APA Newsletters

NEWSLETTER ON PHILOSOPHY
AND THE BLACK EXPERIENCE

FROM THE EDITORS, John McClendon & George Yancy

ARTICLES

Homer Greene
"Ethical Consciencism"

Tommy J. Curry
"Doing the Right Thing: An Essay Expressing Concerns toward Tommie Shelby's
Reading of Martin R. Delany as a Pragmatic Nationalist in We Who Are Dark"

BOOK REVIEWS

Lewis Gordon: An Introduction to Africana Philosophy
Reviewed by Stephen C. Ferguson II

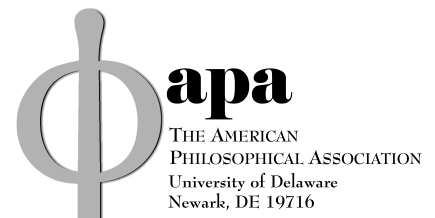George Yancy: Black Bodies, White Gazes:
The Continuing Significance of Race
Reviewed by Cynthia Willett

Maria del Guadalupe Davidson and George Yancy:
Critical Perspectives on bell hooks
Reviewed by Robert Con Davis-Undiano

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FROM THE EDITORS

This issue of our Newsletter has two very timely and provocative essays, which address the philosophical traditions ancillary with African and Black Nationalism. Homer Greene's "Ethical Consciencism" is most timely given that this year (September 2009) marks the Hundredth Anniversary of Kwame Nkrumah's birth. Greene accents the ethical dimension of Nkrumah's Consciencism with detailed attention to the ontological and political philosophy embodied in this work. We have on more than one occasion highlighted Nkrumah's philosophical thought in the pages of this Newsletter. However, Greene offers a diametrically opposed viewpoint on several critical issues concerning materialism, Marxism, and African Socialism. In the spirit of healthy dialogue and debate we present Greene's analysis for your consideration and hopefully it will inspire future debate.

Tommy J. Curry's "Doing the Right Thing: An Essay Expressing Concerns Toward Tommie Shelby's Reading of Martin R. Delany as a Pragmatic Nationalist in We Who Are Dark" is ostensibly an essay book review, but it is in substance more than what the title indicates. This essay is an affirmation of Martin Delany's philosophy of Black Nationalism with its attendant conception of race/ethnicity, group identity theory, and his definitive political/social philosophy wherein racial solidarity is foundational rather than contingent on pragmatic concerns.

There are also three important book reviews within this issue. First, Stephen C. Ferguson reviews Lewis Gordon's text, An Introduction to Africana Philosophy (Cambridge University Press, 2008). Second, Cynthia Willett reviews George Yancy's book, Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008). And, third, Robert Con Davis-Undiano reviews Critical Perspectives on bell hooks (Routledge, 2009), edited by Maria del Guadalupe and George Yancy.

We would also like to acknowledge with both respect and sadness the passing of African American philosopher Jesse McDade (1937-2009). Dr. McDade taught philosophy at Morgan State University for nearly thirty years. He will be missed as a significant voice and figure within the field of African American philosophy and the philosophy of the Black experience.

ARTICLES

Ethical Consciencism

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to posit an ethical argument for the development of a Nkrumahist based ethical system. This will be accomplished by synthesizing the arguments of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's epistemology, his philosophical argument or philosophical consciencism, his political philosophy or political consciencism, then developing an ethical epistemology or Meta-Ethical Consciencism and then finally positing Ethical Consciencism.

Introduction

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah holds the distinction of being the first black president of the first black African country to gain political independence. His political career spanned a number of years in which he was Prime Minister of Ghana (1951-1960) and helped the Gold Coast countries achieve independence, and then became president of Ghana (1960-1966), which in turn became the Republic of Ghana. He was overthrown in 1966.

He is considered the leading historical person who conceptually directed Africa in its struggle for decolonization in all of its forms and is also recognized as the seminal thinker of a united Africa and of Pan-Africanism.

> Nkrumah provides a very good example of a leader who disseminates Western and Eastern political ideas to their people and other leaders. Marx, Lenin, Garvey, Padmore, Gandhi, and also his own African traditional background stimulated Nkrumah's political ideas. Just as we cannot dismiss the foreign influence, neither can we ignore those ideas, which originated from their traditional outlook. Nkrumah was educated in the West and became familiar with Western and Eastern political thought. But what is significant is that Nkrumah, like other African political theorists, did not accept these ideas in toto, but attempted to adapt them to suit the African condition. Thus, Nkrumah was a syncretic theorist (that is, he used Western political thought giving it an African expression) [1]

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah was also a product of a Traditional African American University. He is, in my opinion, an often overlooked and unappreciated African political and philosophical theorist. He is also, in my opinion, the seminal

philosophical theorist arguing for the unification of African, Pan-Africanism, humanism, egalitarianism, socialism, ethics and its related selection of choices based upon one's conscience.

At Lincoln University, Nkrumah helped to organize the African Student Association of America and Canada and founded the African Interpreter as their newspaper. The purpose of the association was to provide a common ground for Africans and Black Americans to work together for liberation and freedom. He received a bachelor's degree in Sociology and Economics from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in 1939. He had planned to go to the Columbia University School of Journalism but because of financial difficulties he had to accept an offer to teach Philosophy at Lincoln University. In 1943, he received the Master of Arts degree in Philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania. He finished the courses and preliminary examination in two years for the Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Pennsylvania, what was left was the thesis.[2]

Historically, this paper is a further conceptual development of a paper that I wrote in 1983 entitled "Ethical Nkrumaism." In my investigation for this paper, I soon realized that it is not Nkrumaism that is the central focus of my endeavor but an investigation into Nkrumah's concept of consciencism. Therefore, I have abandoned the title of Ethical Nkrumaism for a systematic argument for Ethical Consciencism—which is the focus of this paper.

There was no agreed-upon definition of what Nkrumaism entails. But generally, the term was used in reference to Nkrumah's political concepts in the development of an African philosophy that could be political, cultural, religious, moral, economic or social in nature.[3]

Nkrumaism, then, was based on a number of Nkrumah's ideas, put together to form a vague, unsystematized philosophy.[4]

Consciencism is briefly Nkrumah's political and philosophical treaties to provide a conceptual synthesis of the three cultural influences upon the African (Traditional, Islamic, and Euro-Christian) and to provide a methodology or solution to this triad influence upon the African in his or her path toward freedom and decolonization.

I will argue later that consciencism also provides a methodology or template to reflect upon when an individual makes an ethical choice based upon his conscience.

The sense or consciousness of the moral goodness or blameworthiness of one's own conduct, intentions, or character together with a feeling of obligation to do right or to be good.[5]

Consciencism provides the moral concepts to direct an individual's moral and ethical choice. In other words, consciencism presents a belief system, in which the principles of this system can be used by an individual to make moral and ethical choices in order to gain one's freedom or to gain a feeling that one's choice was the right choice to make based upon an objective criteria.

Africans must evolve a philosophy that can provide the intellectual cohesion we so urgently need. Such philosophy must rationalize and harmonize the dominant intellectual strands in Africa's historical experience, reinstate what was noble and elevating

in traditional African society and have itself firmly linked with the common pool of world knowledge. The need is for a new philosophical synthesis which is both general and specific. Generally, because its intellectual roots can be traced to the common pool of world knowledge. Specific, because it grows out of and seeks to explain and guide the African milieu.

This new synthesis is philosophical consciencism which is the subject matter of a new book by Kwame Nkrumah just published.[6]

What Nkrumah is attempting to do with his philosophical concept of consciencism is to reconnect it with the philosophical positions of ancient and traditional Africa. Philosophical consciencism is a contemporary expression of that tradition.[7]

The purpose of philosophical consciencism is to create the intellectual stimulus that will act as the catalyst for a renaissance in the African and also in his society.

This philosophical concept of consciencism is comprehensive because it touches all areas of social, political, scientific, and philosophical interest. It also has universal application to societies or individuals that want to change their views of the world or their relationship to it. But its application is best suited for countries in Africa that are undergoing social, political, and philosophical change in a revolutionary manner. This change is occurring in the society but at the same time this change is also occurring within man.

Nkrumah extracts from ancient and traditional African society, its egalitarian and humanitarian basis and incorporates them into his philosophical conception of man and society. He wants to rescue philosophy from the protection of reaction and mysticism and develop it into a tool for understanding in the world, for understanding man, and man's ability to change it. Philosophical consciencism is a philosophy of action; it wants to show that there is a dialectical nexus between thought and action that is inseparable.

Consciencism will act as the philosophical and theoretical basis for the development of a new society; this new society will reestablish the former egalitarian and humanist relationships that are found in traditional African society. This is the type of society that Nkrumah wants to replace the past colonial and present neo-colonial governments in Africa. This ought to be the type of government that will liberate Africa and liberate man from the injustice of man by man that is experienced today on the African continent. In contemporary political theory, this society envisioned by Nkrumah would be a socialist society; however, its philosophical basis would be rooted in philosophical consciencism. "Consciencism asserts that philosophy always arose from a social milieu and that a social contention is always present in it."[8]

The goal of my philosophical investigation will be to apply Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's philosophical and political consciencism to meta-ethical and ethical concepts, thereby positing an argument for ethical consciencism. The purpose of this paper will be to develop a Nkrumahist ethical system or Ethical Consciencism. This paper will be divided into three parts. First is my investigation into Nkrumah's concept of philosophical consciencism. Second, I undertake an inquiry into Nkrumah's concept of political consciencism. Third is the development of an ethical position that I will label as Ethical Consciencism.

Consciencism

Nkrumah is a materialist, but as we will see his materialism is not the same as that of western thinkers. His view of

materialist is consistent with the ancient and traditional African cosmological view of the world. Nkrumah views all of reality as a harmony of physical forces that are in opposition to one another. He doesn't view the rationalist or empiricist idealism as the correct interpretation of reality. He sees his materialist conception, with its opposition of forces, as the correct approach to viewing reality. Hence, Nkrumah's materialist position is not the same as the materialist position taken by western thinkers. They would say that material substance is primary; however, Nkrumah would say: "The minimum assertion of materialist is the absolute and independent existence of matter. Matter, however, is also a plenum of forces which are in an antithesis to one another."[9]

Theory of Knowledge

After the above brief introduction to consciencism, let us now briefly look at Nkrumah's theory of knowledge. His theory of knowledge has its basis in dialectical materialism. Nkrumah views matter as the basis and source of all knowledge. This matter is not static but is a plenum of forces in tension with each other; hence, matter is dialectical. As a result of these forces, which are in opposition to each other, Nkrumah says that matter is capable of self-induced motion in one direction or another. This motion of matter is both unilinear and in leaps; in other words, any change in matter is both quantitative and qualitative or both evolutionary and revolutionary. The mind has an existence all its own; however, it is a product of matter. There is an interaction between mind and matter, but matter at all times is primary. This interaction between matter and mind, if we are to avoid all error, it must be said that all assumptions, theories, and conclusions are encouraged and are beneficial to society. However, these assumptions, theories, and conclusions become true or have validity only when they are confirmed through practice and in practice.

Therefore, his theory of knowledge is dialectical and it is not naïve determinism, which would limit man to his material environment. His approach is a rational approach but its foundation is based in practice. Hence, his theory of knowledge helps to safeguard man and society from irrationality, half-truths, unproved assertions, and superstitions. This theory of knowledge will subject all ideas to the test of rationality and practice. The purpose would be to reject all ideas or notions that can't withstand the test of being verified or confirmed by practice. As Nkrumah states, "Practice without thought is blind; thought without practice is empty."[10]

Categorial Conversion

Nkrumah, as a materialist, puts a great deal of emphasis upon the dialectical and process characteristics of his conception of materialism. However, he does not stop there; he recognizes the existence of the mind or spirit. He develops the doctrine of categorial conversion to indicate that while there is matter there is also mind. But these two things do not have equal status. Nkrumah would say that the primary category is matter.

> If one says that matter is the primary category, then spirit must, to the extent that it is recognized as a category, be a derivative category. And in order that propositions about spirit should make sense, there must be matter. Secondly, even when propositions about spirit make sense, in order that they be true, certain propositions about matter need to be true.[11]

What Nkrumah means by categorial conversion is the transforming of one category into another but different category. The development of another category that is different from the category that produced it. He is talking about how one category takes on the properties of mind or spirit instead of the properties

of physical matter. This process comes about because matter, which is in tension with opposite forces, has the ability of self-motion. Hence, through this tension of matter, matter has the ability to convert into mind or to develop psychological or mentalistic properties. In other words, categorial conversion is the relationship of matter to mind in which a category of self-consciousness emerges from a category that is not self-conscious.

> When materialist becomes dialectical, the world is not regarded as a world of states, but as a world of process; a world not of things, but of facts. The endurance of the world consists in process…when materialist becomes dialectical it ensures the material basis of categorial conversion.[12]

Again, he acknowledges the existence of non-material things in the world, but he indicates that their existence is secondary quality. He would say that the only existence that has primary quality and that exists independently is matter; matter has primary existence. Although spirit exists, its existence is linked to matter; it does not have independent existence as matter but only as secondary existence.

> For philosophy's model of categorial conversion, it turns to science. Matter and energy are two distinct, but, as science has shown, not unconnected or irreducible, categories. The inter-reducibility of matter and energy offers a model for categorial conversion. And another model is given in the distinction between physical and chemical change, for in chemical change physical quantities give rise to emergent qualities.[13]

Let us investigate this concept further; philosophical consciencism would disagree with the naïve monist that there exists a sole reality of matter. Philosophical consciencism says that there is the primary reality of matter but there is also a secondary reality, and this reality is mind or spirit. Philosophical consciencism also disagrees with orthodox dualism, which argues the position of the independent existence of the mind as compared with matter. According to philosophical consciencism, the mind is the result of the evolutionary and revolutionary organization of matter. This is what separates man from animals, and statements about the mind are empty unless you also make statements concerning the brain or matter. The reason for this is that without the brain or matter you could not have a mind. Hence, it is only the arrangement and organization of matter that brings about a difference in non-conscience matter and conscience matter; the mind is reducible to matter.

Philosophical consciencism also acknowledges that the mind does in fact exist but its existence is secondary. The mind is a fact, it is real, but its reality is dependent upon the reality of matter; there can be no existence of a mind without the prior existence of a brain, body, or matter. This process from matter converging into mind is made clear by Nkrumah's conception of categorial conversion. Therefore, brain and mind do exist but they represent two different categories. According to philosophical consciencism they are not really different at all; in fact, they are the same thing; matter and mind are reducible to one thing. The key point here for Nkrumah is that matter has primary existence because we can arrange matter to produce the mind but we can't arrange the mind in any way to produce matter. These two categories of mind and matter do in fact exist, but according to philosophical consciencism one category can be converted into another category.

In conclusion, by arguing that matter has primary existence, philosophical consciencism remains with its monistic and materialist foundation. However, it uses categorial conversion

to explain the facts of the primary existence of matter; the secondary existence of spirit or mind that we experience; that we should not be confused as to which one is derived from the other.

Philosophical Consciencism

Our society is not the old society, but a new society enlarged by Islamic and Euro-Christian influences. A new emergent ideology is therefore required, but at the same time an ideology which will not abandon the original humanist principles of Africa. Such a philosophical statement will be born out of the crisis of the African conscience confronted with the three strands of present African society. Such a philosophical statement I propose to name philosophical consciencism for it will give the theoretical basis for an ideology whose aim shall be to contain the African experience of Islamic and Euro-Christian presence as well as the experience of the traditional African society, and by gestation, employ them for the harmonious growth and development of that society.[14]

The driving force in philosophical consciencism is to reestablish the way of life of traditional Africa, i.e., its ethical and philosophical formulation, but its intellectual tools of analysis are taken from the various schools of philosophical thought. After rigorous examination of these various schools of thought what develops is a brand new philosophical position that is consistent with the ancient and traditional philosophical view of the world but expressed in a contemporary manner. This new philosophy provides an alternative to the confines that western philosophy puts upon the African's intellectual life, but at the same time this new philosophy can be articulated and understood in contemporary schools of thought. Hence, this new philosophy not only aids the emerging new African intellectual but also enriches the world's philosophical knowledge. This new philosophy also provides a positive guide for the new African man to develop a new progressive society.

