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Double Consciousness and Second Sight

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Friedrich Nietzsche is not an obvious resource for thinking through the contemporary African American situation. He is hostile to egalitarianism, and indeed to political agendas of virtually any sort. Yet he frequently advocates liberation of the spirit and, at least implicitly, the changes to the status quo that would be necessary to support it. I will suggest that Nietzsche offers considerable insight of use to those concerned with African Americans' societal position, not through his ostensible political comments but through his psychological insight. I will offer what I hope is a prima facie case for this idea by considering some of the parallels and links between Nietzsche's ideas and those proposed by his near-contemporary W. E. B. DuBois, author of the "political Bible" of African American thought, *The Souls of Black Folk*.[1]

I will begin by describing DuBois's characterization of the dynamic but incoherent psychological state provoked by the African American's social circumstances which he terms "double consciousness." I will then suggest that Nietzsche makes a number of suggestions that resonate with this conception, and argue that Nietzsche's approach valuably complements that of Du Bois, both in terms of literary strategy and in the articulation of goals for the doubly conscious person.

DuBois describes double consciousness early in his book *The Souls of Black Folk*. Double consciousness, says DuBois, characterizes the American Negro, who is "born with a veil, and gifted with second sight."[2]

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in

> amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.[3]

The term *double consciousness* is not original with DuBois. Keith Byerman observes that "In the psychological theory of the time, including that of DuBois's mentor, William James, 'double consciousness' was a form of mental illness in which the victim experienced self-alienation, an inability to maintain a coherent self-image."[4] Priscilla Wald describes the disorder as one that occurs when "two distinct personalities having no knowledge of each other 'coexist' in the same body."

> Here . . . is the embodiment of the uncanny: the strange familiarity of the self in and as an other. . . . The disruptions in the narrative of identity of medical subjects suffering from double-consciousness become, in DuBois's formulation, the discontinued narrative of identity imposed on black Americans.[5]

As DuBois uses the term, double consciousness involves a number of aspects. First, it involves awareness that others see one in a manner that fails to confer genuine recognition. Sandra Adell argues that DuBois's notion of double consciousness has Hegelian roots, evident particularly in the suggestion that the soul with double consciousness seeks a higher synthesis that would integrate its two natures.[6] DuBois's portrait of double consciousness is Hegelian, however, in an even more basic sense. Like the parties in Hegel's parable of master and slave, the African American desires recognition from others and is frustrated in this aim. The single characteristic of dark complexion is typically taken to imply all other traits of the individual, according to DuBois. "We must not forget that most Americans answer all questions regarding the Negro a priori."[7] DuBois poignantly recalls his first discovery, that awareness of his race could obstruct recognition of his humanity:

> I was a little thing, away up in the hills of New England, where the dark Housatonic winds between Hoosac and Teghkanic to the sea. In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting cards—ten cents a package—and exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card—refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap,

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> in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil.[8]

The "veil" that DuBois indicates refers to the color line separating whites and blacks but also to a dimming of acuity. DuBois is aware that he is simultaneously seen by those on the other side of the veil but also obscured by the veil. While DuBois's double consciousness involves the awareness of being invisible as a distinct person, it also involves a sense of being under the white world's surveillance. This observation is predicated on the maintenance of the color divide.

The white world's identification of the African American in terms of the sole feature of skin color is not a mere oversight regarding other personal characteristics. It is accompanied by a threatening stance, maintained by the white world against any behavior deviating from acceptable deference to the status quo in which white privilege prevails. DuBois described the situation of blacks in the South: "The police system of the South was originally designed to keep track of all Negroes, not simply of criminals. Its police system was arranged to deal with blacks alone, and tacitly assumed that every white man was ipso facto a member of that police."[9]

The self-consciousness that such observation engenders is an internalization of external surveillance. One may choose to defy the pressures imposed by those watching, but one is well aware of them as one's audience. Indeed, one's self-conception comes to involve a sense that one is performing for others. Audience reaction becomes a test of one's success.[10] This reactive self-perception takes on a negative cast when the audience is predisposed to respond in a disparaging manner. This is certainly the situation of African Americans, according to DuBois:

> . . . the facing of so vast a prejudice could not but bring the inevitable self-questioning, self-disparagement, and lowering of ideals which ever accompany repression and breed in an atmosphere of contempt and hate.[11]

Thus far I have indicated three features of double consciousness: (1) the sense of being identified by virtue of a single trait (skin color), and thus being invisible in one's particularity, (2) the sense of being under the surveillance of parties predisposed to be unsympathetic, and (3) the internalization of the mechanisms of surveillance and the adoption of associated self-disparaging judgments. Double consciousness also involves an awareness of oneself as a mixed being. DuBois emphasized the unreconciled character of one's aspirations, the "two warring

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ideals in one dark body." This condition obstructs fulfillment of one's human potential and one's participation in societal life. DuBois says of the African American:

> This, then, is the end of his striving: to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius. These powers of body and mind have in the past been strangely wasted, dispersed, or forgotten. And yet it is not weakness—it is the contradiction of double aims. The double-aimed struggle of the black artisan—on the one hand to escape white contempt for a nation of mere hewers of wood and drawers of water, and on the other hand to plough and nail and dig for a poverty-stricken horde — could only result in making him a poor craftsman, for he had but half a heart in either cause.[12]

Double consciousness easily drains one's energies while this tension remains unresolved. But the inner tension it creates also motivates one to aim at a new synthesis, which Du Bois describes as the African American's "longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self."[13] Although painful, the tension wrought by double consciousness provokes the desire for a more integrated self and instigates the self-questioning that might bring it about. The tension within the soul is thus ambivalent. One's duality provides ample resources for the development of a transfigured, comprehensive self, not just the potential for self-interference. In DuBois's characterization, as Byerman observes, "Blacks . . . are not nothing, but two things, both of which are coherent and meaningful; the difficulty is in successfully joining them for a greater self and, by implication, a greater culture."[14]

Although hopeful, DuBois sees the project of forging a synthetic self as inherently difficult. This difficulty is exacerbated by the temptation to be co-opted.

