APA Newsletters

NEWSLETTER ON PHILOSOPHY
AND THE BLACK EXPERIENCE

FROM THE EDITORS, John McClendon & George Yancy

ARTICLE

Chike Jeffers
"The Pitfalls of Placing the African Personality on the World Stage:
Edward Blyden's Cultural Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism"
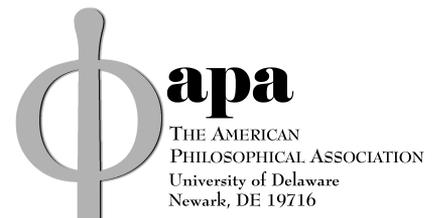
BOOK REVIEWS

Kristin Waters and Carol B. Conaway, Eds.: *Black Women's Intellectual Traditions:
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Reviewed by Joy D. Simmons

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FROM THE EDITORS

In this issue of the *Newsletter*, Chike Jeffers, in "The Pitfalls of Placing the African Personality on the World Stage: Edward Blyden's Cultural Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism," critically explores various important movements or shifts in the thought of Edward Blyden. Jeffers delineates Blyden's early *anti*-cultural nationalist position with respect to the so-called benighted state of Africa, a position that was not atypically held by other nineteenth-century black thinkers. As Jeffers shows, such a position counters the typical characterization of Blyden's position as valorizing black cultural nationalism. After moving the reader through a distinct shift in Blyden's thinking toward a form of nationalism that stresses not only political unification, but also grounds forms of life in qualities that constitute those forms of life as different (what Jeffers calls Blyden's "Black Gift thesis"), Jeffers goes on to evaluate Blyden's encounter with West African Islam and its relationship to Christianity, particularly in terms of Islam's preservation of the indigenous thought of African peoples. Jeffers points out a crucial difference between Blyden's earlier views on the "backwardness" of Africa and Blyden's later views concerning the significance of Africa's indigenous voice and its importance to world-dialogue. Hence, Jeffers provides an important argument to support his thesis that Blyden's position regarding Africa vis-à-vis world-dialogue is a thoroughgoing cosmopolitanism, one that emphasizes the element of mutual improvement through a diversity of world contributions. Africa, on this view, has its own *Geist* (the "African personality") to give to the world. For Blyden, black people constitute a part of God's personality. As Jeffers notes, "African uniqueness is thus necessary to the full manifestation of God's being." Despite his robust cultural nationalism (as expressed in his later work, *African Life and Customs*), Jeffers argues that Blyden saw Europe's imperial and scientific help as indispensable to Africa's future. Jeffers insightfully locates Blyden's reliance on Europe in terms of the latter's providentialism, which is basically the view that God directs all world events in a prudential fashion. This, of course, leads to the acceptance of European imperialism, the African slave trade, the oppression of black people, etc. As Jeffers argues,

> Thus slavery in the United States is treated in this argument as something like a training camp, attended in a land Europeans had claimed, in preparation for a return to the land they had not managed to claim. The possibility of returning to provide the benefits acquired abroad had been demonstrated by the successful founding of Liberia while the wisdom of return had been certified by the perpetual second-class treatment experienced in the land of return.

And while this conclusion is deeply problematic for Blyden and black people more generally, Jeffers does not throw out the baby with the bathwater, rightly pointing out Blyden's contributions to Africana thought, his contribution to the importance of African indigenous thought, his challenge to European domination in the world of ideas and world-making, and his cosmopolitanism, a view that valorizes the importance of different cultural contributions to world-dialogue.

This issue also includes two book reviews. First, *Black Women's Intellectual Traditions: Speaking Their Minds*, edited by Kristen Waters and Carol B. Conaway, is reviewed by Joy D. Simmons. Second, Terrance MacMullan's *Habits of Whiteness: A Pragmatic Reconstruction* is reviewed by Clancy Smith.

The editors would like to invite scholars to submit articles that critically explore philosophy and the Black experience. Also, we encourage scholars to submit reviews of books that broadly explore themes pertinent to philosophy and the Black experience. If you have any suggestions regarding themes or areas of philosophical concern within the context of Africana philosophy that you feel have been underrepresented, please let the editors know. Our effort has been to telescope Africana philosophical thought in terms of its multilayered complexity and diversity.

ARTICLE

The Pitfalls of Placing the African Personality on the World Stage: Edward Blyden's Cultural Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism

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Edward W. Blyden has been called "the father of cultural nationalism" in the African context.[1] In this article, I will explore the evolution of his cultural nationalism while also showing how he can equally be seen as the first major proponent of what I call "the Black Gift thesis": a view that combines cultural nationalism and cosmopolitanism, making the idea that black people should preserve and cultivate black culture mutually implicative with the idea that all the world's people should engage with and gain from each other's cultures. In addition to this, I wish to confront some of the disturbing aspects of his thought as it relates to the growing power of Europeans over Africans during his lifetime. Blyden, I will argue, falls victim to some of the pitfalls of thinking about black people and black culture during the rise of global white supremacy to its zenith. We must recognize and lament this even while celebrating the

importance of his work in bringing culture to the forefront of the fight against racism.

Blyden was born in St. Thomas, then part of the Danish West Indies, in 1832. He came to the United States in 1850 to attend college but was denied access on the basis of race. By the end of that year, he set sail for Liberia, which had become an independent nation only three years prior. Blyden lived the rest of his life in West Africa. In Liberia, he served as a professor and later president of Liberia College, as an emigration commissioner to the U.S., as secretary of state, and as ambassador to Britain. He died in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in 1912.

There is, in my view, too little appreciation for what a different person Blyden was in 1862, when he published his first book (*Liberia's Offering*), and in 1908, when he published his last (*African Life and Customs*). Reading his earlier writings, one justifiably recalls intellectual historian Wilson Moses's warning against positing a "clear-cut distinction between black nationalism and assimilation" because early black nationalists, despite their commitment to black collective action independent of white control, "identified with the history and culture of Europe and desired to merge their destiny with it."[2] This identification manifested itself most clearly in a lack of respect for the history and culture of indigenous Africans, whom nineteenth-century nationalists often saw as savages lacking religion and civilization.

Blyden begins his career exemplifying this mindset. His early essays often combine a clear commitment to political nationalism with what we may call a strong *anti*-cultural nationalism, as in the following passage from his 1862 address at the opening of Liberia College:

> As a race we have been quite unfortunate. We have no pleasing antecedents—nothing in the past to inspire us. All behind us is dark, and gloomy, and repulsive. All our agreeable associations are connected with the future.[3]

Despite what Moses says about the flexibility of the term "black nationalism," the notion of "black *cultural* nationalism" can and must be kept distinct from a point of view that negates the very existence of anything to preserve and cultivate in the cultures of black people. Blyden, therefore, starts out by holding the very opposite of the position for which he is famous.

In another of his speeches from 1862, however, we see the seeds of a different direction. That year, Blyden traveled in the U.S. as an official Emigration Commissioner from Liberia. The lecture he gave to a number of northern black audiences on his tour, entitled "The Call of Providence to the Descendants of Africa in America," has come to be seen as one of his most important works. Political nationalism remains in the forefront in this plea for African American emigration: Blyden demands the building up of "Negro states" where law, religion, travel, trade, education, and the press will all be in black hands.[4] As he goes on, though, he turns to discuss what he thinks will be special and *different* about the emergence of a black presence on the world stage. He mentions "new forms in the various arts" that the "marvels of nature" in the tropics are bound to inspire.[5] Most importantly, he asserts that the "great peculiarity" of the "development of civilization" that he sees as forthcoming from Africa will be "its moral element."[6]

Blyden defends this claim by appealing to the favorite Bible verse of nineteenth-century black thinkers (of all ideological persuasions): "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God" (Psalm 68:31). As he interprets the verse, it indicates that, unlike Europeans, Africans are destined "not to foreign conquests, not to wide-spread domination, but to the possession of spiritual qualities, to the elevation of the soul heavenward, to spiritual aspirations and divine communications."[7] This is a theme to which Blyden will often return: the idea that the black contribution to the world will come in the form of cultivating the moral and spiritual sides of human nature.