Philosophical consciencism is not static but dialectical; therefore, it develops out of the social milieu of mid-twentieth-century Africa. Taking Africa as a whole, we see that it is influenced by three distinct civilizations; traditional, Islamic, and Euro-Christian. These different ideologies compete against one another in Africa. If we assume that societies must develop a certain dynamic unity to exist then what we must develop for Africa is a philosophy and ideology that will stop this conflict and bring about a harmony of these three ideologies. Let us not be naïve, this task will take some time to accomplish, but once this task is completed then the society can advance.

Nkrumah realizes that the solution to these competing ideologies is not a geographical separation of the three; this will only bring about more conflict. The only real solution is by way of a philosophical synthesis. This synthesis will permit a dynamic growth in man as well as in the society because when there is conflict in a society with one group competing against the other there is a lot of energy wasted, hence stagnation. That energy should be directed toward the development of a progressive society; such a philosophical synthesis is consciencism.

Philosophical consciencism, having as its ontological basis materialism, analyzes the three ideologies in African society, i.e., African conscience and ethics, Islam, and Euro-Christian thought. This analysis is the foundation for the theoretical and philosophical base on consciencism. When looking at the positive and negative influences upon Africa, philosophical consciencism synthesizes the positive qualities of these three influences and rejects the negative influences. Hence, this develops the material and scientific core for philosophical consciencism.

What philosophical consciencism is attempting to do is to develop a set of values, body of coherent principles, which will be a rational tool for incorporating or rejecting what is good and what is bad from these three ideological influences. In other words:

This ideological synthesis, which Africa needs, and which consciencism provides, is created by taking what is best in traditional Africa, Islamic Africa, and Euro-Christian Africa and blending these into a system of thought internally rational and coherent and externally capable of serving as a guide to and a yardstick of assessing all aspects of the life of our people. The dialecting of a new harmony out of the three Africas involves a dialectical process.[15]

With its task of trying to construct a new society, philosophical consciencism must fight always on three planes; at all times synthesizing the good and rejecting the bad in comparison to a test of reality. This philosophy and its theory of knowledge demand that we take such a rigorous evaluation of these situations.

Therefore, any social revolution must have as its foundation a revolutionary philosophy. This revolutionary philosophy must be brought about by an intellectual revolution, a revolution and philosophy whose aim is the redemption of our traditional society but in a contemporary form. It is from the people and their social environment that this philosophy will develop; it is from that context that our philosophy is created. This synthesis that philosophical consciencism sets out to do, as a result, will lead toward the liberation of Africa and will also lead toward the liberation of man. But for this to happen it requires two things: first, the extrication from traditional Africa of the egalitarian and the humanist aspects of traditional African society, and second, the organization of society with all its resources aimed at attaining and maintaining these aspects in a new society. This is the goal of philosophical consciencism, that of developing a new Africa and also in developing a new African.

Political Consciencism

This section of my overall analysis will be divided into two parts. I will first discuss Nkrumah's political philosophy and then I will discuss Nkrumah's political consciencism. In my opinion Nkrumah argues strongly for his political philosophy and for this political consciencism, but the ethical foundation of his preceding argument leaves me wanting for more. It is also my opinion that at the foundation of any logical political philosophy there must also be a strong, logical, ethical argument.

Let me now analyze Nkrumah's political philosophy.

Philosophy, too, is one of the subtle instruments of ideology and social cohesion. Indeed, it affords a theoretical basis for the cohesion. In The Republic of Plato, we are confronted with an example in which philosophy is made the theoretical basis of a proposed social order. In the proposal, philosophy would be an instrument of the ideology belonging to the social order proposed by Plato.

Philosophy performs this function in two ways. It performs it as a general theoretical statement to which a specific social-political theory is parallel.

Philosophy also performs this ideological function when it takes shape as political philosophy or as ethics. Through political philosophy, it lays down certain

ideals for our pursuit and fortification, and it becomes an instrument of unity by laying down the same ideals for all the members of a given society.[16]

When I was younger I used to critique Nkrumah's political thought from the position that economic development should occur before political development. Since getting older it has come to my realization that first the political sphere has to be developed along with its inherent ideology and then social, cultural, and economic spheres will develop consistent with the ideology or political philosophy of the society.

Nkrumah, arguing for the independence of African countries in general, and Ghana in particular, said that without first political independence of colonial countries, social and economic development and change would fail. "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all other things will be added unto it."[17]

I would argue that one should seek both the political and ethical kingdoms and all other things will be added unto it. In other words, seek the development of both the political ideology and its ethical guidelines and justifications toward the development of a new African society and a new African man or woman. Let me now transition to a discussion of Nkrumah's political philosophy. His political philosophy consisted of the following elements: non-violence, positive neutralism, one-party mass movement, positive action, tactical action, neo-colonialism, socialism, and Pan-Africanism.

Nkrumah's goal was to attain political independence for Ghana and then proceed to develop a political and economic transformation of Ghana. Nkrumah chose to pursue a non-violence approach towards achieving this goal. However, this did not mean that violence was ruled out! The implied other choice of violence tended to steer the British responses to the nationalist demands. He felt that once political independence was achieved then economic development would follow if the country followed specific ideological guidelines. These broad guidelines were, according to Nkrumah, "the need for a one-party system, the need for state-controlled classless society, the need to pursue socialist and planned economy, and finally, the need for a unified Africa."[18]

As part of his foreign policy, Nkrumah put forth the policy of "Positive Neutralism," which guided Ghana's relationships with countries outside of Africa. His goal was to keep Ghana in particular and other African countries out of the conflict between east and west or the Cold War.

The reverse of Nkrumah's concept of "Positive Neutralism" was another concept articulated by him, "Neocolonialism." Whereas "Positive Neutralism" kept African states from getting invaded in Cold War conflicts between the east and the west, "Neo-colonialism" was a concept whereby newly independent states would be on guard from becoming politically independent but economically dependent upon the former colonizing country or upon another state.

> Another fundamental principle of Nkrumah's political thought was his concept of neo-colonialism. By neo-colonialism, Nkrumah expressed the idea that when third-world countries gain political independence, they continue to economically depend on other countries. This concept is an enduring legacy as African and other third-world countries who have gained political independence have become victims of neo-colonialism.[19]

As a vehicle to gain political independence and to protect the state from the threat of neo-colonialism, Nkrumah argued for the development of a single mass political party. Nkrumah believed that states or countries in transition from colonialism to independence would benefit from a single mass political party that would bring about a genuine unity to all elements of the country or state—which would now be in disunity because of the fractionalizing policies of a colonial administration. In the application of his political philosophy to Ghana, Nkrumah envisioned and created the Convention's People's Party (C.P.P.), a political organization that would act as the vanguard party to bring forth the social transformations and political development of Ghana.

The essence of Nkrumah's argument for the creation of the C.P.P. was that it would be a mass political party representing the social, economic, and political expressions of the broad masses of the population. Nkrumah's single mass party arrangement also contained the following patrilinial elements: the party not only provides the government for the masses but it also acts as the political custodian whose responsibility it is to stand guard over the social, economic, and political welfare of the people.

Nkrumah's vision was basically for the development of a single mass party that took the political form of a people's parliamentary democracy. Historically, this type of political structure became a common political arrangement of newly independent states.

However, I do agree with Boateng's criticism of Nkrumah's political philosophy concerning this particular political arrangement and one's ability to gain and share power.

> What is being denied here is the existence of an opposition party as well as the self-restraint of the party. The exclusion of opposition interest is more of a Leninist than a Weberian contention which emphasizes the need to accommodate diverse and opposing interest.[20]

Nkrumah was dedicated to his concept of a single mass party state. He felt that the people's interest could best be expressed and answered if the masses of the people shared a common set of interests. He felt that these interests would be more easily expressed by a single party and by one group of leaders. However, in my opinion, the way to make such a vision work is the masses would have to accept and support a new ideology, which Nkrumah would articulate and label; this would be his ideological construct: Political Consciencism. I will discuss his concept of Political Consciencism later in this section of this paper.

Now let me outline Nkrumah's political tactics inherent in his political philosophy. Nkrumah believed the path toward political liberation was through a non-violent path. He did not rule out armed struggle but realized that the non-violent path was the easier path to take toward political independence.

He argued that this non-violent approach toward political independence takes the form of "Positive Action." His argument was based on the Gandhian approach toward political emancipation. The Convention's People's Party (C.P.P.) would use the non-violent approach of political agitation, newspaper articles, and educational campaigns. Nkrumah also indicated that if the non-violent approach did not work that the C.P.P. would then organize strikes, boycotts, and non-cooperation. Later, his political philosophy also advocated armed struggle in order for former colonies to gain political independence.

The other approach in his non-violent approach to political independence was "Tactical Action." This non-violent approach used the flexible stance of cooperating with the colonial power while all along consistently pursuing the goal of attaining political independence. As the vanguard party for political liberation, the C.P.P. employed these two non-violent strategies of "Positive Action" and "Tactical Action" as a political

application of Nkrumah's thoughts towards liberating a colony from political and economic domination. It should also be mentioned that Nkrumah was also a Marxist and also believed in armed struggle if the non-violent approach did not work.

As did Marx's and other revolutionary leaders' and political theorists', Nkrumah's political philosophy synthesized Marxism with his own theories and philosophy toward the liberation of Ghana in particular and the continent of Africa in general. "In this connection, Nkrumah is a Marxist but a unique one who syncretically adapts Marxism to Ghana."[21] "Nkrumah considered himself a Marxist theorist. This did not mean that he was in total agreement with Marxist theory."[22]

As with Lenin, Nkrumah saw the party as a vanguard political organization for the people, also agreed with the concept of "democratic centralism" in which all members of the party were equal and free to express their views, and in the development of a single-party state. Nkrumah separated from Lenin in that he envisioned the C.P.P. as a mass party. In other words, the C.P.P. was not the intelligentsia leading the people toward their political and economic emancipation. The Convention's People's Party recruited the entire population to join the party and the masses ruled themselves as opposed to Lenin's conception that an elite group would rule in their name.

As briefly outlined above, Nkrumah agreed with Marx and Lenin on various issues and approaches toward liberation. But, Nkrumah's arguments concerning class struggle and the economic sequence from one economic stage to another, he departed from Marx and Lenin.

His belief was that traditional Africa had a "classless" society and, therefore, a mass party could be created in order to address the issues presented by the masses. He also would argue that socialism was a modern expression of the traditional African economic arrangement of communalism. Based upon his arguments for communalism/socialism and the "classlessness" of traditional African societies, he would use these arguments to justify single-party rule, the repression of dissent elements in society, and use this analysis to defend his theory of African Socialism.

Nkrumah would argue that a single-party state would denote classlessness only if their party was a mass political party. In other words, the state would imply classlessness when the state itself represents that political power is held by the masses of the people.

Nkrumah and Marx would argue that the state is the political and economic expression of the domination of one class over another. Marx would argue that the state does not represent all the people, it only represents the class that is in power; but after class struggle and revolution an elite party would then represent the people though the Communist Party. Nkrumah, on the other hand, would argue that for African countries class antagonisms did not exist so after political and economic independence a single-mass political party could represent the people and the state in turn would represent the masses of the people.

> In essence, Nkrumah is making the case that a country can become socialist without having to go through the other stages, the characteristic of which is the presence of antagonistic classes. Thus, Nkrumah rejects the notion of Potekhin that capitalism is a stage African countries have to confront. If Nkrumah accepted Potekhin's thesis, it also meant his acceptance of antagonistic classes which is a fundamental attribute of capitalism. Therefore, Nkrumah completely denied that someday there may be conflict between the elite

and peasantry. By doing so, Nkrumah denied the relevance of Marxist-Leninist class struggle.[23]

Undoubtedly, Nkrumah was in opposition to the existence of classes in African societies, as for him classes divided rather than united people.[24]

Nkrumah supported socialism or scientific socialism as the economic system to replace colonial political and economic domination. However, in Nkrumah's political thinking, he rejects capitalism as a stage toward socialism. His vision of scientific socialism was that of public ownership of the means of production in order for the country's wealth to benefit the masses. That socialism truly benefits the masses and its leaders must not alienate themselves from the masses and also understand the dialectic and creativity of revolutionary struggle. That philosophical materialism is the key ingredient for scientific socialism and this philosophical foundation will be interpreted and translated into the social and ethical terms of equality.

Nkrumah's political philosophy rejected capitalism and argued for a return to traditional African social and economic relationship following political emancipation. Nkrumah believed that modernity, Islamic, and Euro-Christian influences of technology and social organization, and traditional African economic and social structures, communalism, and egalitarianism, could exist together.

I would agree that for Nkrumah, African socialism would be a socialism that is based upon the traditional African economic and social relationship of communalism, but with a contemporary technological force. However, according to Boateng:

> Nkrumah is quoted in the African Institute Bulletin that, "there is no such thing as African socialism. There is only scientific socialism which is valid the world over and we are building our society on the basis of scientific socialism." By stressing the materialist outlook, Nkrumah argued that his position was scientific because that outlook is subject to objective scientific analysis and laws; it behaves in a predictable manner. This idea was borrowed from Marx. Thus, according to Nkrumah, socialism is the outcome of dialectical material process and therefore a science.[25]

Nkrumah argues that socialism for Africa can bring forth the promised results only if its leaders pragmatically and ideologically apply its basic conceptual grid to Africa's historical development.

As briefly outlined above, Nkrumah rejected the views of Soviet scholars who argue for rigid adherence to Soviet socialist theory because they argued that it was a universal concept. Nkrumah's arguments for socialism were more flexible for use by third-world counties because they were geared toward pragmatic application of socialist theory based upon the material and historical condition of the people.

The majority of Soviet scholars argued that capitalism was a necessary stage for a country to pass through on its historical progression to socialism. Nkrumah would argue that Africa could bypass this historical stage toward socialism because traditional Africa had a communal economic system before it was invaded and taken off its historical course. What Nkrumah was arguing for was the development of socialism that had at its core traditional African beliefs and economic structures. He wanted to develop a socialism that was distinctively African, based on African communalism and social traditions, and as an economic system it would be identifiable to socialism. This departure from Soviet scholars' rigid application of

Marxism made Nkrumah a distinct pragmatic practitioner of implementing Marxism to African scholars.

Let us now transition to Nkrumah's arguments concerning Pan-Africanism and socialism. Nkrumah argued that any meaningful or material development of Africa from foreign exploitation to liberation should progress on a Pan-African path. "Nkrumah's foreign policy took two major directions; first, he devoted a great part of his foreign policy to liberation struggles in all parts of Africa. Moreover, as a Pan-Africanist, he hoped to see continental independence followed by the creation of a continent-wide United States of Africa."[26]

Nkrumah first of all was a nationalist; his primary goal was to build a nation by unifying the country into a homogeneous, consensual, and integrated society. His second goal was the development of an ideology that would economically and politically guide the state and in turn the state would represent and govern the masses of the people politically.

His most important task was the unification of Ghanaians in particular and all Africans in general. He detribalized Ghana by taking political power away from various ethnic and tribal leaders. He stressed that all ethnic groups were Ghanaian first and later Africans before being identified as Ashante, Ewe, Fanti, Ga, or Nzimah. He felt that ethnic and tribal identification and groupings separated Ghanaians and Africans from each other. The ideological basis of Nkrumah's push for a one-party parliamentary system of government was his desire to establish a representative political system to bring about unity among all divergent interest in the society.

As a Pan-Africanist, he argued that political liberators and economic development for Africa and for Africans could only be successful if first Africa was unified under a continental government. As with the division of different ethnic and tribal groups, as long as Africa was balkanized, Africa would be at the mercy of colonialism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism.

The economic and social reconstruction of Africa, Nkrumah would argue, should take the progressive path toward African socialism and egalitarianism. He felt that African socialism or scientific socialism, dialectically, was a revolutionary tool for Africa's independence and liberation. To paraphrase a famous quote by Nkrumah, his political philosophy in a nutshell was that the real political kingdom that Nkrumah was seeking for Africa was the kingdom of a unified Africa itself under scientific socialism.

Various African leaders have attempted to apply socialist theories and socialist ideologies to their countries and they have all ended in near economic disaster, political instability, or civil war. Nkrumah's African socialism or scientific socialism failed because of the moral failure of those implementing it, economic strategies of the United States and Britain to prevent Nkrumah's economic plans from succeeding—not because of conceptual flaws of his African or scientific socialism.