> In the Black World, the Preacher and Teacher embodied once the ideals of this people—the strife for another and a juster world, the vague dream of righteousness, the mystery of knowing; but to-day the danger is that these ideals, with their simple beauty and weird inspiration, will suddenly sink to a question of cash and a lust for gold."[15]

The allure of wealth is particularly dangerous, because riches are a clearer goal than that of forging an integrated self. The quest for gold

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cultivates the illusion that the deficiencies of one's position can be rectified through fulfilled material ambition. DuBois sees the promise of wealth as a false promise. Even if the aim is achieved, wealth does not eliminate the veil. Although wealth might be envied by individuals on both sides of the color divide, with accommodations from both sides to the person possessing it, wealth cannot resolve the psychological problem of developing a sense of one's own identity. To put it in Hegelian terms, wealth does not compel others to bestow human recognition on its possessor.

Moreover, as we observed earlier, DuBois believes that the divided mind that has been cultivated in African Americans interferes with whole-hearted pursuit of any dream. They are therefore at a disadvantage from the start in any effort as competitive as that of amassing wealth. Worst of all, money distracts attention from the goal of self-realization in a higher sense, which involves the construction of oneself as a harmonious being and self-assertion as a full participant in political and cultural life.

The danger that goals of self-development and a sense of dignity will be abandoned is particularly acute at the time DuBois is writing, when Booker T. Washington's "Atlanta Compromise" has become the doctrine of many on both sides of the veil. This compromise is the concession that "In all things purely social we can be as separate as five fingers, and yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress."[16] DuBois sees Washington's compromise as capitulation, as a blatant abdication of spiritual and cultural aspirations to secure the satisfaction of African Americans' physical needs. Of Washington he comments,

> . . . so thoroughly did he learn the speech and thought of triumphant commercialism, and the ideals of material prosperity, that the picture of a lone black boy pouring over a French grammar amid the weeds and dirt of a neglected home soon seemed to him the acme of absurdities. One wonders what Socrates and St. Francis of Assisi would say to this.[17]

Explicitly abandoned in Washington's program are political power, civil rights, and higher education for African Americans. According to DuBois, the disappearance of these aims from the agenda of black leaders such as Washington risks the permanent consignment of African Americans to a subordinate role within American society and the endless prolongation of unfulfilled inner conflict. Indeed, the abandonment of these goals reinforces the inferiority that African Americans have been taught to feel. DuBois comments:

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> Mr. Washington's programme practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro races. Again, in our own land, the reaction from the sentiment of war times has given impetus to race-prejudice against Negroes, and Mr. Washington withdraws many of the high demands of Negroes as men and American citizens. . . . In the history of nearly all other races and peoples the doctrine preached at such crises has been that manly self-respect is worth more than lands and houses, and that a people who voluntarily surrender such respect, or cease striving for it, are not worth civilizing.[18]

DuBois's own view is that the resolution of the inner turmoil of African Americans can only be achieved through self-respect and self-assertion, and any policy that interferes with either should be resisted by all legitimate means.

> The growing spirit of kindliness and reconciliation between the North and South after the frightful differences of a generation ago ought to be a source of deep congratulation to all, and especially to those whose mistreatment caused the war; but if that reconciliation is to be marked by the industrial slavery and civic death of those same black men, with permanent legislation into a position of inferiority, then those black men, if they are really men, are called upon by every consideration of patriotism and loyalty to oppose such a course by all civilized methods. . . . We have no right to sit silently by while the inevitable seeds are sown for a harvest of disaster to our children, black and white.[19]

Although the pain of inner turmoil makes the temptation to co-option a real danger, the turmoil within the African American's soul nevertheless yields a spiritual advantage, according to DuBois. This is the power of discernment that he calls "second sight." Wald describes DuBois's notion as "a rift between experience and evaluation,"[20] and she emphasizes the positive potential of this ability to refrain from giving whole hearted assent to unevaluated surface appearances. "DuBois describes not only the pain of measuring oneself by a contemptuous and pitying world, but also the empowerment that comes with knowing one is doing so."[21] Second sight, for DuBois, involves the ability to see through the debilitating judgments that one has absorbed and to recognize their dubious origins.

The second sight that DuBois describes is a function of having a perspective on everyday experience that differs from the majority's.

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Even if one soul within the African American takes the majority's outlook on most experiences, the second soul provides alternative, modifying insights that are equally part of one's perception. For the person with double consciousness, common opinion cannot be naively accepted. The second sight that DuBois indicates is the multidimensional awareness that emerges from double consciousness, a deeper perspective than that of less complex contemporaries.