It should be noted that by praising the peculiarity of a *future* Africa, Blyden does not yet contradict his aforementioned devaluation of the African *past and present*. He does, however, introduce an idea crucial to the differentiation of cultural from political nationalism, namely, the idea that a nation is to be distinguished from others not only by its political unification but by its being the bearer of distinctive qualities that ground a *different*, and not just a *separate*, form of life. Blyden suggests that the emergence of Africa's future form of life will be of benefit not only to Africans but to the world as a whole. This is a move on his part toward what I call *the Black Gift thesis*: the idea that black people should preserve and cultivate their culture not just for their own sake but also for the purpose of taking part in a worldwide cultural exchange in which each of the world's peoples will benefit from the contributions of all others. W.E.B. Du Bois and Léopold Sédar Senghor are two prominent figures that can be seen as continuing this tradition.

How did Blyden's view evolve from this beginning point? Crucial to the story is his encounter with West African Islam, introduced to him through visits to the Liberian interior. Blyden's first thoughts on West African Muslims reflect, paradoxically, both a continuing move toward *and* away from cultural nationalism. On the one hand, he talks about Islam as "an enormous advance" on "the Shamanism or Fetichism of African tribes," recollecting that "[w]hen we left a Pagan and entered a Mohammedan community, we at once noticed that we had entered a moral atmosphere widely separated from, and far loftier than, the one we had left."[8] Thus, in a continuing anti-cultural nationalist manner, he calls Islam an "eliminatory and subversive agency" that has "displaced or unsettled nothing as good as itself."[9]

On the other hand, when Blyden draws a contrast between Islam and Christianity, it turns out to also be favorable to Islam, but in a different way with different consequences. According to Blyden, while Christianity is the highest form of religion, the fact that it was introduced to Africans as slaves has had dire consequences. They may have received certain

> great and precious advantages; but, nevertheless, owing to the physical, mental, and social pressure under which the Africans received these influences of Christianity, their development was necessarily partial and one-sided, cramped and abnormal. *All tendencies to independent individuality were repressed and destroyed*.[10]

Meanwhile, on Blyden's account, Islam "found its Negro converts at home in a state of freedom and independence of the teachers who brought it to them."[11] Given his political nationalist goals, it is obvious that Islam would thus, in his view, be functionally more conducive to the needs of the race.

What he also sees, though, even if it is obscured when he compares Islam and traditional religion, is that Islam has been conducive in this way by *preserving* as much as, if not more than, *destroying*. He writes:

> While it brought them a great deal that was absolutely new…it strengthened and hastened certain tendencies to independence and self-reliance *which were already at work*. Their local institutions were not destroyed by the Arab influence. They only assumed *new forms*, and *adapted* themselves to the new teachings. In all thriving Mohammedan communities,

in West and Central Africa, it may be noticed that the Arab superstructure has been superimposed on a *permanent indigenous substructure*; so that what took place, when the Arab met the Negro in his own home, was a healthy *amalgamation*, and not an absorption or an undue repression.[12]

This statement of belief in an indigenous African substructure that can and ought to be preserved is, in my view, the moment at which Blyden's cultural nationalism truly takes flight. Note that he develops this view on the basis of a critique of *Western cultural oppression*: he sees the hierarchical nature of European-African power relations reflected and perpetuated in the religious transformation of Westernized Africans, resulting in a damaged sense of self and a loss of cultural independence.

We can measure the distance between Blyden's early position and his emergent cultural nationalism by comparing his 1862 address at the inauguration of Liberia College, which I have already cited, and his 1881 inaugural address as the school's president. In the earlier speech, indigenous Africans are figured as a "benighted people" surrounding the Liberian emigrants and embodying their isolation from the civilized world.[13] In the later speech, indigenous peoples—in particular, those of the interior—are figured as "great tribes" with whom Liberians should aim to "become one" because, as they are "not yet affected by European habits," it is through unification with them that the religion, politics, and literature of Liberia will come to truly reflect "the genius of the race."[14]

Note that what has not "affected" these peoples of the interior is European *misdirection*, rather than simply *contact*: from his discussion of African conversion to Islam, it is clear that Blyden believes non-ruinous contact with foreign cultures is possible. The problem seems to be that black life as it has developed through contact with Europeans has thus far been a *passive* experience of *disorganization from outside* rather than an *active self-directed organization* that retains indigenous principles as foundational even while gaining from foreign influence.

Thus, alongside this growth in cultural nationalism, there is a persistent and complementary cosmopolitanism in Blyden's work that we must track as well. In an article called "The Prospects of the African," for example, he claims that the beauty of the fact that there are Africans like those of the interior who have not been "modified by foreign influence" is that "they are growing up gradually and normally to take their place in the great family of nations—a distinct, but integral part of the great human body."[15] Later in the essay, he revisits the theme of the special contribution to be made by this part of the body, noting that despite such grand achievements as Greek art and Roman law,

the world has yet to witness the forging of the great chain which is to bind the nations together in equal fellowship and friendly union. I mean the mighty principle of LOVE, as it is taught in the New Testament. Many are of the opinion that this crowning work is left for the African.[16]

As Blyden articulates the Black Gift thesis here, the black gift to be shared with the world is *cosmopolitanism itself*—a spiritual ideal that will unite the nations. We can thus see Blyden as a cosmopolitan thinker on multiple levels: from his foundational desire to see Africa emerge onto the world stage as an active partner in progress to his belief that West African Islam represents a model of "healthy amalgamation" to his prediction that Africa's greatest gift as an active partner may be its ability to epitomize the cosmopolitan spirit.

In his 1893 lecture "Study and Race," Blyden introduces a memorable formulation of the Black Gift thesis that influenced later figures like Kwame Nkrumah: the notion of "African personality." The concept first appears in the context of a lament that

there are some Africans…who are blind enough to the radical facts of humanity as to say, "Let us do away with the sentiment of Race. Let us do away with our *African personality* and be lost, if possible, in another Race."[17]

Blyden argues against this call to do away with racial difference on spiritual grounds. Black people are what they are, he claims, because God wishes them to "reveal a phase of His character not given to others to reveal."[18] African personality is one part, among others, of God's personality and the maintaining of African uniqueness is thus necessary to the full manifestation of God's being.

In Blyden's last book, *African Life and Customs*, he discusses the maintenance of African uniqueness from a perspective more radically cultural nationalist than in any previous work. He concerns himself here with (and, more than ever before, *glorifies*) "the African pure and simple—the so-called Pagan African—the man untouched either by *European or Asiatic* influence."[19] Blyden therefore moves completely beyond his early valorization of Africans only when Christianized and his subsequent extension of respect mainly to Muslims. Examining family organization, property laws, punishment, and a host of other aspects of traditional society, he argues that the African "has developed and organised a system useful to him for all the needs of life."[20] Addressing once more the issue of cosmopolitanism, he claims that "human unity" is an unquestionable reality but that "each section has developed for itself such a system or code of life as its environments have suggested—*to be improved, not changed* by larger knowledge."[21] The rejection of *change* here represents a resolutely cultural nationalist rejection of outside interference, but the endorsement of *improvement* demonstrates Blyden's continuing commitment to the cosmopolitan principle of learning from other cultures.

