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Completing “The Uncompleted Argument”:
An Existential Response to Appiah’s Reading of Du Bois

A Dissertation in
Philosophy

by
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Almost 30 years have passed since Kwame Anthony Appiah began writing a series of responses to W.E.B. Du Bois’s definition of race in “The Conservation of Races” (1897). In his famous first essay, “The Uncompleted Argument: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Illusion of Race,” Appiah judges Du Bois’s conception of race in “The Conservations of Races” to be circular and, thus, incoherent. But in 2012 at the Henry Louis Gates, Jr. lecture series Appiah renounces his earlier statements on Du Bois and publishes a new book on Du Bois, Lines of Descent: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Emergence of Identity (2014). This publication, one year shy of the 30th anniversary of “The Uncompleted Argument”, begs the question of why, after a tense history and an even more contentious debate, Appiah returns to Du Bois and, more importantly, what does he find in the emergence of (a racial) identity that he did not 30 years ago. The central work of this project is to deploy existential critical philosophy of race to explore what might remain of Du Bois’s sociohistorical definition of race on the way to developing a new conceptual framework from which to understand racial identity. Using the resources of existential philosophy, broadly conceived, and without succumbing to the allure of Appiah’s interventions, I show that Appiah’s shift from racial eliminativism to cosmopolitanism is able to give us a more robust sense of the terrain we must traverse when theorizing identity. This can successfully be done, I argue, if Appiah’s arguments are unremittingly frustrated by the challenges of racism and racialized subjectivity, and framed according to a world structured by systematic racism. The goal of this project is to reconstruct a philosophical account of lived experience that does justice to the experience of race.
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However, the questions I pursue in this project are not mine alone. I share them (rather indirectly) with my parents, Mrs. Iyabo and Deacon Emmanuel Oke. These ruminations are duly theirs as is anything else I do in this life. When they brought me to the United States they could not have possibly known that they would simultaneously spark an obsession and a problematic, one that I would pursue for the greater part of my adult life. So it is from them that these thoughts and ideas emanate, and with them in mind that I begin to express my deepest appreciation. I undoubtedly have the best parents ever. My dad gave me the technical skills to get where I am going and my mom gave me the moxie to pull it off. Thank you daddy for remaining an open resource as I pursued this project and for always asking, “what do you mean by racial identity?” And thank you mommy for literally sitting by my side until the last period was on the page. Thank you both for never inhibiting me but always allowing me to be the free spirit that I am. Thank you for always believing in me and for your love that never failed me. Thank you for the many long and beautiful conversations we have always had that made me into a philosopher before I even knew what that moniker entailed.

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v
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“No to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever, and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:20)

-- Dr. Rónké A. Ôké
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INTRODUCTION

I was born in Nigeria. It is important for me to begin my story here because many people forget their origins. This identity informs the narrative I construct for my life even though the label is in certain ways artificial. Being Nigerian affects the career paths and goals I pursue, and frames the ends I determine for my life. I have always been mildly disturbed and often curious about the ways in which people fail to accept me as Nigerian and even more distressed by the lengths they go to convince me of some other identity. In my youth I allowed this confusion to fester into an identity crisis. With age I have come to understand it as a philosophical source of inquiry. Thus, from very early on I have been consumed by how easily identity functions as a mislabeling, put differently, it functions as a misappropriation that places one between multiple worlds, neither of which satisfies the other, all of which cohabit the totality of one’s existence. My life has been a struggle to maintain this coexistence in lieu of group membership requirements that deny me access to certain spheres of existence. The task is not to figure out how to integrate prior experiences and geospatial, transphenotypic characteristics into a stable identity, but to figure out what they mean and how they relate to the self I habitually return to.

From these personal experiences I have come to understand the dialectical underpinnings of identity and intersubjectivity. However, this dialectical structure cannot be resolved into a synthesis. Rather both identity and intersubjectivity are saturated by the logic of ambiguity, fluidity and alterity. No other philosophical movement understands the subtleties and complexities, meaningfulness and absurdity, stability and contradictions involved in identity and intersubjectivity more than Existentialism. Existentialists understand that to address the complexities of identity, the best
methodological approach is not to begin with abstractions but with lived experience.

Identities are both socially and personally meaningful. This corresponds with Heidegger’s description in *Being and Time* of Dasein as mine (as always-being-my-own-being) and his ontic-ontological description of Dasein as Being-in-the-world-with-others. Identities are inherently social. Even before I assume an identity I already have an openness to the world of others. My projects and possibilities are essentially bound up with the ways in which other people become intelligible to me. So identity has as much to do with the Others we encounter in the world, as it has to do with any personal attachments we give to these social significations. That a subject's identity develops within and across the self-other dynamic reinforces the notion that identity and intersubjectivity are philosophically related.

The question of identity has led me to the work of Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre’s writings on Jewish identity, THE politicized notion of identity, his contribution to the Négritude movement, and his critical use made of these ideas by Frantz Fanon have helped me to understand myself as the transcendence of identity and to read my past mislabeling in terms of convention. My feelings of anguish and alienation were prompted by the realization that no one can fit into the categories society provides because the self I habitually fall back on is not the social identity I adopt, it is the eternal surpassing of all modalities of being in order to self-identify. But it was not until I started reading Emmanuel Levinas’s work and his criticism of the history of Western Philosophy that my thoughts turned to the ethical dimensions of identity and our responsibility to the Other.

Levinas was concerned with the way we talk about the self and how language condones acts of violence and persecution. When he describes the fundamental problem
of the Western philosophical concept of identity in terms of self-coincidence, self-
possession and self-recovery it is not to say that there is not a recurrence of selfhood but
to challenge the chasm of difference within the selfsame. Levinas’s polemic constitutes
an apostasy of philosophy more formidable than Sartre’s account of the self in terms of
nothingness. On Sartre’s account I can easily withdraw into the comforts of hybridity,
multiplicity and “creolization” without dealing with the real weight of my status as a
Nigerian, Black American woman. In this way Sartre’s analysis attenuates the
complexities of the embodied subject and cannot fully grasp the inescapability of my
condition. As Levinas contends in his writings on Jewish ontology, the real reason why
the Jew is unable to flee her facticity is because she simply cannot; her identity is riveted
to her like a ship’s anchor attached to the ocean floor. What this offered to my analysis
was a complicated portrait of my childhood memories. Levinas made me confront the
inescapability of my identity and the tension that came through my exchanges with
others, ultimately allowing me to see the true limitations of my choices. Choice neither
frees me nor constrains me, but this anchoring is necessary in order for me to maintain
the alterity of the other. Thus, identity and intersubjectivity commit violence to the self
and the other.

One aspect that stands out to me is the incomparability of experiences. Levinas
channels his comments about identity and intersubjectivity through his experience of
living as a Jew in a Nazi and post-Nazi world. However, only a portion of this
experience is available to me. Jewish identity is neither a racial identity nor an identity
Levinas offers to me as a possible mode of my being. In other words, Levinas’
experience as a Jew cannot be reconciled with my experience as a Black woman because
such experiences are incomparable. If I were to attempt to make sense of the meaning and value of identity in my life I would need resources that would help me to think through what it means to live my identity in a raced body. This has been the explicit contribution of the Critical Philosophy of Race to my research and thinking. Critical Philosophy of Race serves two functions: (1) it clarifies what race means in the language of identity and articulates the experiences of raced subjectivity that fall outside intellectual traditions dominated by white bodies, and (2) it explains why moving away from a sociohistorical definition of race towards an existential definition will better capture the ambiguity of identity.

The indispensibility of these points became clear when I was exposed to the work of W.E.B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon. Du Bois's work captures very well the themes of ambiguity, racialized subjectivity, and intersubjectivity from the perspective of black social history. Fanon has written extensively on the notion of race and racism, lived experience, and the perils of being a problem from the perspective of psychology and Existentialism. And yet somehow they seem to find common ground on the prioritization of the meaning of race over an analysis of definitions, the importance of destiny and transcendence, and a belief in the reality of race. Nonetheless, differences remain in their approach to such topics. Whereas Du Bois maintains that race is a matter for the historian and sociologist, Fanon insists that race be taken up as a political project. The convergences and divergences in these two accounts of racial identity are good examples of the logic race theorists have to reconcile, none more pressing than the trauma inherent in the lived experience of being racialized that brings Fanon to tears at the end of Chapter
These are the autobiographical and philosophical starting points of this project.

The fundamental goal of this project is to reconstruct a philosophical account of lived experience that does justice to the experience of race. Towards that end I return to a very familiar starting point: Du Bois’s definition of race from his 1897 address to the American Negro Academy, “The Conservation of Races.”

I begin this work with an extended and critical reading of “Conservation.” My discussion of Du Bois’s 1897 address frames this project as a whole. For nearly 30 years “Conservation” has been stigmatized as a result of Kwame Anthony Appiah’s critiques of this text. Almost 30 years after the first publication of Appiah’s “The Uncompleted Argument” Critical Philosophy of Race scholars are still trying to mitigate the ramifications of Appiah’s essay. We have not been able to exorcize the paradox Appiah constructs in Color Conscious – a racial identity without races – and even today we find ourselves responding to the problematic he raises against Du Bois’s conception of race. Appiah remains a problem we cannot avoid but must confront head on. The only way to move beyond his claims is not to move forward but to go back to where it all began: Du Bois’s “The Conservation of Race”. Therefore, in Chapter 1 I give an extended interpretation of Du Bois’s argument in “Conservation” that will be relevant to how I deploy his definition of race. This new reading explains my reaction to Appiah’s legacy (the work of Chapters 2 and 3) from “The Uncompleted Argument” to his 2014 book Lines of Descent: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Emergence of Identity.
I divide “Conservation” into six parts: (1) the Announcement; (2) the Scientific Conception of Race; (3) the Sociohistorical Conception of Race; (4) Existentialist Critical Reflections on the Predicament of the Negro; (5) Our Duty to Conserve; and (6) the Purpose and Credo of the American Negro Academy. I dissect Du Bois’s address as well as discussions related to the address (Plessy v. Ferguson, Darwinism and neo-Darwinism, Crummell and Douglass’s debate on assimilation, fears about the future of the Negro race, and race-mixing) in order to fully explore what Du Bois means when he defines race as “a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life.”

By fleshing out Du Bois’s argument in each section and tying them back to the overarching goal of this address I will begin to support what I take to be the three main tasks of this project: (1) to demonstrate how Appiah’s criticisms have been supported by provincial understandings of Du Bois’s address; (2) to prove that Appiah’s paradox is a problem for existential philosophy as a whole and not only relegated to interpretations of “The Conservation of Races”; and (3) to show how, by supplementing a reading of “Conservation” with the full resources of the existential tradition, Du Bois’s argument (and, hence, his notion of racial identity) can be defended without devolving into a notion of racial identity devoid of the central tenets of race.

I begin the body of this project with a discussion of the legacy of Appiah’s essays on Du Bois showing that his arguments are still relevant today. Appiah’s work on Du Bois, ethics and cosmopolitanism continue to be cited in contemporary literature on race.

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The two bookends of this discussion of Appiah are framed by his first and last writings on Du Bois: “The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race” (lead by a review of Chike Jeffers’ recent article on this debate: “The Cultural Theory of Race: Yet Another Look at W.E.B. Du Bois’ “The Conservation of Race”’) and his 2014 book *Lines of Descent: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Emergence of Identity* (spearheaded by Tommy Curry’s review article, “Empirical or Imperial? Issues in the Manipulation of DuBois’s Intellectual Historiography in Kwame Anthony Appiah’s *Lines of Descent*”). In Chapter 2 – “The Legacy of Appiah’s “The Uncompleted Argument”” I emphasize his development of thought from “The Uncompleted Argument” to *The Ethics of Identity*. It is not until Chapter 3 – “*Lines of Descent*, A New Legacy?” – that I attend to his most recent comments on Du Bois, most notably his renouncement of these earlier writings during his 2012 Henry Louis Gates lecture at Yale University. Interlacing “The Uncompleted Argument” and *Lines* I find continuity in Appiah’s argument. I argue that reading “Conservation” awakened several questions for Appiah, questions that he would not be able to answer until he made his ethical turn in 2006 and began defending “rooted cosmopolitanism”. My central argument in both of these chapters is that Appiah’s reading of Du Bois’s writings on race have been motivated by his cosmopolitanism. In other words, Appiah’s responses to Du Bois’s sociohistorical conception of race have each been informed by his work on cosmopolitanism and not simply an intellectual historiography as Appiah goes on to claim in *Lines*.

The focus of Chapter 4 – “Du Bois, the Sociohistorical Conception of Race, and Existential Philosophy” – takes up the central point of contention between Du Bois and Appiah – Du Bois’s definition of race. Referring back to the arguments I make in Chapter
I explain first that the key to understanding Du Bois’s definition is to understand what race means initially. What race is, is predicated on the meaning one gathers from one’s lived experience. Second, I will claim that Du Bois’s definition intentionally contained both the biological assumptions about race and the specificity that only a sociohistorical analysis could provide. This I argue represents the twoness of which one feels themselves as raced and the disjointed opinions one maintains about and within themselves as they consider their racial ascription. Third, and the most important part of my argument, Du Bois is writing from a particular subject position of which his statements, including his definition of race, should be filtered through. His treatment of race and racism is shaped by the problem he sees himself as.

Distinguishing between the theories of race Du Bois presents in The Souls of Black Folk, “The Conservation of Race”, Dusk of Dawn, and The Negro is a central task of the fourth chapter. Rather than merely examining whether a consistent theory of race threads these texts together, my goal is to clarify what he means by the ‘sociohistorical notion of race’, and in so doing to understand better how the meaning of race Du Bois proposes is reflected in lived experience. I conclude this chapter by explicating the phenomenon that is crucial to meaning of race in Du Bois – what it means to be a problem. I suggest that this phenomenon can be grasped if one understands that what it means to be Black is to know what it means to be-a-question-to-oneself. Du Bois’s poses several questions throughout his address related to the Negro question, and even poses his more existential remarks as a series of questions. Appiah even refers to the Negro problem as “the question of questions” in Lines. By framing racial identity as an
ontological hermeneutics I connect Du Bois to the Existentialist tradition and begin to locate a sense of race within the confines of this tradition.

This reading of Appiah’s work, as it is presented in this chapter, will explore Appiah’s paradox – the supposition that we can think racial identity without races. Appiah’s paradox does not simply point out the severe limitations of Du Bois’s definition of race; it implicates the Existentialist tradition as a whole. Recall that it is Existentialism, as a conceptual framework, that claims that thinking about human existence requires new categories not found in the conceptual repertoire of modern analytics. If we attempt to identify all analytical truths before making any concrete statements about human beings we render human existence empty. In fact Existentialism makes a stronger claim: if we want to say anything worthwhile about human existence it is necessary to appeal to the new categorical frameworks popularly thematized in Existentialism. Existentialism demands that philosophy begin with lived experience. If Existentialism upholds lived experience as the primordial entryway into an examination of human existence, and if race is one of the various modalities of this existence, then Appiah’s attempt to apprehend a conception of race outside of lived experience fails to meet the demands set forth by Existentialism proper. And if this is true, it is the entire conceptual repertoire of Existentialism that must be utilized to support the tenets of this argument.

I contend that Du Bois’s address needs to be supplemented by other Existentialist philosophers but not to the extent that we risk diluting the provocation and originality of his definition of race. Du Bois has something very important to offer us and this is why his definition is central to the Critical Philosophy of Race. For example, when Du Bois draws on his fragmented and painful existence to develop the concept of double
consciousness, he introduces a new vocabulary with which to talk about racial consciousness. I frame my project around Du Bois’s essay, “The Conservation of Race” instead of emphasizing traditional existentialist themes (e.g. alienation, anguish, freedom, authenticity, etc.). The benefit of this method is that it provides a different conceptual and lexical repertoire in which to think about racial existence. I have selected three technical Du Boisian concepts for my analysis: assimilation, double-consciousness (or multiple registers of existence), and the raison d’etre. These three terms were selected for two reasons. First, assimilation, double-consciousness and raison d’etre are all thematized in Fanon, Sartre and Levinas’s writings on identity although fleshed out in different ways. Second, by accentuating these themes and not the conventional ones we can further extend Du Bois’s definition of race across the existentialist framework. Throughout this project I locate these Du Boisian concepts in various texts by Fanon, Sartre and Levinas and sketch how they have been integrated into their formal and concrete structures of identity. By expanding these notions used by these latter three figures I endeavor to create a more sophisticated reading of “The Conservation of Races” on which to base a more robust defense against Appiah. This project will be the first defense of “The Conservation of Races” to appeal to Sartre, Fanon and Levinas. Scholars often reference Sartre and/or Fanon in their responses to Appiah, which seems reasonable because Appiah mentions Fanon and Sartre in Color Conscious, but my project is set apart from the rest because of its reliance on Levinas. Levinas is essential to this project because he becomes the bridge between Existentialism and the raison d’etre.

It is my hope that by tracing the notions of assimilation, double-consciousness and raison d’etre in the work of Du Bois, Fanon, Sartre and Levinas I can show the
incoherence of Appiah’s idea of a racial identity without races. In so doing I also hope to demonstrate that Du Bois’s sociohistorical definition of race transcends the scientific notion (insofar as it claims that race cannot fully be understood in terms of science and biology but requires new conceptual categories), thereby, completing what was once considered to be an ‘uncompleted argument’.
At the inaugural meeting of The American Negro Academy, Du Bois presented his proposal to raise the Negro race to “higher planes of thought and action”. “The Conservation of Races,” as he entitled his address, anticipates the new Negro, one whose identity was not grounded in the indeterminable physical characteristics that oppressed the Negro, but whose place in history was to be found in the common ideals that those of Negro descent allegedly share. Du Bois’ address was an argument to preserve the idea of the Negro race on the basis of these common ideals against alternative political projects attempting to counter white supremacy. Though he references the Negro race, his employment of race does not engage the term in its conventional uses primarily because “back of most discussions of race with which he is familiar, have lurked certain assumptions as to his natural abilities, as to his political, intellectual and moral status.” Instead race serves to express a more ‘human striving’ common to a sect of people.

In this preliminary discussion of Du Bois I will detail the structure of “Conservation” by explicating the six distinct parts of the address: (1) the Announcement; (2) ‘the final word of science,’ or the scientific conception of race; (3) the sociohistorical conception of race; (4) existentialist critical reflections on the predicament of the Negro; (5) a defense of a “conservation” of races; and (6) the purpose and credo of the American Negro Academy. This interpretation of Du Bois’s

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2 Du Bois entitled his Preface to *The Souls of Black Folk* his “Forethought”. Following this Du Boisian gesture I refer to my reading of his famous address to The American Negro Academy as my Forethought because, like *Souls, this critical reanalysis of “The Conservation of Race” is the beginning of my first extended discussion of Du Bois’s theory of race and racial identity. This discussion of “Conservation” precedes (and necessarily so) the claims this project will present, as it frames the theory of racial identity I defend in this project.
“Conservation” will put into perspective the claims I will make about Appiah’s response to this address in Chapters 2 and 3.