The ideal is to utilize this more penetrating perception to enhance one's effectiveness in the world. For the African American, awareness of how the white world views things can be useful knowledge, as long as one does not accept this outlook as something to which one should give deference. Moreover, double consciousness can provide the basis for distancing oneself from the contemptuous judgments of others, in that it prevents its possessor from giving simple assent to any judgment encountered. The gap between disparaging judgments that one has absorbed and the assent of one's entire consciousness is a starting point for refusing those judgments.

Unfortunately, all too often, the African American's double awareness does not develop into a deeper perspective that is enriched by this duality but instead nurtures feelings of incapacity or inspires self-deception. DuBois reflects:

> From the double life every American Negro must live, as a Negro and as an American as swept on by the current of the nineteenth while yet struggling in the eddies of the fifteenth century—from this must arise a painful self-consciousness, an almost morbid sense of personality and a moral hesitancy which is fatal to self-confidence. The worlds within and without the Veil of color are changing, and changing rapidly, but not at the same rate, not in the same way; and this must produce a peculiar wrenching of the soul, a peculiar sense of doubt and bewilderment. Such a double life, with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals, and tempt the mind to pretence or to revolt, to hypocrisy or to radicalism.[22]

DuBois's book illustrates with examples the extreme difficulty of this situation and the tragic consequences to which it has led many. It serves as a stirring call to conscience for his readers on either side of the veil.

DuBois directs the attention of all of his readers to their obligation to assist the reconstruction of social policies in a way that grants full social and cultural participation to all citizens. He is unswerving

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in his efforts to reveal the mechanisms by which African Americans are oppressed and the psychological toll that this has taken. At the same time, he rejects stances of submission and victimization, insisting that African Americans must assert their own dignity in order to successfully rectify the situation. He emphasizes the political goals that should be sought and the specific attitudes African Americans should cultivate, as well as some they should shun.

DuBois offers hints as to how African Americans' inner distress might be navigated, but these hints remain more suggestive than explicit. The Hegelian goal of the black man "merging his double self into a better and truer self"[23] is held out as the ideal. Some of Nietzsche's insights consider similar psychological territory, and I think that they can help clarify both the challenges, the temptations, and the positive potential of double consciousness. Accordingly, at this juncture I will direct the discussion to Nietzsche.

In Nietzsche's writings we find a parallel with DuBois's account in his frequent discussions of inner tensions and self-conceptions in conflict. Like DuBois, he describes conditions of being seen in a manner that fails to recognize who he is. Although we can only infer which particular experiences were most crucial to Nietzsche's sense of being an outsider, his works reveal that he did consider himself disconnected from many aspects of the way of life that those around him took for granted. He speaks of himself as "untimely" or "unfashionable" even in early works. The "free spirits" that he often mentions represent his assertion of a positive attitude toward his inability to fit his time and place; his letters, on the other hand, often reveal his disturbance with the same situation. Seemingly, he had ambivalent attitudes toward his sense of distance from the cultural mainstream. His autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, provides further evidence that Nietzsche considered himself marginalized. He comments that he is not read, that one cannot communicate where there are no ears for what one says, and that it is possible to be born posthumously. *The Gay Science* also abounds in suggestions that Nietzsche considers himself a member of a misunderstood minority. "There is a time for us, too!" he claims exuberantly at the end of the book's first section.[24] Elsewhere he insists, "The moral earth, too, has its antipodes. The antipodes, too, have the right to exist" (*GS* 289).

Nietzsche was quite conscious of the discrepancy between his multidimensional sense of himself and the reactions he provoked from other people. In the following passage, he uses humor to express this awareness.

> We are too prone to forget that in the eyes of people who are seeing us for the first time we are something quite different

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> from what we consider ourselves to be: usually we are nothing more than a single individual trait which leaps to the eye and determines the whole impression we make. Thus the gentlest and most reasonable of men can, if he wears a large moustache, sit as it were in its shade and feel safe there—he will usually be seen as no more than the appurtenance of a large moustache, that is to say a military type, easily angered and occasionally violent—and as such he will be treated.[25]

A mustache hardly seems to distinguish a person enough to be taken seriously, and Nietzsche seems to be playing with the cliché of using a mustache to go incognito. Nevertheless, Nietzsche draws attention here to his perception of distance from other people. Although he is the outsider, we readers are insiders—we know that Nietzsche is a sensitive philosophical person and what others miss when they see him merely as a man with a mustache.

Nietzsche's claims that his ideas (particularly those about morality) marginalize him indicate a difference between his sense of not fitting and that experienced by African Americans. One's ideas are not so obvious to others as one's skin color, and one might think that ideas are somewhat under one's voluntary control. Nietzsche would deny the latter. (He claims, "A thought comes when it wishes, not when 'I' wish."[26]) Nevertheless, reports of his almost excessive politeness toward acquaintances suggest that Nietzsche aimed to prevent others from noticing what he perceived as a gap between himself and them. In this respect, he was able to stave off to some extent the impact of other people's surveillance in a way that is not available to someone who is judged as suspect on the basis of pigmentation.

Nietzsche's comment about the mustache also indicates a major difference between the trait for which he is mistaken and that for which African Americans are mistaken. It was a matter of Nietzsche's own choice that he grew and groomed his mustache as he did (at least until he went mad). Skin color, in contrast, is not selected or varied by the person whose skin it is (except rather trivially through cosmetics and tanning, or more eccentrically through certain extreme forms of surgery); it is assigned, one might say, whether one likes it or not. As for the mustache, Nietzsche apparently wanted to seem a bit eccentric (though one might ask whether his desire to seem eccentric does not reveal a sense of inferiority disguising itself as pride in being nonstandard).