While Blyden's cultural nationalism is thus at its peak in *African Life and Customs*, his political nationalism has taken a strange and disconcerting dive. At one point, after denying that Africa needs the theology of Europe (made, as it is, to suit the European's mind and tendencies), Blyden claims: "What Africa does need from Europe is its Imperial and scientific help, ruling from the 'top of things', as Miss Kingsley said; and directing in the material development of the country."[22] By "Miss Kingley," he means Mary Kingsley, the British writer famous for her explorations of West Africa. She is especially known for having criticized missionaries and their attempts to alter African culture. She was nevertheless also, as the Blyden quote suggests, a "hardened, unreformed, Imperial expansionist" (to use her own words).[23] Blyden, by this time in his life, shared these two sides of Kingsley's character: a passionate belief in the conservation of African culture alongside vigorous support for the extension of European rule over Africa, especially by the British.

How did Blyden arrive at this point? It is necessary, in my view, to place his later pro-imperialism in the context of an earlier current in his thought: his providentialism. Blyden, from the very beginning of his work, promotes deep faith in God's wise and just arrangement of worldly events. In fact, he believes that, besides revelation in word, God speaks to humanity primarily through His providence, that is, what He has allowed to come to pass. In "The Call of Providence," Blyden serves as an interpreter of this form of speech in order to show African

Americans that God is telling them to go home and build up a powerful black nation in Africa. He claims that God has made this duty clear in four ways:

> First; By suffering them to be brought here [i.e., to the United States] and placed in circumstances where they could receive a training fitting them for the work of civilizing and evangelizing the land from whence they were torn. ...Secondly; By allowing them, notwithstanding all the services they have rendered to this country, to be treated as strangers and aliens. ...Thirdly; By bearing a portion of them across the tempestuous seas back to Africa. ...Fourthly; By keeping their fatherland in reserve for them in their absence.[24]

When he claims that the fatherland has been kept in reserve, Blyden is referring to the fact that, at the time, Europeans had made few incursions into Africa, especially as compared to their overrunning of the Americas. Thus slavery in the United States is treated in this argument as something like a training camp, attended in a land Europeans had claimed, in preparation for a return to the land they had not managed to claim. The possibility of returning to provide the benefits acquired abroad had been demonstrated by the successful founding of Liberia while the wisdom of return had been certified by the perpetual second-class treatment experienced in the land of sojourn.

As Paget Henry writes in *Caliban's Reason*, the purpose of this providentialist form of argument is to "grasp some of the more difficult and perplexing areas of the black experience."[25] As much we should appreciate the toughness of this task, we must keep in mind how problematic the argument is: Blyden can be read as placing God's blessing on the slave trade, slavery, and the racist mistreatment of non-slave blacks. All of these things, in the picture he paints, are tools God has chosen to begin the process of bringing Africa onto the world stage.

As Blyden evolved into a full-blown cultural nationalist, his providentialism began to focus more on God's plan to bring special gifts to the world through the uniqueness of the African personality. In an 1880 speech subtitled "Africa's Service to the World," for example, Blyden speculates that, while the materialism of the West works to blunt its spiritual sensibilities, "Africa may yet prove to be the spiritual conservatory of the world."[26] What we find in tracing Blyden's evolution, then, is a growing prioritization of culture over politics.

As time went on, Blyden also began to lose the certainty he once had that there would be a grand movement of African Americans to Africa to provide political leadership. In an 1894 letter to Booker T. Washington, he admits: "the time for anything like a general exodus is far distant—perhaps three hundred years off—so that practically the Negro is in the United States to stay."[27] Drawing together Blyden's providential hopes for Africa's emergence onto the world stage, his growing prioritization of culture over politics as the focus of his form of black nationalism, and his acceptance of the permanence of African American residence in the United States, we need to add only one further piece of contextualization to understand how Blyden came to see European imperialism as a good thing: the "Scramble for Africa," i.e., the rush by European powers to acquire African colonies leading up to and following the 1884-1885 conference in Berlin (at which the rules for annexing territories were decided). Once this process began, Blyden could no longer doubt, as he had doubted before, that Europe would play a key role in shaping Africa's future. He reacted by reorienting his hopes for Africa's rise to global prominence: if Europe would refrain from destroying African cultural life, and if Africans themselves could work on preserving and cultivating

it, then perhaps a temporary political and economic lordship by the scientifically advanced Europeans could be a blessing to both sides!

Looking back from where we are today, this is shocking, even as we recognize that we sit on the other side of the colonization experience and therefore see things that Blyden could not. When we conjoin his providentialist readings of slavery and U.S. racism with the hope he invests in European imperialism (not to mention his support for Washington's accommodationist response to the loss of civil and political rights under Jim Crow), we are faced with a saddening pattern of accepting white power over black people in one way or another. I see this pattern as Blyden's unfortunate tendency to fall into the pitfalls of thinking about blackness at a time when the doctrine of white supremacy was gaining its most extensive realization on a global scale. It was all too easy, during this period, to continue to accept and reify some forms of white dominance even while simultaneously struggling to figure out the best way to empower black people and thus overcome black subordination.

I wish to close, however, by encouraging us to look back at Blyden's work with a spirit of appreciation, even as this appreciation sits beside sadness. Blyden's cultural nationalism was a revolutionary development: beginning with his engagement with Islam (which, given the geopolitics of today, is ripe for re-examination), he embarked on a path of grappling with the meaning and value of black cultural difference and its relationship with the fact and ideal of human unity that struck a powerful blow to the Eurocentric mindscape of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After Blyden, it was no longer so easy for black thinkers to go on rendering the beliefs, values, and practices of indigenous Africans invisible at best, demonic at worst. Whatever we choose to say of the problematic ambivalences of his thought, his analysis of the cultural dimension of white supremacy and his call for resistance through the construction of an African identity rooted in the uniqueness of African culture—though open to beneficial influence from elsewhere—count as visionary steps in Africana philosophy.

A Ghanaian disciple of Blyden's, J.E. Casely Hayford, demonstrates the type of appreciation I am recommending here in this passage from his 1911 book, *Ethiopia Unbound*:

> Edward Wilmot Blyden has sought...to reveal everywhere the African unto himself; to fix his attention upon the original ideas and conceptions as to his place in the economy of the world; to point out to him his work as a race among the races of men; lastly, and most important of all, to lead him back unto self-respect.[28]

Our lamentations of Blyden's failings in this project of empowerment should not erase our admiration for his powerful innovations and successes.

Endnotes

1. Toyin Falola. *Nationalism and African Intellectuals* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2001), 34.
2. Wilson Moses. *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism: 1850-1925* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1978), 45, 32.
3. Edward W. Blyden. "Inaugural Address at the Inauguration of Liberia College." In *Liberia's Offering* (New York: John A. Gray, 1862), 120.
4. Blyden, "The Call of Providence to the Descendants of Africa in America" in *Liberia's Offering*, 75-76. Capitalization of "Negro" mine.
5. *Ibid.*, 82.
6. *Ibid.*, 82-83.

7. *Ibid.*, 83.

8. Blyden. "Mohammedanism and the Negro Race." In *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967), 6.

9. Blyden, "Mohammedanism in Western Africa" in *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, 174.

10. Blyden, "Mohammedanism and the Negro Race," 13. Emphasis mine.

11. *Ibid.*, 11.

12. *Ibid.*, 11-12. Emphasis mine.

13. Blyden, "Inaugural Address," 98.

14. Blyden, "The Aims and Method of a Liberal Education for Africans" in *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, 71.

15. Blyden. "The Prospects of the African." *African Repository* 50 (Oct 1874): 296.

16. *Ibid.*, 297.

17. Blyden. "Study and Race." In *Black Spokesman: Selected Published Writings of Edward Wilmot Blyden*, ed. Hollis R. Lynch (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1971), 200-201. Emphasis mine.