As a possible answer to the general question as to why socialism has failed in Africa, Boateng presents a plausible answer:

> African leaders are not ready for socialism because they do not have resources to implement it. Moreover, the implementation of socialism requires accurate data for planning, which is unavailable. During the time of Nkrumah, Nkrumah's own top-ranked government officials misappropriated public funds, and also engaged in all kinds of corruptive practices. Instead of punishing the C.P.P. officials, the C.P.P. protected those officials, as an attack against a C.P.P. official was an attack against the entire C.P.P. machinery and the nation in general. Thus Nkrumah's socialism did not yield the expected results because his socialism centralized power in the C.P.P. which in turn protected those who abused their respective positions.[27]

Political Consciencism

Let me now proceed to the second part of this analysis. I will again briefly discuss Nkrumah's Consciencism and I will then posit Nkrumah's political ideology or political consciencism.

> A major theoretical contribution of Nkrumah is evident in his notion "Consciencism." The major dimensions of Nkrumah's philosophical consciencism are: a) that independence should be won by the people for the people; b) that socialism should be the means toward development; c) that socialism should not be alienated from the people. Thus, socialism should seek a connection with the equalitarian and humanist past of the people before their social evolution was ravaged by colonialism; d) that foreign and private interests should not dominate society; and e) that the state should defend the independence and security of the people.[28]

As I also outlined above, Consciencism argues that the only way for colonial countries to gain independence is to break off from the capitalist lead systems of exploitation, to become united and politically independent, and to fight off neocolonialism. Nkrumah would further argue that this can only be accomplished by adopting principles of scientific/African socialism and the state, through a mass political party, would provide for the economic, political, and social well being of the masses. Again, Consciencism argues for the kingdom of an independent political structure to first be developed before the state can embark upon economic, social, and cultural development.

In order to understand Nkrumah, one must understand "Consciencism," which is the overarching principle of his political ideology. Nkrumah's scientific/African socialism as argued through Consciencism meant that the state through a mass political party would own the means of production and also the distribution of goods and services. His arguments also rejected capitalism in that private capital could not be the major producer of goods and services.

> When a plurality of men exists in society, and it is accepted that each man needs to be treated as an end in himself, not merely as a means, there transpires a transition from ethics to politics. Politics becomes actual, for institutions need to be created to regulate the behavior and actions of the plurality of men in society in such a way as to conserve the fundamental ethical principle of the initial worthiness of each individual. Philosophical consciencism consequently adumbrates a political theory and a social-political practice which together seeks to ensure that the cardinal principles of ethics are effective.[29]

Also:

> The social-political practice also seeks to coordinate social forces in such a way as to mobilize them logistically for the maximum development of society along true egalitarian lines. For this, planned development is essential.[30]

The political philosophy of philosophical consciencism is political consciencism; although Nkrumah did not label it as such, I am taking the liberty to do so. Political consciencism has as its main task the development of a solution to the negative influences upon Africa. This task includes developing

alternatives to the realities of disunity, neglect in the area of Africa's resource development, and to imperialism and colonialism. By themselves or together these four objective influences upon Africa have denied Africa from achieving social justice, that has its foundation rooted in the ideas of true equality.

Before proceeding further, Nkrumah makes a distinction between idealism and materialism. For him, idealism is an interpretation in philosophy, in which spiritual factors are primary and the existence of matter is dependent upon spirit. Materialism, which is the other side of the coin, says that the existence of matter is independent from anything else and that it is primary.

When observing individuals, we observe that there are both idealist and materialist tendencies inherent in individuals. In societies, also, we can observe both idealist and materialist streaks. However, these streaks do not exist in harmony but are linked to each other in a conflicting relationship in which one streak predominates for now and another streak predominates at another time.

On the political level, there are only two alternative philosophical schools of thought, that of idealism and materialism. For Nkrumah, idealism is connected to a tiered society, and its method for explaining nature and social phenomena is from the point of view of spirit. Also, idealism supports a hierarchy of class division and arrangements in which one class is subordinate to the other.

Materialism is connected to a humanist interpretation and organization of society. Being that its existence is the primary thing, monistic, all interpretations of nature and social processes are interpreted from a materialist point of view and the application of scientific laws; hence, it brings forth an egalitarian structure and organization on society. Therefore, Nkrumah says, "the unity and fundamental identity of nature suggest the unity and fundamental identity of man is society. Idealism favors an oligarchy, materialism favors egalitarianism."[31]

This opposition between idealism and materialism can also be seen in society, where you have an opposition between conservative and progressive forces. But in this dialectical opposition between capitalism and socialism, one will be dominate and then the other will be dominated; there will always be conflict between the two.

Why is it that socialism is good and capitalism is bad in political consciencism? Under capitalism, the materialist approach to nature is cast away and it also gets rid of its humanist interpretations of man for the use of profit making of man by man. For Nkrumah, happiness is defined in its relationship of man in society; happiness is the feeling that one gets when the individual is in a position to achieve his aspirations in the economic, political, and cultural spheres of society. But capitalism stops the individual's aspirations from being fulfilled because the benefits of the society is for a few, oligarchy, and they are put in conflict with the exploited masses; therefore, happiness for the majority is denied because it puts limits upon who can achieve various goods in the society.

For the above reasons and that capitalism alienates the worker from the benefits of his labor, these negative aspects of capitalism make it unworkable with the basic principles of political consciencism, which are a component of the traditional African society. Hence, capitalism is unjust and is alien to the traditional society.

Under socialism, the mastery of nature and the humanist interpretation of man are rediscovered. Man is not used for profit by other men but now the resources of the society are organized in such a way as to benefit the entire society and not just a few in the society. The idea of transformation and development is for the whole society and not for a few in that society, as is the case in capitalism. There is happiness in this society because everyone in the society is in a position to achieve the feeling of accomplishment for him and others. Everyone can aspire to obtain goods in the economic, political, and cultural context; these aspirations can be fulfilled because no limits are placed upon anyone and everyone can gain this feeling of happiness.

Now let us look at Nkrumah's concept of positive and negative action.

> He was the one who created "African Positivism," as we can term it, or "positive action" as he himself called it the best and the most adequate solution as regards the struggle in the context of British colonial domination.[32]

> We must remind ourselves at this time that all the coins of life have two sides, all realities have two aspects, the positive and the negative. To positive action, negative action has been and will always be opposed and vice versa.[33]

These terms of positive and negative action are intellectual abstractions, but they have their roots in social reality. The relationship that people enter into in society and their social interaction generates both positive action and negative action, which, when they unfold and manifest themselves, can become the determinates of social change.

According to Nkrumah, when looking at matter it seems stable in appearance, but there are forces in tension within. This is also applicable to societies under colonial rule; there is the appearance of stability but in reality there is the conflict of revolutionary forces against reactionary forces. However, any change in the relationship of the two forces will cause a change in the whole society. These opposing set of forces are dynamic, in the sense that they both are actively pursuing to establish a social order. Hence, the term positive or negative action is used to show that these interactions are dynamic. In looking at a colonialist society, you can discern positive and negative action. Positive action will be those forces of action that seek to implement social justice and to abolish an oligarchical and oppressive social system of oppression. Negative action will be those forces that want to maintain the oppressive, oligarchical relationship of the few against the many. Hence, positive action is revolutionary and negative action is reactionary.

In analyzing any relationship between the forces of positive action and the forces of negative action, there are only three observations that you can make; first, positive action may exceed negative action; second, negative action may exceed positive action; and third, that there may be an unstable equilibrium between the two.

The very foundation of political action and its practice is to maximize positive action. This process consists of maximizing, organizing, and projecting deeds, ideas, beliefs, philosophical concepts, and interpretations, etc., that will pull in the right direction for the establishment of social justice and equality. This action will in turn involve reversing negative action and the deeds, beliefs, and ideas that these concepts are based upon, which will undermine the ideal socialist society that political consciencism wants to build.

For example, in a capitalist society, Nkrumah would say that negative action is greater than positive action. Positive action or progressive political practice in such societies is the ability to build up positive action to a point where it will dominate over negative action. When this is done, then positive action

must continually grow while negative action must continually decrease.

Political consciencism does not deny the existence of the individual; in fact, it is the individual who is the material foundation of political and ethical consciencism. This belief in the individual or individualism, as long as it wants to adhere to principles that seek to support the equality of individuals among themselves, will establish the foundation for the growth of egalitarianism. But individualism by itself is not enough to indicate the form of the society that will manifest itself from these relationships of individuals. This is because individualism is also composed of dialectical forces and will lead to capitalism or it will lead to socialism.

If we consider individualism as not the granting of rights to the individual to dominate and exploit one another, but consider individualism as a right and duty for members of the society to aid and support one another and to bring forth happiness, then individualism will have a positive impact upon society. If practiced this way, it will pull the society toward socialism, which is consistent with the concept of individualism in traditional Africa.

On the political level, it is practice that is the glue that holds the society together. As stated above, political consciencism divides all actions into either positive or negative action. Positive actions are all those actions that pull a society in the direction of a just society, which is socialism. This society will be based upon the four ethical principles of ethical consciencism, i.e., the equality of all men, to treat men as an end and not as a means, the group is responsible for the individual, and the group's development is the condition for individual development. Negative actions are all the actions that push the society away from being just. These actions are much broader than just deeds, they incorporate ideas, beliefs, customs, traditions, thought processes, and philosophies.

According to philosophical consciencism, it is materialism and not idealism that will concretely bring egalitarianism and humanist principles back to Africa. Idealism brings about oligarchy, which is detrimental to African society. But materialism, which incorporates a monistic and naturalistic view and explanation of nature, will allow the society to get rid of inequalities, arbitrariness, and injustice in the society. Therefore, a just society will materialize once the humanist and egalitarian principles are incorporated into society; this society will be a socialist one. It is materialism that will be the philosophical basis for bringing about this transformation in society.

In summary, political consciencism has four basic principles that act as a guide to direct the practices of individuals in a just society. First, the dynamic ingredients for social change in society are positive and negative actions, which are discovered though scientific investigation and statistical analysis of the socioeconomic facts of life. Second, positive action is brought about by being imbued with an ideology, by operating though a mass people's party uniting all the progressive forces in society, by constant self criticism. Third, the triumph of positive action over negative action is achieved though revolutionary struggle. Fourth, the state, in a progressive society, is the instrument for establishing the hegemony of positive action. Its ideal form is the people's democracy with a one-party system, and it regulates the behavior of men and women in society in accordance with the egalitarian, humanist, and collectivist norms of social ethics.

The philosophy that must stand behind this social revolution is that which I have once referred to as philosophical consciencism; consciencism is the map in intellectual terms of the disposition of forces which will enable African society to digest the western and the Islamic and the Euro-Christian elements in Africa, and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality. The African personality is itself defined by the cluster of humanist principles which underlie the traditional African society. Philosophical consciencism is that philosophical standpoint which, taking its start from the present content of the African conscience indicates the way in which progress is forged out of the conflict in that conscience.[34]

Let me now conclude this section by stating that as a political theorist, Nkrumah's consciencism and my interpretation of political consciencism has left a conceptual legacy for Ghana, Africa, and African Americans to discuss and critique. His conceptual ideas of consciencism, scientific/ African socialism, neo-colonialism, and Pan-African have all had an impact upon African and nationalist African American thought. "Even though Nkrumah's idea of an Africa Federation did not succeed, the formation of the Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) was a significant achievement."[35]

Ethical Consciencism

Africa needs a new type of citizen, a dedicated, modest, honest, informed man. A man who submerges self in service to the nation and mankind. A man who abhors greed and detests vanity. A new type of man whose humility is his strength and whose integrity is his greatness.[36]

Ethical consciencism is the ethical component of philosophical consciencism; however, Nkrumah did not label it as such; this is the designation made by the writer.

As mentioned above, philosophical consciencism is a synthesis of the three Africas, i.e., traditional, Islamic, and Euro-Christian. Black people in Africa or in the Diaspora are influenced by two of these cultures and these influences must be taken into account when making any analysis of African people in a social or philosophical realm. What Nkrumah does is to synthesize into one philosophical system the best of these cultures.

The ethical principles or foundation of philosophical consciencism are basically five in number. First, egalitarianism, which is the view that all men are equal and must therefore be given equal opportunities to the goods and benefits of the society. Second, humanism, the view that each individual in the society is a personality and must be allowed to develop fully by being treated, by other members in the society, as an end in himself and not as a means to an end. Third, industrialism, which is the view that a highly technical industrial system should be organized on the basis of the public or common ownership of the means of production. Fourth, collectivism, the view that the group is responsible for the individual and the individual development must proceed within limits made necessary by the welfare of the group. And, finally, dialectical materialism, which is the view that asserts the primacy of matter, the independent existence of matter and mind, but recognizes the interaction between matter and mind and solves the matter-mind controversy by way of categorial conversion.

Every ideology, to be complete, must have its philosophical principles, its ethical principles, its theory of knowledge, and its theory of practice, habit formation; because thinking about doing a correct ethical action without practicing it is futile and the correct ethical practice without thinking about the context in which the act is done is accidental. Nkrumah states, "Thought without practice is empty and practice without thought is blind."[37]

Ethics, Morality, and Society

Ethical consciencism states that there is a connection between knowledge and action, but is this connection purely mechanical or dialectical? Because ethical consciencism cannot develop into a closed system of ethical rules which apply universally, at any time and to any society, it must then develop an open system. This view is based upon its theory of knowledge, which states that matter is in an inexorable dialectical evolution.

There is a dialectical connection between materialism, egalitarianism, and ethics in ethical consciencism. Materialism brings about egalitarianism, to be explained below, in society by its theory of how man ought to act toward other men; this manner of interaction between man and man brings forth an ethical position. Egalitarianism is both political and ethical; it gives society the guidelines upon how man's conduct should be in relation to other men. Ethical consciencism cannot develop ethical rules that are static and changeless, because its theory of knowledge says that matter is a plenum of forces in tension giving rise to dialectical change. Hence, the principles of ethical consciencism will never change, but the ethical rules of the society may change from time to time.

> Progress in man's conquest and harnessing of the forces of nature has a profound effect on the content of ethical rules. Some ethical rules fall into abeyance, because the situations in which they take effect lose all likelihood of recurrence; others give way to their opposite, as, for example, when a matriarchal society changes into a patriarchal one; for here many ethical rules arising from the position of the women will have to give way to those arising from the new position of man. And yet, the principles standing behind these diverse clusters of ethical rules may remain constant, and identical as between society and society.[38]

Therefore, ethical consciencism would assert that ethical rules are not static or cast in stone but are dialectical and depend upon the advancement of history and the development of the society. However, the cardinal principle of egalitarianism and humanism will be preserved and will remain constant. In society, it does not change its ethics by just changing its ethical rules; it must change its principles that the rules rest upon; hence, only when the ethical principles of the society have changed will there be a change in the ethics of the society.

What is the moral and social theory of ethical consciencism? When we analyze morality we interpret it to be a network of principles and rules which are used as a guidepost for us to appraise and judge our conduct. It is these principles and rules that give our actions legitimacy, and we use them to support our moral decisions and opinions. The morality of ethical consciencism is based upon the cooperation of all the people for the common good.

The moral and social theory of ethical consciencism finds its foundation in two primary sources: from its materialism, discussed below, and from its extraction of the essence of African traditional society. From its materialism is extracted the ethical principle of the equality of man. This view expresses the basic belief of Africans that man is an end in himself and is not just the means to an end. From African traditional societies and traditional life is extracted the principle that the group is responsible for the individual; this is the form that equality of man takes in the traditional African society. Hence, because of the relationship of the group to the individual, the group is responsible for the individual; the free development of the individual is conditioned by the free development of all.

Therefore, we can say that the moral and social theory of ethical consciencism finds its foundation in these four

principles; that is, that all men are equal, that man is an end in himself and not just the means to an end, that the group is responsible for the individual, and that the free development of the group is the condition for the free development of the individual. The basis of ethical consciencism finds its expression in the first two principles and that latter two principles are expressed in the field of social philosophy. What is important here is that the principle of the individual's development being conditioned by group development finds its very essence in traditional African life. "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am."[39]

Humanism, Egalitarianism, and Ethical Consciencism

According to Nkrumah, the African personality is impregnated with humanist and egalitarian principles that are at the very foundation of African society. In addition, according to Nkrumah, the traditional African also believed in the absolute and independent existence of matter. They believed that matter had the powers of self-motion, as explained above. They also believed in categorial convertibility, and they believed in anchoring their fundamental ethical principles in the nature of man.