1. The Announcement

The publication of Du Bois’s address in The Academy’s second occasional papers is preceded by an Announcement, probably written by Alexander Crummell. This Announcement is a formal call to order conveying the programme of The American Negro Academy to the wider audience beyond those in the room. It intimates that these papers are a continuation of an ongoing discussion, in which members contribute and extend contemporary debates on race and the status of the Negro. Crummell imagines his fellow members to be part of a larger historical context and sees the occasional papers responding to two great obstacles to the sociopolitical mobility of the Negro race. He declares that “the surrounding political situation are crucial to an understanding of his argument” and identifies this situation as “(a) The lack of unity, want of harmony, and absence of a self-sacrificing spirit, and no well-defined line of policy seeking definite aims; (b) The persistent, relentless, at times covert opposition employed to thwart the Negro at every step of his upward struggles to establish the justness of his claim to the highest physical, intellectual and moral possibilities.” From these observations we can conclude that all papers presented (and subsequently published) by the Academy, including “Conservation,” were intended by Crummell to serve two purposes: (1) to “uplift the race to higher planes of thought and action” and (2) to prescribe a plan for the

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“growth and development of the Negro along right lines, and the vindication of that race against vicious assaults.”⁵ When Du Bois was invited to address the American Negro Academy, he was assigned the topic, “The Duty of Cherishing and Fostering the Intellect of the Race.”⁶ Therefore, I begin my analysis of “Conservation” with the Announcement because it foreshadows the content of Du Bois’s address. There is a sense of urgency that moves throughout his speech. His topic is the identity and future of the Negro race. His plan is to unite three temporal stases: to speak to the highly educated, culturally advanced Negro men in the audience about a phenomena he carries forward historically, towards a future (Negro race) they are part of and responsible for. Du Bois thought the founding members had the same responsibility that “those of the race who have had the advantage of higher education and culture” – the Talented Tenth⁷ - have to “uplift the race to higher planes of thought and action” suggesting that, prima facie, “Conservation” serves a primarily ethical role.⁸

II. The Scientific Conception of Race

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⁵ Du Bois, Project Gutenberg
⁶ Bernasconi, “Our Duty to Conserve,” 525
⁷ Robert Bernasconi has argued that Du Bois thought The Academy should be inclusive but that he charged the talented tenth as a larger group with this responsibility to uplift the Negro race as a whole. See ““Our Duty to Conserve”: W.E.B. Du Bois’s Philosophy of History in Context”. South Atlantic Quarterly 108: 3 (Summer 2009) ff. 10
⁸ This goes against the interpretation Lucius Outlaw details in his famous retort to Appiah. In ““Conserve” Races? In Defense of W.E.B. Du Bois,” Outlaw argues that Du Bois’s project is fundamentally political, and supports this by emphasizing Du Bois’s references to justice. He contends that Du Bois’s statement that the ‘history of the world is not about nations but of races’ alludes to a rewriting of history that “prescribe[ed] norms for the social reconstruction of personal and social identities and for self-appropriation by a people suffering racialized subordination, which norms were to aid in mobilizing and guiding members of the race in their efforts to realize emancipatory social transformation leading, ultimately, to a flourishing humanism” (Outlaw, ““Conserve” Races,” 28). I am inclined to see the political undertones in the way Outlaw details but am also mindful of the ethical overtones – the mention of spirituality, the allusions to responsibility, and the emphasis on the Negro’s reason for being. I think it is more fruitful to consider the interwoven of the ethical and the political, than to read Du Bois linearly as a political theorist.
The first major section of “Conservation” begins with the opening lines of the address (“The American Negro has always felt…”) and ends with Darwin’s defense of Human Brotherhood: “It [the final word of science] declares, as Darwin himself said, that great as is the physical unlikeness of the various races of men their likenesses are greater, and upon this rests the whole scientific doctrine of Human Brotherhood.”9 This section includes his discussion of what Du Bois terms “the final word of science”. Du Bois does not begin by rehashing the arguments of science. Rather, he frames his discussion of the scientific conception of race in terms of the psychosocial effects these ideas have had on the Negro spirit. This psychosocial trauma has prevented the Negro from claiming “the highest physical, intellectual and moral possibilities” and has prompted them to consider their identity in terms of their “natural abilities” and “political, intellectual and moral status,” underscoring their apprehension about their own identity and future. He magnifies these assumptions in this section. He acknowledges that these ‘discussions’ have had deep-seated effects on the Negro sentiment, but presumes his reader’s familiarity with these discussions without explicitly identifying them.10 By the end of this chapter I will show that the content of this address should be attributed to these theories about race amalgamation that predicted the annihilation of the Negro race. I argue that Du Bois used “Conservation” to assuage fears that the Negro race will become extinct, fears that undergird feelings of inferiority and oppression in the Negro community.

10 We should follow the instruction of Robert Bernasconi who encourages us to “restore his lecture to its historical context...less than one year after the U.S. Supreme Court had handed down its decision in Plessy v. Ferguson” in order to understand “that certain social Darwinists had recently pressed the issue of the survival of the Negro race...and it was against them, as well as Frederick Douglass’s pursuit of assimilation through amalgamation, that Du Bois wrote his essay.” (Bernasconi, “Our Duty to Conserve,” 519, 520)
These fears were exacerbated by rumors that the Negro race will become extinct through biological weakness or assimilation. This picture “speaks of human brotherhood as though it were the possibility of an already dawning to-morrow.”\textsuperscript{11} The fraternity of races alluded to here does not bespeak the future of race relations but a continuous present where differences are “deprecated and minimized,” bringing about the disappearance of the Negro race.\textsuperscript{12} One proponent of this view was Frederick Douglass. The future of the Negro, as Douglass expressed it, “is that he will not be expatriated nor annihilated, nor will he forever remain a separate and distinct race from the people around him, but that he will be absorbed, assimilated, and will only appear finally in the features of a blended race.”\textsuperscript{13} Douglass’s claims, while mollifying some of the apprehension felt in the Negro community, were not successful in fostering ‘calmer moments’.\textsuperscript{14} Douglass’s arguments did not settle the anxiety in the Negro community because, as he emphasizes, his discussions about race mixing focus on the future of the Negro community without addressing the present state of the Negro experience and how they are to cope, handle and develop race relations as they currently encounter them.

The American Negro Academy was created two years after Douglass’s death in 1895. William H. Crogman and Richard R. Wright approached Alexander Crummell in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[12] In Chapter 2 and 3 I will argue that Appiah takes this idea a bit further into his call for racial eliminativism. Continuing the project of “deprecating and minimizing” differences he argues in “The Uncompleted Argument” not only for the disappearance of the Black race, but because the concept presents, the disappearance of race altogether. It is only in his essay contribution to Color Conscious that he tempers his stance and advocates for a racial identity without races. Even still this is as pernicious as social Darwinism and racial absorption.
\item[14] Du Bois states that “in our calmer moments, [Negroes] must acknowledge that human beings are divided into races; that in this country the two most extreme types of the world’s races have met, and the resulting problem as to the future relations of these types is not only of intense and living interest to us, but forms an epoch in the history of mankind.” (Du Bois, “Conservation,” 84)
\end{footnotes}
1894 with the idea of a national academy but Crummell decided against it possibly because such an organization did not have Douglass’s support.\(^{15}\) Why Douglass’s support factored into Crummell’s decision is quite perplexing especially considering that they often stood on opposing sides when it came to the issue of racial separatism and the question of whether race amalgamation is the future for Negroes. Crummell stalwartly criticized the view that assimilation had the ability to end race and racism and equated race amalgamation with extermination\(^ {16}\) stating that “[t]he race-problem cannot be settled by the extinction of race.”\(^ {17}\) Crummell further argued that an amalgamation of the races, in the sense of an ‘already dawning tomorrow’, is an inappropriate pretention that has in fact never occurred.\(^ {18}\)

Du Bois’ address responds to the confusion and fear that Douglass’s assimilationist comments and Crummell’s collectivist and separatist views initiated. Their investigations into the ‘origins and destinies of races’ created certain assumptions about the American Negro that they ‘felt were wrong.’ When the Negro was not incited or confounded by these arguments, that is, “in our calmer moments,” Du Bois argued that “we must acknowledge that human beings are divided into races; that in this country the


\(^{16}\) In “The Race-Problem in America”, Alexander Crummell states that the intermixture of blood is taken by some “as the indication of ultimate and entire amalgamation. But the past in this incident is no sign of the future. The gross and violent intermingling of the southern white man cannot be taken as an index of the future of the black race.” Alexander Crummell. “The Race-Problem in America”. *Race Amalgamation and the Future American.* Thoemmes Continuum. (2005) Vol. 3. pg 112

\(^{17}\) Crummell, “The Race-Problem,” 115

\(^{18}\) “Amalgamation in its exact sense means the approach of affinities. The word applied to human beings implies will, and the consent of two parties. In this sense there has been no amalgamation of the two races; for the Negro in this land has ever been the truest of men, in marital allegiance, to his own race. Intermixture of blood there has been—not by the amalgamation, which implies consent, but through the victimizing of the helpless black woman.” (Crummell, “The Race-Problem,” 113)
two most extreme types of the world’s races have met…” It is in these words that Du Bois summarizes his anti-assimilationist views. Du Bois was against the notion that amalgamation would dissolve the races into one single race by producing a singular identity among the vast polity of the human species where no differentiation, no variation exists between peoples. He strongly opposed assimilation where identity is left undetermined, serving as a proxy for absorption and substitution—the Negro identity replaced by the white identity. Du Bois believes that Douglass advocates a substitution, calling forth an indeterminability that prevents the identity of races to be retained. He affirms a type of amalgamation that merges races while preserving racial identity, a merging of like-striving peoples to form a community. Du Bois echoes Crummell in his refutation of the notion that the future of the Negro race will be reduced to extinction because of the burgeoning numbers of mixed race persons. This is why he mentions the variation in color “from the marble-like pallor of the Scandinavian to the rich, dark brown of the Zulu, passing by the creamy Slav, the yellow Chinese, the light brown Sicilian and the brown Egyptian.” And also why it is important that the final word of science includes a theory of racial creation based on the intermingling of races. It is not until he presents the sociohistorical conception of race that he provides a final answer to Douglass: “their destiny is not absorption by the white Americans.”

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19 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 108
20 This claim would seem to be in conflict with his second proposition in The American Negro Creed where he writes “it is the duty of the Americans of Negro descent, as a body, to maintain their race identity until this mission of the Negro people is accomplished, and the ideal of human brotherhood has become a practical possibility” (Du Bois, “Conservation,” 117). His writings towards the end of his life reflect his pessimism about a near future where race and racial identities were no longer necessary. Some readers of Du Bois, like Appiah, have suggested that the futility of this project is what prompted his emigration to Ghana. The issue of Du Bois’s call for radical humanism as an end to racial identity will be the topic of the concluding chapter of this project.
21 “[T]he advance guard of the Negro people–the 8,000,000 people of Negro blood in the United States of America– must soon come to realize that if they are to take their just place in the van of
undertone of his words is not accidental but instantiates the importance of futurism to his analysis.

Wilson J. Moses argues that “Conservation” is an instance of “hero worship,” an encomium similar to the eulogy Du Bois writes for Crummell in *The Souls of Black Folk* entitled, “Of Alexander Crummell.” He describes the address as a “specific endorsement of Crummell’s ideas and an attack on those of Douglass” and calls it a declaration of “his support of the strict puritanical values that Crummell had long preached.” While I do interpret this text as a fervent repudiation of Douglass’s assimilationism I stop short of reading it as an atavistic commemoration of Crummell. I do not have the space to detail this position here, but suffice it to say that Du Bois’s project of “conservation” extends beyond the assimilationist-separationist rhetoric awash in Crummell’s writings. Even though “Conservation” appeases Crummell and causes him to describe “Conservation” as “essentially good,” “Conservation” goes further than Crummell could anticipate. Du Bois subordinates the practical questions and raises the more philosophical pertinent ones causing Walter B. Hayson to exclaim that “the day for the work of Mr. Douglass have passed!” This statement was not made in reference to the anti-assimilationist arguments offered by Crummell, even though he had given his inaugural address (“Civilization, The Primal Need of Race”) the day before Du Bois presented “Conservation”. Du Bois went further than Crummell had in his racial politics. The future was not a foray into a thought experiment, a place to caste future concerns. The future was a philosophical conundrum,

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Pan—Negroism, then their destiny is NOT absorption by the white Americans. That if in America it is to be proven for the first time in the modern world that not only Negroes are capable of evolving individual men like Toussaint, the Saviour, but are a nation stored with wonderful possibilities of culture, then their destiny is not a servile imitation of Anglo—Saxon culture, but a stalwart originality which shall unwaveringly follow Negro ideals.” (Du Bois, “Conservation,” 112)

22 Moses, “Idealism and Hero Worship,” 281
23 Moses, “Idealism and Hero Worship,” 282
24 Moses, “Idealism and Hero Worship,” 281
a silence that can never be spoken because to speak about the future is to condemn one to it. Although their positions were very different, Du Bois’s address critiques their manner of speaking about the future as though it was already in sight, as ‘an already dawning tomorrow’. In this section Du Bois signals that his address will be future without ignoring the current sociopolitical climate. As he writes in this section, “the resulting problem as to the future relations of these types is not only of intense and living interest to us, but forms an epoch in the history of mankind.”

Du Bois’s address references these debates affecting the Negro community and invalidates the conclusions that have been derived from them. He proposes a way to address the present state of the Negro experience and provides the means to handle and develop race relations as African Americans currently encounter them. He argues that the solution to the Negro problem cannot be resolved by focusing first on the material questions. Rather, we must

“rise above the pressing but smaller questions of separate schools and cars, wage-discrimination and lynch law, to survey the whole question of race in human philosophy and to lay, on a basis of broad knowledge and careful insight, those large lines of policy and higher ideas which may form our guiding lines and boundaries in the practical difficulties of every day.”

In other words, the practical questions must be subordinated to the philosophical questions. Du Bois takes particular aim at the way the scientific notion of race has been able to extend ‘certain assumptions as to his natural abilities’ to the Negro’s ‘political, intellectual, and moral status.’ The continuity between the biological and the psychosomatic was a facet of both Douglass and Crummell’s arguments. Insofar as biological claims served as the explicit basis for the maltreatment of Negroes (and

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26 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 108
contributed to the legalistic and social separatism called for by the *Plessy* decision and Jim Crow laws) part of Du Bois’s concern was that scientific assumptions did not end with the final word but that these arguments were recast to legitimate an ontological conception of the Negro, one that united the metaphysical and the ontological (I will say more about this in Chapter 4). Du Bois sought to sever this connection, and to minimize the impact the metaphysical had on the ontological, as it has been arrogated by science.

Du Bois’s account of the ‘final word of science’ culminates in a reference to the determination that “we have at least two, perhaps three, great families of human beings—the whites and Negroes, possibly the yellow race” and the supposition that “other races have arisen from the intermingling of the blood of these two.”

The suggestion that all races are formed through the intermingling of the two or three great families of human beings is connected in Du Bois’s mind with the extinction question and the mixed race question. Du Bois challenges any suggestion that science has the last word and in particular its use of race to both emphasize and minimize racial distinctions. It emphasizes racial distinctions by essentializing difference making race a manifestation of different types of human beings on the basis of language, skin color, hair texture, and cranial measurements. It minimizes racial distinctions by establishing a type of human fraternity based on the idea that “out of one blood God created all.” But Du Bois stops short of denying that ‘race’ is a term that forms our guiding lines and boundaries around

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27 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 109
28 Wilson J. Moses tells us that weeks after the inaugural meeting T. Thomas Fortune and Richard T. Greener criticized The Academy as being “hostile to mulattoes and that Crummell was determined to keep them out.” Even though he states that Crummell denied the charges and pointed to Du Bois’s address as “an excellent defense of the principle of racial conservation” Moses, in his defense of his claim concerning Du Bois’s hero worship of Crummell, suggests that Du Bois intentionally took on the issue of mulattoes in his address to provide Crummell with a counterargument to such claims, even though Du Bois knew Crummell was in fact suspicious of mulattoes. (Moses, “Idealism, Hero Worship,” 286)
and between groups of people. He accepts a certain racial separatism (conservation of racial distinctions) and at the same time sets out to provide a rival account to the scientific view. As he explains:

“Many criteria of race differences have in the past been proposed, as color, hair, cranial measurements and language. And manifestly, in each of these respects, human beings differ widely. […] All these physical characteristics are patent enough, and if they agreed with each other it would be very easy to classify mankind. Unfortunately for scientists, however, these criteria of race are most exasperatingly intermingled. Color does not agree with texture of hair, […] nor does color agree with the breadth of the head […] nor, again, has the science of language as yet succeeded in clearing up the relative authority of these various and contradictory criteria.”

The insurmountable problem for science is establishing clearly the criteria for identifying races. The intermingling of blood which, according to the scientific mainstream of the day, is what makes it difficult to establish such criteria. Appealing to linguistics, the science of language, does not succeed in clearing up the “relative authority of these various and contradictory criteria.” And insofar as subtle forces account for all the variations in history, they are better able to explain racial differences. Transcending the limits of biology (natural law) requires a move beyond science to understand how these inconsistencies operate and constitute the world. Du Bois introduces the distinction between the ‘real meaning of race’ and ‘what scientists say it is’. And it is on the basis of this distinction that he develops the sociohistorical conception of race.

The first question Du Bois poses is, “what is the real meaning of race.” He contends that this question must be determined by “what has, in the past, been the law of race development, and what lessons has the past history of race development to teach the rising Negro people.”

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29 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 109
30 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 109
which to answer to the question of how to understand race. He also institutes a temporal
continuity of ‘race’ that charts its development over time, taking into consideration the
past (couch in legal decisions, including the decision of the Supreme Court a year
earlier in *Plessy v. Ferguson*), its current societal impact, and how these meanings will
inform the Negro posterity to come. In a way the entire address can be read as a response
to this initial question and the six remaining questions he asks throughout “Conservation”
as elaborations of this central question -What, then, is a race?; What is the real distinction
between these nations?; What shall be its [race difference] function in the future?; How
shall this [full, complete Negro] message be delivered?; What, after all, am I?; and Have
we in America a distinct mission as a race, or is self-oblitration the highest end to which
Negro blood dare aspire? \(^{31}\)

The purpose of this first section of “Conservation” is to reflect on the future of the
Negro community and address what he will later describe as the issues of black
annihilation and expatriation, as well as the concerns of racial mixing and racial purity.
Du Bois directs his address to this growing Negro sentiment under the veil of a
conservation of races and a criticism of the biological notion of race.

*III. The Sociohistorical Conception of Race*

The next section of “Conservation” begins with Du Bois introducing a concept
that manages to distinguish his sociohistorical conception of race from the scientific
conception of race and explain what races are – *subtle forces*. He writes, “Although the
wonderful developments of human history teach that the grosser physical differences of

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31 “Conservation” asks seven questions in total. It is important to add that he rounds these questions with
a list of questions pertaining to the “pressing, but smaller questions” he stated we should rise above. By
doing this he attended to the philosophical questions before attending to the practical questions.
color, hair and bone go but a short way toward explaining the different roles which
groups of men have played in Human Progress, yet there are differences—subtle, delicate
and elusive, though they may be—which have silently but definitely separated men into
groups.”

This section presents all the major tenets of Du Bois’s sociohistorical
definition and ends with a final nail in the coffin of the scientific conception of race: the
Negroes “destiny is not absorption by the white Americans...is not a servile imitation of
Anglo-Saxon culture, but a stalwart originality which shall unswervingly follow Negro
ideals.” Because of its major contributions to racial theorizing this section has naturally
received the most attention from its readers. This is understandable because it is in this
section that we find Du Bois’s definition of race. But, as I have shown, there is an
important discussion of the scientific conception of race and the historical context that
precedes and sets the tone for this infamous discussion of race. Beginning one’s reading
of “Conservation” at the point where Du Bois defines race is an unsuitable place to
commence an analysis. Furthermore, race is not defined until after history is introduced
as a plausible explanation for racial differences. To begin a discussion of “Conservation”
at this section leads one to overlook the sequence of this text. This is why the divisions in
“Conservation” I am detailing here are crucial. They allow a more rigorous
understanding of Du Bois’s motivation for defining race with such convoluted criteria.
Later Du Bois will reveal the implications of his sociohistorical conception of race as
providing a reason for being (similar to the way Emmanuel Levinas makes the distinction
between the struggle for survival and a reason for being in his early writings). For now it

33 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 112-113
34 As I have mentioned before, this is one of the most perplexing aspects of “The Uncompleted
Argument”. It both stimulates my critique of Appiah’s essay as well as my suspicion of Lines of
Descent.
is important to understand its placement and its meaning (as he maintains that the ‘real meaning of race’ is the only question which must be considered seriously in this context) keeping in mind that, although part of the larger question of meaning, the definition Du Bois provides is the conclusion to the metaphysical question of what race is.  

At this point in the address Du Bois has officially moved away from the biological notion of race and is beginning to investigate its real meaning through “the eye of the Historian and Sociologist.” He starts with the benefits of the sociologist and historian’s perspective. First, they follow the progression of human history to explain differences and are not only concerned with physical differences, as the scientists are, but also seek to explain “the different roles which groups of men have played in Human Progress.” Second, they are not deceived by the ‘subtle, delicate, and elusive’ differences which definitively cause these separations in human groups. Third, they do not conceive these differences on individual, biological, or national levels but are able to elevate them to include the larger collective, ideological trends that have been central to human history and human progress. Finally, social historians understand that collective ideals override physical characteristics.