18. *Ibid.*, 202.

19. Blyden. *African Life and Customs* (London: African Publication Society, 1969), 10. Emphasis mine.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.* Emphasis mine.

22. *Ibid.*, 63.

23. Mary Kingsley. "Imperialism in West Africa." In *West African Studies*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1901), 431.

24. Blyden, "The Call of Providence," 71-72.

25. Paget Henry. *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 202.

26. Blyden. "Ethiopia Stretching Out Her Hands Unto God, or Africa's Service to the World." In *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, 124.

27. Blyden. "Blyden to Booker T. Washington: 28th November, 1894." In *Black Spokesman*, 208.

28. J.E. Casely Hayford. *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation*, 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1969), 163.

Book Reviews

Black Women's Intellectual Traditions: Speaking Their Minds

Edited by Kristin Waters and Carol B. Conaway (University of Vermont Press, 2007). 480 pp. ISBN 978-1-58465-634-0 (Paper, $35.00).

Reviewed by Joy D. Simmons
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"Speaking" and "silencing" are themes that run parallel to one another throughout *Black Women's Intellectual Traditions*. This is first evidenced by the collection's subtitle, *Speaking Their Minds*. The subtitle itself is a powerful challenge to racist stereotypes of black women, which have historically reduced black women to their bodies, denying that they have any intellectual capacity. Not only does the subtitle assert that black women actually possess minds, but they *are speaking* their minds. It is significant that, in a book on nineteenth-century black women intellectuals, the editors did not choose to use the past tense of the verb "to

speak." It is not simply that black women have spoken their minds at a time in history which is now long gone, but these women continue to speak. They are speaking to us through the essays in this volume which seek to reclaim their rich and rigorous intellectual legacies. In their introduction to the collection, editors Carol B. Conaway and Kristin Waters discuss how the voices of nineteenth-century black women intellectuals have been actively silenced, discredited, and obscured by racist power structures. From past limitations on publishing and public speaking to contemporary academic "gatekeepers" who seek to exclude the work of these women from the canon, racism has attempted in a number of ways to erase black women's theoretical productions. In opposition to racist power structures that silence black women's voices, this volume enables their voices to be heard again. The fact that this collection of essays makes a profoundly valuable and desperately needed contribution to intellectual history was emphasized to me time and time again as I carted it to coffee shops around Pittsburgh. As I pored over the pages of this book, fellow (white) coffee shop patrons walking past my table would glance at the front cover, stop in their tracks, and exclaim with shock, "There's a black women's intellectual tradition?!" This reaction speaks to how thoroughly and effectively black women's voices have been excluded from mainstream discourse. *Black Women's Intellectual History* helps to remedy this tragic omission.

The essays in this collection highlight the work of intellectuals such as Maria W. Stewart, Ida B. Wells, Anna Julia Cooper, and Frances E. W. Harper in order to show that nineteenth century black women do not need to be spoken for. They have already spoken for themselves and even continue to speak through the work of contemporary black feminist theorists. Conaway and Waters point out that contemporary black women intellectuals such as Toni Morrison and Alice Walker do not speak from nowhere. Their voices have emerged from a long, systematic history of ideas formulated by nineteenth-century black women. The purpose of this collection is to trace the major themes and structures of the intellectual traditions that began to emerge through the work of nineteenth-century black women. Conaway and Waters consciously use "traditions" (specifically in the plural) in order to acknowledge that there is no single, unified body of thought that can be attributed to black women intellectuals. Because black women's intellectual productions are richly diverse, this collection seeks to highlight the continuum of ideas constructed through their work. As the essays in this volume trace the contours of these bodies of thought, they continually seek to connect them to contemporary feminism in powerful ways.

The collection is divided up into six sections, each section seeking to trace one of the varied threads of black women's intellectual production in the nineteenth century, revealing both the divergences and the common themes. The overall structure of the book, however, does not make it immediately clear what those common themes are or from what specific contexts black women's intellectual productions were emerging (such as churches, literary societies, and newspapers). A few sections are ordered around key figures in black women's intellectual traditions, such as Maria W. Stewart and Anna Julia Cooper. Others are ordered according to themes, such as "Incidents in the Lives: Free Women and Slaves," a section which strangely combines essays on Sojourner Truth, slave narratives, and literary societies. Still other sections combine key figures and themes, such as "Leadership, Activism, and the Genius of Ida B. Wells." The result of this seeming lack of overall organization is that figures such as Frances E. W. Harper, Pauline Hopkins, and Mary Ann Shadd Cary are lumped together in one section as "writers." This is problematic because the kind of writing Harper and Hopkins do is extremely different in both genre and

purpose from the kind of knowledge production in which Shadd Cary engages. Shadd Cary was the first black woman to found and edit a newspaper, in which she advanced her emigrationist-integrationist position. Harper and Hopkins used literature, particularly sentimental novels, as a strategy of resistance to the hegemonic representations contributing to the oppression of black women. The organization of the essays tends to obscure, rather than highlight, this key difference. Essays on Harper and Hopkins would have made more sense in a section exclusively on nineteenth-century black women novelists or in a section that addresses the work of other black women who actively deconstruct racist and sexist misrepresentations. This is a decidedly minor critique of an anthology that is an indisputably valuable contribution to intellectual history.

In order to best explore this richly varied collection of essays, I have tried to identify five main themes that the essays in this collection repeatedly address as they attempt to articulate the contours of nineteenth-century black women's thought. These themes are: religious influence, reckoning with the "cult of true womanhood," awareness of interlocking oppressions, the importance of education, and the usefulness of lived experience. Taken together, these themes roughly characterize the commonalities in the nineteenth-century black women's intellectual traditions that are explored in this collection. I will address each of these themes in what follows, identifying their appearances in this excellent collection of essays.

Religious Influence

The essays on Maria W. Stewart, Sojourner Truth, and Anna Julia Cooper highlight the way these women used religious rhetoric to both critique white supremacy and provide strong justification for their demand for equality with whites. In Marilyn Richardson's essay on Stewart, she writes, "From the start, [Stewart's] religious vision and her socio-political agenda were intrinsically bound together, defined one by the other."[1] For Stewart, advocating for the cause of freedom meant advocating for the cause of God. To resist oppression is be obedient to God. In her essay entitled, "Maria W. Stewart and the Rhetoric of Black Preaching," Lena Ampadu argues that Stewart's speaking style contributes to the black sermonic tradition. Also, using Alice Walker's definition of womanism, Ampadu identifies the political-religious rhetoric Stewart uses in her speeches as womanist. Writes Ampadu, "Multiple dimensions of Walker's definition are especially relevant to analyzing Stewart's rhetoric: her love of her fellow sisters, as well as of the entire community; her enthusiasm for spiritual matters; and her courage to speak out against social injustice."[2] Stewart also employs the rhetoric of the "black jeremiad," warning whites of the divine wrath they would experience if they did not stop oppressing black people. In her essay on Anna Julia Cooper, Karen Baker-Fletcher provides the reader with "womanist reflections" on Cooper's faith and its influence on her work for liberation. For Cooper, the concept of God is central to projects for liberation. Baker-Fletcher points out that, for Cooper, humankind is distinguished from the animals by her likeness to God. This likeness consists in the form of a "Singing Something." Writes Baker-Fletcher, "Where is God's presence evident for Cooper? God is in the very *movement* of reform. God is in this *Singing* Something in human being that rises up against injustice and moves onward toward a full realization of freedom."[3] For Cooper, argues Baker-Fletcher, God is the voice of liberation and resistance within human beings. The concept that the Singing Something within humanity cannot be fully suppressed by oppressive practices is empowering for the voiceless. When she acknowledges the influence of Christianity on black women intellectuals of this period, Kristin Waters makes a crucial distinction between white Christianity and black Christianity. White Christianity was used to justify the oppression of both blacks and women and was critiqued for its hypocrisy by thinkers such as Stewart. Black Christianity, in contrast, was a "syncretic religion," melding Christianity and African religious traditions together. The result was a religious tradition that "was less hypocritical, less contradictory, and at the same time allowed blacks to claim the moral high ground."[4]