Nietzsche seems to have been able to limit or manipulate other's reactions to some degree. Nevertheless, he was aware of the internalization of a sense of being seen and judged by others, and the difficulty

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of asserting oneself in opposition to the observer's evaluations. For example, he reflects:

> The reproaches of conscience are weak even in the most conscientious people compared to the feeling: "This or that is against the morals of your society." A cold look or a sneer on the face of those among whom and for whom one has been educated is feared even by the strongest. What is it that they are really afraid of? Growing solitude! This is the argument that rebuts even the best arguments for a person or cause. Thus the herd instinct speaks up in us. (*GS* 50)

Besides the pain of feeling the denigrating judgments of others amplified within one's own psyche, these internalized judgments are obstacles to the development of a mature self, the achievement that Nietzsche often describes, in a formula from Pindar, as "becoming what one is." He comments in *Ecce Homo*, "To become what one is, one must not have the faintest notion what one is."[27] Other's negative judgments obstruct this effort. They assault one with hostile assertions of what one is, and it is difficult for an individual to keep from absorbing them.

The features of Nietzsche's self-analysis that we have just considered resonate with those of double consciousness as DuBois characterizes it. Nietzsche draws attention to being identified in a distorted manner on the basis of a single trait, sensing that one is seen and judged by others, internalizing others' mechanisms of surveillance, and adopting self-disparaging attitudes on the basis of others' contemptuous judgments. However, Nietzsche may appear idiosyncratic—out of tune with his times, perhaps, but not obstructed by a veil that is anything more than his own projection. Nietzsche realizes that his self-reports (even indirect ones) might strike his readers as applying only to himself. He imagines his reader asking after one of his accounts of spiritual disturbance, "What is it to us that Herr Nietzsche has become well again?" (*GS* P 2).

Nietzsche's answer is that he is presenting himself as a case in point of someone who has traversed many states of soul, something he takes to be critical to philosophy. Moreover, and more to the point here, he takes the kind of inner conflict that he experiences as characteristic of any sensitive person in the modern era. The modern world has lost belief in the vision that the human world is the centerpiece of God's creation, and that it is well ordered in accordance with God's plan. In the modern world, most people, whether theists or not, have abandoned that vision—and yet their expectations and values are still

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premised on such ideas. The sensitive person is torn between an awareness that the world is not designed as he or she imagines it should be and an inability to let go of demands it cannot fulfill.

Such a person, moreover, consciously torn in this way, is the exception in modern society. Most modern individuals either ignore the fact that their professed religious beliefs do not really inform their lives, or they abandon religious faith externally without changing their habits. The latter merely subordinate themselves to what Nietzsche calls "shadows of God," such as science or supposedly secular morality. Although both sorts of people might be commonly viewed as religious, Nietzsche sees both as spiritually deficient. He sees the sensitive person's inner conflict as a mark of spiritual distinction. At the same time, it is unavoidably connected to the condition of being marginalized.

Like DuBois, Nietzsche describes an awareness of himself as a being in tension with himself. Both similarly see this experience of inner tension as more than a personal characteristic. Both take themselves to be typical of a whole population in a given place and time. While not an exact parallel, the double consciousness of the spiritual person within modernity resembles the double consciousness that DuBois describes. In both cases, the person with double consciousness judges by a standard that neither fits one's own case nor ceases to structure one's longings. One wants a sense of a place in the world that accords with one's conception of oneself and reflects one's human dignity, but society acknowledges a person in this manner on a basis (having the "right" ideas, or being a member of the "right" race) that does not apply to oneself. The inner tension generated is tremendous, and the potential is great for either devastation or transfiguration.

What is the value of noting these parallels between DuBois's and Nietzsche's analyses of those who are inwardly conflicted by virtue of their uneasy relationship to the dominant culture? I think there are several benefits. First, Nietzsche's discussions complement DuBois's approach to the analysis of power and its impact. The character of Nietzsche's discussions is relatively nonspecific, as opposed to DuBois's more situated account of African Americans' inner life. In this way, each of the two accounts can supplement the perspective presented by the other. Second, the nonspecific character of Nietzsche's analyses makes it less likely that a reader will assess their plausibility on the basis of his or her sense of location on the map of social identities. Nietzsche's approach can help make readers more sensitive to the painfulness of certain positions on that map without making them defensive about their own status and prone to evade insight. Third, Nietzsche and DuBois can serve as foils for each other, because they

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use complementary literary devices to enhance the reader's sensitivity to those with perspectives not their own.

The complementarity of the two approaches becomes evident when we observe the different levels of specificity in the two thinkers' writing. DuBois uses his analysis of double consciousness to illuminate concrete situations in the experience of African Americans. Nietzsche, in contrast, theorizes in a more generalized fashion about the difficulties involved in translating multifaceted perceptions into an integrated vision. Nietzsche's speculations about psychological perspectives of the oppressed and of oppressors, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, for example, are abstracted from concrete historical particulars of any sort, and his psychological sketches are often similarly abstracted from actual circumstances. Nietzsche may have witnessed interpersonal power ploys that would have provided a novelist with ample material for description,[28] but he distills from such observations formal analyses of ways that human beings sometimes interact. Even his discussions of Wagner, by far his most extensive analyses of a particular person, are presented most often in abstract form. Wagner becomes the representative of "the artist," "the problem of the actor," and so on (*GS* 87, 361).