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35 This distinction will become important for Chapters 2 and 3 when I turn to a discussion of Appiah’s “The Uncompleted Argument.”
36 Beginning with the first full paragraph on page 108 (the paragraph beginning, “Although the wonderful developments of human history...”) there is a shift in emphasis from a detailing of the biological assumptions of race to a concern with history and a presentation of the sociohistorical account of race. I will argue in Chapter 4 that Du Bois's definition of race contains both the scientific and sociohistorical beliefs about processes of racialization and necessarily does so in order to capture the “two warring ideals in one body”. This is why Appiah does not think Du Bois has transcended the scientific conception of race because he thinks it has been subsumed in the sociohistorical definition of race.
37 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 109
38 This final point will serve as the crux of my critique in Chapter 3 especially as I discuss Appiah’s cosmopolitanism and Chapter 4 when I discuss the political impetus for Du Bois’s study of race. For now it is important to note that Appiah hears these concerns in a transcendent way that the collective concerns are the only ones that are important, hence, why he follows up with cosmopolitanism.
Objections have been raised against Du Bois taxonomy of eight great families of human beings as opposed to three, as if he merely replaces one system for another. But these objections are severely misguided. Du Bois was not erecting a new system of race on the basis of eight races. In fact there was nothing new about his categories of race or his racial definition. Du Bois informs us that he is not responsible for why we can think of eight races where we once thought of three but that history has revealed to historians the existence of eight races. The divisions science relied upon had to give way to history’s determination of the course of events. And it is with the lens of historians and sociologists that Du Bois instantiates the commonplace use of eight main races, explains the divisions of humans, and responds to the struggle for existence with a reason for being, that is, an affirmation of racial identity in terms of a conservation of race.

The word “history” reoccurs most often in this section compared to the rest of the text indicating that history is the operative term in Du Bois’s analysis of race. Before he provides his definition of race Du Bois does something curious: he states the purview of history. The “history of the world” he tells us “is the history, not of individuals, but of groups, not of nations, but of races, and he who ignores or seeks to override the race idea in human history ignores and overrides the central thought of all history.”

History concerns itself with the movement and progression of human groups, and these groups

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39 Appiah, in his 2004/2005 address to the W.E.B. Du Bois Lecture Series held at Humboldt University, he writes, “The three races – black, white and yellow – are replaced once we take this historical view, by eight groups of which only one, the English, is un-controversially a nation (even though Du Bois then, more controversially, takes it to be spread over two continents.” (“Ethics in a World of Strangers: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Spirit of Cosmopolitanism.” In Justice, Governance Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Difference: Reconfigurations in a transnational World. p. 26 http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/humboldt-vl/152/all/PDF/152.pdf

40 Robert Bernasconi has argued that Du Bois’s definition of race was far from original simply because there was no need for him to defend a radical definition as the concept of race was not being “seriously contested”. He also argues that his use of eight main races “was actually not such an unusual concept at that time.” (Bernasconi, “Our Duty to Conserve,” 521-522)

41 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 110
are constituted not by national affiliations but by their racial identities. Therefore, the domain of history is the concept of race. And with that explained, Du Bois defines race: “What, then is a race? It is a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life.”

Kevin Thomas Miles argues that “Conservation” presents Du Bois’s theory of history and the goal of this theory was to “mobilize Black Americans in a bid to have them recognized as fully enfranchised citizens in the United States”. Making a stronger claim than I do, Miles argues that Du Bois is not primarily concerned with rethinking biology, rather his interests lay in “rewriting historiography”. He establishes the parallels between Du Bois and Hegel’s notion of history, in that history for them implies ‘world history’ and history is worked out on a spiritual plane. The Du Boisian notion of history is revisionist, not simply because he wishes to rewrite the past – biological notions, ideas about the mental, physical, political nature of Negroes, etc. – to say something that no one writing on Negroes (including Hegel) has ever said before, but because he wants to write a history (in the present tense) of a people that has not yet come into view and open up a future “silenc[ing] those fabricat[ed] narratives in which black people have no role in history’s past or future”. This is the story of a people no one has seen “except for

42 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 110
44 It is important to note alternative interpretations of Du Bois’s relationship to Hegel. See Robert Bernasconi ““Our Duty to Conserve”: W.E.B. Du Bois’s Philosophy of History in Context”. The Atlantic Quarterly. 108:3 (Summer 2009).
45 Miles, “One Far Off Divine Event,” 23
those possessed by the vision of Spirit’s goal.” Du Bois’s mention of the physical suggests his concern with “existential bodies that are shaped by the world that they occupy even while they give shape to it.”

As I have argued, there is nothing new about Du Bois’s definition of race and he did not mean it to be understood as new. So if the point of this definition was not to “diverge greatly from the way the term was used by those of his contemporaries engaged in writing philosophical histories,” and if it did not run counter to the “use of the concept of race in ordinary life,” what exactly did this definition achieve? The answer hinges on the difference between the scientific notion of race and the sociohistorical. One finds in Du Bois’s definition of race two definitions of race brought together under one common moniker: the concept of race that apprehends the aspect of race that the scientists have given (vast family, inheritance schemes, common blood and language) and that aspect of race that is “clearly defined to the eye of the Historian and Sociologist” (common history, traditions and impulses, strivings, and ideals of life). What Du Bois has done by offering this binomial definition of race is to insist that any examination of the idea of race must take up this fundamental twoness, the presence of “two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in a black body” and apprehend the permanence of this experience. This fundamental twoness - a psychosomatic dualism in Fanonian terms, and the ‘duality in unity’ in Sartrean terms – was first mentioned in the opening lines of “Conservation” as the prevalence of ‘certain assumptions’ against ‘feelings that these assumptions are wrong’. He will come to describe this sensation 6 years later in *The Souls of Black Folk*

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46 Miles, “One Far Off Divine Event,” 23
47 Miles, “One Far Off Divine Event,” 26
48 Bernasconi, “Our Duty to Conserve,” 521-522
49 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 110
50 Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 7
as a “strange experience – peculiar even for someone who has never been anything else”\textsuperscript{51} to which he ascribes the term double consciousness. Double consciousness is the “sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others.”\textsuperscript{52} Reading Du Bois’s definition of race alongside his notion of double consciousness exposes his definition as the very instantiation of this twoness. Contained within Du Bois’s definition of race are the insights that science has given (‘a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language’) and what sociologists and historians can see (‘always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life’). Du Bois means for us to see the convergences and divergence, the meaningfulness and imprecision in the concept of race. As he remarks, “The term Negro is, perhaps, the most indefinite of all, combining the Mulattoes and Zamboes of America and the Egyptians, Bantus and Bushmen of Africa.”\textsuperscript{53} And he reinforces this unification of science and sociohistory when he describes the “whole process which has brought about these races differentiations” as “a growth, and the great characteristic of this growth has been the differentiation of spiritual and mental differences between great races of mankind and the integration of physical differences.”\textsuperscript{54} One can begin to comprehend in the indeterminacy of race the sense that the term Negro encapsulates a wide swath of “blackness”. This will begin to explain his reasons against Douglass’s amalgamation and his argument that the borders of “Negro” should be opened up to include mixed race persons.

\textsuperscript{52} Du Bois, \textit{Souls of Black Folk}, 7
\textsuperscript{53} Du Bois, “Conservation,” 111
\textsuperscript{54} Du Bois, “Conservation,” 111
For now he tells us that it requires a keen eye – the eye of the ‘Historian and Sociologists’ – to “teach that the grosser physical differences of color, hair and bone go but a short way toward explaining the different roles which groups of men have played in Human Progress” and to know that “yet there are differences – subtle, delicate and elusive, though they may be – which have silently but definitely separated men into groups.” More importantly, it requires a keen eye to move beyond kinship schemas of race and understand that what binds nations of people together are “similar habits of thought and a conscious striving together for certain ideals of life.” Du Bois never denies that the sociohistorical view relies on the scientific view; the history of the concept of race requires this relationship. The “deeper differences” of which he characterizes his sociohistorical definition is “are spiritual, psychical, differences – undoubtedly based on the physical, but infinitely transcending” it. What he does believe is that it is necessary to surpass biology in order to allow for the possibility of a future.

“Turning to real history,” he concentrates on a new opponent: individualism. He writes, “We who have been reared and trained under the individualistic philosophy of the Declaration of Independence and the laisser-faire philosophy of Adam Smith, are loath to see and loath to acknowledge this patent fact of human history,” namely that we have been mesmerized by history to think that individuals make history – the Pharaohs, Caesars, Toussaints and Napoleons. But Du Bois calls us to remember that “the history of the world is the history, not of individuals, but of groups, not of nations, but of races.”

Under the ‘individualistic philosophy’ we invent human progress as the history of the

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56 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 111
57 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 111
58 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 110
victors. But this assumption “can not be established by a careful consideration of history.” In Dusk of Dawn he writes that superiority of the races was due to that race which had a history: “Which was the superior race? Manifestly that which had a history…Africa was left without culture and without history.” Du Bois’s task in using history was not to write the Negro into history or to narrate their historical lineages, but to correct an “assumption of which the Negro people are especially fond” and assert that they are and have always been a part of history, thus contributing (in a substantially understated way) to human progress.

The connection I would like to point to now exists between the precariousness of an internal dualism and the preoccupation with origins and destinies. As argued earlier, Du Bois sought to demystify competing arguments about the extinction and preservation of a Negro future. Though Du Bois contributed to this conversation on the side of Crummell his address signaled a different preoccupation than the one Crummell and Douglass seemed to entertain. The burden to assimilate and the Darwinistic omen of natural (un)selection spoke in tones that echoed a struggle to survive. Du Bois, on the other hand, chose to speak in the theme of a reason for being. Du Bois ties the meaning of race ineluctably to the existential condition of the Negro, revealing the implications of this theory of race: the question of what race means, and by extension his definition of

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59 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 110
60 Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, 98. This was a challenge to Hegel who would claim that the Negro is not a historical part of the world.
61 Levinas makes the distinction between the struggle for survival and a reason for being in his essay “On Escape” and in Existence and Existents where he critiques traditional Western philosophy for their obsession with survival without attending to the reason why certain beings exist (while others do not). Western philosophy forgets that there is purposiveness (in a non Darwinistic way emphasizing survival) in the very fact of being. He writes that traditionally philosophers have devised elaborate plans of escape – to escape being, to escape death, etc. – but fail to address how we are riveted to being; they cannot deal with the condemnation that being is. I take Du Bois's emphasis on a reason for being to be making a similar claim.
race, provides the Negro with a reason for being. I want to suggest that similar to how the ontology of race takes priority over the metaphysics of race, his defense of the raison d’être is also anterior to a definition (or, the metaphysics) of race. In fact, the very vernacular of “race identity” – messages, strivings, ideals of life – all conspire to defend the historicity of the Negro and, accordingly, their reason for being. Du Bois returns to this raison d’être in the final section of the address, this time in the service of the American Negro Academy: “This, is the reason for being which the American Negro Academy has. It aims at once to be the epitome and expression of the intellect of the black-blooded people of America, the exponent of the race ideals of one of the world’s great races.”

Difference is essential to Du Bois’s characterization of race. From what he has said thus far we know that it is integral to the assigning of group roles in human progress, explains the variances of group history, is clearly observed physically, mentally, and spiritually, and is the shared domain of science, sociology and history. But what is especially interesting to Du Bois are the many ways differences are usurped by a force that binds people together with others. This force is primarily a spiritual one and Du Bois’s references to the spiritual should not be attenuated. The deeper differences are spiritual and psychical and as he explains, the “[s]ociohistorical races each have a “message” for humanity – a message which derives in some way from God’s purpose in creating races.”

When we dismiss his ‘spiritual messages’ and the gaze of the social-historian, we ignore the transcendent spiritual criteria informing Du Bois’s recognition of Volk as races. Returning to “One Far Off Divine Event”, when Du Bois states that

62 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 115
63 Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 25
Negroes have a spiritual message that has yet to be given it, Miles argues that it is “semantically correct but conceptually mistaken” to take this to mean that he has identified a Negro race. Du Bois identifies as Negro people who have their identities as a question, those who are not yet conscious of themselves, and those who have not achieved the self-consciousness and freedom that is their history. In order to understand his common history, traditions and impulses, strivings, ideals of life and allusions to ‘spiritual messages’ it is vital to understand that the people are the message. Rather than connecting the present to the past Miles thinks that Du Bois connects the present to the future. This is how the present and the future are intertwined. Du Bois’s notion of history thinks the past, present and future at the same time. And we can hear the interpenetration of temporal states in the following remark: “the history of the world is the history, not of individuals, but of groups, not of nations, but of races, and he who ignores or seeks to override the race idea in human history ignores and overrides the central thought of all history”. And what, then is a race? A “vast family…”, a conglomeration of people. Therefore, any denial of race, according to Du Bois, is ahistorical.

Du Bois defines vast families as a group of “closely related individuals” that reflect the “maximum of physical differences,” and he notes in this historiography that “there were as many groups as families.” There are two points that are necessary to Du Bois’s familial structure. The first pertains to how these maximally physically different people are bound together, and requires an examination of Du Bois’s thoughts on the mixed race problem. The second concerns the third question Du Bois asks in this address – what is the real distinction between these nations? – and will necessitate another look
at his sociohistorical criteria – messages, strivings, traditions, impulses, and ideals of life – as well as a consideration of nation-building as it develops out of this familial structure.

On the first point we must acknowledge that Du Bois does not think that a new race has manifested in America\textsuperscript{64} to be found in mixed race individuals. Those of mixed race are not products of the diverse elements of the Negro, requiring a separation from the race, but share a common blood, language, history, tradition, impulse, and ideal with the Negro that allow them to share in the common message that the Negro has yet to deliver. The idea that the Negro would be ‘abruptly swept away’ was supported by the steady decline in the numbers of ‘pure’ Negroes and the vast increase in populations of mixed race individuals (Mulattos, Quadroons, etc.). Even those in the Negro community advocated for the integration of races as a plausible solution to race relations in America disregarding the fear that elimination of Negroes would come as a result of their absorption and assimilation. So menacing and entrenched were these suggestions that Du Bois calls for “calmer moments.” To bring the Negro into ‘calmer moments’, two questions need to be answered: (1) How will the Negro race avoid extinction, and (2) How will the Negro handle the burgeoning population of mixed race persons? Du Bois answers these two questions with one answer: include those of mixed race in the greater Negro community.\textsuperscript{65} This resolves the problem in two ways. First, the litmus test employed by society for inclusion into the Negro community already presumes ‘pure’ Negroes and mixed race persons as part of the same community. Because the exponential

\textsuperscript{64} This question is a variation of a question Crummell asked in his essay “The Race-Problem in America”. Du Bois was influenced by Crummell and many of his comments in The Conservation of Races can be traced to similar remarks made by Crummell. The question was “Has a new race, the produce of our diverse elements, sprung up here in America?” (Bernasconi, “Our Duty to Conserve,” 113)

\textsuperscript{65} By “greater Negro community” I mean the inclusive notion of Negro that includes all those with even the least amount of Negro blood that the society included as representative of the Negro.
population growth of mixed race persons affords the community they belong to amass a larger populace, the steady decline of the Negro race can rebound by adding mixed race persons into their community, resolving the extinction of the race that seems inevitable (and possibly creating a colossal power). Second, the survival of the Negro race is safeguarded if mixed race individuals are included in the greater Negro community. It also has the added advantage of bringing about “calmer moments” as Negroes no longer have to fear the intermingling of the races for they now share in the progression and nascence of the greater Negro community.

However, this answer is not explicitly stated in Du Bois’ address, but can be read from “Conservation.” One way to read his response to Negro sentiments as support for the greater Negro community is to highlight his response to the race amalgamation problem. Another is to focus on the “who” that possesses the common ideals and message that he proposes to conserve. According to the second account, Du Bois proposes that the commonalities of both groups advocate the inclusion of mulattoes into the Negro race. Mixed race individuals were not exempt from the prejudices and racism that followed the Negro. Their biological proximity to Negroes afforded them participation into the oppressive circumstances of Negro existence. Even Douglass agreed with this reality. Their association with whites was not enough to excuse them from the lived experience of the Negro. Colored individuals share the common blood, language, the history of oppression and discrimination, traditions and impulses that their

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66 Frederick Douglass. *"It is only prejudice against the Negro which calls everyone, however nearly connected with the white race, and however remotely connected with the Negro race, a Negro. The motive is not a desire to elevate the Negro, but to humiliate and degrade those of mixed blood; not a desire to bring the negro up, but to cast the Mulatto and the Quadroon down by forcing him below an arbitrary and hated color line."* (Douglass, “The Future of the Colored Race, 46).

67 It is not a coincidence that this phrase, found in Du Bois’ address, also heads the fifth chapter of Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* where he discusses Negro identity and where a majority of the material for this current essay draws from.
Negro brethren share among themselves. They share similar ideas about the proprieties of life, parallel sentiments about their survival, and endure the daily struggle of their existence as the Negro. They are part of the greater Negro community.

Near the end of this section Du Bois seems to move from using “race” to describe this vast family of Negroes, or the greater Negro community, to using “nations.” It is clear that, against Hegel (and Douglass) who privileges “nations,” Du Bois prefers the descriptor “race.” So why does he then ask, what is the real distinction between these nations, and why is this question posed after he lists the ‘eight distinctly differentiated races’ and the ‘other minor race groups’? The link between ‘race’ and ‘nation’ is forged by a rather lengthy explanation:

The forces that bind together the Teuton nations are, then, first, their race identity and common blood; secondly, and more important, a common history, common laws and religion, similar habits of thought and a conscious striving together for certain ideals of life. The whole process which has brought about these race differentiations has been a growth, and the great characteristic of this growth has been the differentiation of spiritual and mental differences between great races of mankind and the integration of physical differences.

The age of nomadic tribes of closely related individuals represents the maximum of physical differences. They were practically vast families, and there were as many groups as families. As the families came together to form cities the physical differences lessened, purity of blood was replaced by the requirement of domicile, and all who lived within the city bounds became gradually to be regarded as members of the group; i.e., there was a slight and slow breaking down of physical barriers. This, however, was accompanied by an increase of the spiritual and social differences between cities. This city became husbandmen, this, merchants, another warriors, and so on. The ideals of life for which the different cities struggled were different. When at last cities began to coalesce into nations there was another breaking down of barriers which separated groups of men. The larger and broader differences of color, hair and physical proportions were not by any means ignored, but myriads of minor differences disappeared, and the sociological and historical races of men began to approximate the present division of races as indicated by physical researches. At the same time the spiritual and physical differences of race groups which constituted the nations became deep and decisive. The English nation stood for constitutional liberty and commercial freedom; the German nation for science and philosophy; the Romance nations stood for literature and art, and the other race groups are striving, each in its own way, to develop for civilization its particular message, it particular ideal, which shall help to guide the world nearer and nearer that
For Du Bois nations are formed first by their racial identity and common blood, and then by their common history, laws, religion, habits of thought, conscious striving and ideals of life. The story Du Bois tells us displaces physical similarities and heredity as symbols of nationhood. When families came together to form cities they were constituted on the basis of their lineage and phenotypic continuities, but as more and more families came together ‘purity of blood was replaced by the requirement of domicile’. So borderlands supplanted the physical differences that used to separate groups of people eventually territorializing the concept of citizen. Borders no longer represented individuals but ‘spiritual and social differences’ reflecting the varying purposes and contributions of those within its limits: “this city became husbandmen, this, merchants, another warriors, and so on.” And the differences were not mere variations but sources of “struggle” (Du Bois will replace ‘struggle’ with ‘striving’), conflict, discord, reinforcing the necessity of city limits. By the time these boundaries come to demarcate national lines the ‘sociological and historical races of men began to approximate the present division of races as indicated by physical researches’, that is, national spiritual and physical differences coalesced around the concept of race. Accordingly, as a byproduct of nation building, race can also be charted alongside human progress in history.