Reckoning with the "Cult of True Womanhood"

Each black woman intellectual addressed in this collection must reckon with the concept of "true womanhood" advanced by white supremacist society. The cult of true womanhood, which emerged in the nineteenth century, defines true women as pious, pure, submissive, and domestic.[5] This conception of womanhood was supported and enforced in various ways, including law, custom, and religion. One of the problems with the cult of true womanhood is that it is coded as white. According to Waters, "'True Womanhood' was reserved for a class of elite white women who derived their elevation from the slavocracy that supported them."[6] The pressure to conform to the image of true womanhood was intense in the nineteenth century. The theorists that are written about in this volume address the cult in various ways. Maria W. Stewart repeatedly exhorted black women in her writing and lectures to develop virtuous characters and become excellent housewives. Because of this, Marilyn Richardson argues that Stewart buys into the popular notion of true womanhood. Waters, however, argues that the white cult of true womanhood had a counterpart in the black community that was quite different. Stewart was articulating the cult's black counterpart. Waters labels this counterpart the "ideology of black female moral leadership."[7] She accounts for the similarities between the white cult of true womanhood and the ideology of black female moral leadership by pointing to the need for the latter to gain authority in a racist society. The black woman as a moral leader, in the way she is described by thinkers such as Stewart and Anna Julia Cooper, is not domesticated and submissive. The concept of the virtuous woman advanced by these thinkers "is a concept of genuine, proactive 'public virtue,' of women engaged in every part of public life."[8] Waters further explains, "The idea of black women as social and moral leaders is a self-generated, self-reflexive arm of a liberation movement designed to help bring women to consciousness about social conditions in modern society and about the kinds of activities, education, and organizing required to bring about change."[9] While the ideology of black women as moral leaders may have been modeled upon the white-defined cult of true womanhood, it could not be more different because it was created by black women themselves as a strategy for survival against oppression. The cult of true womanhood, on the other hand, was designed to keep women weak and submissive.

In contrast to the way that Stewart and Cooper appropriate and redefine the cult of true womanhood as a tool for liberatory struggle, Carla L. Peterson points out that Sojourner Truth deals with the cult of true womanhood by simply debunking it. In her famous "A'n't I a Woman" speech, Truth first outlines the conception of the ideal woman as she is constructed by the cult: she is someone to be helped out of carriages and over ditches. Truth then "affirms her masculine strength based on her ability to perform strenuous physical labor," and then pleads her identity as a woman by asking rhetorically, "A'n't I a woman?"[10] In her speech Truth also appeals to the fact that she has given birth to thirteen children as incontrovertible proof of her womanhood. Truth's speech functions as an affirmation of black womanhood. Writes Peterson, "Rather than begging for admission to a sphere of femininity acceptable to white women, Truth, here offers her audience a vision of black womanhood."[11]

In keeping with the idea that there is not a single, unified body of black feminist thought, this collection exhibits the continuum of black women's responses to the oppressive and exclusive cult of true womanhood.

Awareness of Interlocking Oppressions

Many of the essays in this volume make it clear that nineteenth-century black women intellectuals understood identity in ways that were more complex than the conceptions of identity employed by many first wave white feminists. Black writers such as Harper and Cooper understood that their racial identities and their gendered identities intersected to produce a double oppression. Black women faced not only racial discrimination, but also gender discrimination both inside and outside of the black community. Valerie Palmer-Mehta, in her essay on Harper and feminist theory, appeals to a speech Harper gave to an audience of white women in which she argues for the double oppression of black women. Harper points out that, while white and black women share oppressions because of their gender, black women cannot take the same seat as a white woman in a streetcar. Harper theorized experience at the intersection of race and gender long before such a concept became recognized in mainstream feminist theory. She illuminates the need for a discussion of interlocking oppressions within the feminist movement. R. Dianne Bartlow maintains that Maria W. Stewart articulated a "radical" standpoint when she drew "attention to the link between race and gender in women's experiences."[12] Nineteenth-century intellectuals such as Stewart and Harper realized that gender could not be privileged at the expense of identities that also deeply affect one's lived experience, such as race. Developing conceptions of identity that can account for the intersection of race, gender, class, ability, and sexuality remains an important challenge for feminist theory today.

The Importance of Education

Central to the work of figures such as Stewart and Cooper is their struggle to procure educational opportunities for black people, particularly black women. Stewart tirelessly argued for the importance of education in the struggle for liberation. The formal education of black women was "a matter of the greatest political urgency."[13] Stewart's commitment to equal educational opportunities for blacks is certainly still relevant to the contemporary struggle against racism in the U.S. Activists must still work, as Stewart did, to ensure that racial minorities have equal access to education. In her essay, "Anna Julia Cooper: A Voice from the South," Mary Helen Washington describes Cooper's life-long dedication to the education of black youth. Only the fourth American black woman to receive a Ph.D., Washington writes that Cooper was nevertheless excluded from black intellectual history. Much of her work was about women and was therefore considered less significant in comparison to work by and about black men. Cooper taught at several schools for black youth throughout her life, preparing her students for prestigious universities such as Harvard and Yale. Education was also key to Cooper's brand of feminism. Washington writes, "Passionately committed to women's independence, Cooper espoused higher education as the essential key to ending women's physical, emotional, and economic dependence on men."[14] Educated women will be able to make their own way in the world and become self-reliant, rather than simply being the beneficiaries of men. Michelle N. Garfield dedicates an entire essay in this volume to the literary societies that were formed in the nineteenth century in which middle-class black women gathered to collectively further their education because of their belief that "knowledge is power."[15] According to Garfield, these societies facilitated the emergence of the figure of the black female writer.

The Usefulness of Lived Experience

This collection highlights the ways in which black women intellectuals of the nineteenth century used their lived experience in order to illustrate the connection between the personal and the political. Palmer-Mehta argues that Harper contributes to feminist theory through her use of "compelling personal stories in order to demonstrate the political aspect of personal experiences, laying the groundwork for the contemporary feminist philosophy of making the 'personal political.'"[16] In her speech before the Eleventh National Women's Rights Convention, Harper used her experiences to critique the hegemonic power structures that oppressed blacks on a day-to-day basis. She showed how the political permeated the daily lives of the oppressed. Palmer-Mehta argues that Harper thus contributes to the tradition of second-wave feminism, in which the mantra was "the personal is political." Washington points out that, in Cooper's collection of essays entitled *A Voice from the South*, she appeals to her own personal experience, "prob[ing] her own pain, anger, and victimization."[17] It seems to me that these thinkers prefigure the feminist phenomenological tradition, which seeks to theorize the lived, embodied experience of oppressed minorities.

This collection of essays highlights many common themes and traces several diverse threads of thought that cannot be summarized here. I have simply tried to tease out the most prominent themes in order to illuminate the foundations of black feminist thought as they are presented here. The essays in this book function as an excellent critical introduction to nineteenth-century black women's intellectual traditions. Not only do the essays give an overview of the theoretical contributions of some of the century's key figures, but the last section attempts to address their continuing relevance for contemporary feminist thought. Because black women intellectuals have been obscured and silenced for so long, this collection can only be the beginning. This collection provides an impetus for further study and deeper exploration of these key figures in U.S. intellectual history.