I read Nietzsche as being an heir to the Enlightenment in his efforts to resonate with his readers' spiritual and psychological states regardless of their particular backgrounds. His "slaves" are not particular slaves—they are any slaves wrestling with the psychological impact of oppression. Indeed, this might strike some as a reason to think Nietzsche's discussion of slavery is bound to be out of touch with the African American experience. His accounts, rhetorically universalistic in seeming to apply to anyone, may actually apply to no one in particular.[29]

Nietzsche's universalistic stance might be objectionable if he took his claims to provide "the truth" on these topics. But he himself is the great teacher of the provisionality of all of our formulations of insights.[30] His own assertions about psychological possibilities, unqualified by concrete details in most cases, are powerful in their way because of this lack, for they offer the reader no distancing specifics. This is one way in which Nietzsche's analyses complement DuBois's more specific accounts. Nietzsche's analyses are offered as paradigm scenarios, story lines from humankind that one sees again and again. For example, "He cannot control himself, and from that a poor woman infers that it will be easy to control him and casts her net for him. Soon she will be his slave" (*GS* 227).

The more abstract focus that Nietzsche offers, besides broadening one's picture of power relations, has a second benefit as well. Although

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Nietzsche lacks DuBois's gift for portraying the particular human story in its immediacy, his work yields penetrating abstract insights. He offers scenarios that are open-ended enough to prompt the reader to assent to their acuity, if they are apt, regardless of his or her sense of social identity. Nietzsche's insights, presented in this way, may bypass defense mechanisms that might be invoked if the reader were made more aware of his or her own political position.

While DuBois is explicitly concerned with particular power dynamics in historically specific terms, Nietzsche indicates the diverse and surprising forms that power dynamics can take, often in small-scale interpersonal interactions, leaving it to the present-day reader to determine where they apply in contemporary life. Because of this difference, Nietzsche's and DuBois's respective efforts to alert the reader to unfamiliar perspectives can be seen as mutually supporting. DuBois's attempt in this connection is most evident in relation to his white reader. Wald observes that he crafts *The Souls of Black Folk* in a way that makes the white reader aware of the veil.

> Moving unpredictably between past and present tenses, the narrator alternatively includes the reader on his journey and excludes him from an experience that has already transpired. The reader moves—or is moved—arbitrarily into and out of a shared perspective.[31]

DuBois's text conveys to the white reader an awareness of a social world from which he or she is excluded and of the veil that has obscured one's vision of those on the other side. DuBois's achievement in this respect may be to provoke an essential step in the consciousness-raising of the oblivious white reader. Nevertheless, this accomplishment risks a defensive reaction unless supplemented with other approaches. Nietzsche and DuBois each use a further literary strategy that can help the reader on the far side of the veil from black folk to overcome defensiveness and to mobilize moral imagination.

DuBois's further technique is the presentation of vivid anecdotes that give the reader a focus for sympathetic emotion. After being made aware of a whole social world behind the veil, a reader might be overwhelmed by its scope and the range of problems that afflict it unless given more manageable particular cases on which to focus. DuBois penetrates the defenses of the reader and incites specific sympathetic response by storytelling. I imagine that even a reader who maintains a fairly distant sense of self-identification feels great sympathy when

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DuBois describes the death of his first child. I would expect that most readers empathetically experience something of the inner turmoil and horror of double consciousness when they read the following:

> All that day and all that night there sat an awful gladness in my heart,—nay, blame me not if I see the world thus darkly through the Veil,—and my soul whispers ever to me, saying, "Not dead, not dead, but escaped; not bound but free."[32]

By inviting the reader inside his or her own experiences in this fashion, DuBois helps him or her to imaginatively cross the gulf between the veil's two sides. At the very least, this motivates the reader's sympathy to cross through the veil. The focus on a particular case counteracts the danger that the reader will only feel numb and impotent in the face of social structures so deeply systematized as American racism. Sympathy itself involves the conferral of Hegelian recognition, and perhaps the first glimmer of respect for those on the other side of the veil and a refusal of the contemptuous perception on which the structures of racism depend.

Nietzsche's technique for provoking empathetic moral imagination is to provide more abstract cases that are sufficiently familiar to remind the reader of comparable experiences. The abstract character of the possibilities described encourages the reader to fill in the outline with concrete particulars drawn, at least in part, from memory. Not infrequently, the shapes that Nietzsche provides for analyzing types of situations bring particulars to the foreground that one has not previously noticed in the same way. When Nietzsche's examples draw attention to circumstances that one recognizes to some extent from one's experience, one finds it easier to recognize that certain seemingly alien experiences are not entirely unfamiliar. One may discover that one's consciousness has already experienced both sides of certain experiential divides.

Or I may realize through reading Nietzsche that even if I lack direct acquaintance with the other side of the veils he describes, the experience of those living there is not really so foreign to me. For example, he compares the lover's denial that his beloved is a mere biological specimen, subject to repulsive physiological processes, to the religious person's rejection of natural laws in previous centuries:

> . . . as lovers still feel about nature and natural functions, every worshiper of God and his "holy omnipotence" formerly felt. Every "natural law" sounded to him like a slander against God.