At the beginning of this section I argued that Du Bois does not define race until after history is introduced as a plausible explanation for racial differences. Two questions arise: why is history paired with the scientific notion of race? and what does the inclusion of history offer to a definition of race? This first question was addressed by the rather lengthy explanation in the previous paragraph. However, it seems necessary to add

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68 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 111
that spiritual and physical differences have always, in tandem, been the cause of the ‘deep and decisive’ differences within racial groups. So Du Bois is doing nothing more than reiterating the ordinary usage of race that seamlessly pairs sociohistory with biology. But the significance of history, as opposed to the socio-historical mélange, is not as commonplace. From these observations we can conclude that all papers presented (and subsequently published) by the Academy, including “Conservation,” serve two purposes: (1) to “uplift the race to higher planes of thought and action” and (2) to prescribe a plan for the “growth and development of the Negro along right lines, and the vindication of that race against vicious assaults.”69 Not to reverse history but to bring the Negro into calmer moments:

“[i]f we consider what race prejudice really is, we find it, historically, to be nothing but the friction between different groups of people; it is the difference in aim, in feeling, in ideals of two different races; if, now, this difference exists touching territory, laws, language, or even religion, it is manifest that these people, cannot life in the same territory without fatal collision; but if, on the other hand, there is substantial agreement in laws, language and religion; if there is a satisfactory adjustment of economic life, then there is no reason why, in the same country and on the same street, two or three great national ideals might not thrive and develop, that men of different races might not strive together for their race ideals as well, perhaps even better, than in isolation.”70

History “remind[s] us how deeply impersonal racism is, how automatically, unreflectively, race and racism are learned, but they also reveal how strong and tenacious is the struggle to be freed of its imprisoning constructs.”71

Dispersed throughout this section of “Conservation” are the characteristics from the sociologist and historian’s contribution to the definition of race: common history, traditions and impulses, strivings, ideals of life and message. Du Bois elaborates on each

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69 Du Bois, Project Gutenburg
70 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 113
IV. Existential Reflections on the Predicament of the Negro

What I refer to as “Existential Reflections on the Predicament of the Negro” is the shortest section in “Conservation”. It begins with the first appearance of the word “situation” and concludes at the end of the paragraph where Du Bois makes reference to “incessant self-questioning.” Since Du Bois’s existential reflections will become the centerpiece of my extended discussion of his sociohistorical conception of race in Chapter 4, I will limit my examination here to the overarchling themes presented in this fourth main division of “Conservation.” Du Bois concluded the last section with an incisive proclamation about the future of the Negro – “their destiny is not absorption by white Americans” – and with a final charge: “if in America it is to be proven for the first time in the modern world that not only Negroes are capable of evolving individual men like Toussant, the Saviour, but are a nation stored with wonderful possibilities of culture, then their destiny is not a servile imitation of Anglo-Saxon culture, but a stalwart originality which shall unswervingly follow Negro ideals.” This proclamation serves as an answer to Douglass’s prediction that the future of the Negro is to be ‘absorbed, assimilated, and […] appear finally in the features of a blended race’. But there is an ambiguity in his response to Douglass (and consequently, an ambiguity in his understanding of assimilation) that makes it clear that Du Bois is going beyond the debate between Douglass and Crummell over assimilation. Recall that Du Bois was in favor of

72 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 113
73 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 113
74 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 113 my emphasis
certain forms of assimilation. As noted, the assimilation he opposed was an assimilationism in the sense that often prevented differentiation and variation between people.

In his essay, “The Ethics of Assimilation,” Eamonn Callan discusses the difference between two strands of assimilation: voluntary assimilation and coercive assimilationism. He examines the ethics surrounding this debate over assimilation within the discourse on multiculturalism and the culture of diversity. Callan understands assimilation as a person’s decision to leave the culture they are a part of and immerse themselves in another proximal culture. On this basis he defends the voluntary act of assimilating to another culture as ethically acceptable. Voluntary assimilation claims that assimilation is not wrong because it is neither harmful to others or to the self. Callan goes on to claim “black people do not have a duty to self-segregate, that self-segregation and assimilation pose no dilemma, and furthermore that compulsory racial segregation is unjust.” By making the distinction between assimilation and complicity (in oppression) Callan brings out the acceptability of assimilation:

“Consider for a moment the widely used but little considered metaphor for what is sometimes the intended outcome of assimilationist policies: cultural genocide. The metaphor suggests that coercive assimilation is tantamount to cultural murder. Fair enough. But is it also true that voluntary assimilation is an instance of cultural suicide? Is assimilation a terrible thing, like death, regardless of the reasons it comes about? Should we try to dissuade prospective assimilators as if they were would-be perpetrators of suicide? I would think that the answer to these questions is very obviously no, though the metaphor of cultural genocide might reasonably be taken to suggest otherwise.”

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77 Callan, “The Ethics of Assimilation,” 473
In her response to this essay Kathryn Gines argues in, “The Ambiguity of Assimilation,” that Callan defends assimilation (voluntary) against assimilationism (coercive) “which occurs whenever a dominant social group appeals to the superiority of its culture as the license for its domination and seeks to entrench its power through the selective assimilation of outsiders.” Gines’s interest in Callan’s argument for voluntary assimilation pertains to “the ambiguity of assimilation, the relationship between race and culture (or racial assimilation and cultural assimilation), and finally the relationship between assimilation, assimilationism, and complicity.” For these reasons she is particularly interested in his “distinction between people who regard race as something that “properly recedes” with the end of racism and those who value race beyond strategies against racism and for whom “the imagined community is cherished in part as an end in itself, a source of belonging and direction in people’s lives whose value would persist beyond the end of racism.” Callan contends that what counts as assimilation or not depends on the “self-styled insiders” which draw (and redraw) the boundaries around those imagined communities. In a world of “promiscuous culture mixing” it becomes untenable to maintain the argument or to read the ethics of assimilation as somehow in conflict with the social idea of diversity. The idea of voluntary assimilation suggests a lot of agency, but the role of cultural insiders policing imaginary cultural borders poses a limit to such agency. But, as Gines explains, this produces a false dichotomy between racial and interracial solidarity. As she explains, “he [Callan] assumes that one would have to reject racial solidarity if one were in favor of interracial solidarity; however, the

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78 Callan, “The Ethics of Assimilation,” 472
79 Gines, “The Ambiguity of Assimilation,” 1
80 Gines, “The Ambiguity of Assimilation,” 2
81 Callan, “The Ethics of Assimilation,” 474
two forms of solidarity do not have to be mutually exclusive.”82 Those who enter a new culture may be as apt to diversify that culture as to passively adjust to it. Here Callan asserts, “there is no conceptual gap between the supposed duty to avoid assimilation and a duty to avoid what cultural insiders take to be assimilation.”83

The main duty Du Bois advocates is the Negro’s duty to conserve race. But as Du Bois informs us the duty to conserve is not only a dilemma, it is a puzzle. What I would like to argue through Gines’s critique of Callan, that this ambiguity is found not only in the multiple uses of assimilation but more primordially in the very possibility of assimilation. Stated differently, assimilation can only be a destiny for those beings who are able to have it as a possible free mode of being. The situation of the Negro disallows their freedom and limits their possibilities. The destiny of the Negro is not absorption because the situation of the Negro is one who cannot escape their facticity in either direction – cannot escape to the freedom of originality and cannot escape the condemnation of imitation. Neither assimilation nor transcendence are possibilities for the Negro. The status of the Negro is an inescapability from themselves: “the situation of our race in America renders this attitude [servile imitation or stalwart originality] impossible.”84 This section is primarily about that situation85 – the precarious existential condition of the Negro. Every Black person in America must confront the perils of this situation. Du Bois writes,

82 Gines, “The Ambiguity of Assimilation,” 2
83 Callan, “The Ethics of Assimilation,” 481 my emphasis
84 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 113
85 The word “situation” appears only four times in “Conservation,” and two of those times are in this section. The other two mentions of this term are noteworthy. In the first he reminds us “not to deceive ourselves at our situation in this country” (Du Bois, “Conservation,” 114), which he begins to pull together the descriptions he has recounted throughout the address, and in the second he condemns The Academy to an ‘immediate work’ that must have practical and direct “bearing on the situation of the Negro” (Du Bois, “Conservation,” 116).
“No Negro who has given earnest thought to the situation of his people in America has failed, at some time in life, to find himself at these cross-roads; has failed to ask himself at some time: What, after all, am I? Am I an American or am I a Negro? Can I be both? Or is it my duty to cease to be a Negro as soon as possible and be an American? If I strive as a Negro, am I not perpetuating the very cleft that threatens and separates Black and White America? Is not my only possible practical aim the subduction of all that is Negro in me to the American? Does my black blood place upon me anymore obligation to assert my nationality than German, or Irish or Italian blood would?”

We have already heard Callan’s answer to these questions – self-separation and assimilation are not duties. Curiously enough, Du Bois does not provide an answer to these questions. Instead he returns to the situation of the Negro and recasts it as an “incessant self-questioning” and “hesitation” that renders the condition of the Negro a sequence of “vacillation and contradiction”. To understand the Negro is to understand their perpetual vacillations and contradictions, and to understand them as an instantiation of an “incessant self-questioning.” The Negro is an eternal question, the oldest question in history. And “the grappling with indeterminate questions is one of the inevitabilities of life.”

V. Our Duty to Conserve

In Section II of “Conservation” – the scientific conception of race – Du Bois states that we must suspend the practical questions of “separate schools and cars, wage-discrimination and lynch law” in order to attend to the philosophical question of race. His hope is that the philosophical analysis of race, once treated, will “form our guiding lines and boundaries in the practical difficulties of everyday.” Having outlined with “broad knowledge and careful insight” his philosophical response (i.e., the sociohistorical

86 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 113
88 Moses, “Idealism, Conservatism, and Hero Worship,” 280
conception of race) to the race question he returns in Section V of “Conservation” to those practical questions he bracketed earlier. This section is marked by (i) a return to practical questions, (ii) a definition of racism (race prejudice), (iii) a defense of our ‘duty to conserve’, (iv) an emphasis on the ‘ideals of life’; and (v) the final, but equally salient, guiding question in this address: Have we in America a distinct mission as a race – a distinct – or is self-obliteration the highest end to which Negro blood dare aspire? It begins at the point in the address where Du Bois asks this final question and ends right before his discussion of the American Negro Academy. 89

This section begins with great intensity, as the frustration and anxiety of being a problem to others and being a question to oneself proves to be inescapable. The heavy exasperation that fills this point of the address is comparable to the burdened cry that hurtles from Fanon as he weeps near the end of Chapter 5 of Black Skin, White Masks. And out of that heaviness Du Bois asks a most piercing question: “Have we in America a distinct mission as a race or is self-obliteration the highest end to which Negro blood dare aspire?” The question Du Bois asks conjures “The Destined Superiority of a Negro” (1877) an essay in which Crummell enquires, “Is this a race doomed to destruction? Or is it one possessed of those qualities, and so morally disciplined by trial, as to augur a vital destiny, and high moral uses, in the future?” 90 Bernasconi has speculated that Du Bois intends to juxtapose the threat of self-obliteration with his proposition to conserve race, and suggests that “Conservation” was in fact a response to this final question (Bernasconi refers to it as “the question to which “The Conservation of Races” was the answer”). 91

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89 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 115
90 Bernasconi, “Our Duty to Conserve,” 526
91 Bernasconi, Robert. ““Our Duty to Conserve”: W.E.B. Du Bois’s Philosophy of History in Context”, The Atlantic Quarterly. 108:3 (Summer 2009) p. 520. It is unclear whether Bernasconi meant quite
hesitate to accept this interpretation wholesale because it recasts “Conservation” in the Douglass-Crummell debate and, as I have argued, I see this essay capable of much more than a response to the question ‘to assimilate or not’. Regardless, it is important to flesh out the implications of Bernasconi’s reading for no other reason than to unpack the utility of ‘our duty conserve’ as the focus of these final two divisions. Furthermore, emphasizing ‘the threat of self-obliteration’ concretizes Du Bois’s encouragement to “deprecate and minimize race distinctions” that begins “Conservation” (recall that the threat of self-obliteration was introduced at the beginning of the address with Du Bois’s brief remarks on Douglass and Crummell).

By ‘self-obliteration’ Du Bois had in mind the after-effects of race mixing. Recall that the first lines of the address begin with “intense personal interest in discussions as to the origins and destinies of races.” As I argued in Section II against Moses, and in disagreement with Bernasconi, Du Bois was more aligned with Douglass than often claimed, and he bought into the idea that race mixing was a possible future for the Negro race, but disagreed with the supposed implications of that line of thinking. However, and a point I agree with Bernasconi on, the practical concerns made assimilation impossible. Du Bois was not a pure separatist and his inclusion of mulattoes into the Negro race offered more than just a statement that they shared a similar condemnation. Similar to how careful Du Bois is to write the Negro into history, he takes equal care to include

literally that Du Bois answered the question, “have we in America a distinct mission as a race [...] or is self-obliteration the highest end to which Negro blood dare aspire” as a phrase or with an extended argument. In other words, whether he literally retorted with the phrase “the conservation of races” as to imply that our distinct mission as a race was to conserve races, or whether his entire address was his longwinded response and “our duty to conserve” was a mere catch phrase of a larger argument. More than likely Bernasconi meant the latter as he implies throughout this essay that the address was framed “with reference to this dichotomy.” My goal in this section is to explore the significance of this phrasing as an expressed following the validity of the former option. It is only by executing this hypothetical that we see the impact of the words “our duty to conserve” reflecting a weighted emphasis on the title of this address.
mulattoes in the “distinct mission of the Negro race.” To include them would pose the eventuality of “lighten[ing] the race” or “weaken the race” and could quite easily draw a “wedge between mulattoes and “pure” Negroes.” However, Du Bois believed that a more dangerous annihilation of Negroes was taking place, one more relentless and pervasive than the slow ascension to a blended race Douglass conceived, and one more pernicious to the future history of humanity. Because each race had a message to give and that message was for the upliftment of humanity, the obliteration of this message would effectually mean the demise of humanity. Therefore, his answer to the question of self-obliteration in the form of the conservation of races spoke to the legality and political atmosphere that suffocated the Negro and mulatto alike. It is that they possess protections under the laws that separates white America from Black America. As Americans, Blacks share the same ideals as their white national counterparts but as Blacks they do not share the same laws. This is why he returns to the “pressing practical questions”. As he explained, “If there was any statistical evidence suggesting the possible extinction of the Negro in America then it was because of the policies being directed against them.” The connection between amalgamation and obliteration could not be understood if we began arbitrarily from the middle of the address, that is, from his definition of race.

As noted briefly in Section IV, Du Bois abstains from using the language of “racial purity” to undergird his intervention. When he writes about the Negro’s situation in America he selects the language of racial identity and race pride to capture what sustains this group, refusing to engage with the politics of purity. What is most striking about the politics of purity is that it relies more so on the ever-tightening enclosure around the category “Black” as it does on the policing and protection of the category
“white”. Bernasconi reminds us that although “[e]xisting races were defined by their purity […] what was important in the United States was the exclusion of a significant black component.” The assimilation debate occludes the root of self-obliteration – the exclusion of Blacks – the effects of which play out once the practical concerns are illuminated. “Our duty to conserve” gestures towards the triviality of assimilationism mainly because, as argued in Section IV, assimilation, as Douglass and Crummell conceived it, was impossible for the Negro. It is useless to debate an impossibility; what requires attention are those matters that are actual, pressing and occurring. Racial purity too was an issue that was transpiring, active because it was “not so much inherited as it was a goal to be achieved,” and this most pressing concern was enforced by the social program of Jim Crow and evidenced in the diminishing social status of Blacks. So the matter of racial purity differed in kind from assimilationism, and it is the politics of purity that Du Bois had to contend with.

Du Bois utilized ideas that stem from the politics of purity without the eugenic undertones and the plans to breed out difference they require. Appiah is correct to point out (in Lines of Descent) Du Bois’s “need for partiality and the value of difference with the recognition of the value of encounter across identities.” By “focusing on the “ideals of life” as the primary agents of history he sought to draw attention away from the conviction that racial purity was the main power in history.”

There was a more powerful historical catalyst – ideology. The conception of racial identity that Du Bois

94 Bernasconi, “Our Duty to Conserve,” 523
95 Appiah, “Ethics in a World of Strangers,” 33
96 Bernasconi, “Our Duty to Conserve,” 523
argued for conserving was based on the racial ideas one might conceive that served to both capture the ideals of life and propel that life into the future. Du Bois boldly declared, “Tomorrow would be black!”\textsuperscript{97} Pushing back against Miles who argues that Du Bois was primarily concerned with ‘rewriting historiography’ I contend that Du Bois’s theory of racial identity was forward looking. Like an archer who must pull her arrow backwards in order to launch it expansively into the eternal future, Du Bois looked backwards but was directed to the future. Because the Negro belonged to the future it was not up to Du Bois to stipulate the content of this unknown future – the Negro message and the Negro ideals – but to announce it, to \textit{address} the future as “The Conservation of Races.” But as I note in my discussion of Section I, the future he predicted accomplished two things: (1) to “uplift the race to higher planes of thought and action” and (2) to prescribe a plan for the “growth and development of the Negro along right lines, and the vindication of that race against vicious assaults” and it was up to the individual and the community (through race organizations, racial politics, etc.) to usher in that future to come.

For Du Bois the onus of the present is to conserve racial identity. The future of this greater Negro community rests in its ability to retain its identity. This identity is lost when it becomes indistinguishable from the identity of other races. It is within this fear of what the future might become that Du Bois emphatically calls for “our duty to conserve”:

“It is our duty to conserve our physical powers, our intellectual endowments, our spiritual ideals; as a race we must strive by race organization, by race solidarity, by race unity to the realization of that broader humanity which freely recognizes differences in men, but sternly deprecates inequality in their opportunities of development. For the accomplishment of these ends we need race organizations:

\textsuperscript{97} Du Bois, “Conservation,” 114
Negro colleges, Negro newspapers, Negro business organizations, a Negro school of literature and art, and an intellectual clearing house, for all these products of the Negro mind, which we may call a Negro Academy. Not only is all this necessary for positive advance, it is absolutely imperative for negative defense. Let us not deceive ourselves at our situation in this country. Weighted with a heritage of moral iniquity from our past history, hard pressed in the economic world by foreign immigrants and native prejudice, hated here, despised there and pitied everywhere; our one haven of refuge is ourselves, and but one means of advance, our own belief in our great destiny, our own implicit trust in our ability and worth. There is no power under God’s high heaven that can stop the advance of eight thousand honest, earnest, inspired and united people.”

Referring to this passage in “Conservation,” Bernasconi points out that “on the one occasion when he used the term conserve in the main body of the essay, he referenced not only physical powers but also intellectual endowments and spiritual ideals” He concludes that to “conserve a race was to conserve all three together.” This is why his return to practical questions, his mention of racial prejudice (what we now understand as racism), his reification of the “ideals of life” seem to interpenetrate the justification for Black existence. But as we must incessantly remember, this justification not only serves the Negro spirit, it serves all humanity. In other words, we should collectively accept as a common ideal the preservation of the Negro. This is why the existential drama is so essential to ‘our duty to conserve’ – it makes us conscious of the necessity of Black life as coextensive with the consciousness of our shared humanity. Put in its purest vulgarity, Black existence is the justification for our conception of human dignity.

Half way through this section Du Bois rehashes the existential puzzle he introduced in Section IV, but this time he employs more definitive terms:

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98 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 114
99 Bernasconi, “Our Duty to Conserve,” 522
100 Bernasconi, “Our Duty to Conserve,” 522 Bernasconi aptly describes each element: “By physical powers, Du Bois meant above all the virility necessary to perpetuate the race; by intellectual endowments, he meant the fits a race inherits; and by referring to spiritual ideals, he meant to open the race to hop in a possible future, the thought of which would sustain it in unpropitious times.”
“We are Americans, not only by birth and by citizenship, but by our political ideals, our language, our religion. Farther than that, our Americanism does not go. At that point, we are Negroes, members of a vast historic race that from the very dawn of creation has slept, but half awakening in the dark forests of its African fatherland. We are the first fruits of this new nation, the harbinger of that black to-morrow which is yet destined to soften the whiteness of the Teutonic to-day. We are that people whose subtle sense of song has given America its only American music, its only American fairy tales, its only touch of pathos and humor amid its mad money-getting plutocracy.”

Du Bois subordinates nationalism and reifies racial groups. He claims that it is by being Negro that we are American, so the order of priority and the order of socialization does not begin with a national identity but with a racial identity. And it is at the end of this declaration that he triumphantly states,

“As such, it is our duty to conserve our physical powers, our intellectual endowments, our spiritual ideals; as a race we must strive by race organization, by race solidarity, by race unity to the realization of that broader humanity which freely recognizes differences in men, but sternly deprecates inequality in their opportunities of development.”

We can now understand what Du Bois meant when he said that we “deprecate and minimize our race distinctions.” He did not mean an abandonment of racial identity towards a radical humanism. Rather, he intended to deprecate the inequality that disallows the Negro race from opportunities because of their phenotypic features. “Race could be minimized or it could be emphasized” but Du Bois saw a “need to emphasize it because until they had fulfilled their mission as a race, African Americans would be unable to assert their equality from a position of strength.”

More than this, as has been the trend throughout the entire address, this duty is necessary for all of humanity. The practical concerns place humanity in jeopardy. The Negro’s ability to define what it means to be American is comparable to their contribution to the ‘broader humanity which

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101 Du Bois, "Conservation," 114
102 Du Bois, "Conservation," 114
103 Bernasconi, “Our Duty to Conserve,” 523
freely recognizes differences in men’. If Americans are able to engage in a healthy politics of difference they will become active contributors to humanity. Otherwise their nationalism is both stifling and insular.

Du Bois ends Section V with an interesting turn: the underside of Black life. He writes:

“There is no power under God’s high heaven that can stop the advance of eight thousand thousand honest, earnest, inspired and united people. But – and here is the rub – they must be honest, fearlessly criticizing their own faults, zealously correcting them; they must be earnest. No people that laughs at itself, and ridicules itself, and wishes to God it was anything but itself ever wrote its name in history; it must be inspired with the Divine faith of our black mothers, that out of the blood and dust of battle will march a victorious host, a mighty nation, a peculiar people, to speak to the nations of earth a Divine truth that shall make them free. And such a people must be united; not merely united for the organized theft of political spoils, not united to disgrace religion with whoremongers and ward-healers; not united merely to protest and pass resolutions, but united to stop the ravages of consumption among the Negro people, united to keep black boys from loafing, gambling and crime; united to guard the purity of black women and to reduce the vast army of black prostitutes that is today marching to hell; and united in serious organizations, to determine by careful conference and thoughtful interchange of opinion the broad lines of policy and action for the American Negro.”