In their introduction to the volume, Conaway and Waters reiterate the importance of a project that allows us to hear and recognize the voices of black women who have been silenced by racist power structures and hegemonic epistemologies. They write, "Self-generated and authentic 'voices' constitute a powerful means of reclaiming the territory of black women's intellectual production."[18] Through their own voices, then, the scholars who wrote the essays in this collection are bringing nineteenth-century black women back to voice. As these contemporary theorists speak, they are "turning up the volume" so that we may hear the voices of the nineteenth-century black women that history has attempted to silence. "Do not walk past these intellectuals and activists," caution Conaway and Waters. "Listen carefully to their voices and the voices of those who elucidate and amplify their work, bringing their legacies into the present."[19] While it is outside the scope of this collection, it seems necessary to me at this point to elucidate a theory of listening. What does it mean, as a white woman, to hear the voices of these black women intellectuals? I suspect that listening well is an active, rather than a passive, activity. This seems especially true because of the long, infamous history of racism in the U.S., actively working to silence black women. Part of this history of silencing includes conditioning white people to dismiss habitually the voices of black people, particularly black women. White people may hear, but we do not listen. As we learn from this collection of essays, black women's voices are an incredibly powerful tool for challenging oppressive representations and hegemonic epistemologies. But as they speak, I ask myself the question, "How am I listening?" How

am I allowing my perceptual lenses to be transformed? As a white feminist, how am I reimagining the goals of the feminist movement alongside black women in more inclusive ways? As the voices of black women intellectuals are amplified by collections such as this one, the question of listening becomes of the utmost importance.

Endnotes

1. Marilyn Richardson, "Maria W. Stewart: America's First Black Woman Political Writer." In *Black Women's Intellectual Traditions: Speaking Their Minds*, ed. Kristin Waters and Carol B. Conaway (Lebanon: University of Vermont Press, 2007), 17.
2. Lena Ampadu, "Maria W. Stewart and the Rhetoric of Black Preaching: Perspectives on Womanism and Black Nationalism," in *ibid.*, 41.
3. Karen Baker-Fletcher, "A Singing Something: Womanist Reflections on Anna Julia Cooper, in *ibid.*, 271.
4. Kristin Waters, "Some Core Themes of Black Feminism," in *ibid.*, 368.
5. *Ibid.*, 374.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, 375.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Carla L. Peterson, "'A Sign Unto This Nation': Sojourner Truth, History, Orature, and Modernity," in *ibid.*, 164.
11. *Ibid.*, 165.
12. R. Dianne Bartlow, "'No Throw-away Woman'": Maria W. Stewart as a Forerunner of Black Feminist Thought," in *ibid.*, 75.
13. Marilyn Richardson, "Maria W. Stewart: America's First Black Woman Political Writer," in *ibid.*, 27.
14. Mary Helen Washington, "Anna Julia Cooper: A Voice from the South," in *ibid.*, 262.
15. Michelle N. Garfield, "Literary Societies," in *ibid.*, 115.
16. Valerie Palmer-Mehta, "'We Are All Bound Up Together': Frances Harper and Feminist Theory," in *ibid.*, 194.
17. Mary Helen Washington, "Anna Julia Cooper: A Voice from the South," in *ibid.*, 263.
18. Conaway, Carol B. and Kristin Waters, introduction to *ibid.*, 3.
19. *Ibid.*

Habits of Whiteness: A Pragmatist Reconstruction

Terrance MacMullan (Indiana University Press, 2009). 272 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-253-31813-8 (Cloth, $60.00); ISBN-13: 978-0-253-22071-4 (Paperback, $22.95).

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Terrance MacMullan's *Habits of Whiteness: a Pragmatist Reconstruction* is a masterful synthesis of John Dewey's pragmatic social psychology and W.E.B. Du Bois's study of racial identity. This review will discuss MacMullan's analysis of the habits that comprise "whiteness" and that perpetuate problems that hinder the development of fully fair and democratic communities.

Revitalizing the pragmatic habit formation found in John Dewey's *Human Nature and Conduct*, MacMullan brings Dewey's inquiry-driven model of human experience to bear upon the problems of whiteness. The cornerstone of

MacMullen's argument, and perhaps the richest and most original contribution to the conversation, is his contention that "whiteness" is a socially constructed *concept*, a construction that can be traced and explained historically. "Concept," however, is a technical term in Deweyan pragmatism; it is the fusion of *kinds*, which "capture the past operations of habits," and *categories*, which "describe dispositions to act in the future in certain ways" (75).

Stemming from the contributions of his pragmatic predecessors, Dewey, as MacMullan accurately contends, maintains that "the notion of inquiry and the results, ideas, and directed actions that stem from it are responses to a problematic situation," which is, I agree, "perhaps the most prominent thread across the field of American pragmatists" (67). Fundamentally, the "problematic situation" is the unsettling of the equilibrium between an organism and its surrounding natural and social environments. From this transaction between organism and environment, habits are formed and are solidified "because they work" (76), because they enable the individual to reestablish his/her equilibrium with his/her environment. As MacMullan notes, it is precisely this "interaction of habits, concepts and inquiry that was missed in earlier discussions of whiteness as habit."

There are four parts in the book, all turning on the interaction between racial identity and habit formation. The first, "History," outlines the ways in which whiteness, as a coordination of habits and concepts, has been culturally conditioned towards a sense of white supremacy in the United States. Although innumerable historical moments and ratified laws have given rise to this false notion of white superiority, MacMullan convincingly argues that Bacon's Rebellion and the Draft Riots of 1863 were historical turning points in which whiteness was, in effect, invented in the former instance and, in the latter, further defined and solidified. The second part, "Pragmatist Tools," makes a case for W.E.B. Du Bois's inclusion in the American philosophical tradition of pragmatism and brings him into close conversation with John Dewey. In this cluster of chapters, MacMullan outlines Dewey's pragmatism, focusing specifically on the habit formation articulated in *Human Nature and Conduct*. MacMullan then reads Du Bois through a Deweyan lens and notes that, just as Dewey viewed individual character development as the culmination of habits resulting from organism-environment transactions, so too did Du Bois treat race as a "*kind*, as *a category*, and as *a set of habits*" (110). These habits can be historically explicated and actively rectified should they prove undesirable, as in the case of the habits that comprise whiteness. The third part, "Contemporary Problems and Debates," engages the problem of whiteness in post-Civil Rights America. MacMullan notes the perpetuation of racism in post-Civil Rights America by articulating the ways in which overt, legal racism may have been eradicated (for the most part) but that the field of racism has shifted to the subtler realm of white privilege and a habitual sense of racial superiority. Though the laws supporting and perpetuating racial inequality are no longer in effect (again, for the most part), the habits of whiteness that gave rise to these laws have not been adequately addressed. MacMullan looks here at the tradition of critical race theory that analyzes white privilege and whiteness as "invisible," that "white people remain ignorant of white privilege because of the fact that all aspects of our lives...were defined and tailored to fit the needs, wants and concerns of white folk" (142). Drawing from his pragmatic reading of Dewey and Du Bois, MacMullan recasts the language of "invisibility" and supplants it with the language of habit formation. The habits with the greatest efficacy are those that pass unnoticed and "invisible" in human activity, reflecting both an environment tragically receptive to racial inequalities and an organism

unwittingly engaging in it for its own benefit. In the fourth and final section, "Reconstructing Whiteness," MacMullan offers us his solution to the problem of whiteness through the Deweyan model of habit formation. Somewhat more optimistic than Shannon Sullivan in her recent book *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege*, in which Sullivan provided a masterful account of the unconscious habits at the heart of racial identity, MacMullan maintains that a closer look at Dewey's theory of habit formation holds the key for a practical reconstruction of unconscious, solidified habits. Through the interplay between fresh impulses and the matrix of habits already solidified in human character, along with an historical excavation of the artificiality of whiteness and a demystification of the assumed a-historicity of white superiority, new habits can be formed atop a self-understanding that is no longer based on a flawed memory of historical events. Habits can be altered, MacMullan argues, and this often-painful process must begin with a historical analysis of how those habits were forged to begin with and why their efficacy has endured for so long, an analysis that MacMullan has been good enough to provide for us in the opening sections of this book.

