois’s 1936 visit to Nazi Germany when he offers clear comparisons between the “vindictive cruelty and public insult” of the Nazi regime and “such horrors as the Spanish Inquisition and the African slave trade,” (Du Bois 1936). What is the position of the Jew within Du Bois’s post-*Souls* consideration of duality and double consciousness? Does double consciousness maintain its theoretical importance in a post-Civil Rights context in which political emancipation and civil rights are codified for Black Americans, and in which American Jews become fully incorporated? A close reading reveals that Du Bois’s post-*Souls* theorizing of Black American duality emphasizes the role of a racialized social structure in producing for Black Americans *and* whites a debilitating condition that prevents either group from recognizing their humanity. Meanwhile, while some of Du Bois’s contemporaries borrowed from his conceptualization of

duality, most failed to adequately recognize the role played by the racialized social structure in the continued marginalization of minority groups, but especially Jews. Indeed, Jews' marginality was for many a pathological indicator of their inability to assimilate into their host nations.

Post-*Souls*, Du Bois views the Veil as constraining Black Americans from recognizing themselves except through the eyes of others. In his 1938 commencement address at Fisk University, he states:

We Black folk have striven to be Americans. And like all other Americans, we have longed to become rich Americans...With few exceptions, we are all today 'white folks' niggers' (Du Bois 1938, 14).

Later, in a 1950 manuscript draft, Du Bois identifies what, if any, way forward exists for the Black American who continues to strive toward both Blackness and American-ness:

This group has long been internally divided by dilemma as to whether its striving upward, should be aimed at strengthening its inner cultural and group bonds, both for intrinsic progress and for offensive power against caste; or whether it should seek escape wherever and however possible into the surrounding American culture. Decision in this matter has been lately determined by outer compulsion rather than inner plan; for prolonged policies of segregation and discrimination have involuntarily welded the mass almost into a nation within a nation with its own schools, churches, hospitals, newspapers, and many business enterprises. The

result has been to make American Negroes to wide extent provincial, introvert, self-conscious and narrowly race-loyal (Du Bois 1950, 12).

Yet, as a metaphor for a racialized social structure (see Itzigsohn and Brown 2015), the Veil also incapacitates other racial groups, including whites. Returning to his 1938 Fisk commencement speech, Du Bois states:

Very, very many colored folk: Japanese, Chinese, Indians, Negroes; and, of course, the vast majority of white folk; have been so enthused, oppressed, and surpassed by current white civilization that they think and judge everything by its terms. They have no norms that are not set in the 19th and 20th centuries. They can conceive of no future world which is not dominated by present white nations and thoroughly shot through with their ideals, their method of government, their echoic organization, their literature, their art; or in other words their throttling of democracy, their exploitation of labor, their industrial imperialism and their color hate (Du Bois 1938, 15).

Indeed, that the Veil is debilitating for whites constitutes a significant revision from Du Bois's original articulation in *Souls*:

If, however, the effect of the color caste system on the North American Negro has been both good and bad, its effect on white America has been disastrous. It has repeatedly led the greatest modern attempt at democratic government to deny its

political ideals, to falsify its philanthropic assertions and to make its religion to a great extent hypocritical (Du Bois 1938, 12).

The same racialized social structure that constrains minority groups' recognition of their own humanity also creates among whites an irreconcilable contradiction between what *is* (American racism) and what *ought to be* (American democracy), and prevents the realization of a unified national 'spirit'.

Some of Du Bois's contemporaries borrowed from Du Bois's conceptualization of duality to parallel the experiences of Black and bi-racial Americans with Jews (e.g. Mecklin 1914; Park 1928; Stonequist 1935). Yet whereas Du Bois understands duality as the result of a racialized social structure, his contemporaries often failed to follow suit. Instead, their considerations of duality posit it as an intrinsic, pathological disorder – either an inability or unwillingness to fully assimilate into their host nation-states.

Robert Park's widely cited marginal man thesis, though it borrows heavily from Du Boisian imagery, epitomizes the duality-as-pathos perspective (see Park 2007; 1914; also Morris 2017). Following their political emancipation, Park argues that among Jews "there appeared a new type of *personality*, namely, a cultural hybrid, a man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples... The emancipated Jew was, and is, historically and typically the marginal man," (Park 1928, 892). Park's Jewish figure cannot reconcile their desire to remain Jewish while also wanting to incorporate into their respective nation-state. Park's student, Everett Stonequist, extends Park's duality-as-pathos thesis in claiming the marginal man is "poised in the psychological uncertainty between two (or more) social worlds; reflecting in his soul the discords and harmonies, repulsions and attractions of

these worlds,” (Stonequist 1937, 8). Stonequist leaves no doubt of the degree to which such a personal problem reflects a pathos:

The intensity of the inner conflict varies with the situation itself, the individual experience with this situation, and perhaps certain inherited traits. With some individuals, it appears to be a minor problem; in such cases one cannot speak of a ‘personality type.’ It is only in those cases where the conflict is intense and of considerable duration that the personality as a whole is oriented around the conflict (Stonequist 1935, 10).