Noting the filiopietism in Du Bois’s relationship to Crummell, William J. Moses posits that “racial awareness was not the only concern of this paper [“Conservation’]” but that Du Bois used this medium to articulate “strict puritanical values” as “the first and greatest step toward the settlement of the present friction between races—commonly called the Negro problem—lies in the correction of the immorality, crime and laziness among the Negroes themselves, which still remains as a heritage from slavery.”

Indolence, self-ridicule, sexual immorality and other perversions were seen as impediments to vitality and needed to be eradicated in order for the Negro race to be viable. It is in the final words of this section and in the next that we get the judgmental, moralizing tone of Du

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104 Du Bois, "Conservation," 114
105 Moses, "Idealism, Hero Worship," 282
Bois’s black leadership ideology, and, eventually, an insistence on the need for Black organizations like the American Negro Academy and the Talented Tenth. The insistence that the Negro’s ‘particular message, its particular ideal, which would help to guide the world nearer to that perfection of human life for which we all long, that ‘one far off Divine event’ was immersed in the “rhetoric of Christian idealism and theological racism”\textsuperscript{106} that renders his statements in “Conservation” inseparable from his Christian beliefs. Lastly, our duty to conserve serves as the meeting ground for morality and vitality. This is why Appiah’s disregard of the spiritual undertones in “Conservation” leads him to miss the thrust of Du Bois’s argument.\textsuperscript{107}

\textit{VI. The American Negro Academy}

“Conservation” was presented at the inaugural meeting of the American Negro Academy. In the final section of this address (from “the reason of being which the American Negro Academy has” to the final lines of “Conservation”) Du Bois defines the purpose and activity of the Academy as he understands it. And in this section he proposes a seven-point Academy Creed.

1. We believe that the Negro people, as a race, have a contribution to make to civilization and humanity, which no other race can make.

2. We believe it the duty of the Americans of Negro descent, as a body, to maintain their race identity until this mission of the Negro people is accomplished, and the ideal of human brotherhood has become a practical possibility.

3. We believe that, unless modern civilization is a failure, it is entirely feasible and practicable for two races in such essential political, economic and religious

\textsuperscript{106} Moses, “Idealism, Hero Worship,” 285
\textsuperscript{107} Appiah writes in “The Uncompleted Argument,” “We do not need the theological underpinnings of this argument. What is essential is the thought that through common action Negroes can achieve, by virtue of their sociohistorical community, worthwhile ends which will not otherwise be achieved.” (Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 25)
harmony as the white and colored people in America, to develop side by side in
peace and mutual happiness, the peculiar contribution which each has to make to
the culture of their common country.

4. As a means to this end we advocate, not such social equality between these
races as would disregard human likes and dislikes, but such a social equilibrium
as would, throughout all the complicated relations of life, give due and just
consideration to culture, ability, and moral worth, whether they be found under
white or black skins.

5. We believe that the first and greatest step toward the settlement of the present
friction between the races–commonly called the Negro Problem–lies in the
correction of the immorality, crime and laziness among the Negroes themselves,
which still remains as a heritage from slavery. We believe that only earnest and
long continued efforts on our own part can cure these social ills. 6. We believe
that the second great step toward a better adjustment of the relations between
races, should be a more impartial selection of ability in the economic and
intellectual world, and a greater respect for personal liberty and worth, regardless
of race. We believe that only earnest efforts on the part of the white people of
this country will bring much needed reform in these matters.

7. On the basis of the foregoing declaration, and firmly believing in our high
destiny, we, as American Negroes, are resolved to strive in every honorable way
for the realization of the best and highest aims, for the development of strong
manhood and pure womanhood, and for the rearing of a race ideal in America
and Africa, to the glory of God and the uplifting of the Negro people.108

Moses describes the Academy Creed as “a practical illustration of the “idealistic” belief
that race problems could be greatly ameliorated by intellectual activity” and the belief
that “the burden of reform must be carried out by black people working through black
institutions.”109 Rather than focus on Du Bois’s credo, an examination that usually
overshadows most discussions of Section VI, I want to highlight two characteristics of
the American Negro Academy that Du Bois emphasizes in this section. The first pertains
to how the reason for being of the American Negro Academy is related to yet
distinguished from the reason for being of the Negro. The second concerns the
implications of Du Bois’s collectivist project that some have interpreted as a radical
humanism.

109 Moses, "Idealism, Hero Worship," 285
To begin with, Du Bois ascertains that the reason for the formation of the American Negro Academy was to ‘determine by careful conference and thoughtful interchange of opinion the broad lines of policy and action for the American Negro’. And he identifies the reason that the Negro exists is to deliver a distinct message that will uplift humanity. Accordingly, when we combine these aims we get the personal and collective goals of life. Our collective pursuits should aim to impart “the best thought, the most unselfish strivings, and the highest ideals”; they should be honest, earnest, inspiring and able to unite people towards a Divine truth, and should exalt people “by truth—not by lies, by honest—not by flattery”; they should reform as they transform and should establish laws that express ecumenical standards of policy and right. Our personal pursuits should articulate ideals of life that place us in proper communion with humanity. They should celebrate the wonderful possibilities of our cultural backgrounds, differences and experiences, fully subjective and unmarred by any badges of insult and discrimination, and they must be rooted in history, our current situation and our hope for the future. The most striking aspect this is that, opposed to the existential drama detailed in Section IV, we do not get the image of two warring ideals in one body but compatible political agendas and strategies. Though they remain at war their friction is neither problematic or odd. Rather it is productive, and as I will argue in Chapter 4, necessary. By the end of “Conservation” we find that the collective and the subjective have been reconciled.

If it is true that the “duty to conserve race was not for all time” then how can I possibly justify the claims just made? Apparently, “maintaining their race identity was

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110 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 115
111 Bernasconi, “Our Duty to Conserve,” 523
imposed on African Americans primarily because of the need to organize in the face of racism and oppression” but it was also “attached to the Herderian idea that each people has a mission to fulfill for the sake of humanity as a whole.”  

112 And if maintaining racial identity was a requirement only for the time being, then like a message once delivered, racial identity would soon be inutile. Even the American Negro Academy was included in this impending expiration date. If these statements are true then it is imperative that we end this examination of “Conservation” with an inquiry into the purpose of this final section that legitimizes the Academy. Other than presenting at the inaugural meeting, why did Du Bois use this occasion to stipulate the American Creed when his address would have been complete without this addition and these remarks did not exactly fit into his assigned topic. In other words, why the need for the American Negro Academy? Why use this occasion to defend the existence of this body of intellectuals?

I alluded to an answer in my discussion of the first characteristic of The American Negro Academy above. I contend that this discussion of The Academy and adumbration of its credo provides insight into Du Bois’s collectivism. To be sure, this is not Appiah’s cosmopolitanism. Du Bois’s collectivism is a form of political grassroots organizing that provides us with the type of ingenious interventions to ensure that each individual and racial group can give the full and complete message of their genius, complementing the individualistic portrait necessary to progress human life. The condemning tones he uses to describe (the underside of) Black life is extrinsically linked to his desire to transform Blacks. This theme hangs over “Conservation”; it is the exhortation that whispers quietly after every word in this address, beginning from the first and concluding with the last. Moses describes Du Bois’s desire to rehabilitate the Negro, to present a positive account

112 Bernasconi, “Our Duty to Conserve,” 523
of Negro being and identity, and to rewrite the Negro back into the story of humanity as an obsession: “Du Bois, Crummell, Frances E. W. Harper, and numerous other black men and women were just as obsessed as Washington was with puritanism as a panacea for the cultural reform of the black masses”\textsuperscript{113} and “like Crummell, he [Du Bois] believed that the burden of reform must be carried out by black people working through black institutions.”\textsuperscript{114} The point here is this: transformation does not occur at the individual level but at the collective level. The individual has an important part to play but they do not and cannot move history. Du Bois is clear that The Academy, as an organizing structure, should devote itself to reformation and transformation, making it the paragon for what collective humanism should aspire.

\textsuperscript{113} Moses, “Idealism, Hero Worship,” 288
\textsuperscript{114} Moses, “Idealism, Hero Worship,” 285
Almost 30 years have passed since Kwame Anthony Appiah began writing a series of responses to W.E.B. Du Bois’s conception of race in “The Conservation of Races” (1897). One year shy of the 30th anniversary of “The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race” (1985) Appiah published a new book on Du Bois: Lines of Descent: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Emergence of Identity (2014). The provocation of Appiah’s new book is a philosophical event of the first order. The previous twenty years of Critical Philosophy of Race have been defined by Appiah’s dereliction of Du Bois’s concept of race. In this new volume Appiah seems to withdraw some of the major claims of his earlier essay. I will show that in fact this is not the new reading of Du Bois from Appiah that we have been waiting for but a reiteration of the old view which, nevertheless, allows us to see for the first time the full unity of Appiah’s vision of race.

Since 2006 Appiah’s publications have moved away from an explicit focus on race to reflect on the larger question of ethics that, at least for Appiah, preconfigure any expressed concern one might have for particular identities. So, why return to “Conservation”? For those like myself who are persuaded by Du Bois’s definition, in its ability to reflect their own experiences, reading “Conservation” always offers a fresh reminder of the value of (Black) identities at a time when this value is only octothorpically asserted (#BlackLivesMatter, #AfricanLivesMatter, #SayTheirNames), therefore, canonizing “Conservation” as an essential contribution to the theorizing of race. But to a theorist who thinks that the conceptualizing racial project assumes the reality of a concept (race) whose veracity is in question, what does the emergence of (a racial) identity offer to Appiah? Considering that Appiah described Du Bois’s impulse to discover the sociohistorical properties of racial and national groups in “Conservation” as “mere bravado”¹²⁰ this final question is not a trivial one. In fact it summarily steers my thoughts on the legacy of Appiah’s “The Uncompleted Argument.” What I offer in this chapter is a critical examination of the conceptual shifts that permit Appiah to move from a discussion of the ‘assimilation [of] the unbiological nature of races’ in “The Uncompleted Argument” to an exploration of Du Bois’s answer to the question “what am I to do with the identities that fate has given me” in Lines of Descent.

As we will recall, what is at issue in “The Uncompleted Argument” is Du Bois’s definition of race, whether it transcends the scientific conception and offers a definition of race that is more sociohistorically constituted. Interestingly enough Appiah begins his invective at the point where Du Bois defines race. Du Bois’s 1897 address neither begins nor reaches its pinnacle at this point, so what is the motivation behind Appiah’s fixation

¹²⁰ Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument” 28
on this definition? I argue that Appiah believes that unpacking Du Bois’s definition of race will lead us towards the hard truth that there are no races. I further assert that this intellectual maneuvering launches Appiah into a confrontation with the hard truth awaiting the postracial or multicultural idealist: if the question ‘what, then, is a race’ has been invalidated then how can we explain personal commitments (to others, ideas, nations, groups, etc.) that occur on the basis of identity? I believe this is the question (the basis of black political solidarity\textsuperscript{121}) Du Bois attends to when he offers his now infamous definition of race. And, I argue, this is the same conundrum Appiah was attempting to sort out as he tried to understand Du Bois’s answer in “Conservation.” The seven characteristics he identifies – common blood, common language, common history, common traditions, impulses, strivings, - are, more or less, all discredited for the same reason: they cannot explain what binds people. I will argue in a subsequent section in this chapter, that Appiah’s ethical turn post-2006 can be explained by his answer to this most pressing question about personal commitments. Simply stated, Appiah explains personal commitments that arise out of collective identities with a single yet powerful term –  \textit{cosmopolitanism}.

The conclusion that I want to draw from these observations is this: the emergence of (a racial) identity offers to Appiah a way to ground his cosmopolitanism. He wants to show through Du Bois’s biography that (racial) identity is inherently cosmopolitan, that identity can – and necessarily does – allow for a cosmopolitan partiality that reconciles universalist claims of transcendence and particularist claims of commitment. Reading the epigraph that opens \textit{Lines of Descent} shows better the interlacing of his work on Du Bois

\textsuperscript{121} On this topic see Tommie L. Shelby \textit{We Who Are Dark: Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity}. (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2007)
Quoting from Du Bois’s essay, “The Superior Race,” Appiah reproduces this line: “His triumph is a triumph not of himself alone, but of humankind….” What I want to highlight from a consideration of these words is equivalent to what we can gather from the priority Appiah assigns to racial eliminativism, namely that his motivation for returning to Du Bois’s “Conservation” almost 30 years later is due to the congeries of antinomy (the so-called ‘tensions’ in Du Bois’s definition) “submerged in the depth of his argument” that make it difficult for him to accept Du Bois’s conception of race.

In this chapter I critically reflect on the legacy of Appiah’s famous first essay, not by rehashing its merits and clarifying the objectives, but by showing its endurance over time. I contend that Appiah was already leaning towards a view of cosmopolitanism as early as “The Uncompleted Argument” because what troubled him most about Du Bois’s definition of race is the same problem he claims fundamentally challenges cosmopolitanism in his later works – universal particularism – and is the same argument he uses to frame Du Bois’s racial emergence in *Lines of Descent*. In “The Uncompleted Argument” Appiah is confounded by the possibility that Du Bois’s articulation of his personal experience of race – experiences on the individual level – can meet the needs of identity on the collective, social-political-ethical level. He states repeatedly that this particular definition cannot tell us why a Negro - past, present, and future - is a Negro by Du Bois’s standards. This temporal inconsistency is also the same criterion he cites in *The Ethics of Identity* that needs to be resolved before we can “ask where

122 In the final section of Chapter 2 I will discuss Appiah’s 2005 paper entitled, “Ethics in a World of Strangers: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Spirit of Cosmopolitanism.” This paper will buttress my claim that Appiah already had in mind a project that brings together “The Uncompleted Argument” and *Ethics of Identity*, that is, it picks up where his comments on Du Bois left off and look a lot like the fledglings of *Lines of Descent*. 
cosmopolitanism can take us.” As he writes, “if cosmopolitanism, in its universalist aspect, raises challenges for partiality – the “group feelings” that we all have – one could equally say that the existence of group feelings raises problems for cosmopolitanism.”

His “cosmopolitan patriotism” reconciles “a kind of universalism with the legitimacy of at least some forms of partiality.”

This section will proceed with an examination of the numerous tensions Appiah identifies in “Conservation” that cause him to use cosmopolitanism to reconcile them in his later works. My goal here is to argue that Appiah’s cosmopolitanism guides his reading of Du Bois in both “The Uncompleted Argument” and Lines of Descent. What is interesting about this thread is how it leads him to be more critical of Du Bois in the former essay than in his recent book. A reading of Du Bois’s “The Conservation of Races” and Appiah’s corpus from “The Uncompleted Argument” to Lines of Descent will, consequently, require a new hermeneutical approach in order to defend “Conservation” against the new claims that Appiah makes in his 2014 book (part of the work that Chapter 2 accomplishes). If the interpretation I outline here is to have any conceptual merit, this project will require that we root Du Bois’s oeuvre firmly in (his own) Existentialism, a project that will persist through the entirety of this project.

From ‘What Race Is’ to ‘There Are No Races’

In this section I will make three arguments: (1) first, I will show that, read progressively, “The Uncompleted Argument,” In My Father’s House, “Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections” (from Color Conscious), The Ethics of Identity,

123 Appiah, The Ethics of Identity, 220
124 Appiah, The Ethics of Identity, 220
125 Appiah, The Ethics of Identity, 223
and *Lines of Descent* show that Appiah is developing a theory of cosmopolitanism; (2) then I will show how Appiah uses cosmopolitanism to resolve the primordial tension between the denial of difference and the acceptance of difference; and (3) in so doing, Appiah’s argument is structured in accordance with the classic dialectic. This final claim is an important one. Appiah pejoratively characterizes Du Bois’s argument as nothing more than the antithesis in the classic dialectic. If this is true then what I claim amounts to an assertion that cosmopolitanism is the final step (the synthesis) in the classic dialectic. Therefore, and given this analysis, a complete portrait of race from the perspective of the Du Bois-Appiah debate requires the scientific conception of race, Du Bois’s sociohistorical conception, and Appiah’s cosmopolitan ideal.

In “The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race” (1985), Appiah disputes Du Bois’s claim to develop a sociohistorical conception of race. Appiah argues that “Conservation” is just a step in the classic dialectic, the antithesis to the claim that racial distinctions should be minimized and differences should be denied. What Du Bois espouses – which Appiah describes as an ‘antiracist racism’ – is an acceptance of differences towards the idea that white and Black are complementary terms. It is important not to neglect the significance of this description of Du Bois’s address as a “classic dialectic”. For one, the pattern of the classic dialectic, Appiah informs us, frames his reading of “Conservation” and proves to him that his interpretation and the

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126 Appiah’s statements about “The Conservation of Races” resemble those Jean-Paul Sartre made in “Black Orpheus”. In this introduction to Senghor’s *Anthologie* Sartre describes Négritude as an “antiracist racism” and argues that it too is a step in the classic dialectic, the anti-thesis to the thesis of white supremacy. Appiah goes as far as Sartre does to say that, like *Négritude*, “The Conservation of Races” must be abandoned. But whereas Sartre thinks Négritude must be replaced with the proletariat struggle, Appiah thinks that, insofar as Du Bois’s definition of race does not transcend the scientific definition, it must also be abandoned. Appiah adopts the further to claim that the sociohistorical notion of race should be abandoned because there are no races.
conclusions he draws on the basis of it are both “natural” and “correct”. Another reason to take this comment seriously is because the dialectic structure invokes a relation between two poles. In other words, Appiah’s labeling of this address as a classic dialectic creates a primordial bond between the scientific conception and the sociohistorical conception of race, in a way that prevents the latter from being understood without its antecedent, and abutting his assertion that Du Bois’s sociohistorical conception relies on the nineteenth century scientific conception of race as the dialectic requires. More important than these, understanding that “Conservation” is structured according to the classic dialectic allows Appiah to dissect Du Bois’s argument “by analyzing the sources of tension in Du Bois’s allegedly sociohistorical conception of race, which he explicitly sets over against the scientific conception.”\(^{127}\) It is towards these tensions I would like to turn.

I suggest that the primary tension he identifies between a denial of difference and an acceptance of difference (the classic dialectic) is a conceptual Hydra: a domineering beast whose many heads emblematize several derivative tensions. As I will argue, the tension that the denial-acceptance paradigm obliges is the same tension Appiah claims causes meaning to conflict with truth, universalism to conflict with particularism, and Europe to conflict with America (in “The Uncompleted Argument”); creates a tension between identity and identification, and the ideational and referential accounts of race (in *Color Conscious*); between cosmopolitanism and partiality, liberalism and autonomy, individuality and identity, and ethics and loyalty (in *The Ethics of Identity* and *Cosmopolitanism*); and finally it will cause a conflict between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, culture and Pan-Africanism, and will cause the conflict between Europe and

\(^{127}\) Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument”, 25
America to resurface (in *Lines of Descent*). All these conceptual antinomies are underwritten by the original tension of denial-acceptance, and are similarly resolved by the same analytic structure: Appiah’s cosmopolitan ideal. I do not have the space in this chapter to flesh each of these tensions through these four texts. Luckily it does not require a protracted analysis to demonstrate that Appiah executes the same process in each tension and through each text. It only requires the selection of choice representatives that depict this structure. So in the first section I will look at the divalent combination of meaning and truth and how it precipitates a theory of cosmopolitanism. In the second section, I will show how cosmopolitanism is the synthesis to the classic dialectic between denial and acceptance.

*i. Congeries of Antinomy*

In dispute in Appiah’s “The Uncompleted Argument” are the justifiable criteria used to support the existence of human races. Said differently, it is a question of whether there are any factors – attributable to (genetic) variation – that would lead to the defense of human racial differences. So from the very onset this is a question about difference, consequently formulating the concept of race with the language of difference. This is not to claim the non-existence of difference (even without the eye of the historian and sociologist it is easy to see that differences exist) but rather to espouse the philosophical question of what difference means and what valid conclusions can be drawn from the distribution of variant characteristics among the human population. For the scientist this was a question and a matter of extension: can biological differences be *extended* to make any claims about physical, mental, spiritual and political characteristics? But for Du Bois it was primarily about content: what epistemic *content* do history and society provide that
fortify this connection between biology and culture, subsequently imbuing race (and racial difference) with meaning. Without much exertion we can begin to see the difference between the domain of the scientific conception of race and that of the sociohistorical conception, as they erect a binary between truth and meaning. This is not to say, however, that the truth about race was not of importance to Du Bois. As Appiah explains, “[t]hroughout his life, Du Bois was concerned not just with the meaning of race but with the truth about it.” 128 Here Appiah corroborates this tension between truth and meaning.