The Civil Rights Movement went far, MacMullan maintains, to eradicate white supremacy by attacking the laws that perpetuated racial inequality. However, it did not go so far as to analyze and critique the habits that endured unnoticed even in white individuals who do not identify as proponents of white supremacy. MacMullan argues that the field of racism shifted to one far subtler, the unnoticed habits (what he calls "the habits of whiteness") that endured in white folk and perpetuated racial inequality through the enjoyment of unearned privileges. Hence, MacMullan's choice to draw upon Dewey's analysis of habit formation is apt, an analysis that allows a robust and dynamic explication of how, precisely, these unhealthy habits came about. Further, MacMullan maintains that "these habits of whiteness also perpetuate a cultural numbness or emptiness that prevents white people from enjoying the rich and meaningful cultural experiences all people need" (2). Drawing upon Du Bois's insights into racial identity, MacMullan argues that the cultural identity of whiteness is forged from a series of fabricated memories and a "false sense of history" (105) in which violence and enslavement were artificially transformed into memories of heroism and tolerance. MacMullan highlights Du Bois's point that each race carries with it a unique perspective on a shared world, a cultural gift that can be brought into conversation with other races for mutual benefit. Whiteness, however, is simultaneously incapable of bringing anything positive to the table of discourse, constructed, as it was, from lies, forged of "habits...that have been uncritically handed down from older generations" (95), and incapable of profiting through discourse with other racial histories because of the inherent sense of superiority which tends towards the rejection of alternative perspectives. Therein lies the heart of MacMullan's project: the fusion of his analysis of Deweyan habit formation and the gift of race in Du Bois will provide the foundation for, first, the critical excavation of the falsified history that constructed the problematic habits that lead to contemporary issues of racial inequality and the unearned privileges of whiteness. Only by making explicit this fabricated cultural history of whiteness can those habits be seen for what they are, that is, culturally constructed and historically contingent rather than, as whiteness would have it, a-historic and a-temporal essential characteristics of racial identity and superiority. Second, once we establish that the interplay between impulses, habits, and concepts gives rise to the racial identity of whiteness can we begin to take active steps toward reconstructing those habits to provide the type of cultural gift and authentic cross-cultural conversation that Du Bois champions.

The introduction wastes no time in outlining the general trajectory of the book through the author's own unique experiences with whiteness. MacMullan, himself white, through a series of insightful and entertaining anecdotes, critically explores his own experiences with the privileges he noted in white America after a childhood of being the relative outcast, the outsider, the "gringo" living in Puerto Rico for many years. Moving from a childhood (when so many habits are forged) in which he felt anything but privileged by his whiteness, into an adolescence in white America, provides MacMullan with a rather unique perspective into what, for many, pass as otherwise unnoticed privileges of their own whiteness.

In the introduction, MacMullan maintains that a robust analysis of the unnoticed habits of whiteness is the key to contemporary investigations of enduring racial inequality in the post-Civil Rights era. Indeed, "the intractability of current philosophical and political arguments regarding race stems largely from misunderstandings about the nature of race and racism that can best be clarified through pragmatist models of inquiry and habit" (3). Significant here is that this methodology is capable of explaining how it is that even "the most well-meaning people...whether liberal, moderate or conservative" (4) experience moments in which a sense of racial superiority still influences their ideas and actions. This is due to "the disconnect between ideas and habits" in which conscious, reflective experience can express an individual's antipathy towards racial inequality while at the same time habits which have never been fully explored betray the legacy of pre-Civil War racial inequality. A proper explication of the habits causing this disjunction will likewise make explicit the otherwise "invisible" habits governing white behavior, paving the way for the potential to "develop new identities that are more amenable to fostering democratic community" (5). Pedagogically, this type of pragmatic analysis makes engaging the topic of racism more amenable to students who do not wish to be associated with the sort of white supremacist groups that operate on a cognitive level of hatred and the perpetuation of racial inequality. MacMullan argues that "the problem of white racism is not located primarily with people who *consciously* discriminate against other people or *explicitly* argue in favor of white supremacism" (6). In so doing, without denigrating the significance of that type of overt, hatred-infused racism, MacMullan can differentiate another sort of racism inspired by unconscious habits, fostered by the enjoyment and perpetuation of unearned privileges, that may plague even the most well-meaning of individuals.

"The problem of whiteness, and the best way to correct it, is the focus of this work. By 'the problem of whiteness' I mean the practices, habits, and assumptions that impede human flourishing and democracy and that stem from the concept of whiteness as a superior and pure group" (18). There are three facets to this problem that MacMullan will articulate throughout the book. The first facet is the special advantages and privileges that white folk enjoy but other races do not. This will be fleshed out in the chapters dealing with a historical analysis of the different occasions in which white supremacy was solidified in law and the habits that both gave rise to these laws and the habits which were ultimately solidified because of them. The second facet is over-oppression of people of color, the acts of violence perpetrated against them. The third facet is "cultural vacuity" (18), the emptiness at the heart of all that is defined as whiteness to the detriment of those that identify as white.

The second and third chapters, entitled "Bacon's Rebellion and the Advent of Whiteness" and "The Draft Riots of 1863 and the Defense of White Privilege," together comprise the opening section of the book, "History." In these two chapters, MacMullan

utilizes these two historical moments to chronicle important movements in the history of whiteness and the development of the habits that are being analyzed. There are three major claims that MacMullan traces through these historical events. First, that "whiteness is a social construct that varies over time and place (and is not a fixed, irreducible feature of human biology)" (25). Second, "though whiteness changed from age to age, once it emerged as a legal and social construct in the eighteenth century, it was treated as a natural kind in each age" (25), and, finally, that "whiteness was established largely in a circular or negative fashion...its boundaries were defined primarily through the exclusion of those who were defined as non-white" (26).

The definition of whiteness through negation is critical to MacMullan's exploration of the unnoticed habits that motivate what Peggy McIntosh calls the "invisible knapsack" of unearned privileges. The laws ratified after Bacon's Rebellion, defining non-whites in terms of privileges they could no longer enjoy, effectively constructed a definition of whiteness in the negative space around the denied privileges for others. Consequently, this led to a sense of identity not through positive laws granting privilege, but negative laws stripping them away from others. "It is the definition through negation that causes subsequent generations of white people both to be unaware of the many unjust privileges attached to whiteness and to be concerned, even obsessed, with protecting the privileges to which they feel entitled" (30). Further, by ratifying laws disabling the privileges of racial minorities, the experience of white folk was implicitly treated as normative, "where Africans and Native Americans were marked as different" (41). In effect, the sense of unnoticed, invisible, unearned privileges was further solidified by making what critical race theorists call the "transcendental norm" of whiteness. Whatever was indicative of whiteness, from racial characteristics to privileges, became the normative standard against which all else, in law and experience, was treated as deviant.

After the Draft Riots of 1863, the defense of whiteness, as it had already been negatively defined, revolved around a systematic justification of many of the atrocities perpetrated against blacks and Native Americans. The "myth of the frontier," not only justifying but encouraging "the genocide of indigenous peoples and the theft of their land" (51), was one of many projects designed to obfuscate or justify many of the more insidious moments in the cultural history of whiteness.