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> Oh, these men of former times knew how to dream and did not find it necessary to go to sleep first. And we men of today still master this art all too well. We artists! We ignore what is natural. We are moonstruck and God-struck. (*GS* 59)

Addressing himself mainly to contemporary "men of science," Nietzsche urges them to recall their own attitudes toward the women they love. This familiar attitude, he contends, should enable his readers to understand a perspective that seems entirely foreign, that of religious people opposed to science. Nietzsche goes on to suggest that some other contemporary viewpoints are not dissimilar, implying that those who pride themselves on their hardheaded scientific realism are not so different in their motivations from their very differently thinking forbears.

Other clear illustrations of this Nietzschean technique are evident, as I have argued elsewhere, in Nietzsche's passages on women in *The Gay Science*. These passages force his male readers to reconsider their own stereotypes about female behavior by inducing them to consider women's perspectives empathetically.[33] For example, Nietzsche urges men to consider the horrendous inner tension produced by the "amazing and monstrous . . . education of upper-class women."

> All the world is agreed that they are to be brought up as ignorant as possible of erotic matters, and that one has to imbue their souls with a profound sense of shame in such matters until the merest suggestion of such things triggers the most extreme impatience and flight. And then to be hurled, as by a gruesome lightning bolt, into reality and knowledge, by marriage—precisely by the man they love and esteem most! . . .
>
> Thus a psychic knot has been tied that may have no equal. Women easily experience their husbands as a question mark concerning their honor, and their children as an apology or atonement. In sum one cannot be too kind about women. (*GS* 71)

This strategy of inducing his readers to imaginatively penetrate perspectival veils is a third way in which Nietzsche's approach concurs with and supports DuBois's efforts to make the experience of being a member of a racial minority group clearer to the range of his readers. Nietzsche offers his readers practice in passing through experiential divides of exactly the sort that DuBois describes.

There is yet a further way in which Nietzsche's writing may be valuable for furthering DuBois's project, this time with respect to the

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psychological situation of African Americans themselves. Nietzsche offers guidance for those suffering from double consciousness from the standpoint of one who has been there. He makes suggestions relevant to self-reevaluation that might counter the pressures toward self-hatred arising from those who control the status quo. He also warns against some of the same dangers that DuBois sees for those afflicted by the conflict born of double consciousness, elaborating on the psychological mechanisms involved.

Nietzsche offers several strategies for overcoming self-disparagement motivated by the hostile attitudes of those who are comfortably ensconced within mainstream society. First, Nietzsche encourages the marginalized to recognize the limitations of the majority's viewpoint. Like all perspectives, the hegemonic viewpoint is incomplete. "We cannot look around our own corner," Nietzsche tells us (*GS* 374). No one is entitled to claim, as those in the majority are prone to do, that their own outlook is the objective view of things.

> There is only a perspectival seeing, only a perspectival "knowing"; and the more affects we allow to speak about a matter, the more eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will our "concept" of this matter, our "objectivity" be.[34]

Those who claim objectivity have less of the only "objectivity" available than those who recognize other perspectives.

The perspective of those unfairly advantaged by the status quo is in fact far from dispassionate. Those who are particularly respected within a reigning social structure are easily moved to brutal reactions toward those who would question the legitimacy of the social support they receive. Nietzsche's character Zarathustra challenges the grounds for such individuals' "good" reputations.

> . . . beware of the good and the just! They like to crucify those who invent their own virtue for themselves — they hate the lonely one. Beware also of holy simplicity! Everything that is not simple it considers unholy; it also likes to play with fire — the stake. And beware also of the attacks of your love! The lonely one offers his hand too quickly to whomever he encounters. To some people you may not give your hand, only a paw: and I desire that your paw should also have claws.[35]

Zarathustra goes on, however, to point out that the person who would transform society's current ways of valuing should not be

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surprised to feel inner conflict. While this conflict itself may be unavoidable, Nietzsche urges the individual tormented in this way to resist the temptation to use this as a basis for self-flagellation. Zarathustra proclaims, "I say unto you: One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star" (*Z* P 5). He cautions against too much caution, and he indicates that the solution to this inner tension is self-transformation along the lines that DuBois also suggests.

> But the worst enemy you can encounter will always be you, yourself; you lie in wait for yourself in caves and woods.
>
> Lonely, you are going the way to yourself. And your way leads past yourself and your seven devils. You must wish to consume yourself in your own flame: how could you wish to become new unless you had first become ashes! (*Z*: 1 "The Creator")

Instead of viewing tension as a sign that one is doing something wrong, those suffering from marginalization and the inner strife that it occasions should reassess their situation, Nietzsche contends. As he comments in *Beyond Good and Evil*, "The great epochs of our life come when we gain the courage to rechristen our evil as what is best in us" (*BGE* 116). Instead of viewing oneself as deficient for not fitting in, one can view oneself as occupying a particularly valuable role. One might see oneself as a pioneer, an adventurer, or a legislator of new values. The last of these is particularly relevant to African Americans who seek a transformation of society's values. Seeing oneself in this manner, one is in a position to heal the self-doubt that typically arises in those who are exceptions to the communal norm. Nietzsche points out that the innovator is necessarily marginalized. Thus one's sense of being outside the mainstream, even of being cast outside it, may be an unavoidable feature of being a cultural pioneer.