The traditional interaction of the African among members of his society and the attitude derived from this interaction toward other men can only be described, in social terms, as being communalistic or socialist. The reason for this is that man in African societies is regarded as primarily a spiritual being. A being put here on earth composed from the beginning with an internal dignity, integrity, and values.

Hence, in Africa we find a humanism that is manifested and is inherent in a political and ethical system that we identify as communalism. It is a system in which everyone in the community is each other's keeper; in other words, everyone in the society watches out for the welfare of everyone else. This basic ethical belief was at the very foundation of the society and acted as a catalyst for the development of egalitarianism, which also existed in traditional African societies. Therefore, in traditional African societies, the welfare of the people was supreme; neither sectional interest, interest group, nor the legislative or executive group in the society had more importance than the welfare of the people.

Besides humanism, the other ethical principle of ethical consciencism is egalitarianism. Nkrumah would say that egalitarianism finds its foundation in matter, as being the basis of all things. But matter, although being one thing, has various manifestations. These manifestations are not unilinear but are random; they have one root, matter, but their ramifications vary from this root. In other words, these manifestations are dialectical with matter being at its base; however, these manifestations of matter follow objective laws and there is a deterministic unfolding in which every manifestation is derived.

For ethical consciencism, matter, although dialectical, is that which egalitarianism is founded upon. In other words, we look at man and he is one as a human being, but man has also evolved in various ways from this material base. Hence, in humanity, matter, we find the material base to develop egalitarianism upon.

In developing rules of conduct for human interaction, rules must be general and they must be objective and guarantee impartiality. This quest for impartiality is the outer shell of egalitarianism; it is the fundamental basis of how man should interact with other men.

Egalitarianism, in ethical consciencism, enables the society to create the conditions that will enhance individual

development, but this social organization will be structured in such a way that it will create the condition for the development of all in the society and these conditions in turn will create the conditions for the development of each person in the society. However, these conditions for the development of humanity and society must not in any way promote any relationship that will destroy the egalitarian base of the society. "This idea of the original value of man imposes duties of a socialist kind upon us. Herein lies the theoretical bases of African communalism. This theoretical basis expressed itself on the social level in terms of institution such as the clan, underlining the initial equality of all and the responsibility of many for one."[40]

Ethical Conversion

Let us take Nkrumah's argument a little further; I hope that he would agree with me. With the above understanding, we can look at the individual as a material and spiritual being that is also composed of tensions that are in opposition to one another. We can say that according to Nkrumah's analysis, man ought to make his decisions based upon positive action.

When we observe a human being, according to Nkrumah's argument, he will either make a choice based upon positive action, or one based upon negative action, or if he can't make a choice he will find himself in an unstable equilibrium or indecision; however, sooner or later he will have to make a choice.

Hence, a positive decision or action would be one that supports the principles of egalitarianism and humanism. Negative decisions or actions would be those that are contrary to egalitarian and humanist principles. If, however, a person can't make a decision, then he will be caught up in an unstable equilibrium and it will depend upon which forces are dominate to determine what choice he will make. Therefore, in accordance with the above analysis, when man makes his decision there will be three possible situations. First, if positive action exceeds negative action then we will have an ethical decision. Second, if negative action exceeds positive action then we will have an unethical decision; however, there may be no decision made and the person will find himself in an unstable equilibrium in which, at some time, he will have to make a decision.

There is a moment, which Nkrumah calls a dialectical moment, in which the greater force will manifest itself. Individuals ought to decide based upon positive action and the principles they imply; hence, after the dialectical moment the force that will be dominant will be that of positive action, and therefore an ethical decision. Of course, if the opposite occurs, then negative action and an unethical decision will be produced.

The ethical person for Nkrumah is one who makes his decisions based upon positive action, a human imbued with humanitarian and egalitarian principles and one that is consistent with these principles. As long as she makes her decisions based upon positive action and develops a habit of deciding this way, then this person is an ethical human; also, her consistent positive behavior will safeguard her from making decisions based upon negative actions, which are unethical.

The beauty of this argument for me is that Nkrumah looks at humanity as being material and composed of forces in tension, and through conversion, man makes his decision based upon what type of society and what type of human he wants to develop. With positive action, human beings will develop into humanitarians and egalitarians. Society will be one based upon those principles, which is a socialist society. This socialist society will be consistent with the ethical and political society of traditional Africa.

Therefore, ethical consciencism has as its main focus the individual, and it separates positive and negative action based upon the four principles of ethical consciencism. Political consciencism has as its main focus the whole of the society, but its foundation is based upon the four principles of ethical consciencism and its own principles for practice; hence, philosophical consciencism and its own principles for practice. Finally, philosophical consciencism is a materialistic approach to developing an ethical society based upon ethical and political principles taken from the three influences upon Africa. This theory is particular to Africa but there can be universal applications of its basic principles.

The Fabric of Ethical Consciencism—Meta-ethical Consciencism

Let us bring this section to a close. There is a nexus between political consciencism and ethical consciencism. One is the greater and the other the lesser but both are concerned with the development of the just society and the just man. They both establish rules and ideas for us to pursue and to incorporate into our lifestyle; however, because of its egalitarian and humanist principles, it will be an apparatus for bringing about unity, in the society, by having these rules and ideas obeyed and accepted by everyone in the society.

Philosophical consciencism is the epistemological path that this Nkrumaist society follows. Political consciencism is the ideology that this society follows. Ethical consciencism provides the foundation for how a just man or woman makes his or her choices in the new African society.

Philosophical consciencism with its materialist foundation provides the metaphysical foundation for political and ethical consciencism. Stated differently, there is a synthesis of political consciencism and ethical consciencism, which are components of a broader concept of philosophical consciencism.

According to the above analysis, how is the cloak woven in order to protect and benefit man from other men who would do him harm? The cloak would represent philosophical consciencism with its materialist base. The threads of this cloak would be warped into a fabric consisting of threads of philosophical consciencism and the other threads of political consciencism.

However, individuals still have to make their own decisions as to how they will exist in the climate in which the cloak protects them. How do humans make individual moral choices while being protected by the cloak that protects all of society? These decisions will be based, according to the above analysis, upon positive or negative actions.

Consciencism, the designer label inside this cloak, is the meta-philosophical treatise that propounds that a new African man, imbued with the principles of consciencism, can make choices based upon positive action to benefit African societies as opposed to choices based upon negative action which do not benefit African societies.

The threads of this philosophical cloak protects man from other men, but what protects and guides man in his everyday decisions as he conceptually interacts with reality? I would argue, as outlined above, it is ethical consciencism. Consistent with the above analysis, a positive ethical action is one in which the positive behavior is intended, and when an ethical decision is made based upon humanism and egalitarian principles. An individual's intention to do an action based upon the principles of humanism and egalitarianism and the individual's fulfillment of that intention is an ethical action for which an individual can be held accountable and commended for.

On the other hand, a negative ethical action is one in which the negative behavior is intended—when an ethical

decision is intentionally not made based upon humanitarian or egalitarian principles. An individual's intention to do an action not based upon the principle of humanism and egalitarianism and the individual's fulfillment of that intention is an ethical action for which an individual can be held accountable and condemned for.

In other words, this philosophical cloak is designed by consciencism; the threads of philosophical consciencism and political consciencism are woven together in order to protect the individual. The individual must make moral choices in order to establish societal unity and a social contract with other individuals. The individual is guided in making these moral choices by basing these decisions upon the principles of ethical consciencism.

I would like to again paraphrase a famous Nkrumaist quote by saying that humans should first seek ye the philosophical kingdom based upon philosophical consciencism, then seek ye the political kingdom based upon political consciencism, then seek ye the moral kingdom based upon ethical consciencism and then everything else will be added onto it.

Are, as outlined above, Nkrumah's Consciencism and my arguments for Political Consciencism and Ethical Consciencism relevant and viable today? I would argue that the above construct can be used as a viable analytical and philosophical tool in evaluating, understanding, and giving value to the ontological existence and experience of Africans in particular and Africans in the diaspora in general. All African people have ontologically experienced psychologically, socially, politically, and philosophically one or more of the Euro-Christian, Islamic, or traditional African influences on culture and belief systems. For example, in Africa the experience is Euro-Christian, Islamic, and Traditional. In the United States, African Americans have mainly experienced the Euro-Christian and traditional African beliefs, especially in the south, and the Islamic experience to a lesser extent.

In addition, as did Mao and Castro, Nkrumah adopted Marxism to fit the ontological and historical experiences of Africans. His political and philosophical interpretations of Marxist theory would also guide young African and African American scholars who become interested in Marxism and its philosophical and political manifestations in China, Cuba, and Africa.

Consciencism's task is to give birth to a new African society and a new African man who must always fight on three planes—the philosophical, the political, and the ethical. This new African personality must synthesize the good or positive ethical and political actions and reject the bad or negative ethical and political actions by comparing and deciding what action to choose based upon the test of reality—dialectical and historical materialism—and that his or her actions are consistent with the traditional African principles of humanism and egalitarianism.

These mental ethical choices are explained by the concept of ethical conversion in which the development of an ethical choice is made from the tension of choices. The choices are made based upon positive or negative ethical choices or the choosing with intention a course of action consistent with the principles of Ethical Consciencism or contrary to it. A positive ethical choice will push the society and the individual close to the ethical ideals of humanism and egalitarianism. A negative ethical choice is contrary to this elevation of the society and the individual. However, there are times when the tensions of choices are in an unstable equilibrium and a choice cannot be made from the myriad of choices in tension. This is when an individual must intentionally, at some time, make a choice to either stay in this state of unstable equilibrium by not making a

choice, or make a choice based upon the principles of Ethical Consciencism or positive ethical action.

> Nkrumah's tendency to view traditional African society as classless strongly goes against the grain of authentic Marxist thought and, in an important respect, marks Nkrumah as a syncretic theorist. Essentially, he was arguing for a change in culture, which was a rather "idealist," not materialistic approach to social change. In other words, Nkrumah was not contented to wait until capitalist development transforms society and provoked the final class struggle. Instead, he was arguing for a social revolution, not just an economic one. Moreover, his cultural referents were traditional, indigenous, and that was something way out of line with Marxist theory, which is universalist and unsympathetic with traditional cultural values (always remember Marxism is a secular and universalist theory). But from our perspective, this is an asset, because it provides us a way of discussing Nkrumah as a unique social theorist syncretically adapting Marxism to Ghana. Nkrumah combined Marxism and Nationalism, emphasizing Ghanaian and African traditions as part of its valuable national heritage.[41]

For students of philosophy and ethics, Consciencism, both philosophical and political, and my Ethical Consciencism presents a new Afrocentric philosophical and ethical system for further investigation, comparison, and analysis.

Conclusion

This paper was written in an effort to explain Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's position on philosophy and ethics. I felt that his ethical arguments weren't developed far enough and I tried to expand upon them, which was the major focus of this paper. Nkrumah is a teleologist because his ethical theories are put forth in such a way that the consequences of their actions will bring about benefits for man and for society.

The ultimate principle of ethical consciencism is egalitarianism; that of treating each man as an end in himself and not merely as a means, which is at the basis of traditional African and socialist concepts of humanity. Kant also came to this conclusion, but he made it a command to reason, a universal law. He was a deontologist and this is where Nkrumah and Kant separate. Another separation is that Nkrumah is a materialist and his principles develop out of the real world, whereas Kant develops his arguments from a philosophical idea of the nature of humanity.

Nkrumah's ethical theories are also philosophical; however, he seems to be attempting to bring about a synthesis. Earlier in this paper, I demonstrated that Nkrumah held that one's ethical principles need not change, whereas the rules established on such ethical principles may change; hence, the ethical principles are commands to reason or statements that can be generalizable, but are based upon the material realities of human beings. The rules will change based upon the consequences that they bring to the society. These fundamental principles will bring about the benefits of a just society based upon egalitarianism and a just humane society based upon humanism, all generating out of a materialist conception of human beings and society.

Nkrumah's philosophical treatise centers on the concept of consciencism, which is the belief that one can recognize the right or wrong of his actions. This is a cognitivist position because of the ability to recognize the rightness or wrongness of one's actions.

This may pose a problem for some because of its simplicity; however, for Nkrumah its simplicity is what makes it so powerful. For an ethical act to be good on the whole we must know by some way that its existence is preferable than its non-existence. To concretely know that any act is right is to know that there is no possible alternative that is more preferable than it. This assumes that you can have some empirical knowledge of this value. This is what Nkrumah is arguing in support of. He is saying that through positive action, with its inherent fundamental principles, we can come to know what the correct relationship between human and human is, and what the correct relationship between individual humans and society is. These principles are preferable because they are based upon egalitarianism and a humanist idea of humanity, which, for Nkrumah, is the social refection of materialism. Therefore, by using positive actions as a guide, human beings can come to reason about what is to be an ethical person and what is an ethical society. "These African historigraphical reactions to the first comings of Christianity and Islam must be revisited in our restoration of an appropriate methodology of our project. One of the echoes of this approach to African historiography is the Triple Heritage Thesis put forth by Kwame Nkrumah…"[42]

Endnotes

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2. Ibid., p. 58.
3. Ibid., p. 9.
4. Ibid., p. 9.
5. Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (Merriam-Webster Inc., Publishers, Springfield, Massachusetts, 1984), 278.
6. Editors of The Spark, "Some Essential Features of Nkrumaism" (New York: International Publishers, 1965), 103.
7. The author is currently working on a paper entitled, "The African Philosophical Tradition: The Ethical Tradition."
8. S.G. Ikoku. "Aspects of Consciencism." Pan-African Review 1 (1964): 94.
9. Kwame Nkrumah. Consciencism, rev. ed. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 79.
10. Ibid., p. 78.
11. Ibid., p. 22.
12. Ibid., p. 25.
13. Ibid., p. 21.
14. Editors of The Spark, p. 113.
15. S.G. Ikoku, Aspect of Consciencism, p. 95.
16. Nkrumah, Consciencism, p. 66.
17. Boateng, Nkrumah's Consciencism, pp. 1-2.
18. Ibid., p. 28.
19. Ibid., p. 140.
20. Ibid., p. 130.
21. Ibid., p. 6.
22. Ibid., p. 27.
23. Ibid., pp. 35-36.
24. Ibid., p. 31.
25. Ibid., p. 38.
26. Ibid., p. 88.
27. Ibid., p. 143.
28. Ibid., p. 3.
29. Nkrumah, Consciencism, p. 98.
30. Ibid., p. 98.
31. Ibid., p. 75.
32. Amilcar Cabral. Cabral on Nkrumah (Paige, Jihad Productions, 1973), 3.
33. Ibid., p. 4.
34. Nkrumah, Consciencism, p. 79.
35. Boateng, Nkrumah's Consciencism, p. 3.
36. Kwame Nkrumah. Africa Must Unite (London: Heinemann, 1963), 130.
37. Nkrumah, Consciencism, p. 78.
38. Ibid., p. 94-95.
39. John S. Mbiti. African Ailigion and Philosophy (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday and Company, Inc.), 141.
40. Nkrumah, Consciencism, p. 69.
41. Boateng, Nkrumah's Consciencism, p. 140.
42. World History Project, The Preliminary Challenge, edited by Jacob H. Carruthers and Leon C. Harris. Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations, 1997, p. 63.

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Doing the Right Thing: An Essay Expressing Concerns toward Tommie Shelby's Reading of Martin R. Delany as a Pragmatic Nationalist in We Who Are Dark

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Abstract

In Tommie Shelby's recent book entitled We Who Are Dark, he argues that Martin R. Delany is a pragmatic nationalist. According to Shelby, pragmatic nationalists view Black solidarity as a contingent strategy for achieving social quality, rather than an essential, biological identity. This article argues that Shelby's conceptualization of pragmatic nationalism simply does not exist in Delany's actual text. Instead, I argue that pragmatic nationalism is a dangerous revision to Delany's thought that reduces his brilliance to an imitation of integrationist rhetoric and liberalist dogma.