Chapters three and four, entitled "John Dewey and Inquiry" and "Race as Deweyan Habit," comprise the first half of the second section of the book, entitled "Pragmatist Tools." Here, MacMullan makes his case for focusing exclusively on John Dewey for his articulation of classical American pragmatism, arguing that Dewey's work maintains a "consistent advocacy for pragmatist theories and methods" and that "his collective body of work stands as one of the best elucidations, if not *the* very best, of pragmatism" (61). It is here that MacMullan offers a clear, swift, and concise account of Dewey's contributions to American pragmatism, weaving the classical threads of organism-environment transactions together with inquiry-driven experience and the formation of habits that result from the reestablishment of equilibrium after the onset of a problematic situation. Indeed, even outside the context of race or whiteness, these chapters present a solid overview of Deweyan pragmatism in general, offering a clear articulation of the basic tenets of Dewey's unique perspective on the tradition.

Chapters five and six, entitled "Du Bois and the Gift of Race" and "Du Bois's Critique of Whiteness," complete the second section and provide the final pragmatic tools MacMullan needs for the reconstruction of whiteness he forwards in his concluding chapters. MacMullan takes from his reading of Du Bois that race is a gift, "that each race bears a message for the rest of humanity in the form of its collective, preserved experience" (104). Race, therefore, is something that should be preserved, in contrast to those proponents of "color blindness." However, whiteness, based upon its fabricated history that eschews the violence and inequality that was its genesis and continues to be its perpetuation, has little to nothing to offer in terms of its own "unique" cultural perspective. MacMullan, utilizing Du Bois, investigates what, if anything, should be preserved from whiteness or, if nothing, what "gift" do white folk bring to the communal table. What can fill the "vacuity" of whiteness after the lies have been expunged?

The third part of the book, "Contemporary Problems and Debates," contains chapters seven and eight, entitled "Whiteness in Post-Civil Rights America" and "Contemporary Debates on Whiteness," respectively. These chapters attempt to "bridge the gap between Du Bois's time and our own" (131) highlighting, specifically, the phenomenon of enduring habits of racial superiority in white folk even after the Civil Rights era, which took great steps towards eradicating legalized racial inequality. "Whiteness adapted" (132) to the new climate and the old habits of whiteness persisted even after Civil Rights reconstruction. Here, MacMullan agrees with the critical race theorists that utilize the language of invisibility for the unearned privileges and latent sense of superiority in white folk, but recasts it in the Deweyan language of habit formation. He argues, "when they are referencing the invisibility of whiteness they are speaking about the *habitual dimension of whiteness* as seen through a Deweyan and Du Boisian lens" (133). Utilizing Dewey's explication of the efficacy of unconscious habits on conscious behavior, MacMullan convincingly argues that we should replace the language of invisibility with the language of habit formation that goes far in explaining why a sense of entitlement and superiority pervade even the most well-intentioned individual. Further, the "important moments in our history, and their constant repetition in our present age, have ended the days of extreme and overt white supremacism, but initiated the age of white privilege through invisibility" (142). It is this new manifestation of racism that must be addressed and the best way to do so is precisely through this reformulation of habits on the Deweyan-cum-Du Boisian model.

The final chapters, "Habits of Whiteness" and "Whiteness Reconstructed," offer MacMullan's solution to this new form of racism and the culmination of research in this book. It is here that MacMullan offers his most thorough critique of Dewey, convincingly arguing that Dewey, himself, did not always stay entirely true to his own project, assuming too great a specificity to the impulses that play a key roll in conditioning our habit formation. Whereas Dewey notes we all have an instinctual antipathy towards all that is "strange," MacMullan correctly notes that such specificity should not lie in the realm of the nebulous impulses that condition habit formation but in the habits themselves. This distinction is critical to MacMullan's project because if we can move such antipathy out of the realm of impulses (where Dewey had them) and into the realm of acquired habits (where Dewey should have placed them if he was true to his own project) then antipathy towards what is strange, a sense of entitlement and guilt (the three habits he examines in these concluding chapters) are now in the realm of what can be actively reconstructed. It is refreshing to see MacMullan take Dewey to task on this point, demonstrating his ability to constructively critique and not simply take up the Deweyan perspective uncritically. We can utilize fresh impulses, new stimuli, MacMullan argues, to alter pre-existing habits if we maintain this pragmatic framework. "If we take full advantage of Dewey's work on the interrelation of ideas, impulses, and habits

as well as Du Bois's historically and sociologically informed critiques of whiteness, we can move from seeing whiteness as a vague and murky problem to a determinate problem that can be engaged through inquiry" (168).

MacMullan's explication of Deweyan habit formation is an astute, concise, and clear articulation of an underutilized text, namely, Dewey's *Human Nature and Conduct*. Although there is nothing overly revelatory about his account of Dewey's pragmatism, advanced students of the tradition will appreciate the apt presentation of Dewey's social psychology, particularly in terms of tying it into Dewey's unique adaptation of the American tradition and bringing it to bear on issues of racial inequality (something Dewey himself did not engage thoroughly). However, these same pragmatists might take notice that the subtitle of the text, "A Pragmatist Reconstruction," is somewhat of an exaggeration, unless of course one understands Dewey as the best representation of that philosophical tradition, which MacMullan clearly does. He makes clear his reasons for utilizing Dewey rather than his pragmatic predecessors and, to his advantage, keeps his focus narrow and specific. However, some scholars of pragmatism may be disappointed to note that figures such as William James are only barely mentioned and C.S. Peirce more or less absent altogether even though both figures could offer much in terms of an analysis of habit formation and the pragmatic inquiry-driven account of human development through the overcoming of problematic situations. This is not a critique of the book itself, per se, for MacMullan argues admirably for his utilization of only Deweyan pragmatism and allows himself greater argumentative precision in keeping his focus narrow. Nevertheless, it is important to note that those in search of a greater overview of American pragmatism in terms of its application to critical race theory will find a more or less strictly Deweyan manifestation.

Further, MacMullan is right to note that Du Bois's place in the tradition of American pragmatism is far from certain. However, he makes as strong a case as I've yet seen for Du Bois's inclusion, noting the resonance between Du Bois and Dewey in terms of habit formation, constructivism, and the human development that results from inquiry driven by the onset of problematic situations.

Finally, MacMullan is not shy in engaging head-on one of the other recent, and very popular, texts dealing with this topic, namely, Shannon Sullivan's *Revealing Whiteness*. Though with a clear admiration for Sullivan's contributions, MacMullan continues the conversation by not shying away from a critique of some of her readings of Deweyan habit formation, specifically, to what degree *can* habits really be actively reconstructed? Any reader who enjoyed Sullivan's investigation will find MacMullan's analysis an intriguing continuation of the same line of inquiry.

Having a background in philosophy is certainly useful but not entirely necessary to engage this text and come away with many significant insights. MacMullan's articulation of the basic problems of philosophy that the pragmatic tradition engaged is sufficient to bring even an undergraduate student in philosophy quickly up to speed and enable that student to engage the conversation as it unfolds. For more advanced students and scholars alike, the book does not shy away from detailed technical terminology, but presents it in a straightforward and clear manner. Further, MacMullan draws from his own, personal experiences of white privilege through a series of charming, illuminating, and entertaining anecdotes that are sure to engage readers from a variety of backgrounds and levels of philosophical expertise. From a perspective of critical race theory, MacMullan deftly engages the ongoing conversation and demonstrates the breadth of his academic research, drawing from other contemporary authors like Cornel West, Lucius Outlaw, Robert Bernasconi, and George Yancy and weaving them into his ongoing discussion with Sullivan. It is an intriguing read, one useful to pragmatist and critical race theorists alike, one accessible to student and scholar, and one that does an extraordinary job bridging the gap between race theory and pragmatism.

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