And, for Stonequist, it is the Jew who is most likely to exhibit these pathological tendencies:

The Jew is likely to be a typical marginal man...He is the perennial immigrant. His children are apt to have the second-generation problems. Popularly regarded as a race, the Jews are felt to be unassimilable...Centuries of social conflict, combined with their tenacious historical memories, have produced a group consciousness which in turn suspects and resists assimilation tendencies which go beyond a certain point. It is little wonder, then, that the Jew becomes the classic illustration of this problem, just as he has been the most articulate in expressing it (Stonequist 1935, 9).

To be sure, other scholars like Goldberg (2017) argue that the Jew-as-marginal-man plays a key role in “breaking down the social isolation of others, introducing them to new cultural

influences”, while also “stamping modern Jews—in contrast to their socially isolated and provincial forebearers—with the enlightened, rationalistic, and cosmopolitan outlook that was the hallmark of the man living in two worlds,” (2017, 81–82). Yet Goldberg acknowledges that the internal and external conflict that is the hallmark of Park’s thesis was apparent to other twentieth century intellectuals and writers, including Jews themselves (2017, 83).

Indeed, Jews figured prominently into public discussions of both the individual and nation as multifocal and divisible, rather than singular and united. The Jew was, for many early to mid-twentieth century intellectuals, a troubled soul attempting to traverse between “Old World and New and struggling for acceptance in a Christian world,” (Heinze 2004, 36). Meanwhile, Jewish social scientists proffered the concept of self-hatred to explain Jew’s duality and its effects on the Jewish psyche. Irving Sarnoff, for example, argued that Jewish self-hatred was rooted in Jews’ identification with their antisemitic aggressors. Post-World War II America was, for Sarnoff, the perfect ground for self-hatred:

In so far as Jews are concerned, the contemporary American scene appears to fulfill all three of the above prerequisite conditions. Firstly, there is widespread antisemitism among majority group members. This negative attitude wanes in intensity from the crudely destructive outcries of the “lunatic fringe” category of bigots to the discreet practice of “gentleman's agreement” housing restrictions. Secondly, Jews are, in every sphere of life, ultimately dependent upon the good will of majority group members who control our social institutions. The granting or withholding of ratification of such needs as education, work, and living quarters is sometimes determined by the degree of prejudice motivating the

particular educator, employer, or landlord whose approval the individual Jew is obliged to obtain. Finally, no Jewish person, unless he renounces membership in the minority group into which he is born and succeeds in "passing" as a non-Jew, can avoid personal experience with the social fact of antisemitism (Sarnoff 1951).

For Sarnoff, then, the social situation – American antisemitism – primes Jews for self-hatred. This debilitating condition, made manifest within the Jewish psyche, is brought upon by racial hatred.

Likewise, writing for the popular Jewish *Commentary Magazine* in the mid-twentieth century, anthropologist Harold Orlansky locates Jew's marginal status in childhood and parallels it the Black American child who recognizes for the first time their embodied difference:

It is enough to describe the Jewish group as an underprivileged minority in a marginal social position, and the individual Jew, like the light mulatto, as a typical marginal man...The Jewish child cannot help taking as his own, society's evaluation of the Jewish stereotype. We have then the primary form of inferiority feeling and its consequence, self-hatred. 'I could bite my arm when I see how Black it is,' a colored girl once said (Orlansky 1946).

Summarizing the psychological, anthropological, and sociological literature to date on Jews' personality, Orlansky concludes that the principal features include feelings of inferiority, self-hatred, and neurosis, among others:

Apparently a great deal of ambivalence inheres in Jewish character—both within the Jewish group, where one individual may be as timid as another is aggressive, and within the individual, where submissive and aggressive tendencies may wage constant emotional war (Orlansky 1946).

Even by the end of World War II, then, beliefs in Jewish inferiority ground popular and scientific perceptions of the 'Jewish question' in Europe and America, and frame their incorporation into the nation-state as precarious, at best. In contrast to this, Du Bois's theorizing on double consciousness and duality shifts the problem from *what is wrong with the Black American* to *what is wrong with America?* Black Americans' inability to reconcile their loyalty to their race with their duties to their nation-state is not a psychological matter for Du Bois, but instead distinctly social. Meanwhile, the same white supremacist nation-state that produces retrogradation for its victims, does so for the entire society.