Introduction

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 his thought in African American philosophy. Most recently, 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 entitled: "Two Concepts of Black Nationalism: Martin Delany on the Meaning of Black Political Solidarity,"[1] and the "Foundations of Black Solidarity: Collective Identity or Common Oppression?"[2] Extending upon arguments made in these aforementioned works on Black solidarity, Shelby claims that he has drawn from Martin R. Delany

a notion of Black solidarity and Black political theory that is compatible with (Rawlsian notions of) political liberalism and contemporary (anti-essentialist) accounts of racial identity in the United States.[3] While multiple reviews of Shelby's We Who Are Dark have questioned the viability of Shelby's conceptualization of "racial identity," the viability of multi-racial/ethnic coalitions, and his understanding of racism in the post-civil rights era,[4] no scholar to date has ascertained whether Shelby's reading of "pragmatic nationalism" actually exists in the works of Martin R. Delany, or is simply an idiosyncratic interpretation of Delany created to suit the political and ideological leanings of Shelby's liberalist inclinations. Why then has such an obvious question not been asked about Shelby's reading of Delany?

Because African American philosophy is still marginalized and ostracized by mainstream philosophy as a less rigorous application of philosophical training,[5] there is a concerted effort to make African American philosophy appear rigorous through the utilization of "legitimate" theories to describe Black experience. Tommie Shelby's We Who Are Dark is simply one of the more recent examples of this much too common practice in African American philosophy that rewards creative interpretations of Black thinkers that negotiate the racist legacy of American liberalism and European philosophy with conciliatory theories of diversity and racial compassion over and against scholarly evaluations of those thinkers' actual thought. By ignoring key texts, inventing illusory continuities with established white philosophical traditions, and eliminating meaningful discussions of race and culture with charges of essentialism, philosophy continues to actively enforce an anti-Black moratorium on any attempts by Black philosophers to address the drastic cultural, social, and political conditions of African-descended people in America outside the liberal political frame. Because philosophy, or rather the sensibilities of most whites in philosophy, denies the pessimism of most historic Black thinkers as an adequate theorization of America's contemporary race relations, there is a disciplinary expectation that "rigorous" race work will utilize contemporary political language and popular (white) consensus to describe America's gradual move toward racial equality.

By questioning Shelby's reading of Delany as a "pragmatic nationalist," and his interpretation of Delany's Principia of Ethnology, I hope to demonstrate that Tommie Shelby's work on Delany is marred by a subtle, but serious "failure to grasp" that fails to break convincingly from or genuinely contribute to current Black political theorizations of race and racism in African American philosophy. Worst yet, I argue, Shelby's work continues the unapologetic revisionism of Black authors toward white idealizations of liberalism and anti-essentialism that simply were not present in the mid- to late-1800s, and perpetuates the erroneous idea that it is only to the extent that Black thinkers conform to our contemporary ideas of social equality that their work is philosophically relevant.

A Summary of Delany's Philosophy of Race

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"[6] 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."[7] 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."[8]

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."[9] This was a common opinion during the mid-1800s that many Black theorists understood 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]."[10] While this was certainly a major impetus in Delany's justifications for pursuing emigration,[11] 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 believed moral suasion is useless on whites, and is absolutely impotent as a political strategy for equality.[12] 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"[13] 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.[14] 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."[15] "Thus between 1850 and 1852," says Cyril Griffith, "Delany finally reached the conclusion that equality for black people in America was unattainable."[16]

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 one 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.[17] If it is assumed that Blacks are 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.[18]

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 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 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," Blacks have embraced their difference over their similarity 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.[19]

In a previous work, I have argued that Delany is working within a nationist tradition—an 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," while simultaneously admitting that political and racial equality in the United States is in fact impossible.[21] 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 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.

I take nationalism to be a natural conceptualization of Delany's thinking, 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…"[22] It is from this basis that I have argued that scholars should consider the possibility that Delany's philosophical nationism 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.

Shelby's Interpretation of Pragmatic Nationalism

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."[23] 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."[24] The problematic to which Shelby refers resides in the inability of Black political culture to adequately acknowledge the "loss of race as a viable concept in the biological sciences and anthropology"[25] 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."[26] 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,"[27] 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."[28] Instead, "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.[29]

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."[30] For Shelby, the use of Black solidarity for anything but racial equality can be counterproductive.[31] 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 a premise that is 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 equality. 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."[32] 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 newfound world of equality?

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.[33]

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 commits himself to understanding 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.[34]

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 his vying for political office.[35] Floyd Miller, for instance, maintains that "although neither Martin R. Delany nor any other black emigrationist would explore West Africa against during the 1860s, 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."[36] 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 1830s, any compromise with equality of opportunity in a democracy such as this country claimed to be.[37]

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,"[38] 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 organization like the Liberian Exodus Joint Stock Steam Ship Company[39] and personally financed the sailing of the Azor.

Against Shelby's reading, Delany presents himself to be a thinker that 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.[40] 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.[41] 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

While Shelby's work engages Delany from an established investment in Black Americanism and equality,[42] it is not the understanding of race and solidarity that Delany endorsed in The Condition (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."[43] "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."[44] Given the historical gap between Kymlicka and Delany, since Kymlicka is writing in the twenty-first century and Delany in the nineteenth, 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 1800s or the outlook Black thinkers should have now.

Besides the appropriateness of contrasting Delany's use of nation with that of Kymlicka, 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 1840s. 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."[45]

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 permanent 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."[46] 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,[47] Delany understood a nation within a nation as a "distinct class"[48] that sought to establish a national character of fixed aims or goals.[49] 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 an historical legacy. It is ironic to say the least that Shelby ignores Woodson's contribution to Delany's thought in his work, 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,[50] which claims Rev. Lewis Woodson was the first to author a program of pragmatic nationalism. According to Miller,[51] 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."[52]

Although Tommie 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 Martin R. Delany has an intellectual indebtedness to Lewis 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."[53] This practically mirrors Woodson's understanding of nations who also believed 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.[54]

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 definition of a nation presented in 1849. "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,"[55] 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 this concept of family became synonymous with the idea of race.[56]

The Philosophical Import of Delany's Principia of Ethnology

Delany's last major work, Principia of Ethnology: The Origins of Race and Color (Hereafter Principia) was his most definitive articulation of race.[57] 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."[58] By making races, God marked men with a distinction that would "fix in the people a desire to be separated by reason of race affinity."[59] This racial affinity was not simply a natural or essential designation, rather it was a process through which races—the historical groups of people—co-authored 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"[60] 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."[61]

As a corroborating analysis, some contemporary Africanist historians have become very interested in Delany's use of hieroglyphs, and have concluded that Delany's attempt to reconstruct an African past is in line with his attempts to make the knowledge of Africa's civilizations a present reality in America. 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."[62] Whereas Shelby is committed to describing Delany's Principia as a text committed to the idea that "race is only skin deep,"[63] 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 as the Principia is practically the only surviving text of Delany's thinking in the late 1800s.

> 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 not only an understanding of the African past, but a more salient political future for African Americans.[64]

Whereas decades of Black historians and Black scholars have encountered Delany's Principia as being consistent with Delany's Pan-Africanism and Nationalism with a certain level of historical certainty, Shelby wants to insist that his reading of Delany's Principia as a creative prose rather than a serious work in anthropology achieves the same scholarly contribution as decades of scholarly investigations. On Shelby's account,

> In his Principia of Ethnology, Delany stressed his view that all humans, of whatever race, have common ancestors—Adam and Eve, and then later Noah and his wife. Moreover, the separation of Noah's offspring into three distinct groups did not give to each resulting population any special attributes, except a common language, and, on Delany's account, linguistic peculiarities just happened to correspond to differences in skin color. He insisted furthermore, that God did not change the physical constitution of the three groups; thus, any biological differences that existed between them would have been the result of normal physiological processes.[65]

Unfortunately, much of what Shelby claims about the Principia cannot be verified when one actually appeals to Delany's text. In fact, Delany in many ways argues the exact opposite of Shelby's reading of him.

According to Delany, races did not exist prior to the "dispersion," because every human being was of the same complexion (color).[66] Shelby's description intentionally leads the reader to believe the division of races as Black, white, Asian, etc., existed in Delany's account of Adam and Eve and Noah and his wife. This is manifestly untrue. Delany thought "Noah and his family were Adamites, himself and wife undoubtedly of the same color as that of their progenitors, Adam and Eve. And from the Garden of Eden to the Building of the Tower, there was but one race of people known as such, or no classification of different peoples."[67] Separate "racial groups" did not come about until God commanded Noah's three sons to inhabit different corners of the earth. Delany is quite clear on this point. He argues it is

> When by Divine command to go forth through the earth, the separation took place, the people led by the three sons of Noah, began a new progress in life, as three distinct peoples, of entirely different interests, aims, and ends. Shem remained in Asia; Ham went to Africa, and Japheth journeyed to Europe, permanently and forever severing their connexion with each other, henceforth becoming different peoples and divided as though they never had been united. And then the different Races of the Human Family had just begun.[68]

Because Shelby so adamantly insists on reading Delany as a humanist and liberal political thinker, his encounter with Delany's text is irreparably skewed towards his own ethical and political sensibilities of race. This bias is clearly apparent in Shelby's account of Martin R. Delany's views on miscegenation. Working from the perspective that "Delany's commitment to racialism was, at most, half-hearted, invoked merely to lend credence to his claims of black national distinctiveness and to link modern blacks to their symbolic ancient progenitors,"[69] Shelby erroneously concludes that "Delany was not particularly disturbed by so-called miscegenation."[70] According to Shelby, Delany "did not suggest that interracial reproduction

compromises or retards the 'black essence.' Nor did he view 'race-mixing' as a practice that has negative biological consequences, either for the 'mixed-bloods' or for the so-called pure races."[71] In order to eliminate the traditional reading of Delany as a racialist, Shelby wants to impose upon Delany the possibility inter-racial marriage as an accepted strategy for dealing with America's race problem. However, Delany is clear that mixed races are abnormal races, and that miscegenation can never be a strategy for dealing with American racism. What Shelby does not tell the reader is that Delany did not believe that the three sterling races (Black, white, and yellow) could ever be destroyed. Since races were of divine origin, Delany believed that all "mixed races" would one day return to their sterling origins. Because Delany's words on this matter so sharply contradict Shelby's reading, I feel it necessary to present in length his complete view of miscegenation and race formation. On these aforementioned matters, Delany says,

> that it may be indelibly fixed on every mind, we place on record the fact, that the races as such, especially the white and black are indestructible, that miscegenation as popularly understood—the running out of two races, or several into a new race—cannot take place. A cross only produces one of a mixed race, and a continual cross from a half blood on either side will run into the pure original race, either white or black; the fourth cross on one side from the half-blood perfecting a whole blood. A general intermarriage of any two distinct races would eventually result simply in the destruction, the extinction of the less numerous of the two; that race which preponderates entirely absorbing the other…The three original races in complexion and texture of hair are sterling…

> If indeed it were true, that what is implied by miscegenation could take place—the destruction of all or any of the three original rules by the formation of a new race to take the place of either or all, then indeed, would the works of God be set at naught, his designs and purposes thwarted, and his wisdom confounded by the crafty schemes of poor, mortal, feeble man. Nay, verily, as long as earth endures, so long shall the original races in their purity, as designed by God, the Creator of all things, continue the three sterling races—yellow, black, and white—naming them in the order given in Genesis of Shem, Ham and Japheth.

> The sterling races when crossed can reproduce themselves into their original purity, as before stated. The offspring of any two of the sterling races becomes a mixed race. That mixed race is an abnormal race. Either of the two sterling races which produced the abnormal race may become the resolvent race.

> That is, when the offspring of a mixed or abnormal race marries to a person of a sterling race, black or white, their offspring is a quadroon; and if that quadroon intermarries on the same side, and the intermarriage so continues to the fourth cross on the same side, the offspring of this fourth intermarriage is an octaroon (whether black or white), and therefore becomes a pure blood. The race continuing the cross to its purity is the resolvent race, and each offspring of the cross till the fourth is an abnormal race, when the fourth becomes sterling or pure blooded. Hence to speak of a mixed race as being changed by a resolvent process, simply means that the change is being made by one

race alone, which must result in normal purity of either black or white, as the case may be.[72]

Rather than clarifying the insights of Delany's text, Shelby relies on his own anecdotal interpretations of Delany's personal life to offer evidence of Delany's philosophical and political thinking on race. Shelby tries to convince the reader that Delany's marriage to Catherine Richards Delany, a bi-racial woman, demonstrated his support for interracial unions, but he ignores the work of Tolagbe Ogunleye, who argues that Delany proposed to solve "intraracial ostracism, as well as other color-caste system complexities, by having sterling (pure African) men and women marry and couple with 'mixed raced' men and women to revert back to a more homogeneous color and stock."[73] Delany whole heartedly believed that "if what is implied by miscegenation could take place…then indeed, would the works of God be set at naught, his designs and purposes thwarted, and his wisdom confounded by the crafty schemes of poor, mortal, feeble man."[74] It is this divination of races, the inevitability of God's three sterling creations to endure in the world, which simply does not allow Shelby to usurp Delany's thought without committing violence against and condemnation towards Delany's texts.

Conclusion

Though Shelby acknowledges the unjustifiable marginalization of African American philosophical thought, it is precisely this marginalization that his work takes advantage of through his peculiar appropriation of Martin R. Delany. Because there are virtually no active engagements with Delany's texts in African American philosophy and an absence of any scholarly contextualization of the debates between Martin R. Delany, John E. Bruce, Alexander Crummell, Edward Blyden, and Fredrick Douglass—debates which in many ways define ante-bellum Black political thought—there is no readily enforceable standard of interpretation or contemporary scholarly engagement with figures like Delany that can gauge the quality of "new scholarship" on these "old Black thinkers." This lacuna between contemporary works on Black philosophical figures and the active knowledge of these figures in the field of African American philosophy highlights a particular vulnerability of the field. Whereas various disciplines maintain a certain rigor and intellectual integrity around their respective progenitors, African American philosophy commits itself to a perpetual revisionism that forces historical Black figures' thought to conform to popular race agendas. What is perhaps most dangerous about Shelby's reading of Delany is that it condemns the intellectual productions of African American theorists to the narrow confines of traditional white political thought. To the extent that Black thinkers, like Delany, are read as the racial embodiments of contemporary white ideals, Black philosophers, past and present, will remain idle artifacts of history appropriated only when needed as "colored" testaments to the dominant political current of the times. As Black philosophers and scholars of Black thought, we cannot continue to valorize historical Black thinkers by the degree to which their thought can be made to conform to the dominant moralizations of liberalism and racial integrationism held by many post-civil rights thinkers as a matter of pertinaciouness and dogma.

Endnotes

1. Tommie Shelby. "Two Conceptions of Black Nationalism: Martin Delany on the Meaning of Black Political Solidarity." Political Theory 31 (2003): 664-92.
2. Tommie Shelby. "Foundation of Black Solidarity: Collective Identity or Common Oppression." Ethics 112 (2002): 231-66.

3. Shelby's essay entitled "Race and Social Justice: Rawlsian Considerations," Fordham Law Review 72 (2004): 1697-1714, provides an interesting background to understanding Shelby's theoretical framing of liberalism and the free individual. Ironically, this work has not been cited in current attempts to understand his political theory.

4. For examples of this tendency, see Bill E. Lawson, "We Who Are Dark," Notre Dame Philosophical Review (2006). Accessed December 11, 2008. The review can be viewed at: < http://ndpr.nd.edu/review.cfm?id= 6281> ; Neil Roberts, "We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity by Tommie Shelby," Souls 9.2 (2007): 184-86; Bryan Sinche, "Tommie Shelby: We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity," H-Net Reviews in the Humanities and Social Sciences (2007): 1-3. Accessed December 11, 2008. The review can be viewed at:< http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id= 13643>

   This is not to ignore other critical reviews of Shelby's project. For examples, see Orlando Patterson, "Being and Blackness," New York Times, January 8, 2006. Accessed December 11, 2008. This review can be viewed at: < http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/08/books/review/08patterson.html?pagewanted= 3&ei= 5090&en= 432af0f495e2c9dc&ex= 1294376400&partner= rssuserland&emc= rss> , and Dwayne Tunstall, "Book Review: We Who Are Dark," Essays in Philosophy: A Biannual Journal 9.2 (2008). Accessed December 11, 2008. Review can be viewed at: < http://www.humboldt.edu/~ essays/tunstallrev.html>

5. Tommie Shelby agrees with this assessment. He says, "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." (We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity [Cambridge: Belkap Press, 2005], 13)

6. 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.