One also can attempt to interpret one's own position as central to the unfolding development of humanity, even if this centrality is not recognized by those comfortable with their positions within the status quo. Nietzsche argues that each individual's perceptions are limited by virtue of being perspectival but are simultaneously real contributions to human understanding for exactly the same reason. This suggests that individual and minority outlooks represent an enhancement to society generally, the more so because they are not viewpoints taken for granted by the majority. Marginalization, on this view, is a precondition for assuming a particularly significant cultural role.

Nietzsche also suggests the possibility of the marginalized person's reversing the sense of separation from others by absorbing what one

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can from other perspectives. This is a way of developing second sight through double consciousness. Because one is aware that multiple perspectives exist and command one's attention in certain ways, one has an access to their implicit insights that is foreclosed to the literally more simpleminded.

The experience of enjoying literature illustrates the way that one can absorb understandings of value from the perspectives of others. Through literature we imaginatively project ourselves into other characters whose experiences and personalities may diverge significantly from one's own, and ideally we feel enriched by this process. Drawing on the perspectives of others is more complicated in the case of real people with whom one interacts in real power relations. But the case of literature offers a demonstration of the possibility of the ideal of absorbing multiple viewpoints into a richer sense of oneself. The person with double-consciousness, unable to restrict himself or herself to one outlook or another, might take comfort from the awareness of having an enlarged sense of self-understanding that draws from both sides of one's currently warring inner state. Nietzsche characterizes the extreme case of absorbing and integrating partial viewpoints as a condition of deep happiness, a state in which the sense of being a soul rent into pieces has been healed.

> Anyone who manages to experience the history of humanity as a whole as his own history will feel in an enormously generalized way all the grief of an invalid who thinks of health, of an old man who thinks of the dreams of his youth, of a lover deprived of his beloved, of the martyr whose ideal is perishing, of the hero on the evening after a battle that has decided nothing but brought him wounds and the loss of his friend. But if one endured, if one could endure this immense sum of grief of all kinds while yet being the hero who, as the second day of battle breaks, welcomes the dawn and his fortune, being a person whose horizon encompasses thousands of years past and future, being the heir of all the nobility of all past spirit—an heir with a sense of obligation . . . ; if one could burden one's soul with all of this—the oldest, the newest, losses, hopes, conquests, and the victories of humanity; if one could finally contain all this in one soul and crowd it into a single feeling —this would surely have to result in a happiness that humanity has not known so far; the happiness of a god full of power and love, full of tears and laughter, a happiness that, like the sun in the evening, continually bestows its inexhaustible riches, pouring them into

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> the sea, feeling richest, as the sun does, only when even the poorest fisherman is still rowing with golden oars! This god-like feeling would then be called humaneness. (*GS* 337)

Of course, this condition is not easily achieved, particularly when aspects of the history of humanity have been directed against oneself, or at the whole side of the veil one inhabits. The natural tendency is to respond with anger and hatred. If one is suffering, one wants to blame someone. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche characterizes the outlook typically inspired by any condition of distress: "'I am suffering: for this someone must be to blame'" (*GM* III: 15).

One of the most fascinating features of Nietzsche, and one that is often overlooked, is the extent to which he thinks that blaming others is harmful, not so much to them but to oneself. His whole case against slave morality, articulated in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, amounts to an analysis of the temptation to respond to oppression and contempt from one's oppressors by asserting their guilt. Although the assertion of oneself as judge, if only in one's own eyes, does indicate that one is at least healthy enough to defend oneself, the effect of maintaining one's self-esteem through this strategy is a poisoning strategy, according to Nietzsche.[36] Resentment becomes one's fundamental project. This strategy enables one to bolster self-esteem by judging those who disdain one with contempt, but because it makes self-esteem contingent on one's attitude toward others, it precludes the attitude that the oppressed most deeply desire, healthy self-regard. Nietzsche goes so far as to suggest that this strategy makes one's positive self-assessment contingent on the very situation that challenged it in the first place.

With this in mind, we can see why Nietzsche describes his aim in this manner: "I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. Looking away shall be my only negation. And all in all and on the whole: some day I wish to be only a Yes-sayer" (*GS* 276). Nietzsche's character Zarathustra similarly cautions that reacting to hostility with hostility interferes with one's higher aspirations. "Injustice and filth they throw after the lonely one; but, my brother, if you would be a star, you must not shine less for them because of that" (*Z*: 1 "The Creator").

Nietzsche's proposed strategy for overcoming the poisoning effects of long resentment is to shift one's attention away from the past toward the future-directed present.

> "It was"—that is the name of the will's gnashing to teeth and most secret melancholy. Powerless against what has been done,

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> he is an angry spectator of all that is past. The will cannot will backwards; and that he cannot break time and time's covetousness, that is the will's loneliest melancholy.
>
> . . . This, indeed this alone, is what revenge is: the will's ill will against time and its "it was." (*Z*: 1 "The Creator")

The great danger for any frustrated individual is the tendency to rage against the past that has treated one unfairly. Even when one's grievances are justified, the stance of angry victim is a disease, certainly not a cure for anything.

In order to heal the wounds of the past (whether past ill treatment or guilt over one's own actions or inaction) one must resist the temptation to dwell on them. One compounds their damage if one takes them as evidence that one is pathetic and powerless. One can heal such inner wounds by learning to see oneself as having a will, with real power to affect change. One need not and in fact should not repress the fact that one's experiences have been what they were. But the aim is to recognize one's own will and dignity as having operated in these previous experiences, even if this was not what others chose to recognize. One needs to summon one's will to act, to make deliberate choices as to how to respond to the present situation, while recognizing the past as a source of insight, not just of affliction. To summarize Nietzsche's advice in a slogan, one must act, not react. As Zarathustra puts it, "All 'it was' is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful accident—until the creative will says to it, 'But thus I willed it.' Until the creative will says to it, 'But thus I will it; thus shall I will it'"[37] (*Z:* 2 "On Redemption").