Conclusion

The codification of political and civil rights for Black Americans and other minority groups in the 1960s and 1970s brings into question the continued relevance of double consciousness for understanding the political incorporation of minority groups. Benjamin Bowser (2006, 6), for example, asks "if Du Bois's double consciousness exists, who has it; who does not; under what circumstances does it develop or wane; do other racial/ethnic groups have it?" For those who spent their entire life within the American racial caste system, double consciousness was "a predictable outcome of this structural arrangement," (Bowser 2006, 7). Yet, if consciousness is shaped by social conditions, then as social conditions change so ought our consciousness. Thus,

Bowser (2006) suggests that post-Civil Rights changes to the social structure may lead to multiple, distinct forms of racial consciousness.

Du Bois's concept of double consciousness emerges out of his own comparison of German Jewry with Black America, and how each group was affected by their relationship to the white racial state. Du Bois's theorizing – both in late nineteenth century Germany and in the inter-war period – posits that that duality (1) results from the required subduction of minority group consciousness in order to appeal to membership within the host nation; and yet (2) the recognition that this suppression is meaningless within the context of a white racial state that views minority group status as antithetical to its ethos.

Nearly eighty years after Emancipation to be Black still meant one had "to ride Jim Crow in Georgia" (1923, 60). Today, it means to hold a fraction of the wealth of whites, to be more exposed to joblessness, homelessness, and poverty, to be more at risk of mass incarceration, and far too often to be denied due process. Likewise, the recrudescence of antisemitism in the United States and abroad reveals the Veil's pervasiveness, and its racializing consequences for Jews, who, over the course of the twentieth century increasingly occupy an almost-but-not-quite white status (Biale 1998). Poland's emergent nationalism is defined, in part, by its erasure of the Jewish experience under Hitler's Third Reich (McAuley 2018). In the UK, Nazi imagery of Jewish infestations are revived as warnings of its current refugee crisis (see MAC 2015). In America, neo-Nazis march openly in the streets chanting "Jews will not replace us".

Significant legislative gains notwithstanding, then, changes in the structure of white supremacy are not matters of degree, but matters of kind (Seamster and Ray 2018). The post-Cold War expansion of Western European and American empire has resulted in war, disease, and death for millions of non-whites in Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Du Bois

lived during a time in which lynchings were regular occurrences (Tolnay and Beck 1995). Today, a similar regularity defines patterns of mass incarceration for Black Americans and Latinos (see Alexander 2012). Meanwhile, the post-9/11 era is defined in large part by anti-immigrant fever and racial backlash. In America, that backlash targets Muslims and Latinos, while across Western Europe it is aimed at Muslims, Jews, and refugees from the Middle East and Africa (Correa 2013; Selod 2015; AUTHOR 2015).

In the United States, the twenty-first century is witness to a retrenchment toward segregated schools and neighborhoods (Siegel-Hawley and Frankenberg 2012; Lichter, Parisi, and Taquino 2015). Unemployment levels for Black Americans remain double that of their white peers; and Black Americans' wealth a fraction of whites' (see Dettling et al. 2017). However we might define racial progress, it is routinely met with white rage (Anderson 2016). Even the most ostensibly assimilated Black American is reminded they are not quite American the moment they are pulled over by the police while driving in their own, predominantly white neighborhood. To move up in America, then, is not to move in. Du Bois's claim that the color-line produces among minority groups the condition of "always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" remains as true today as it was in the late nineteenth century.

At the same time, few scholars have considered Du Bois's later theorizing of the Veil as producing debilitating effects not only for racial Others, but also for whites. An important exception to this is Linda Martin Alcoff's description of whites increasingly having to see themselves through their own eyes as the universal political subject and through the eyes of a political Other that challenges their hegemonic status (Alcoff 2015, 139). The same demographic, economic, and political shifts that threaten whites' hegemonic status give rise to an

affective register of available responses for whites – shame, guilt, anxiety, fear, and so forth. Alcoff argues that because whiteness is not a monolith, some of these affective registers may manifest in more critical, race-conscious dispositions. Alcoff's theorizing of white double consciousness attends to changing social structures, yet pushes back against the more common 'racial progress' narrative' which suggests these changes produce a decline in double consciousness for minority groups, or a growth in forms of consciousness as minority groups attain more power. Importantly, Alcoff's treatment of double consciousness opens up important empirical questions. When whites' political status shifts, what are their various reactions? What social, political, and economic factors might explain why some whites develop double-consciousness while others do not? These questions strike me as fruitful 'routes' through which to empirically build upon Du Bois's consideration of whites' status within a racialized nation-state.

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