7. Ibid., 41.

8. Ibid., 42.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., 43.

11. Martin R. Delany. "The Political Destiny of the Colored Race." In The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism, edited by Sterling Stuckey (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972 [1854]), 199; Delany, The Condition, 216-20.

12. Delany, The Condition, 67.

13. Ibid.

14. Racial realism is the Derrick Bell's term used to describe the permanence of American racism. For a discussion of Delany's connection to this tradition, 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.

15. Robert S. Levine. "Introduction." In Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 220.

16. 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.

17. Delany, The Condition, 170.

18. Delany, "The Political Destiny," 199.

19. Delany, "The Political Destiny," 202.

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

21. 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.

22. Delany, The Condition, 38.

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

24. Shelby, We Who Are Dark, 255.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., 244-45.

27. Ibid., 247.

28. Ibid., 251.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., 245.

31. Ibid., 254.

32. Ibid., 255.

33. Shelby, We Who Are Dark, 53. It is also interesting that John H. Bracey, Jr. criticized the work of Cyril E. Griffith for similar inferences back in the late 70s; see John H. Bracey, Jr., "A Book Review of The African Dream: Martin R. Delany and the Emergence of Pan-African Thought by Cyril E. Griffith," Journal of Negro History 62.1 (1977): 104-106.

34. 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, edited by Edwin S. Redkey (New York: Arno Press, 1971); John E. Bruce, The Selected Writings of John Edward Bruce: Militant Black Journalist, edited by 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]).

35. 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 nationalists 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.

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

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

38. 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, edited by Leon Litwack and August Meier (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 149-71, 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*, edited by Robert S. Levine [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003], 452-55, 453).

39. See "The African Exodus," in *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader*, edited by Robert S. Levine (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 466-67.

40. See "Delany for Lieutenant Governor, South Carolina State Election of 1874: Two Speeches," in *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader*, edited by Robert S. Levine (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 442-47, 444.

41. 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.

42. 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), or Richard T. Ford, "Race as Culture? Why Not?" *U.C.L.A. Law Review* 47 (1999-2000). 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.

43. Shelby, *We Who Are Dark*, 27.

44. Ibid.

45. Delany, *The Condition*, 221.

46. Ibid., 42.

47. 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.

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

49. Woodson, "Ten Letters," 121.

50. Gayle T. Tate. "Prophesy and Transformation: The Contours of Lewis Woodson's Nationalism." *Journal of Black Studies* 29 (1998): 209-33.

51. Floyd J. Miller. "The Father of Black Nationalism: Another Contender." *Civil War History* 17, no. 4, (1971): 310-19.

52. Tate, "Prophesy and Transformation," 213.

53. Martin R. Delany. "Political Economy." In *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader*, edited by Robert S. Levine (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 149.

54. Delany, "Political Economy," 50.

55. Delany, "The Political Destiny," 197.

56. It is also interesting to note the relationship between Delany's thinking about races as families, and Alexander Crummell's and W.E.B. DuBois's arguments in 1897 stating that "races are families." For a discussion of Alexander Crummell's definition of races, see Alexander Crummell, "The Race-Problem in America," in *Africa and America* (New York: Negro University Press, 1969), 46-47. For DuBois's definition, see W.E.B DuBois, "The Conservation of Races," in *The American Negro Academy Occasional Papers 1-22* (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1969).

57. 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]).

58. Ibid, 16.

59. Ibid, 27.

60. Ibid, 68.

61. Ibid, 72.

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

63. 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 1800s, 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 Champollian. To say then as Shelby does, that Delany presents 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).

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

65. Shelby, We Who Are Dark, 44.

66. Delany is quite clear that,

> Until the Dispersion, Races as such were unknown, but must have been recognized at that time, doubtless at the period of that event, which brings us to the enquiry, What was the Original Man? There is no doubt that, until the entry into the Ark of the Family of Noah, the people were all of the One Race and Complexion?

> It is, we believe, generally admitted among linguists that the Hebrew wor Adam (adham) signifies red—dark-red as some scholars have it. And it is, we believe, a well-settled admission, that he name of the Original Man, was taken from his complexion. On this hypothesis, we accept and believe that the original man was Adam, and his complexion to have been clay color or yellow, more resembling that of the lightest of the pure-blooded North American Indians. And that the peoples from Adam to Noah, including his wife and sons' wives, were all of one and the same color, there is to our mind no doubt. (Martin R. Delany, Principia [Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1991], 11).

67. Delany, Principia, 13.

68. Ibid., 37.

69. Shelby, We Who Are Dark, 47.

70. Ibid., 46.

71. Ibid.

72. Martin R. Delany, Principia, 91-93.

73. Tolagbe Ogunleye. "Dr. Martin R. Delany, 19th Century Africana Womanists: Reflections on His Avant-Garde Politics Concerning Gender, Colorism and Nation Building." Journal of Black Studies 28.5 (1998): 628-49, 636.

> It is also important to point out that Ogunleye does not find any evidence that Catherine Delany was specifically "bi-racial" than any other Black woman in Pennsylvania and in many ways exemplified, just as her husband, a richly developed racial loyalty and African consciousness. Despite Ogunleye's profound historical engagements, and Shelby's citing of her work on page 267 (footnote 24) of We Who Are Dark, he simply ignores her findings concerning Delany's view of race.

74. Delany, Principia, 92.

BOOK REVIEWS

An Introduction to Africana Philosophy

Lewis Gordon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Pp. xii + 275. $29.99 (paper); $90.00 (cloth)

Reviewed by Stephen C. Ferguson II
(North Carolina A & T State University)

In the 1970s, the African-American philosopher William R. Jones—the founder and first chairman of the APA Subcommittee on the Participation of Blacks in Philosophy—brilliantly argued for the legitimacy and necessity of Black Philosophy.[1] For many in the philosophy guild, what has come to be called Africana philosophy was a "bastard philosophy" or a "semantic monstrosity." Since that time, the legitimacy of Africana philosophy has generally been accepted despite the "polite racism" of many analytical philosophers.

In the last thirty years, we have been witnesses to the explosion of a vast array of books and journals related to Africana philosophy and the philosophy of the Africana experience. Percy E. Johnston started the Afro-American Journal of Philosophy, the first academic journal dedicated to philosophy and the Black experience, in 1982. In 2007, we saw the emergence of the Collegium of Black Women Philosophers founded by Kathryn Gaines among others. In 2008, Cambridge University Press—as a part of its Introduction to Philosophy series—presented us with An Introduction to Africana Philosophy, the "first comprehensive treatment of Africana philosophy," authored by Lewis R. Gordon, the Laura H. Carnell Professor of Philosophy, Religion, and Judaic Studies at Temple University.[2]

Any book about Africana philosophy is necessarily selective and likely to engender debate, argument, and conflict. To offer a truly comprehensive account of Africana philosophy would be to reproduce, or at least summarize, every single article, dissertation, and book written by philosophers from Africa and the African diaspora. Not only would this be a mammoth task for any one writer, but also the problem would remain of deciding which philosophers warranted discussion. In light of the problems associated with writing any history of philosophy, we should be aware of the obvious fact that Gordon's book An Introduction to Africana Philosophy is implicated in constructing a particular view of Africana philosophy. It is a selective reading of the history of Africana philosophy from an existential-phenomenological perspective. While there is nothing inherently wrong with approaching the history of Africana philosophy from an existential-phenomenological perspective, we should be aware of how it serves as a conceptual lens for Gordon.[3]

Gordon's book is divided into two parts: (1) "Groundings," and (2) "From New World to new worlds." The first part of the book is concerned with outlining the modern social, historical, and political context for the development of Africana philosophy in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. In the second part, "From New World to new worlds," Gordon discusses the various contemporary philosophical trends in African-American, Afro-British, Afro-Caribbean, and African philosophy.

The first and perhaps crucial question which any historian of philosophy must face is what should be denominated as "philosophy." This metaphilosophical problem is no small task particularly as it relates to Africana philosophy. What is Africana philosophy for Gordon? How does Gordon decide

who makes the cut in his introduction to Africana philosophy? Who are the major as opposed to minor philosophers in his philosophical landscape? Should a nonphilosopher be regarded as a major philosopher vis-à-vis a professional philosopher? What philosophical traditions, trends, or schools of thought exist within Africana philosophy?

Gordon defines Africana philosophy as a species of Africana intellectual thought which involves "theoretical questions raised by critical engagements with ideas in Africana cultures and their hybrid, mixed, or creolized forms worldwide" (Gordon, 1). Much later, Gordon argues that Africana philosophy as an area of philosophical research is limited to "the problems faced and raised by the African diaspora" (Gordon, 13). He goes on to argue that three fundamental elements of Africana philosophy are (1) concern with philosophical anthropology, (2) liberation and social transformation, and (3) reflective critique on the role of reason itself and its relation to (1) and (2) (Gordon, 91-92). Gordon seems to imply that Africana philosophy is primarily a "philosophy born of struggle" and concerned primarily with issues like whiteness, blackness, racism, or white supremacy. Africana philosophy would appear to be nothing more than critical race theory.

I would suggest that Gordon employ a more useful analytical distinction which draws a line of demarcation between Africana philosophers and the philosophy of the Black experience. The difference here is a qualitative one that is rooted, nonetheless, in a quantitative relationship. The former is more general in scope and is inclusive of all Black philosophers without regard for the exact nature of their philosophical works and practices. The latter, in turn, are those identifiable philosophical efforts toward elaborating on the precise characteristics and implications of the African American experience. I think it ought to be noted that Black philosophers need not (and have not) exclusively engaged the Africana experience as an area of inquiry.[4] Take, for example, the African-American philosopher Berkley Eddins (University of Michigan, 1961) who examined the philosophy of history in his scholarly articles, "The Case for Philosophy of History," "Speculative Philosophy of History," and book Appraising Theories of Histories (1980). Based on Gordon's conceptual framework, does Joyce Mitchell Cook's work on value theory fit within the pantheon of Africana philosophy? She was the first African American woman to covet the Ph.D. in philosophy from Yale University in 1965 and wrote her dissertation on A Critical Examination of Stephen C. Pepper's Theory of Value. Or what about Wayman McLaughlin (Boston University, 1958) who wrote an article on "Plato's Theory of Education: A Reevaluation."[5] Of course, such work on the part of African American philosophers does not mean that the Black experience did not function as a background assumption for many of these thinkers.

Gordon fails to recognize the categorical difference between intellectual history and the history of philosophy. In the preface, Gordon informs us: "The work at hand transcended the history of philosophy by demanding an interrogation of the distinction between historical work in philosophy and philosophical work in the history of ideas" (Gordon, ix-x). In principal, Gordon follows Paget Henry who argues: "long before there were professors of philosophy there were philosophers." As such, an Africana philosopher is "an individual who exhibits a distinct type of self-reflective activity that others recognize as both wise and profound."[6]

In contrast to Gordon, I would contend that the center of interest of any history of philosophy must be philosophical ideas themselves. As Theodor Oizerman remarks, for the historian of philosophy "the main task is to understand that [philosophical] doctrine, to appreciate it critically, to show its connection with other philosophical doctrines, a connection that must in some way or other be conditioned by the socio-historical process."[7] No doubt it is necessary to point out that the history of philosophy does not proceed in vacuo. Many of the great works of the history of philosophy have attempted to relate a philosopher or a philosophic movement or theory to the "Spirit of the Age" or to social and economic developments. This is important!

However, because of his failure to separate Africana intellectual history from the history of Africana philosophy, Gordon assigns very different weights to the importance of many individual professional philosophers who stand within the tradition of Africana philosophy. On the positive side, Gordon has done a good job of "unveiling" many Africana thinkers of philosophical significance such as Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, Anténor Firmin, and Zara Yacob. To speak of Africana philosophy as a philosophical tradition demands that we go beyond a narrow range of particularly well-known figures such as Alain Locke, Cornel West, and the like.

However, in whatever way one is likely to define intellectual history, or to relate the history of philosophy to it, it would seem that one must grant that philosophy, like mathematics or science, to some degree possesses its own internal history which is not to be submerged in general intellectual history. There are, as Gordon clearly points out, networks of connections among the works of philosophers, and it is through these connections that there arose the tradition with which historians of philosophers are concerned. On the other hand, as we have also seen, this tradition exists only in so far as men and women have a desire or need to deal with those sorts of intellectual problems which we have come to call philosophical. My only point is that while Africana intellectual history greatly influenced the history of Africana philosophy, the two are distinct. Yet, his methodological approach fails to distinguish Africana intellectual history from the history of Africana philosophy.[8]

The pitfalls of Gordon's approach can be gleaned from his discussion of the "three pillars of African-American philosophy." Gordon argues that the three "greatest influences" on contemporary African-American philosophers are Anna Julia Cooper, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Frantz Fanon. While Gordon should be applauded for his attempt to revitalize Black intellectual figures who have been mummified, this does a great disservice to three forgotten pillars of African-American philosophy: Patrick Francis Healy (the first African-American to receive the Ph.D. in philosophy—outside the United States from the University of Louvain in 1865), Thomas Nelson Baker (the first African-American to receive the Ph.D. in philosophy—within the United States from Yale in 1903), and Joyce Mitchell Cook (the first African-American women to receive the Ph.D. in philosophy from Yale in 1965).[9] Certainly it is the case that without these individual's sacrifices the current generation of African-Americans would not be able to publish with such prestigious publishers as Cambridge University Press.

My insistence that Gordon's book should primarily be concerned with the internal dialectic of Africana philosophy in no sense precludes him from acknowledging the influence of, say, science upon the concerns of Africana philosophy. Yet, we should note that Gordon does not offer us a sustained discussion of any Africana thinkers who engaged with science such as Frederick Douglass' engagement with evolutionary theory, Eugene Holmes' materialist approach to the philosophy of space and time, or Roy Morrison's writings on Einstein's theory of relativity. Have Africana philosophers been concerned with issues such as atheism, creationism, evolutionary theory, quantum mechanics, Einstein's theory of relativity? If we only read Gordon's book we will never know.

John McClendon makes note of a major problem found in many recent books on the history of African-American philosophy. He observes,

> Unfortunately, some scholars of African-American philosophy have a view of its history which is not founded on the rigorous empirical assessment of actual historical evidence. Their presumptive context for the very idea of what constitutes African-American philosophy is often grounded in implied and preconceived notions about its history, rather than in the results of explicit research projects directed specifically at history. One prevailing and dominant preconception is that the history of African-American philosophy is essentially one that derives from nonacademic (rather than academic) intellectuals. In fact, nonphilosophers are often given priority over those actually trained as philosophers.[11]

While McClendon's observations are in its immediacy concerned with the history of African-American philosophy, I think they are applicable to the general category of Africana philosophy. This problematic is especially evident in Gordon's An Introduction to Africana Philosophy. His book provides us a clear example of privileging nonphilosophers in order to justify the existence of a tradition of Africana philosophical thought. Now, given the racist character of academic philosophy over the last two centuries, Gordon is certainly justified in embarking down the road of racial vindication. However, there is a real danger in racial vindicationism because it tends to offer an anachronistic interpretation of Black intellectual history and culture. Moreover, Gordon's conceptual framework paints a portrait of a Black philosophical canon which gives priority to the nonphilosophers vis-à-vis academic philosophers.