Nietzsche offers support for African Americans afflicted by double consciousness through his accounts of his own experiences and the psychological processes they involved. He has written about the inner difficulties of proposing new values, particularly when these challenge the dominant views of one's contemporaries. He saw his own inner tension as a source of insight, if a painful one. Through his discussions of these matters, Nietzsche maintains spiritual solidarity with those, such as African Americans, whose political position may be different from his, but with whom he shares a divided consciousness. Like them, he seeks a resolution to inner conflict. To them, he suggests that this resolution may be accomplished by directing one's attention away from the past to the present moment and one's ability to assert one's will. One can move beyond the impasse of being unable to assent wholeheartedly to anything by summoning one's will to bequeath something of value to the future. Nietzsche leaves it to his readers to determine, for themselves, what this legacy might be.

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Notes

1. This expression is a coinage of William Ferris in 1913. See David W. Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams, "Introduction—The Strange Meaning of Being Black: DuBois's American Tragedy," in W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. with and introduction by David W. Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 21.

2. DuBois, *Souls*, 38.

3. DuBois, *Souls*, 38.

4. Keith E. Byerman, *Seizing the Word: History, Art, and Self in the Work of W. E. B. DuBois* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 15.

5. Priscilla Wald, *Constituting Americans: Cultural Anxiety and Narrative Form* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 177.

6. Sandra Adell, *Double Consciousness: Theoretical Issues in Twentieth-Century Black Literature* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 19. Posnock also emphasizes the German idealistic roots as well as the pragmatic aspect of DuBois's thought. See Ross Posnock, *Color and Culture: Black Writers and the Making of the Modern Intellectual* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998) 113–14, 119–21. Posnock adds, "Because scholarly work on DuBois's relation to James has largely been confined to the latter's possible influence on the notion of double consciousness, what has been missed is that DuBois seems to have internalized pragmatism as a method and style of thinking" (114).

7. DuBois, *Souls*, 81.

8. DuBois, *Souls*, 38.

9. DuBois, *Souls*, 141–42.

10. Feminists and others have described a similar psychological mechanism that develops on the part of women, who are aware of being under "the male gaze." For a particularly accessible account, see John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York: Penguin, 1972), essay 3.

11. DuBois, *Souls*, 42.

12. DuBois, *Souls*, 39.

13. DuBois, *Souls*, 39. Wald goes on to point out the Emersonian roots of DuBois's reflections, noting that Emerson saw the "uncomfortable tension between 'the two lives, of the understanding and of the soul', which remain irreconcilable" as leading to a self-questioning that ultimately blossoms "into an advantage born of insight" (Wald, *Constituting Americans*, 177).

14. Byerman, *Seizing the Word*, 15.

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15. DuBois, *Souls*, 85.

16. DuBois, *Souls*, 63.

17. DuBois, *Souls*, 63.

18. DuBois, *Souls*, 67.

19. DuBois, *Souls*, 70.

20. Wald, *Constituting Americans*, 178.

21. Wald, *Constituting Americans*, 176.

22. DuBois, *Souls*, 155–56.

23. DuBois, *Souls*, 39. Although DuBois adopts the convention of referring to a group by reference solely to its male members, I assume that his psychological observations are for the most part applicable to women as well.

24. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science, With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), *GS* 1.

25. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 381. My thanks to Laurence Lampert for drawing my attention to the evident self-reference in this comment.

26. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to the Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966), 17.

27. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann [together with *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale] (New York: Random House, 1967), "Clever" 9.

28. There is reason to believe that Nietzsche may have engaged in observations of interpersonal political machinations early in his life. His classmates at the secondary school that he attended on scholarship, Schulforta, were in large measure the children of politicians and other social elites. Nietzsche may well have become aware of being from the other side of the proverbial tracks in this context. My thanks to Thomas Brobjer for this information about Schulforta.

29. This is a real possibility, of course, regarding any of his claims, as Nietzsche himself seems to have realized when he subtitled his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* "a book for all and none."

30. See Kathleen Marie Higgins, *Comic Relief: Nietzsche's Gay Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), chapter 3.

31. Wald, *Constituting Americans*, 226.

32. DuBois, *Souls*, 162.

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33. See Kathleen Marie Higgins, "Gender in the Gay Science," *Philosophy and Literature* 19:2 (October 1995): 227–47.

34. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. and ed. Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swensen (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), III: 15.

35. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking/Penguin, 1968), I: "The Creator."

36. Much could be said on this topic. I have discussed it at greater length in "On the Genealogy of Morals—Nietzsche's Gift," in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 49–62.

37. The primary example of past failure that Nietzsche appears to have in mind would be the self-initiated errors that the Judeao-Christian tradition calls "sins." "Thus I willed it" hardly seems the obvious response to make toward a past in which one has been treated unjustly by others. However, Nietzsche's basic point remains applicable: one can only overcome rancor against the past if one avoids seeing oneself as the passive recipient of harm and envisions oneself as an agent with dignity and the power to will creative responses to one's situation.

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