On the one hand truth is at odds with meaning. We have been inundated with scientific truths about race – what has come to create our commonsense understandings of race, or the ordinary usage of race – ranging from the inability to locate any scientific determinant for race 129 to the utility of race to proxy exclusively for human taxonomy. According to Du Bois, science has reflected both a minimizing and a centralizing of racial distinctions, fortifying a feeling of alienation. It claims simultaneously that “out of one blood God created all” 130 establishing a type of human fraternity, and that race is a manifestation of different types of human beings on the basis of language, skin color, hair texture, and cranial measurements. The result has been the establishment of “at least two, perhaps three, great families of human beings – the whites and Negroes, possibly the yellow race.” 131 But in neither the claim of monogenesis nor its essentialist remarks do scientific truths explain the difficulties in classifying people, the intermingling of the

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128 Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 22
129 During the “Philosophy and Race” Conference sponsored by The New School for Social Research (February 2015) Lucius T. Outlaw, Jr. corrected the interpretation of the “race-gene.” In his formulation science has been unable to locate the “race-gene” not because race cannot be reduced to one genetic marker or chromosomal point but because race is not determined by one specific gene (sic).
130 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 108
131 Du Bois, “Conservation”, 109
criteria for race, or the biologizing of certain assumptions about a person’s natural abilities. The problem for the scientist is the inconsistency of race (Appiah will use “instability” instead of “inconsistency” to describe this problem in *Lines of Descent*). Du Bois acknowledges with these inconsistencies that differences between people do not account for all the variations in their histories nor can it explain the metonymy of race. In other words, science can instantiate facts about the world but it cannot assign meaning. The instrumentality of race incites for Du Bois a distinction between the ‘real meaning of race’ and ‘what scientists say it is’.  

On the other hand, if we follow Appiah this tension can appear illusory, in that Du Bois’s references to meaning actually conceal his primary interest in truth. Appiah writes, “[w]e are more inclined at present, however, not to express our understanding of the intellectual development of people and cultures as a movement toward the truth” but, he continues, “I am disposed to argue that this struggle toward the truth is exactly what we find in the life of Du Bois.” The point here seems to be that we are deceived by our investigations into meaning and led to believe that meaning is either distinct from or a sublation of truth. Our travails into meaning are in fact movements toward truth. A subsequent version of “The Uncompleted Argument” entitled, “The Conservation of

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132 The emphasis on the ‘real meaning of race’ has several implications for the sociohistorical conception of race, especially if we consider that it is the very first question Du Bois asks in “Conservation”.

133 Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 22

134 It must be noted that there are three versions of this essay: “The Uncompleted Argument” (1985), “The Conservation of “Race”” (1989) and “The Illusion of Race” in *In My Father’s House* (1992). It has always appeared curious to me the scholarly attention given to Appiah’s first essay without devotion to the revisions and extensions made in the subsequent essays. More curious still that in the long career of this famous first essay that someone has not had the foresight to publish an article contrasting these articles. Unfortunately I do not have the space here to perform such an analysis.
“Race” lends further insight to this sublation as Appiah writes, “[t]heories of race and its meaning are bound, as a result, to play a role in Afro-American literary criticism and theory—perhaps, indeed, to set the stage” but then he encourages us to “share Du Bois’s concern to understand the truth about race, just because the idea has played so crucial a role in the self-understanding of Afro-Americans.” Appiah’s emphasis on truth is inherited from his roots in the philosophy of language, especially his contribution to Michael Dummett’s anti-realist debate. We do not have to look much further than Appiah’s defense of weak verificationism in his 1985 article “Verificationism and the Manifestation of Meaning” to understand why he grounds race in truth.

In this article Appiah shows how verificationism is compatible with realism by making a distinction between Dummett’s strong verificationism and the weak verificationism he supports. The issue that places a wedge between realists and anti-realists according to Dummett is whether truth is an important semantic ideal. A verificationist would argue that truth and verifiability are co-extensive and understands that the verification-transcendent claims of the realist do not necessitate the objective reality they claim to. The verificationist’s claim is actually stronger than this: knowing the truth conditions of the object to which assertoric utterances refer cannot, in fact, prove that these objects exist. Therefore, argues the anti-realist, a stronger criterion of existence—verifiability—is required to make the connection between the reference (assertoric utterances) and its referent. Truth-values cannot do this on their own.

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Contradistinctively Appiah thinks that this anti-realist line hastily rejects truth as a condition for knowledge and that its requirement for existence is much too stringent for the ends it wants to achieve. He claims that verificationists are so blinded by their anti-realism that they are unable to see that their disagreement with realists is not over the question of whether verificationism poses a threat to realism (which Appiah asserts that it does not) but “from what point of view must it be possible to know that something is true for it to be something that could be true.” Framing the debate on the relation of fact to existence exposes a strain of verificationism that limits what can be known to what is contemporaneous, that is, what is possible for us to know here and now. Appiah will argue that this version of verificationism, what he labels as strong verificationism, is incompatible with realism’s transcendent clause. But there is an alternate version of verificationism - weak verificationism - that is more generous to the spatio-temporal positioning that makes knowing possible for both realists and verificationists. Weak verificationism maintains that “every fact is a possible object of knowledge” without “insisting that the possible knowers must be us here and now” making it compatible with realism. Appiah’s goal is to show that, as a realist, he can concede verificationism without accepting Dummett’s strong account.

To make his argument Appiah must show that the verificationist principle – only verifiable truth-aiming utterances make sense, that is, they have semantic value and can be an object of knowledge – can be endorsed by the weak verificationist and the realist. In other words, Appiah must defend semantic realism and show that it is tantamount to the verificationist formula: verifiability, true referents and existent referents (as what is

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\item[138] Appiah, “Verificationism,” 18
\item[139] Appiah, “Verificationism,” 19
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“true” for the verificationist is both verifiable and existing). Undergirding this formula is a second principle – semantic externalism – that more readily brings together the distinction between meaning and truth this discussion of verificationism is meant to illuminate, especially considering that the realist-antirealist debate originally concerned the notion that truth is an important semantic ideal. First, a definition of semantic externalism: following E. Craig, Appiah defines semantic externalism as “the thesis that no item which is epistemically private to the speaker – which no one other than he can know the nature of – can be essential to the meaning of any symbol, word, or phrase he uses.” In order to have knowledge about any metaphysical object there is a requirement that this object of knowledge be manifested in order for the meaning of it to be grasped. Objects of experience endemic to a certain group or “essentially private” to a particular knower cannot be known (as they cannot be extended) and, hence, cannot be verified (as they neither exist nor have any applicable truth-values). As Appiah explains, “[i]f there is no manifesting the knowledge, there is no knowledge. Semantic externalism, if true, entails that knowledge of meaning must be manifestable.” Dummett is adamant that this proves semantic externalism poses a threat to realism because “if knowledge of truth conditions cannot be manifested because the truth conditions transcend current verification, then knowledge of truth conditions cannot be knowledge of meaning.”

Adopting Dummett’s example of ‘private language’ Appiah retorts that semantic externalism “provides no route from the demand that semantic theory be verifiable at some time, to the demand that truth conditions should be capable of a currently

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140 Appiah, “Verificationism,” 19
141 Appiah, “Verificationism,” 20
142 Appiah, “Verificationism,” 20
practicable test.” In the case of language Appiah argues that language is not an “essentially private” object of knowledge as language conforms to a set of semantic rules. Even if the language spoken is one that is unknown to a larger populace (i.e. the language is privy to language speakers) this will lead to the conclusion that ‘essentially private’ objects are inappropriate objects of knowledge and, more problematically, that they are somehow unreasonable. However, that languages abide by semantic rules proves that they have semantic currency. Stated differently, assertoric utterances spoken by people who speak foreign languages mean something to those speaking the (private) language. Appiah’s objection shows that the privacy condition is introduced only to bolster strong verificationism. Appiah imposes a b-clause onto semantic externalism that disproves that the realist rules out private objects when truth conditions are applied to sentences. Appiah disambiguates what is essentially private from what is manifestable and usable. In the case of pain, for example, a realist can maintain the inaccessibility a knower can have to someone else’s pain (that pain is an essentially private object) while asserting that “whether someone is in pain is a question on which people other than A can have evidence sufficient to warrant rational belief, and even knowledge.” What is indispensable to this argument is the inclusion of objective rules that allow private objects to be manifestable and meaningful. The manifestability and meaningfulness of private objects appeases the realist by offering a basis on which to ground truth-conditions, namely in rule-following that proves that they are verifiable, have true referents and existent referents. This is why Appiah can be a (semantic) realist at the same time he insists on the real world verifiability of objects of knowledge (weak verificationism).

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143 Appiah, “Verificationism,” 21
144 Appiah, “Verificationism,” 22
145 Appiah, “Verificationism,” 23
How does this discussion of “Verificationism and the Manifestation of Meaning” relate to Appiah’s conclusions on race and his reading of Du Bois’s sociohistorical conception? Understanding Appiah’s weak verificationist realism makes his discrediting of Du Bois’s definition and his conclusion that “there are no races” more comprehensible. Appiah’s realism allows him to understand truth as bivalent. And his defense of weak verificationism allows him to require of all objects of knowledge, including the concept of race, that they be verifiable, have true referents and existent referents. So when he says that race is not real he is following the weak verificationism realist’s intuition that whatever is real must manifest itself in the world according to objective rules that both in-group and out-group knowers can all follow (because even essentially private objects are manifestable for the weak verificationist realist). But races are inherently absurd, irrational and consistently betray their boundaries. As he reminds us, “there is nothing in the world that can do all we ask "race" to do for us.” In other words, race cannot be verified, refers to no one currently existing, who have existed in the past or who may exist in the future, and it has no metaphysical substance. Therefore, for Appiah, race does not exist.

Appiah’s chapter in Color Conscious reinforces this point by adhering race to the ideational and referential accounts of meaning. In “Race, Culture, and Identity: Misunderstood Connections,” he argues that both the ideational and the referential are necessary to understand the idea of race, and draws this distinction out of the philosophy of language (where Dummett’s arguments have been canonized). The ideational account, with its concern on how people think about races and what central truths they have about races, can be seen as a consideration of whether the concept of race has any applicable

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146 Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 35
and transcendent truth conditions (Appiah’s realism). Surveying the idea of race from intellectual and political elites Appiah ultimately concludes that “[f]rom Jefferson to Arnold, the idea of race…requir[ing] that there be significant correlations between the biological and the moral literary, or psychological characters of human beings; and that these be explained by the intrinsic nature…of the members of the race…has turned out not to be true.”147 Concerning the referential view, which requires that one identifies the thing to which the concept applies and what we refer to when we speak of races, is an allusion to the verificationist formula: verifiability, true referents and existent referents (Appiah’s weak verificationism). Appiah’s overview of the historical and linguistic foundations of race revealed that the “various candidates from the referential notion of meaning” could not provide us with a race concept as “none of them will be much good for explaining social or psychological life, and none of them corresponds to the social groups we call “races” in America.”148

That Appiah affords race a truth value – the idea of race ‘has turned out not to be true – is an indication of a revision from his earlier account in “The Uncompleted Argument.” In the earlier essay he essentially claimed that race cannot be an object of knowledge because it is inappropriate and unreasonable. In Color Conscious it is assigned a truth value that leads to the same conclusion – “there are no races”. Surprisingly Appiah argues that race does not exist but there is racial identity, and this determination is based on the weight of the referential view to the idea of race. The referential account of meaning shows that there is a division between the existential criterion and the independence clause of the realist claim. Reference is a word-to-world

147 Appiah, Color Conscious, 71
148 Appiah, Color Conscious, 74
relationship and truth is determined by reference and satisfaction. Satisfaction is typically understood as a word-to-world relation as well, which relates a predicate to the things in the world that bear it. An aspect of truth (ideational view) can be satisfied by showing that people have a conception of the circumstances that would permit the application of the term “race” and they covet certain truths about races even if the correlations are nonsensical and they do not ‘correspond to the social groups we call “races” in America’. As we have seen in the case of weak verificationism Appiah can concede the existential dimension but rejects the independence dimension, that things are true independent of “anyone’s belief’s, linguistic practices, conceptual schemes and so on”. The subjectivism involved in racial experiences does not warrant the exception to essential privacy as semantic realism requires. What is important at this stage in the discussion of “The Uncompleted Argument” is that we note Appiah’s conflation of meaning and truth is at odds with Du Bois’s intent but is congruent with what Appiah proffers as the “rough truth” about race: “The truth is that there are no races: there is nothing in the world that can do all we ask "race" to do for us.”

Du Bois reminds us that if we use either the scientists’ claim of monogenesis or its essentialist remarks and “thus come to inquire into the essential difference of races we find it hard to come at once to any definite conclusion.”\textsuperscript{149} Appiah reads these remarks differently in “The Uncompleted Argument.” Instead of reading it in the context it appears in “Conservation” – the sentence right after Du Bois asks “what is the real meaning of race” and the first statement he makes as he lays out the inadequacies of the scientific definition of race – Appiah places these words next to Du Bois’s mention of “calmer moments” as a way to emphasize the necessity to “acknowledge that human

\textsuperscript{149} Du Bois, "Conservation" 109
beings are divided into races” even if we “find it hard to come at once to any definite 150 conclusion.” Again, the misplacement of these words obscures Du Bois’s emphasis on meaning and social history but readily supports Appiah’s belief in the arbitrariness of this term that we must acknowledge even if its veracity is in question. Du Bois upholds that truth is not external to or distinct from its meaning, but that the truth about race is in its meaning. If race is not a scientific concept then its validity cannot be found in what it determines to be true about race. There is an aspect of race that science (hence, truth) cannot reach, the deeper differences, the spiritual, psychical differences. So when Du Bois seeks to transcend the scientific conception of race he transforms it on the level of meaning not on basis of irrefutable truths. 151 After all Appiah tells us that “the dialectic requires, a revaluation of the Negro race in the face of the sciences of racial inferiority.” The transvaluation of race is a discrediting of the conceptual order entailed by a denial of difference, a reorientation of the relationship of the concept to its meaning, or in the Nietzschean sense, a countering of the natural instincts of humanity, and therefore a contradiction of "natural values" and the entirety of the moral system that flowed from it.

While I think these statements better correspond to Du Bois’s thinking, it is necessary to follow this interpretation with an asterisk. We should caution ourselves against the binarism of race. Resisting this binary might be what Appiah intended by his conflation of meaning and truth, and what I intended when I spoke about the vacillating line between truth and meaning. But I must intervene against the shadow of singularity this portrait may depict. Similar to the inanity of speaking about the truth of race using singular conveyances, the meaning of race cannot (and should not) be reduced to

150 Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 22
151 This is why it is important that the first question Du Bois asks in “Conservation” is ‘what is the real meaning of race.’
singularity as well. Jayne Chong-Soon Lee captures this sentiment aptly in her review of Appiah’s *In My Father’s House*:

> “The fluidity of racist discourse requires us to accept that “race” can be defined in many different ways simultaneously. Once we relinquish exclusive definitions of race, we are free to explore the consequences of certain conceptions of race in a variety of situations. We can begin to chart the complexity of the terrain we call race when we refuse to accept restrictive binary categories. After all, the meaning of race is never given solely by its content. Its meaning is always constructed by the social contexts in which it is embedded. Since these social contexts change constantly, the term “race” possesses no fixed content.”

The probable unsociability and ahistoricity of race obfuscates two dimensions of race, and presents the multiplicity of meaning (or the instability of race) as occurring on the individual level when it in fact describes a collective identity. Appiah captures this sentiment in his essay response to Charles Taylor’s notion of “multiculturalism”: “[i]f what matters about me is my individual and authentic self, why is so much contemporary talk of identity, about large categories—gender, ethnicity, nationality, “race,” sexuality—that seem so far from the individual? What is the relation between the collective language and the individualist thrust of the modern notion of the self?”

The point I want to make by introducing Appiah’s question is that the meaning-truth dichotomy further bifurcates into a consideration of universal and particularist appeals to identity.

Appiah’s critical response to Charles Taylor’s “Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition,” is an essential step towards his notion of cosmopolitanism for it precipitates his ethical turn. In “Identity, Authenticity, Survival: Multicultural Societies

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and Social Reproduction,” Appiah again interrogates identity as a doubling of commitments, this time examining whether universal rights to recognition conflict with individual claims of authenticity. Similar to how meaning and truth converged on the collective level and not along the seams of the individual, Appiah argues in this essay that identities – whether individual or collective – collate on the collective dimension. He shows through Taylor’s work on recognition that the rubrics of identity, authenticity and recognition all presuppose a social conception of the individual. This is because recognition, to take Taylor’s primary example, places a demand on society to acknowledge the individual, not qua individual, but as a member of a preexisting, and therefore, already recognizable, group. His argument essentially seeks to undo the “celebration of the individual over society” that has been inherited from Romanticism (recall Appiah’s characterization of Du Bois as a Romantic in “The Uncompleted Argument” and Lines). More than being an ancillary mode of association, Appiah argues that social life is inherently bound up with identity. The individual’s interaction with the social (mediated by their group affiliations) makes it impossible to focus on individual identity without reference to collective identities. Contrariwise, when Taylor speaks about collective identity he posits it as another dimension of identity, separate from the individual. Appiah refutes this model and emphasizes, on the contrary, that the collective and the individual are invariably connected. Individual identity, he contends, has two major dimensions: a collective dimension and a personal dimension. Each dimension

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156 Personal identities speak to our particular tastes and traits, and include individualized aspects such as “witty”, “clever”, “sports enthusiast”, “wine aficionado”, “college graduate”, “lactose
has properties that are important for social life, but only collective identities have properties that count as social categories and are able to make personal claims of identity socially relevant. So when he asks why contemporary talk of identity is largely about categories he is asking a question about the preoccupation with the collective dimension of individual identity, not about the distinction between individual identities and collective identities (as there is no distinction for him). His question may sound like an accusation but inextricable to his cosmopolitan ideal, he will end up prioritizing the collective, social level of individual identity.

Appiah calls identities that simultaneously place us in communities while informing the kinds of persons we are “collective social identities”. His use of “collective social identities” rejects Romanticism’s essentialist conception of the self that awaits discovery and monological conceptions maintaining that the self is created. In this way “collective social identities” align with Taylor’s dialogical notion of the self but also extend Taylor’s notion in two important ways. First, in rejecting authenticity’s decree that my way of being push back against “the forces of convention”, and Taylor’s response that my identity is forged in consultation with family, organized religion, school, etc., “collective social identities” recognize that the dialogues that constitute the self often take place with concepts and practices that structure the modes of association we consult. Second, he takes aim at the positioning of authenticity as an unmediated ideal where the subject is responsible for nothing other than the pursuit of her true self. “Collective social identities” remind Romantics that we make ourselves from “a tool kit of options” intolerant”, “democrat” and even “would not give money to the poor even if they had millions in the bank” and “supports male circumcision but not female circumcision”.

157 Appiah, “Identity, Authenticity, Survival,” 151-152
158 Appiah’s “collective social identities” are compatible with Du Bois’s definition of race as I have interpreted his definition in the “Forethought”.
made available by the historical and metaphysical materiality that mediate our relationships. Any attempt to think the individual without the collective or to think the collective without the social misses the overlap of these three areas. This, Appiah claims, is the modus operandi of the rhetoric of authenticity; it bypasses the collective and social in order to make claims about the individual. Authenticity reveals that the individual and collective levels are related by opposition: “the search for authenticity is demonstrated at least as much in opposition to the demands of social life as it is in the recognition of one’s real self.”

Appiah’s point is that the ethical domain of recognition has often been constrained by appeals to authenticity. But the real detriment of the rhetoric of authenticity, to borrow a phrase from Taylor, is that it promotes a “culture of narcissism”. Authenticity manipulates the individual into thinking of herself as an island, undetermined and unaffected by the social world.

The entire section on authenticity and the final section of his essay (now under the subheading “Beyond Identity”) appear in his contribution to Color Conscious. And since “Race, Culture, and Identity: Misunderstood Connections” continues his reading of “Conservation” from “The Uncompleted Argument” it establishes a connection between his comments on authenticity and his vision of race. Having concluded Part I of “Race, Culture and Identity” by showing that neither the ideational nor referential accounts of meaning are able to secure a definition of race that even faintly resembles social and psychological life or commonsense understandings of “racial groups”, Appiah identifies the task of Part II (“Synthesis for Racial Identities”) as “reconstruct[ing] a sociohistorical view that has more merit than I have previously conceded.”