A case in point, Gordon opens the introductory chapter with a discussion of the origins of philosophy. As the traditional narrative goes, philosophical thought has its origins in Greece. And the etymology of the term philosophy derives from the conjunction of two Greek terms, philo (love) and sophia (wisdom). However, as Gordon notes, the term philosophy is derived from Phoenician and Hittie words, which are in turn adoptions of ancient Egyptian words. He cites in support of his argument Enrique Dussel, Martin Bernal, and Theophile Obenga. Now, Obenga has done important work detailing the nature of classical African philosophy. However, why does Gordon completely ignore the work of George G. M. James? Whatever controversy may surround James' Stolen Legacy, the Guyanese born philosopher presents a historico-philosophical interpretation of the African origins of philosophy. In his 1954 magnum opus, James fervently argues that Greek philosophy is a plagiarized version of classical African philosophy. James was one of the many academic philosophers whose career was restricted to historically Black colleges and universities. Until his mysterious death in 1954, he taught at several HBCUs including Livingston College (as a Professor of Logic and Greek), Johnson C. Smith (as a Professor of Languages and Philosophy), Georgia State College (as a Professor of Mathematics and Dean of Men), Alabama A & M (as a Professor of Social Science), and finally Arkansas A. M. & N. (as a Professor of Social Sciences). Unfortunately, while James gained recognition from his contemporaries, today's scholars of the history of Africana philosophy such as Gordon see James and many others like him as not deserving of scholarly attention.[12]

In a similar vein, there is no serious discussion of Marxist philosophy as a philosophical trend in Africana philosophy. Gordon dedicates a considerable amount of space to the Black political scientist Cedric Robinson and what Gordon calls his "anthropology of Marxism" as found in his important anti-Marxist tome Black Marxism.[13] Despite the tremendous influence of Marxism in the Africana world throughout the twentieth century, we find Gordon is either unaware or ignores the influence of Marxist philosophy. There is no sustained discussion of Nkrumah's Conscienscism, one of the first attempts, by an African (professional) philosopher, to formulate a Marxist philosophical analysis of African conditions and the struggle against imperialism. Nkrumah's philosophical importance is limited to the development of African humanism. All we get from Gordon is a rather cryptic reference to Nkrumah's conscienscism as "critical material consciousness" (Gordon, 192). There is not one citation dealing with the work of the Black Marxist philosopher Eugene Holmes.[14] Holmes did impressive work in developing a materialist conception of space and time. He also did work in the general area of the philosophy of the Black experience writing essays on African-American socio-political philosophy, the aesthetics of Black art, and such individuals as W. E. B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, and Alain Locke. Recently, in George Yancy's monumental African-American Philosophers: 17 Conversations, several African-American philosophers (including Albert Mosley, Leonard Harris, and Joyce Mitchell Cooke) spoke about Holmes' role at Howard University's Philosophy Department. How could Gordon ignore one of the African-American philosophers who made giant steps in Marxist philosophy? If Gordon is engaged in Black intellectual history, then how can Gordon ignore the Marxist "school of thought" which emerged at Howard University in the 1930s and 1940s, and which included Alpheus Hunton, Abram Harris, Ralph Bunche, E. Franklin Frazier, Doxey Wilkerson, Eric Williams, and Harold Lewis?

While Gordon does not ignore the Marxist philosopher and historian C. L. R. James, there is no discussion of his great philosophical work, Notes on Dialectics: Hegel-Marx-Lenin. Oddly enough, Gordon places James in the camp of "Afro-Caribbean Marxism" or "Afro-Caribbean historicism" rather than the more appropriate school of thought, "Marxism-Leninism." While Gordon lavishes great praise upon the contribution of James to African philosophical thought, he says nothing about what James considered as his greatest philosophical work, Notes on Dialectics: Hegel-Marx-Lenin. Did I already say this was a philosophical work? Moreover, Gordon has nothing informative to say about John McClendon's excellent book on James' Notes on Dialectics. In line with a post-structuralist reading of James, Gordon argues—in a footnote, I might add—that McClendon's work on James' Notes on Dialectics is "an effort to sublate James's thought into a more narrow and unfortunately sectarian conception of Marxist-Leninism."[15]

While Gordon does mention Angela Davis, arguably (today) the more publicly known among past Communists of African American descent, who has had a very long and strong history of activism and scholarship around racism, sexism, and Black political prisoners. After graduating from Brandeis University in 1965, she spent two years teaching philosophy at Johann Wolfgang von Goethe University in Frankfurt, West Germany, before studying under the philosopher Herbert Marcuse at the University of California–San Diego. She went on to become a philosophy lecturer at UCLA. When the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) informed the California Board of Regents that Davis was a member of the CPUSA, they—urged by then-California Governor Ronald Reagan—terminated her contract in 1969. He doesn't mention any of the following Communists who greatly influenced (and preceded) Davis such as Grace Campbell, Williana Burroughs, Claudia Jones, Eslanda Robeson, Maude White, Miranda Smith, Velma Hopkins, Marvel Cooke, Esther Cooper Jackson, and Charlene Mitchell and treated sexism within the dialectic of class exploitation and racism.

Yet, all is not lost! Gordon does provide a rather interesting discussion of recent trends in Africana philosophy. In rather broad strokes Gordon highlights various schools of thought in Africana philosophy: pragmatism, analytical philosophy, feminism, Afrocentrism, postmodernism/poststructuralism, existentialism/phenomenology. He does a good job of bringing to the forefront the recent work of Black women philosophers such as Naomi Zack, Joy James, Patricia Hill-Collins, Jennifer Lisa Vest, Anika Mann, and Kathryn Gines. Perhaps the strongest sections of the book are discussion of the "existentialist-phenomenological" tradition and chapter 5, "Afro-Caribbean philosophy"—both of which he is intimately familiar with. The last chapter on modern or contemporary African philosophy centers on the themes of African humanism and invention. This section is the most disappointing chapter to read because it fails to deal with the dialectical development of African philosophy in the last thirty years. I find it criminal that Gordon, in a "comprehensive treatment of Africana philosophy," blithely ignores the seminal work of African philosophers such as Paulin Hountondji, Marcien Towa, P. O. Bodunrin, and the late Henry Odera Oruka. Given the influence of Paulin Hountondji's critique of ethnophilosophy, why does Gordon ignore Hountondji's African Philosophy: Myth and Reality?

Despite the many flaws in the book, we should applaud Gordon's efforts in documenting the history of Africana philosophy. However, I would caution that if one is predisposed to use this text for a course on Africana philosophy, I strongly suggest that this book be supplemented with D. A. Masolo's African Philosophy in Search of Identity, Tsenay Serequeberhan's African Philosophy: Essential Readings, Paulin Hountondji's African Philosophy: Myth and Reality, George Yancy's African-American Philosophers: 17 Conversations, Naomi Zack's Women of Color and Philosophy, John McClendon's "The Afro-American Philosopher and the Philosophy of the Black Experience: A Bibliographical Essay on a Neglected Topic Both in Philosophy and Black Studies," and Lucius T. Outlaw's recent article, "What is Africana Philosophy?" in addition to articles from Black philosophers such as Fabian Eboussi-Boulaga, Lansana Keita, Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, Thomas Nelson Baker, Eugene Holmes, William R. Jones, Albert Millard Dunham, Gilbert Haven Jones, Charles Leander Hill, William T. Fountaine, Forrest Oran Wiggins, Roy D. Morrison, Michele M. Moody-Adams, and so many others forgotten by Gordon and left out of the annals of academic philosophy.

Endnotes

1. William R. Jones. "Crisis in Philosophy: The Black Presence," Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association 47 (1973-4): 118-25; and "The Legitimacy and Necessity of Black Philosophy," The Philosophical Forum 9 (2-3) (1977-78): 149-60. For a similar statement, see Roy D. Morrison II, "Black Enlightenment: The Issues of Pluralism, Priorities and Empirical Correlation," Journal of the American Academy of Religion (1978): 217-40.

2. This is based on the publisher's summary on the back of the book.

3. For further discussion of Gordon's existential-phenomenological approach, see Paget Henry, "Afro-American Philosophy: A Caribbean Perspective," in Caliban's Reason (New York: Routledge, 2000): 144-66.

4. For a similar argument, see William R. Jones, "The Legitimacy and Necessity of Black Philosophy," The Philosophical Forum 9 (2-3) (1977-78): 149-60.

5. See Winston-Salem State College Quarterly, Spring 1967. While at Boston University, he was a classmate and good friend of Martin Luther King, Jr. In 1958, under the direction of Millard and Bertocci, McLaughlin finished his dissertation—The Relation between Hegel and Kierkegaard—at Boston University. He taught for nearly thirty years at North Carolina A & T State University (Greensboro, North Carolina) before retiring in 2003. For an example of McLaughlin's work on the philosophy of the Black experience, see "Symbolism and Mysticism in the Spirituals," Phylon 24, 69-77.

6. Paget Henry. Caliban's Reason (New York: Routledge, 2000), 21.

7. Theodor Oizerman. Problems of the History of Philosophy (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), 7.

8. For a discussion of the methodological difference between history of philosophy vis-à-vis intellectual history, see Richard Rorty, "The historiography of philosophy: four genres," in Philosophy in History: Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy, edited by Richard Rorty, J. B. Schneewind, and Quentin Skinner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 49-75. See also John H. McClendon, "The African-American Philosopher and Academic Philosophy: On the Problem of Historical Interpretation," APA Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience 4(1) (Fall 2004): 1-9.

9. On Thomas Nelson Baker, see "History: On the Power of Black Aesthetic Ideals: Thomas Nelson Baker as Preacher and Philosopher," The A. M. E. Church Review 117: 384 (October-December 2001): 50-67; See James O'Toole, Passing for White: Race, Religion and the Healy Family, 1820-1920 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002). There are no articles or books related to Joyce Mitchell Cook. However, see the insightful interview by George Yancy in African-American Philosophers: 17 Conversations (New York: Routledge, 1998): 263-86.

10. See Frederick Douglass, "The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered: An Address Delivered in Hudson, Ohio, on 12 July 1854," in Douglass Papers, Vol. 2, 497-525. See also Waldo Martin, The Mind of Frederick Douglass (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), particularly, chapter 9. See Roy D. Morrison, Science, Theology and the Transcendental Horizon: Einstein, Kant and Tillich (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1994).

11. John H. McClendon. "The African-American Philosopher and Academic Philosophy: On the Problem of Historical Interpretation." APA Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience 4(1) (Fall 2004): 4.

12. George G. M. James. Stolen Legacy (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954). See the review of James' Stolen Legacy by the pioneering historian of ancient Africa William Leo Hansberry, "Stolen Legacy," Journal of Negro Education 24(2) (Spring 1955) 127-129.

13. For a critical discussion of Cedric Robinson from the standpoint of Marxism, see John H. McClendon III, "Marxism in Ebony Contra Black Marxism," ProudFlesh: New Afrikan Journal of Culture, Politics and Consciousness 6(2007), and Greg Meyerson, "Rethinking Black Marxism: Reflections on Cedric Robinson and Others," Cultural Logic 3(2) Spring 2000.

14. See John H. McClendon, "The Philosopher, Rebel," Freedomways 22(1) (1982); McClendon, "Eugene Clay Holmes: Black Marxist Philosopher," in Philosophy Born of Struggle, edited by Leonard Harris (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall-Hunt, 1983), 37-50; and Percy E. Johnson, Phenomenology of Space and Time: An Examination of Eugene Clay Holmes' Studies in the Philosophy of Space and Time (New York: Dasein Literary Society, 1976).

15. Gordon, An Introduction to Africana Philosophy, 166n16. For a discussion of the problems with reading James as a post-structuralist, see my essay review of McClendon's book, C. L. R. James's Notes on Dialectics: Left-Hegelianism or Marxism-Leninism, APA Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience Spring 2005 4(2): 1-6.

Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race

George Yancy (Rowman and Littlefield, 2008). 250pp including notes. ISBN 0-7425-5297-7, $75.00; ISBN 0742552985 pbk, $29.95; ISBN 9780742552975, $75.00; ISBN 9780742552982 pbk, $29.95

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It is the summer of 2009, and President Barack Hussein Obama has just nominated Sonia Sotomayor to serve as a justice of the Supreme Court. If she is approved, she will become the first Latina on the Court. In a controversial remark that she made in a speech from 2001, she describes her contributions to our predominantly white judicial system in terms of her experiences as a Latina: "I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn't lived that life."[1] She makes a reasonable observation given the continuing significance of race and gender in our society. But with her nomination to the Supreme Court, this remark hit the press, prompting the Rush Limbaugh republicans to rant on hysterically over the return of identity politics. This minor flair-up of paranoia is likely to only further isolate the republicans given that it comes at a time of continued celebration and high approval rating for the first African American president. However, Sotomayor's remark serves as a reminder for what we as a nation may too easily forget: The first African American president as celebrated in our mainstream media is less black than post-black. The problem is that we are not yet a post-black, post-racial, or post-ethnic nation. Not any more than we are a post-feminist one.

In his bold and brilliant book Black Bodies, White Gazes, George Yancy draws upon his experiences as a black male and philosopher in a context in which whites would prefer to recognize black people not as black but as post-black. He writes of white students in his classes who refuse to believe his experiences of anti-black racism although the evidence is all around them, and of a white professor who wonders why he would ever slip into black dialect in his written work when he can write in perfectly good English. The naïveté of the good-willed white is that he or she demands a post-black world when in fact the world is not yet post-white.

The irony of white ignorance would be funny if it were not so terribly tragic in its consequences. Yancy reminds us of the incarceration and poverty rates for blacks as he describes in lucid terms the everyday signs of black phobia among whites. This phobia is heard in the sounds of car doors locking shut as the black male body walks by: "Click. Click. Click.…The click ensures their safety.…[and] seals my identity as a dark savage," Yancy writes (xix). And it appears in the nervous look of the white woman in an elevator as the closing door leaves her alone with a black man. But the click is also the sound of the maximum security prison lock-down and the visceral aversion to the black body in the public school system in most of the major U.S. cities, certainly here where I write from in Atlanta. The implication is clear: The near ridiculous phobic clicks and nervous looks of paranoid whites set the stage for the twin horrors of the weakening public school system and the growing U.S. prison system.

Yancy reminds us that the U.S. was born as a nation of the middle passage, and that the specter of that violence continues to haunt our political landscape today. With Sartre,

Yancy names that failure to own up to our racial inheritance as part of our legacy of bad faith. This failure mars what we call freedom, not just at a political level, but also deeper down at a metaphysical level. In the midst of what we call freedom, we are hollowed out by the corrosive effects of "white lies" and self-deception. Or so our murky political landscape reveals itself to Yancy as he interprets his experiences together with those found in narratives penned by such authors as Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, and Frederick Douglass through the strenuous demands of an existentialist political ethic.

Central then to these demands is the examination of racial politics not only through the grid of economic exploitation or social phobia and political exclusion but on the metaphysical plane of bad faith. Yancy's ethical appeal is lodged on this plane. This plane is defined through multiple vectors of force that he develops by drawing upon a multitude of theorists of race and oppression from many traditions (including existentialism, phenomenology, Fanon studies, critical legal studies, and American pragmatism). Among these many traditions, from Simone de Beauvoir he learns to decipher the undercurrent of white politics as a symptom of the "serious man." The serious man and woman in the context of North American race relations do not question the values of whiteness that have worked their way in to our attitudes or expectations, but instead treat these values as part of the natural landscape. Beauty is just white skin, and white privilege is just merit. The serious attitude preempts any genuine exercise of free choice. But what the serious man and woman call beauty or merit in fact names their free ride on the back of an unquestioned system of white supremacy. Along with Shannon Sullivan, Yancy discerns the most recalcitrant arena of prejudice not in cognition or consciousness but in the visceral responses and habits of white embodiment.[2]

The white gaze is part of a system of oppression that saturates life and closes off any obvious way forward. But this does not mean that this gaze is always and everywhere effective. Yancy observes that he is fully capable of resisting the white gaze of the woman who pulls back from him in the elevator: "I am not dependent upon her recognition. Indeed, to 'prefer' that she see me differently does not bespeak a form of dependency. Rather, my preference is suggestive of my hope of a radically different world. On another day, for example, I might say, 'To hell with it. I simply don't care if she changes or not.' Today, I would rather that she stand and deliver. The subtext is a moral critique that she get her shit together" (6).

A priori the black body is judged guilty. To assume mutual recognition as a moral norm under these conditions would be, as Yancy explains, "a form of pathology." The plane of moral decision is conditioned by fear and deception. Until we alter the plane, any effective moral claims are of the order of those we might make on the white gaze in the locked car or the nervous eyes in a corner of an elevator. These claims are not of the deontological form—they are not of the order of an unconditional respect for the other—but of the order of "get your shit together." As long as the ethical plane turns on the axis of white supremacy, the plane of moral encounter is conditioned.

There is no universal moral point of view for the same reason that there is no universal or neutral knowing subject: "To say that any knower can know what I do about the white woman's racist gesture would render my experiences and similarly shared experiences that other Blacks have had under similar circumstances irrelevant. To argue that any and all knowers can simply open their eyes and see the white woman's gesture as racist is to flatten out significant differential histories…. Black people constitute a kind of epistemological community for the same reason that white people do" (6-7).