By this he means Du

159 Appiah, “Identity, Authenticity, Survival,” 152-153
160 Appiah, Color Conscious, 75
Bois’s sociohistorical conception of race in “Conservation” where he claims “Du Bois’s proposal to “speak of civilizations” turns out not to replace a biological notion but simply to hide it from view.” He hopes to present a more amenable sociohistorical account of racial identity that corrects the misfortunes of Du Bois’s attempts in “Conservation” and The Crisis. Rather than revisit these texts he finds it beneficial to start from Du Bois’s idea of the “badge of color” from Dusk of Dawn.

A more tenable sociohistorical view requires a historical analysis of racial labels like the “badge of color”, the removal of essentialist language to indicate racial groups so that they may be recognized as sociocultural objects, and a distinction between racial identification and racial identity. Again, in Part I Appiah explained that race entrepreneurs like Thomas Jefferson and Matthew Arnold employed race to signify the commonalities of ancestry, blood and language. However, Appiah cannot prove that this deployment of race can lead to a typology of the Negro as characterized by common history, traditions and impulses, strivings and ideals of life. This is because race does not operate as a descriptive concept able to identify people with a shared essence. Rather, and like other social identities, race proxies as a process of labeling whereby the racial label is applied to present and future individuals who are clustered together (Outlaw’s “cluster groups”) and are assumed to have more commonalities than they actually do. Assigned haphazardly and leaving vague boundaries, these seemingly arbitrary ascriptions nonetheless have serious consequences. Therefore, a sociohistorical account must endeavor to “trace the history not only of a signifier, a label, but also a history of its effects.” To begin with the “badge of color” is to locate the starting point of racial

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161 Appiah, Color Conscious, 75
162 Appiah, Color Conscious, 76
discourse and its socio-psychological effects. What Appiah once saw as a reliance on nineteenth-century biologism now helps him to explain the social and psychological life of racialized subjects. The socio-psychological effects of racial labeling “shapes the way people conceive of themselves and their projects.” Appiah’s corrective sociohistorical account reinscribes Du Bois’s eight great families as sociocultural objects, products of effective racial labeling, in essence, as the outcome of racial identification.

Racial identification is “the process through which an individual intentionally shapes her projects—including her plans for her own life and her conception of the good—by reference to available labels, available identities.” The stipulation that identities be “available” combines Taylor’s sense of “recognizable self-definitions” from *The Ethics of Authenticity* with Ian Hackings notion of “dynamic nominalism” – the idea that “numerous kinds of human beings and human acts come into being hand in hand with our invention of the categories labeling them.” Dynamic nominalism goes hand in hand with processes of identification. For example, Rachel Dolezal’s performance of “blackness” utilized available labels, recognizable definitions of blackness, and conformed to the script for that identity. But our ability to think Dolezal’s case caused a new conceptual language for her performativity – *transracial* – to emerge. However, even with dynamic nominalism, the activity of intentionally determining one’s projects does not yet encapsulate the passivity inscribed within processes of labeling whereby a person is assigned an identity regardless of whether they conform to the script for that identity (that is, whether or not they are “really” black) but because they “have certain

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163 Appiah, *Color Conscious*, 78
164 Appiah, *Color Conscious*, 78
166 Appiah, *Color Conscious*, 78
antecedent properties that are consequences of the label’s properly applying to them.”

Because “ascription of racial identities—the process of applying the label to people, including ourselves—is based on more than intentional identification” and “racial ascription is more socially salient” Appiah makes a distinction between racial identification and racial identity. He defines racial identity as “a label, $R$, associated with ascriptions by most people (where ascription involves descriptive criteria for applying the label); and identifications by those that fall under it (where identification implies a shaping role for the label in the intentional acts of the possessors, so that they sometimes act as an $R$), where there is a history of associating possessors of the label with an inherited racial essence (even if some who use the label no longer believe in racial essences).” Racial identity captures the subtlety in the medley of racial identification, dynamic nominalism, racial labeling and racial ascription. It essentially states that individuals identify with the label(s) they have been assigned such that they conform to the script expected for that label, perform the role and intentionally shape their projects in accordance to that identity. So it is the sociohistorical content (in the form of racial labeling and racial ascriptions) as the inescapable material that makes racial identification irresistible and predictable and that steers what we come to call racial identity.

There is an inherent tension between racial identification and racial identity. Earlier I stated that a racial label can be imposed on an individual and, in response, the individual must shape (and at times, restructure) their projects to align with the normative and descriptive expectations (and effects) these ascriptions carry. But if identification

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167 Appiah, Color Conscious, 79
168 Appiah, Color Conscious, 79
169 Appiah, Color Conscious, 80
170 Appiah, Color Conscious, 81
171 Appiah, Color Conscious, 82-83
consists in the idea that “what people can do depends on what concepts they have available to them; and among the concepts that may shape one’s action is the concept of a certain kind of person and the behavior appropriate to that kind,” then authenticity is correct that the social material places a burden on the individual, one that it determines must be respected, and one that the individual must fight against. In terms of black identification Appiah mentions the project victims of racism have to “join together to resist it” as an example of the demand authenticity makes on individual identity. This makes Appiah’s criticism of authenticity more belaboring: If the moral idea behind authenticity is “self-fulfillment” that is, being true to oneself, and if this notion of self-fulfillment disregards either the demands of our ties with others or demands that “emanate from something more or other than human desires or aspirations” then they essentially “destroy the conditions for realizing authenticity itself.” Then authenticity as the protection of the individual does not seem to be the problem if it is the case, as Appiah claims it is, that “other things being equal, people have the right to be acknowledged publicly as what they already really are.”

This is not to problematize authenticity as a practical goal but to question “the route from identity to moral and political concerns.” In rehashing (and reproducing) his comments on Taylor’s *Multiculturalism* he sees more clearly the inherent worry about racial identities, “one that has not to do with their being too tightly scripted but with a consequence of their very existence for social life.” He frames his worry about racial identity around the problem of difference: “we can approach the problem [of racial identities] by asking why differences between groups matter.” Differences between

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172 Appiah, *Color Conscious*, 78
173 Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 35
174 Appiah, *Color Conscious*, 99
groups matter in the same way that recognition mattered to Taylor and race mattered to Du Bois: it “may be evidence of injustice to individuals.” This latter statement about the relation between identity and moral and political concerns opens up questions of collective responsibility. And these injustices are only visible from the point of view of the individual, not the collective. Appiah explains,

“Well suppose I live in a society with two groups, blacks and whites. Suppose that, for whatever reason, the black group to which I obviously belong scores averagely low on a test that is genuinely predictive of job performance. Suppose the test is expensive. And suppose I would have in fact, a high score on this test and that I would, in fact, perform well. In these circumstances it may well be economically rational for an employer, knowing what group I belong to, simply not to give me the test, and thus not to hire me. The employer has acted in a rational fashion; there is no Sowellian discrimination here. But most people will understand me if I say that I feel that this outcome is unfair. One way of putting the unfairness is to say, “What I can do and be with my talents is being held back because others, over whose failings I have no control, happen to have the characteristics they do. […]"

This specific sort of unfairness—where a person is atypically competent in a group that is averagely less competent—is the result, among other things, of the fact that jobs are allocated by a profit-driven economy and the fact that I was born into a group in which I am atypical. The latter fact may or may not be the consequence of policies adopted by this society. Let’s suppose it isn’t; so society isn’t, so to speak, causally responsible. According to some—for example, Thomas Sowell, again—that means it isn’t morally responsible, either: you don’t have to fix what you didn’t break.

I’m not so sure. First, we can take collective responsibility, “as a society” for harms we didn’t cause […] But second, the labor market is, after all, an institution; in a modern society it is kept in place by such arrangements as the laws of contract, the institution of money, laws creating and protecting private property, health and safety at work, and equal employment laws. […] So the outcome is the result not only of my bad luck but of its interaction with social arrangements, which could be different.

Thus, once we grasp the unfairness of this situation, people might feel that something should be done about it.”

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175 Appiah, *Color Conscious*, 100-101
Strategies aimed at rectifying these injustices to the individual effectuate a global homogenization at the group level, eradicating the differences that make us individual, complex and multifarious people. Appiah describes this as the tendency of collective identities to “‘go imperial,’” dominating not only people of other identities, but the other identities, whose shape is exactly what makes each of us what we individually and distinctively are.”\textsuperscript{176} This “imperialism of identity” is prevalent in racial identities. Therefore, Appiah ends “Race, Culture, Identity” with these final words: “the identities we need will have to recognize both the centrality of difference within human identity and the fundamental moral unity of humanity.”\textsuperscript{177} In time, Appiah will come to represent this antinomy of identity and identification as the relation of ethics and loyalty. Appiah understands ethics to entail the recognition that the plans one has for one’s life is ineluctably tied up and constrained by the kind of person they are. This recognition extends to all others as there are similar constraints for citizens in every nation in the world, citizens who are similarly engaged in collective projects. He will come to term the unity of ethics and loyalty the ‘ethics of identity’ permitting a transition from \textit{Color Conscious} to \textit{The Ethics of Identity}.

Du Bois was not the only one consumed by an obsession that entranced him for a large span of his life. Appiah describes \textit{The Ethics of Identity} as his attempt to “pull together my thinking and writing over the past decades on ethics and identity.”\textsuperscript{178} Appiah begins \textit{The Ethics of Identity} by acknowledging that the liberal political tradition has both a theoretical and practical interpretation that, taken together, captures most notions and understandings of liberal theory. The theoretical he characterizes as a history of debates

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\textsuperscript{176} Appiah, \textit{Color Conscious}, 103
\textsuperscript{177} Appiah, \textit{Color Conscious}, 136
\textsuperscript{178} Appiah, \textit{The Ethics of Identity}, xvi
\end{flushright}
about dignity, liberty, equality, individuality, tolerance, etc. and not a sustained theory or body of ideas. Most associations to this form of liberal theory accord it with a focus on the equal possession of human dignity and with such events as the French and American Revolutions, and theorists such as John Locke. The problem with theoretical liberalism is that it remains undefined; a coherent theory or outline cannot emerge from a focus of its history and there are no singular threads of thought over time. Liberalism on this view is the definition (and re-definition) of individuality. To counter this, most have tried to establish liberalism as a tradition of practice. This entails focusing on how liberalism has been utilized in the political structures of society and has maintained itself in political affairs and life. This emphasizes civil rights, political institutions, legal system, political rights of citizens, freedoms and the respect of fundamental human rights. One limitation to this is that the practical and theoretical are co-extensive; each political institution has practical implications. The second problem with practical view of liberalism is that it is unprincipled; there is not a rule to tell you what to do. Other problems associated with liberalism is that it is an all encompassing term, bridging together both proponents and critics of liberal theory under its general rubric.

Even with the problems of liberalism Appiah wants to defend it on conceptual grounds. His use and interest in liberalism is due to its historical situatedness as an all-encompassing concept. He focuses generally on what has come to be understood as liberalism rather than what the term actually connotes. He wants to uphold the values of liberalism as they “matter to the lives we live and the politics we fashion.” Although he considers that the theoretical account he will provide in this book, and liberal theory in general, can extend to the practical, Appiah’s main concern is the realm of the theoretical.
The problems Appiah’s book addresses do not deal with any of the problems identified above. The nomenclatural problems of liberalism are of no concern to Appiah. He is not interested in clarifying what liberalism is but using the ideas developed through the history of liberalism in order to understand an underlying tension: the relation between the political and the individual. He claims that this relation is a problem despite what view of liberalism you take. Liberalism characterizes a set of values – individuality, human dignity, liberty, equality – and uses these values to talk about the lives we live and the politics “we wish to fashion”. As he understands, there are constraints on my life but they do not determine the form my life takes. I choose my life and decide what to make of it. This view leads to two implications. First it claims that the measure of my life depends on the aims I set for myself. Second, it maintains that I set my life’s shape. These are two fundamental aspects, not only for current understandings of the self but also out of liberalism’s definition of individuality. Appiah takes this view of individuality from John Stuart Mill. He draws on Mill because he takes seriously the relationship between the political and individual, he focuses on harm as evidence of the influence of others in the development and definition of our individuality, and he explicitly focuses on morality. Appiah attaches to the view of the individual a social element which seems to go beyond my individualism, my “voluntary undertakings” and, ultimately, beyond morality as it has been conceived.

The distinction between morality and ethics is related to this discussion because, as he adopts from Ronald Dworkin, whereby “ethics “includes convictions about which kinds of lives are good or bad for a person to lead, morality includes principles about how a person should treat other people”. So for Appiah, morality, as an offshoot of ethics, is
the point where the individual, social and political collide. Even when we ask the ethical and individual question of the type of life we should live we are thrust back into the moral and sociopolitical question of what socially provided resources and forms must this life include. Language is one of these forms and so is identity. As he argues, “identities make ethical claims because … we make our lives as men and as women, as gay and as straight people, as Ghanains and as Americans, as blacks and as whites.”179 And so for Appiah the relationship between the political and individual coalesce in the discussion of identity as an ethical problematic. Identity asks the “what am I question” and individuality asks the “who am I” question. Appiah’s task in this book is to give an account of identity that aligns with Mill’s notion of individuality.

In privileging identity Appiah reinterprets identity as the site of the sociopolitical and reimagines his task as fleshing out the relation between identity and individuality. Part of the difficulty of his task stems from criticisms of liberal theory and concerns that it is unable to accommodate diversity, heterogeneity or multiculturalism, that its lexicon is inappropriate for a multiethnic world, that it leaves out the perspectives of marginalized or non-European realities, and that it abstracts all of the nuances in persons. Appiah retorts that the conceptual resources of liberal theory can still offer insight into our world of diversity. The abstraction was done to make possible a theory of respect for persons. We cannot be bound or morally obligated to respect the encumbered self and can only respect individuals “as we consider them as abstract right-holders”.

While the concept ‘ethics of identity’ provides a structural explanation of social oppositions it does not explain the corresponding feelings of allegiance that webs of commitments engender, or why our claims to having particular identities happen to

179 Appiah, The Ethics of Identity, xiv
curtail the sociability of the kind of broad-scale recognition underlining it. These commitments are not directed towards every citizen in every nation in the world, but smaller units of entanglement – family, community, nation-states. Appiah argues that ethics must contend with these loyalties, and insofar as our loyalties reveal the kinds of persons we are and espouses the basis of how we come to devise an identity for ourselves, the relation between ethics and identity is able to do all the work we need it to do. More interesting than the tension between ethics and identity is that these threads do not seem to interrelate for Appiah until he writes *The Ethics of Identity* (and they will be further refined in *Cosmopolitanism*) and introduces his notion of “rooted cosmopolitanism”. As he writes, “[o]ur identities, our identifications, make some ties matter to us, and give rise to ethical communities” and the type of rooted cosmopolitanism he wants to defend “doesn’t seek to destroy patriotism, or separate out “real” from “unreal” loyalties” but “must take seriously the value of human life, and the value of particular human lives, the lives people have made for themselves, within the communities that help lend significance to those lives.”

Cosmopolitanism, he continues, “values human variety for what it makes possibly for human agency.”

In this section I endeavored to thread the themes in “The Uncompleted Argument” through Appiah’s subsequent essays. My goal has been to show the striking similarity between his work on race and his writings on ethics, to essentially prove that they are part of the same conversation. The minor variations that I highlighted were agglutinated by the problem of difference, a problem that first came to Appiah’s attention in his reading of Du Bois’s “Conservation”. I ended my analysis with a brief discussion

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180 Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, 222-223
181 Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, 268
of *The Ethics of Identity*. I merely wanted to introduce the argument that I will be making in the next section. It is the work of the final section of this chapter to sharpen this argument. By way of conclusion, I argue that cosmopolitanism is not only Appiah’s final resting point but also the synthesis of the classic dialectic he set up between the scientific notion of race and Du Bois’s sociohistorical account. I rehearse the ways he provides cosmopolitanism as the resolution to all the antinomies I mention in this first section, including the original tension between the acceptance of difference and the denial of difference. The inability for Appiah to overcome this paradox motivates him, not to resolve the difficulties of difference, but, as the dialectic requires, to subsume both sides in a single, all-encompassing concept - *cosmopolitanism*. Consequently, his notion of “cosmopolitan patriotism” is the completion of what from the very beginning has been Du Bois’s “uncompleted argument”.

**ii. The Classic Dialectic**

According to Appiah we are currently under the entrancement of race. But, what exactly is the illusion that race falsely creates and we wrongly perceive? Appiah has already conveyed an aspect of this illusion through his now hackneyed claim that “there are no races”. But it would be too trite to simply assert that we have been deluded into thinking that race exists. Even Appiah by the time he contributes to *Color Conscious* has tempered this claim and now contends that racial identities exist (even if racial essences do not). Appiah concludes “The Uncompleted Argument” with this triumphant claim of racial eliminivism. But to maintain that it satisfies both the incompletion and the illusion is a misreading of the final section of the essay. Appiah begins his “Concluding Unscientific Postscript” with the following words: “Du Bois died in Nkrumah’s Ghana,
led there by the dream of Pan-Africanism and the reality of American racism. If he escaped that racism he never completed the escape from race. The logic of his argument leads naturally to the final repudiation of race as a term of difference and to speaking instead “of civilizations where we now speak of races.” Let us understand Appiah properly: the claim that “there are no races” is the conclusion of the argument that Du Bois left uncompleted in “Conservation.” It gives us grounds to declare an illusion but, again, it is not the chimera. However, he goes on to tell us that the claim that ‘there are no races’ sanctions “the final repudiation of race as a term of difference.” This addendum points us in the direction of the illusion: *the illusion is that race works as a term for difference.*

Appiah’s foray into the dialectic of race was intended to substantiate his claim that “there are no races” and to further show that the language of race offers nothing to the problem of difference, as it cannot explain what binds people together or what pushes them apart. Race does not resolve the problem of difference, hence it does not reconcile the two sides of the dialectic (acceptance-denial). The problem of difference is unperturbed by the superimposition of race. In the first lines of the “Concluding Unscientific Postscript” Appiah remarks that Du Bois emigrated to Ghana in an attempt to escape race, and he quite naturally ties this performative act with Du Bois’s logical argument to conclude that both of these led to the proposition “there are no races.” He understood Du Bois at the end of his life as confronting and accepting the futility of race and saw his relocation to Ghana as the implicit nonmetaphorical insistence that we abandon (the language of) race. Appiah too, following the example of Du Bois, was trying to escape the language of race as a metonym for difference.

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182 Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 35
As I have argued in this chapter Appiah’s main preoccupation is the structure of oppositions, easily seen by his concern with the tensions throughout Du Bois’s 1897 address. He is keen to uncover the structures that undergird the oppositions. When Appiah pejoratively calls the sociohistorical conception of race the antithesis to the classic dialectic he is invoking a doppelgänger to stand in as the structure of opposition he is curious about, and sees Du Bois as offering race as what reinforces the structure. Appiah rejects the idea that racial differences mediate the two poles of opposition. He writes that “we have too easily become accustomed to thinking of meaning as constituted by systems of differences purely internal to our endlessly structured langues” and comments that “Post-structuralism is not a step forward here.” Read alongside a discussion of the telos of race (truth or meaning) we can hear in these words the idea that systems of difference are not constituted by race qua meaning. Recast differently, “[i]f we can now hope to understand the concept embodied in this system of oppositions, we are nowhere near finding referents for it.” Systems of opposition must reproduce themselves in the world; we must be able to point to objects of existence and see in them instantiations of the structure they signify. For race to implicate this structure it must exist, refer and signal (recall his defense of weak verificationism). This should remind us of his argument in Color Conscious as he tries, again, to determine whether there are any races. Citing the theoretical distinction of meaning from the philosophy of language he posits “two very different and competing philosophical notions of what it is to give an adequate account of the meaning of a word or expression.” The first is the ideational view of meaning whereby meaning entails the indexing and circulation of race logic. The

183 Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 35, footnote 13
184 Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 35
185 Appiah, Color Conscious, 33
second account of meaning is the referential view which involves deciphering the system of signs as well as detecting examples of races. The race concept fails to meet both the ideational and the referential benchmarks.

His argument in “The Uncompleted Argument” and Color Conscious lead to the same conclusion - “there are no races.” But, as I have suggested, the difference between these two arguments – his defense of racial identities and racial eliminativism in the latter work - is significant. When he returns to Du Bois’s sociohistorical conception of race in Color Conscious it is a more charitable reading (prompted by the influence Jean-Paul Sartre’s Being and Nothingness had on Ian Hacking). Appiah’s goal has always been to “transcend the system of oppositions.” Had Du Bois accepted this objective, he writes, it “would have left him opposed to the (white) norm of form and value.” Essentially, Du Bois’s methodology failed to transcend this structure of opposition because race does not (and cannot) transcend oppositions but instead fortifies them. Even if we might be able to transcend race Appiah (finally) realizes that we cannot transcend the ascription of a racial label.