Whiteness is that willful ignorance of an alternative frame of reference. "The white woman thinks that her act of 'seeing' me is an act of 'knowing' who I am, of knowing what I will do next, that is, hers is believed to be simply a process of unmediated or uninterpreted perception" (17). Given the tragic consequences, we might call this seeing that is also not seeing "white hubris."

But then what moral lever might the black existentialist or the white race traitor engage to undo white identity and its parasitic relation to black bodies? There is no universal epistemological position or moral point of view upon which one might lodge an appeal across the kind of racial divides that Yancy encounters, for example, with the white woman in the elevator. His approach must itself be more visceral. He decides to "impact her habitual mode of embodied racism through the process of triggering a sense of shame: 'Miss, I assure you that I am not interested in your trashy possessions. I especially have no desire to humiliate you through the violence of rape…'" (17). Through reversing the gaze, and naming her fears, the unacknowledged privileges of her subject position are called into question. Shame cuts through blind ignorance and awakens knowledge that she has but does not claim. I have characterized this bad faith as a form of double consciousness that afflicts the white subject, and I have argued that it plays a key role in the struggle between Frederick Douglass and the slavebreaker Mr. Covey in his narrative of freedom.

I mention this conception of white double consciousness in the context of Douglass's struggle against white domination to raise another perspective, although perhaps a more "whitely" one. The classic existential conception of freedom radicalizes the liberal conception of freedom as autonomy or self-definition. An ongoing feminist concern (for philosophers as different as Martha Nussbaum and Judith Butler, among many others) is whether self-definition—radical or not—adequately captures the complexity of the human subject. The embodied subject is vulnerable and dependent as well as independent and self-assertive, and this is not a bad thing. On the contrary, it opens us up to our need for others. Douglass asserts himself against the slavebreaker but he is never the sole agent in his struggle against either his own slavery or the larger institution, as Yancy certainly reminds us. His autobiographies tell of the strength that he draws first of all from his mother but also from his community, and finally from the abolitionist movement—a movement that includes whites as well as blacks. Yancy reflects, for example, upon the significance of Douglass's mother (he was "not only a child, but somebody's child") as a form of "Mitsein" (165). But such constitutive relations with others emerge in the analysis only to slip a bit too quickly into the background. The analysis of concrete others as markers of historicity or temporality (the mother signifies a past and a genealogy, for example, more than a person) obscures the concrete relations with others as meaningful forms of intersubjectivity. Douglass's struggle against the slavebreaker does humble the white man and regenerates the "pour soi" of the black body, as Yancy so well argues (166). The struggle also breaks down the barriers of the double consciousness of the white subject as Douglass forces Covey to acknowledge his implicit humanity. If the black man is not always dependent upon the white, the white is more often than he would expect dependent upon the black.

The communal support that Douglass enlists in the struggle against the slavebreaker and slave America enlarges the vision of the narrative from the scenario of the warrior-agent combating white paranoia to communities rising up to repair the damage of white hubris on vital social bonds. Douglass's narrative of his self-liberation is communal. The ethics is an ethics of connectivity.[3] In Toni Morrison's narratives, although perhaps more in Beloved and in her later novels, than in the novel that Yancy explores in his penultimate chapter, The Bluest Eye, this language of connectivity rises to a pitch that is more than ethical, it is also spiritual.

The chapter on The Bluest Eye addresses questions of gender specificity; this is a topic worthy of even more analysis. The socio-economic and cultural aspects of race likewise deserves more attention. As in the case of forms of Mitsein in self-constitution, Yancy reflects on the impact of class and cultural factors (his educational pedigree, speaking "proper English") on the perception of his blackness and, by implication, on the meaning of race. His preference for disentangling race from its connectivity with these other factors lends his analysis a strong moral force. But with the increase in the North American population of native Spanish speakers who are marked as brown, the impact of pedigree, language, class, nationality, and cultural variables render race an increasingly dynamic and convoluted concept. We might call this the "Latin Americanization" of race in North America, and it will be interesting to see its effects on the enduring bi-polar, color-conscious black/white politics that Yancy compellingly portrays.

Yancy's analysis crescendos to a powerful concluding chapter on "whiteness as ambush." The chapter opens with: "'Bullshit!' That was the immediate response of a white student after I gave a lecture exploring the interstitial 'race' dynamics theorized in the elevator example…where my body is confiscated and marked as dangerous" (227). This white student's objection, Yancy explains, exemplifies how white theories of race and subjectivity may function as modes of self-deception rather than of self-knowledge. He writes: "Whiteness, after all, is a master of concealment; it is insidiously embedded within responses, reactions, good intentions, postural gestures, denials, and structural and material orders. Etymologically, the word 'insidious' (insidiae) means to ambush—a powerful metaphor, as it brings to mind images and scenarios of being snared and trapped unexpectedly" (229). The white person needs to be aware that at the very time she believes she is joining the fight against anti-black racism, she may unwittingly be setting whitely snares against blacks. One is ambushed by whiteness, for example, when one questions the competency of airline pilots who happen to be black and yet one thinks of oneself as a "good white." Undoing whiteness is a work in progress.

This work is not simply a matter of ending the insults and stereotypes, as we might like to think. Yancy explains that such an approach leaves unsprung the traps of deep structural racism. These enduring traps and the long history of their tragic effects means that "To be white in America and to be an ally must involve a self-reflexive moment of realization that people of color don't owe white people anything" (237). Only by relinquishing power and confronting the angst-ridden situation of creating a new identity can a white person expect to avoid the traps of moral narcissism and paternalism that too often ambush whitely good intentions.

Yancy's thought-provoking book is philosophy at its best. It takes on the big questions of our times by challenging what those of us who are white call freedom. He exposes with a keen eye the nuances of a pathology of bad faith concealed in our visceral responses and in our normative concepts. This white politics is relentless and often unnamed, but it is found in such ordinary places as in a ride up an elevator, on a casual walk along a city street, and even in well-intentioned words of advice that translate as insults at the APA. Yancy calls out our white identity politics, not simply to reverse the gaze, and expose the ignorance and arrogance of whiteness, although such a reversal is an important first moment in his dialectic.

The final aim is to awaken white America out of its existential stupor to its implicit humanity. Until this happens, a wise black person with the richness of his or her experiences will more often than not reach a better conclusion than a person who has not lived that life.

Acknowledgements

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Endnotes

1. Neil Lewis. "Debate on Whether Female Judges Judge Differently Arises Anew." The New York Times, June 3, 2009.
2. Shannon Sullivan. Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).
3. For more on an ethics of connectivity, especially in the context of Douglass, Morrison, and black feminist thought, see Cynthia Willett, The Soul of Justice: Social Bonds and Racial Hubris (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

Critical Perspectives on bell hooks

Edited by Maria del Guadalupe Davidson and George Yancy. (New York and London: Routledge, 2009). 241 pp.

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The most surprising fact of Critical Perspective on bell hooks is that this collection took so long to appear. It comes after nearly three decades of hooks's career as a commanding feminist, cultural, and educational theorist who shapes thinking in many areas of scholarship. If such texts are markers of impact, unusually strong voices like bell hooks's may find acceptance more slowly than lesser figures owing to how disruptive their thinking will be once it is accepted. In bell hooks's case, her work even challenges received notions of what education can be and the impact it should have on students. A reader will finish this extraordinary collection aware that a major thinker is on the scene and that much we previously thought we knew about culture, race, social privilege, and possible change needs fundamental revision.

Insofar as the three sections of this collection—"Critical Pedagogy and Praxis," "The Dynamics of Race and Gender," and "Spirituality and Love"—represent bell hooks's body of work, they signal that bell hooks has one foot in traditional academic discourse and another in the world where personal, political, and cultural concerns interact and collide. It is hooks's contention that personal experience, politics, and culture are always interacting to shape institutions, even though they often conflict in ways that do not fit neatly within academic discourse. The six articles of "Critical Pedagogy and Praxis" work from the common assumption that points of intersection among the personal, the political, and the cultural spheres mark revealing issues and sites that need exploring the most. Nathalia E. Jaramillo and Peter McLaren in "Borderlines: bell hooks and the Pedagogy of Revolutionary Change," for example, quote hooks on the need to "create an oppositional worldview, a consciousness, an identity…which also opposes dehumanization but as that movement which enables creative, expansive self-actualization" (23). The assumption here is that we should educate students not merely to teach inquiry within a discipline but to enable students to lead productive and healthy lives.

What is at stake in such an approach is made abundantly clear in George Yancy's "Engaging Whiteness and the Practice of Freedom: The Creation of Subversive Academic Spaces." Yancy quotes hooks in saying that teachers must care for and respect "the souls of our students" (34). The language of "care," "respect," and "souls of our students" signals that hooks's approach to education violates not only traditional academic and disciplinary boundaries, but that education must minister to students to enable them to be healthy and happy in their lives. For mainstream white students in U.S. higher education, for whom class and privilege are stratified along racial lines, achieving these goals necessarily means interrogating white privilege as a practice within the academy and in culture. "Does my black body make a difference?" asks Yancy. Being black and a professor, he answers, in fact "provides an important countervoice to an otherwise majority white class attempting to think critically about whiteness" (48). If such students are to rise above the blindness of their privileged circumstances, and if they are to see past affluence and privilege which—like a snow storm—are blinding, students must "push the limits of what they know and how they come to know that they know" (51). They must begin to think about their own whiteness as a social construction, a construction like the other categorical distortions we call race (51).

The other articles in "Critical Pedagogy and Praxis" follow Yancy's lead by theorizing and mapping institutionalized privilege at points where the personal, political, and cultural realms intersect. At such sites of friction, the social system—the foundation and scaffolding of white culture itself—starts to become visible and available for scrutiny. Cindy LaCom and Susan Hadley in "Teaching to Transgress: Deconstructing Normalcy and Resignifying the Marked Body" examine institutionalized attitudes about being able bodied and the educational labeling of those marked as not able bodied. Likewise, in "Engaging bell hooks: How Teacher Educators Can Work to Sustain Themselves and Their Work," Gretchen Givens Generett recounts her own path to the questioning of institutionalized privilege and how "engaged pedagogy," by contrast, "demands that we create spaces [for students] that support wholeness and uphold the idea of mind and body as one" (92).

Most far-reaching and cogent in this section is Tim Davidson and Jeanette R. Davidson's "bell hooks, White Supremacy, and the Academy." The Davidsons advance nothing less than a full indictment of racism and white privilege in U.S. higher education. They show the hidden and nuanced effects of white privilege and the extent to which practices reflecting the bias of privilege frustrate the "healing and transformation" that could otherwise happen.

However, their candid and hard-hitting critique shares hooks's basic optimism that "certain opportunities…do exist currently within the academy for increased attention to cultural diversity" and that "progressive change" is still possible in higher education (76). The nature of the university as a protected space for reflection and speculation, but also the advent of cultural studies and theoretical advances made possible by poststructuralism, contribute to the potential for evolution and change. The Davidsons argue that only an unflinching look at racist practices and the effects of white privilege will be sufficiently reinvigorating for higher education to change. "The grip of white supremacy will not be released voluntarily," of course, but that the academy, as "one of the most prized and valuable institutions in society," still has the power to "evolve into more of an equitable, beloved community" (78).

The second section—"The Dynamics of Race and Gender"—focuses on the core of hooks's thinking regarding

race and gender. In "Talking Back: bell hooks, Feminism, and Philosophy," Donna-Dale L. Marcano discusses the necessity of taking the risk of actual self-disclosure as a frame for discussing political and cultural issues. Such commitment and involvement are necessary if education is to connect personal, political, and cultural experience—for teachers as well as for students. In this same vein, Arnold Farr in "The Specter of Race: bell hooks, Deconstruction, and Revolutionary Blackness" argues that it is not enough to condemn racism; we need to understand how race functions. Farr shows that hooks embraces traditional Black Studies's themes but appropriates poststructuralism as a perspective. hooks judges that essentialist definitions of being "black" are dead-ended and will weaken the critique of racism and white privilege by reinforcing the very underlying principles that made racism possible to begin with. Clevis Headley in "The Ethics of Blackness: bell hooks's Postmodern Blackness and the Imperative of Liberation" also assesses hooks's selective deployment of a poststructuralist perspective as a tool to critique essentialist approaches to the "true substance" of being black. Headley argues that essential definitions harden the lines separating self and other, thus perpetuating an order that fundamentally needs to change, whereas "the ethics of deconstruction, instead of privileging sameness and identity, emphasizes difference and otherness, the idea being that ethics is a matter of respecting the singularity of the other" (139).

Maria Del Guadalupe's "bell hooks and the Move from Marginalized Other to Radical Black Subject" dramatically brings home the dangers if essentialism is embraced. Unquestionably, the ravages of racism can create the "hatred and desire" that, in turn, can lead to a "commodification of otherness," freezing for all time who and what the other can be. The effect of such commodification is to freeze the terms of understanding racism to a particular primal scene of discrimination and abuse. Working against such commodified and limited (and ultimately unproductive) understanding, Davidson advances hooks's notion of "radical black subjectivity," that is, constructing the black subject as the "multiple, affirming black subjectivities…giving voice and power to black women," in effect, designating the subject and the other as positions in discourse and not as particular entities (122). Davidson adds that in "developing a radical black subjectivity, hooks asks that we look beyond the negative and externally imposed multiplicity of the commodified other"—in effect, we must overturn and dismantle the reification of human experience that makes racism and white privilege possible to begin with (128).

The third section of this book—"Spirituality and Love"—explores the understanding and engagement opened by a radical black subjectivity. In "Love Matters: bell hooks on Political Resistance and Change," Kathy Glass analyzes hooks's treatment of love in three works—Salvation, All About Love, and Communion. Glass points out the dangers of discussing love as "patriarchal popular culture often relegates love to the feminized realms of weakness and sentimentality." By contrast, hooks's idea of love is a "powerful political spiritual force capable of transforming 'all spheres of American life…'" (167). Such a conception presupposes the overcoming of a "commodification of otherness" and the emergence of a radical black subjectivity that can comprehend the dynamic and evolving operations of power in the many forms that they can take.

In "Love, Politics, and Ethics in the Postmodern Feminist Work of bell hooks and Julia Kristeva," Marilyn Edelstein explores "hooks's own choice to analyze and advocate love as ethically and politically necessary…for both self-transformation and social-cultural transformation…" (192). She argues that love is the healing cure for the personal and social ailments that hooks's critique of racist practices lays bare. How does one act to enable the healing power of love? Edelstein argues

for the practical efficacy of the personal centering and acting on behalf of others that love entails. Love, finally, is the only solution worth pursuing, the only long-term solution that works. Nancy E. Nienhuis in "'Revolutionary Interdependence': bell hooks's Ethic of Love as a Basis for a Feminist Liberation Theory of the Neighbor" focuses on these very possibilities. "Such revolutionary love," Nienhuis writes, "creates the possibility for revolutionary interdependence, and social transformation is not possible without it" (214).

In "Toward a Love Ethic: Love and Spirituality in bell hooks's Writing," Susan Vega-González brings the discussion of love full circle to the issue of religion and spirituality that is the traditional ground for discussions of love. In All About Love: New Visions, Salvation, Black People and Love, Communion: The Female Search for Love, and The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity and Love, Vega-González sees a transformation of hooks's earlier attempts to articulate relations among the personal, political, and cultural realms. From these latest books arises "a love ethic [that] will certainly warrant the success of such transformation so that, instead of a harvest of dust contemporary men and women can envision and finally enjoy the fruits of a harvest of love and spiritual connection" (236).

The profile of bell hooks that emerges from this monumental collection is that of a thinker dedicated to expanding discourse beyond the academy in terms of working across disciplinary lines but also moving discourse into the community, bridging the academy and the social world. For hooks, the seminar room is being replaced by the café and living rooms, spaces that are being redefined as critical spaces of engagement and sites for making a difference. In becoming this figure over the last thirty years—much as Gloria Jean Watkins became "bell hooks"—hooks is breaking new ground by helping people to discuss white privilege and racist practices that previously did not exist, or at least were invisible as a focus within the academy. By successfully crossing barriers that separate the personal, political, and cultural worlds, hooks is reinvigorating the ideal of the organic intellectual, the thinker who deliberately acts on behalf of her community. As hooks acts on behalf of blacks, she is changing the conversation in the U.S. for others as well about how the U.S. over the course of its complex history has been captured by racism and what it can do to drop its chains and finally move ahead.

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