The impact of racial labeling has significant implications for the trajectory of Appiah’s thinking about race. First, it causes him to reconsider Du Bois’s sociohistorical conception of race and to “shape a sociohistorical account of racial identity.” Second, it causes him to pay more attention to the phenomena of racial labeling and the lived experience of racism “which Du Bois so memorably captured in the phrase “the social heritage of slavery; the discrimination and insult.” Third, it allows him to realize that the “label works despite the absence of an essence,” or more familiarly, “racial identities

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186 Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 36
187 Appiah, Color Conscious, 75
188 Appiah, Color Conscious, 76
could persist even if nobody believed in racial essences.” Fourth, it causes him to become sympathetic to discussions of race and racism, reserve the language of racism, and to see racial identity, because of the insistency and social saliency of racial labeling, not as a choice but as inescapable fact. Lastly, he comes to realize that racial identities are marked by cultural differences, elevating not race, but culture as the operative idea. Given that the goal of Du Bois’s examination of race was to show how the “‘gross differences” of morphology are correlated with “subtle differences” of temperament, belief and intention” Appiah recognizes that the concept of culture achieves this and does it more effectively. In other words, we do not need a notion of race to ‘do all that we require “race” to do’; our existing understanding of culture is sufficient. Appiah reinvents Du Bois as a cultural theorist when he explains “how in graduate school at Harvard and in Germany he [Du Bois] encountered the cultural historical view of race: “The history of the world was paraded before the observation of students. Which was the superior race? Manifestly that which had a history, the white race: there was some mention of Asiatic culture but no course in Chinese or Indian history or culture was offered at Harvard, and quite unanimously in America and Germany, Africa was left without culture and without history.”189 But by the time he writes The Ethics of Identity Appiah resists the strict distinction between cultural and moral cosmopolitanism,” and claims that culture ‘doesn’t do much work’.

Appiah makes his ethical turn in the midst of a conundrum. He knows, on the one hand, that race creates more conceptual difficulties than it is worth but, on the other hand, as a sociohistorical artifact it cannot (easily) be transcended because it serves as a source of great injustices against groups of individuals. He also realizes that, on the one hand,

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189 Appiah, Lines of Descent, 92
individual demands for recognition obfuscate the critical role that “collective social identities” play in the construction of the self, but, on the other hand, as an indicator of difference individuality cannot (and should not) be eradicated. Finally, he recognizes that what he is after is a way of thinking identity that ‘recognizes both the centrality of difference within human identity and the fundamental moral unity of humanity’. What are Appiah’s options?

This is a point that a return to Du Bois becomes most advantageous. Du Bois’s writings on race demonstrate a way of thinking that starts from immanence. And this immanence, Du Bois reveals, presents the problem of difference. In fact, it is out of immanence that difference is given. Immanence discovers a multiplicity that is not a multiplication of objects, therefore requiring a new logic, but one that is able to think this heterogeneity. And as we saw specifically in his definition of race, Du Bois is able to maintain both heterogeneity and subjectivity in one evocation all while groping at a structure of opposition that shows that these ideas are in fact in opposition, but without opposition. It is no mere twist of fate that Appiah objects to Du Bois’s definition because it offers not difference but rather a subsumption of difference under the guard of race. Du Bois teaches us that any account of the structure of the world must take up this fundamental twoness (subjectivity and heterogeneity) and apprehend the permanence of this experience, because, as he reminds us, there has never been anything else. Appiah requires a way to simultaneously think immanence and heterogeneity, to think beyond logic (that is, truth-values and commonsense) in order to provide a structural explanation of social oppositions. He finds what he is looking for within the domain of ethics and in his “wish-washy” concept of “rooted cosmopolitanism”. “Rooted Cosmopolitanism”
defends patriotism and loyalty, is informed by moral universalism and impartiality, encourages travel and kindness to strangers (including what we might owe to strangers), and values human life, diversity, and community. With “rooted cosmopolitan” he is able to uphold differences among groups while erasing differences within groups. In essence, he is able to resolve the dialectic by seemingly erasing (the conflict of) both sides.

\[190\] Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, 239
The purpose of Chapter 1 was to reveal the unity of Appiah’s thought. I argued that his writings from “The Uncompleted Argument” to Lines of Descent converge in a defense of cosmopolitan. In this chapter I conclude my discussion of the legacy of Appiah’s writings on Du Bois with an examination of his newest book on Du Bois, Lines of Descent. I intend to clarify the reason I begin this examination with a critical survey of Appiah’s work on cosmopolitanism. The first half of this chapter connects Appiah’s argument in the third chapter of Lines (“The Concept of the Negro”) to “The Uncompleted Argument” focusing on the correctives and continuities between both texts. I remark on how these revisions are already present in the context of Color Conscious. It is in the space of this section that I assert my claim that Appiah does not alter his original argument against Du Bois’s definition of race. Instead he argues with more historical detail and ingenuity that charting Du Bois’s intellectual biography confirms that the sociohistorical definition does not transcend biology but relies on it, further upholding Appiah’s attempt to think racial identity without races. In the second section I connect Lines of Descent to the portrait I sketched in Chapter 2. I focus on two chapters in Lines of Descent - “Culture and Cosmopolitanism” and “The One and Many” – in order to see how they are informed by his work on cosmopolitanism and not simply an intellectual historiography as Appiah claims. I will return to these reflections in the concluding chapter of this project and isolate the exact aspect of his version of cosmopolitanism that stands in the way of the theorizing of race – the subduction of subjectivity and the erasure of the global
significance of race. The goal of this final section is to discuss how Appiah reads “Conservation” through the lens of cosmopolitanism.

\textit{i. Correctives to “The Uncompleted Argument”}

During the 2012 Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Lecture series at Yale University, Appiah interrupts his paper to make the tangential comment that his current work renounces the claims made in his earlier writings on Du Bois, including his fiercest claim against “Conservation” that it fails to transcend the scientific conception of race. In what can only be seen as a prelude to \textit{Lines}, this concession of early-Appiah provides the context from which to read and understand the contribution of this book. Appiah offers \textit{Lines} as a correction of “The Uncompleted Argument,” a refinement of his original argument that reflects the maturation of his thinking since he first engaged Du Bois, and the lessons he learned from the maelstrom of responses to his famous first essay. Therefore, \textit{Lines} is part of the legacy of “The Uncompleted Argument” and should be read alongside my examination in Chapter 2. Consequently, and to push this point a bit further, \textit{Lines} is the culmination of his pursuit of a cosmopolitan ideal and the byproduct of a project Appiah declared in \textit{The Ethics of Identity}, namely, to fuse together his writings on ethics and identity. The point I am essentially making is this: \textit{Lines} provides a cosmopolitan rendering of (racial) identity. If this is the case how does \textit{Lines} differ from \textit{The Ethics of Identity} if I claim that both intend to derive cosmopolitanism from individual and collective social identities? And if the difference between these books is that \textit{Lines} included an analysis of Du Bois’s writings on racial identity then how does

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\textsuperscript{191} Appiah presents the first draft of \textit{Lines of Descent} at an April 2014 lecture series by the same name. See Anthony Appiah and Cornell West, “Lines of Descent,” Lecture. Labyrinth Books, Princeton, NJ. April 29, 2014
Lines differ from Color Conscious? Thus it becomes imperative to ask whether Lines marks the beginning of a new legacy or a relapse of the old legacy.

Although I will not pursue this question about a “new legacy” explicitly it remains in the background. Rather I want to focus on the revisions to “The Uncompleted Argument” that distinguish Lines and allow it to simultaneously express Appiah’s writings on identity and his work on cosmopolitanism. As I read Lines I am struck by how this “new legacy” requires correctives to his earlier analysis in “The Uncompleted Argument.” And not just any corrective, it requires first disambiguating the sociohistorical account of race. Appiah believed Du Bois’s sociohistorical account had been contaminated by the nineteenth-century racial biologism. Thus he argued that a purely sociohistorical account must transcend the scientific conception of race and utilize criteria that can sufficiently distinguish it from its scientific counterpart. In “The Uncompleted Argument” Appiah examines Du Bois’s inductive process, that is, how he understands the sum of the parts (criteria for race) to be equal to the whole (definition of race). Stated differently, Appiah wanted to know whether Du Bois’s criteria for race are individually necessary and jointly sufficient. Appiah surmises in this earlier essay that at “the center of Du Bois’ conception, then, is the claim that a race is “a vast family of human beings,…always of common history and traditions.” He takes seriously Du Bois’s mention of “family” and adds that in order to understand what Du Bois meant by family “we must distance ourselves from its sociological meaning.” Therefore, he

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192 Given these questions it becomes clear that I am taking issue with more than the unity of Appiah’s writings. It is not logical consistency that I find problematic but what happens when “racial identity” gets swept up in the language and rhetoric of cosmopolitanism. Appiah’s consistency of thought is problematic because its facile prescriptions (“rooted cosmopolitanism”) obscures real and potential dangers for the subject whenever we try to rend her from her situation in hopes of achieving a more communal human state (not to mention the fact Levinasian ethics shows the impossibility of this endeavor).

193 Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 26
reinterprets “family” as common ancestry and argues that, because ancestry entails biology, Du Bois’s inclusion of “family” proves that the sociohistorical conception relies on the scientific conception. “Family,” he declares is not a choice. Even though we choose one ancestral line – either our matrilineal family history or our patrilineal family history – to determine the basis of our racial identity, we must already assume a common ancestry in order to make this choice. Thus, “to speak of two people as being of common ancestry requires that, before some historical point in the past, a large proportion of the branches in their respective family trees must coincide.” Science also “presupposes common features in virtue of a common biology derived from a common descent.” Therefore, the core of Du Bois’s sociohistorical definition has not transcended science. All conditions for race that are passed through heredity – including common blood, language, and any familial descriptions of races (i.e. the first words in Du Bois’s definition of race) – are subsequently invalidated as part of the scientific conception of race and not the bases for a sociohistorical conception of race.

Even the two aspects he thinks might avoid this reduction and correspond with a sociohistorical interpretation – impulses and strivings – are reducible to scientific explanation. In fact he states that impulses and strivings are “all that remain to do the job that Du Bois had claimed for a sociohistorical conception; namely, to distinguish his conception from the biological one.” As for impulses and strivings he claims that these “must be due either to a shared biological inheritance ... or to a shared history; or, of course, to some combination of these.”

194 Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 26
195 Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 31
196 Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 28
197 Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 30
science Appiah charitably concludes that the ‘shared biological inheritance’ or any combination that includes biology cannot be Du Bois’s intention; impulses and strivings must be due to a shared history. But, he asks, “what common impulses—whether voluntary or involuntary—do the Romance people share that the Teutons and the English do not?” He is lead to conclude that impulses and strivings cannot contribute to the explanation of race, for they are neither historical properties nor can they be used as historical evidence. Impulses and strivings are simply “a posteriori properties of racial and national groups, not to be criteria of membership of them.”

“The Uncompleted Argument” reveals a tension in Du Bois’s account of race: the reliance on a posteriori properties of racial groups forms a wedge between experience and history, one that prevents historical evidence from being relevant to the claims of experience. Without historical evidence we cannot say who is or was a Negro, and without this link our a posteriori claims are unable to ground these shared impulses and strivings on anything other than happenstance. He references the number of historiographies Du Bois has read and recites Du Bois’s racial make up to argue that a posteriori evidence cannot render visible racial solidarity or racial identity. He questions the implicit assumption that impulses and strivings can tell us who is or is not a Negro. Here Appiah presumes that Du Bois must mean that biologically defined groups have the same impulses. If Appiah is correct, he shows again Du Bois’s commitment to the scientific account of race.

There are two competing threads of argumentation coursing through “The Uncompleted Argument,” one that seeks to investigate whether the sociohistorical conception of race can be distinguished from the scientific conception of race, and the

198 Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 28
199 Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 30
other that seeks to identify the exact criterion for the sociohistorical conception of race. Appiah seems to merge these two arguments by implying that the central criterion, once identified, *is* the aspect that precisely distinguishes the sociohistorical conception of race from its scientific counterpart. The continual reversion back to common history provides for Appiah the essential part of Du Bois’s account: the sociohistorical account relies on common history to explain what races are. But Appiah is clear that he does not think history can explain race because history cannot offer an account of what binds people together and only goes as far as to show that people are bound together in a certain way. History he thinks is neither a cause nor an explanation of the continuity of a certain group of people over time. To suggest common history is the basis of a sociohistorical account of race is to equivocate the criterion and the identifier of group solidarity and then to beg the question of what is meant by the history of people of the same race. Appiah is led to claim that Du Bois definition is susceptible to the fallacy of circularity.

Appiah’s critique of circularity claims that Du Bois’s definition entails the very conclusion it attempts to prove; without justification it assumes the existence of races before it provides veritable criteria for its existence. As David Miguel Gray explains in “Racial Norms: A Reinterpretation of W.E.B. Du Bois’s “The Conservation of Races,”” Appiah’s methodological approach attacks the criteria of common history proving that it is inherently and viciously circular. And since the only criteria ‘that are left’ – traditions, impulses and strivings - must rely on and be interpreted through this

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200 Lucius Outlaw maintains that Du Bois’s sociohistorical definition is not prone to the fallacy of circularity. He writes, “Du Bois’s strategy would be circular (and viciously so) only if common history were the only criterion. As on criterion among others taken severally, however, its use is not circular, and need not be ruled out.” (Outlaw, “Conserve” Races?” 24)

sociohistorical cornerstone, they too are historical and therefore will be circular as well.\(^{202}\) His critique of circularity is vital to this earlier argument and with this fallacy at hand he disqualifies common history, and by association, common traditions, as qualifiers for a conceptualization of race. Hence, Appiah demarcates another tension in Du Bois’s account: common history \textit{cannot} separate one group of people from another.

Once he separates Du Bois’s definition into its parts, eliminating all inessential elements, it becomes apparent that neither the whole nor its parts make any sense. What we are left with, Appiah determines, is the scientific concept of race. The final task left for Appiah to do in “The Uncompleted Argument” is to explain how Du Bois’s sociohistorical definition amounts to eight races when the final word of science only counts three. The only way this can happen, he argues, is if Du Bois’s common history assumes a geographical criterion. Appiah has shown that history cannot be the history of groupings of people into a race but that history is the history of people who inhabit the same space. Appiah then rewrites Du Bois’s definition in this way: “people are members of the same race if they share [physical or cultural] features in virtue of being descended largely from people of the same region”\(^{203}\). Depending on which features – cultural or physical – one highlights, one ends up with a different number of races: physical arrives as three and cultural leads to eight. The ‘sociohistorical’ conception of race, he concludes, amounts to a moral and metaphysical significance that prioritizes the positive messages each race can offer. And by studying history, which Du Bois did, he was able to discern the different messages of each race.

\(^{202}\) Gray, “Racial Norms,” 472-473
\(^{203}\) Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 34
In many ways *Lines* is a corrective of “The Uncompleted Argument” insofar as Appiah admits that “[e]ven in 1897, then, Du Bois is resisting the biological model.” Accordingly *Lines* amends the four main premises in his first essay: (1) Du Bois’s sociohistorical account does not transcend the scientific conception of race; (2) impulses and strivings distinguish Du Bois’s account from the biological account; (3) the sociohistorical account relies on common history to explain what races are; and (4) common history and geography explain why Du Bois identifies eight races instead of three. As I stated at the very outset of this section, what strikes me most about Appiah’s argument in *Lines* is that the correctives to “The Uncompleted Argument” require that both the sociohistorical account and the criteria it utilizes transcend the scientific conception of race. Appiah used the inductive process in this early essay to show that the criteria for race and the sociohistorical definition of race rely on scientific assumptions. By abandoning his inductive method Appiah is able to see that the criteria and the definition are able to ‘resist the biological model’. As he explains “Du Bois’s talk of these “great families of human beings” was nothing if not conventional in form, whatever was new [was] in its substance.” With the help of Trietschke’s *Politics*, Appiah is able to see that the originality of Du Bois’s account is not found in the form of his definition (i.e, the relation of its parts to the whole) but what lies in the substance of these races science has discerned – *the subtle forces*. Prioritizing subtle forces isolates the exact criteria that distinguish the sociohistorical definition from the scientific definition.

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204 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 86
205 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 85
206 Du Bois argues in “Conservation” that the differences between the races are “subtle, delicate, and elusive”. Therefore, it is his notion of subtle forces that is critical to the sociohistorical conception of race. In “The Uncompleted Argument” Appiah disregards Du Bois’s references to subtle forces.
Appiah’s willingness to read “Conservation” with the lens of the historian and sociologist marks a significant modification from his earlier position.

The accusations of circularity dominating “The Uncompleted Argument” are also absent from *Lines*. His previous assumption that impulses and strivings indicate an implicit circularity relied on Du Bois allegedly purporting that impulses and strivings are historical artifacts. Upon further reflection on Du Bois’s kinship to his Negro comrades and his longing for Africa Appiah speaks in “The Concept of the Negro” (*Lines*) about impulses and strivings as the expression of collective life, understanding now the importance of their inclusion in Du Bois’s definition of race. Appiah no longer presumes that impulses or strivings are a characteristic of biologically defined groups. Following the literature of romanticism he defines “striving” as a life that pursues the infinite, “a search to transcend the inevitable resistance of the world […] a yearning for wholeness, for the project of bringing the superficially conflicting elements of reality into a unity; a project whose completion is, of course, forever beyond our grasp.”

Entailed in the romantic notion of striving are two projects. The first is the (cultural) cosmopolitan’s project of respect for legitimate difference that fosters community in the midst of often competing human diversity. It is this project that explains racial and national membership without a strict reliance on the problematic of history. The second is the (cultural) cosmopolitan’s project of human flourishing based on principles of solidarity, by which human flourishing depends on membership in distinct, stable cultural groups. In this way “membership in a race allows people – compels people – to work together for common purpose.”

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207 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 56
208 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 91
shared biological inheritance or common history. Additionally, neither project includes a \textit{a posteriori} properties that appear only after the racial group is formed. Impulses and strivings become criteria for group membership, more expansive than racial and national groups; they are ineradicable to the impartial loyalty we show to humanity as a whole.

Appiah also takes a different position in regards to Du Bois’s eight categories of race in \textit{Lines}. He argues that the reason that the eye of the social historian is able to produce eight distinctly differentiated races instead of three is because of the “instability of the term “race.”” Before explaining what he means by this he notes first that the discussion of eight races marks a transition in Du Bois’s address from the question “\textit{What is the real meaning of race?}” to “\textit{What is the real distinction between these nations,}” circumventing the question “\textit{What, then, is a race}” altogether. Appiah describes this shift as a subtle slippage between Du Bois’s talk of “race” and his talk of “nation,” a shift, he notes, that is already present in Treitschke’s writings. “The logical point here,” he writes, “is quite simple: once you use the word “race” for groups of common descent, you can, so to speak, narrow or broaden your focus on the human family tree.”

This ability to expand and constrict Du Bois’s definition serves three independent purposes. The first is that it allows a contemporary reader of Du Bois to understand the continuities and discontinuities in his definition. Second, the fluidity of his definition allows a contemporary reader to hone in on the oddity and artificiality of his eight groups and to read Du Bois’s use of racial boundaries as a “deliberate piece of mischief.” Du Bois intends to show that any talk of racial identity entails nationalist commitments,

\footnote{209 Appiah, \textit{Lines of Descent}, 87\footnote{210 Appiah, \textit{Lines of Descent}, 88\footnote{211 Appiah was concerned about the ways we read Du Bois as one of our contemporaries, which, mistakenly, causes us to impose many of our modern understandings of race onto Du Bois's nineteenth-century ideas.}}
discrediting the line separating race and nation. Appiah argues that in Du Bois’s day
““race” was understood as a form of membership that can be defined independently from
politics” and “was the more natural term to use for a group that crossed states or
societies.”

Nation, however, “suggests a form of belonging that is, at the very least,
ambitious for political recognition and, at the most, depends on a connection to a state”
capturing the individual’s “ethnoterritorial loyalty.” Appiah shows that Du Bois
“believed about the Negro race everything that an American patriot of his day would have
believed about America (or a German about Germany), except that he did not believe that
it required a single country, a nation-state, to gather its people in.” Finally, the
distinction between race and nation, represents Du Bois’s attempt to institute a new
vocabulary to talk about racial identity that veered from the language science employs.
Appiah argues that a “biological account [of race] would have provided a ready
explanation for the unity of the Negro people” but, picking up on Du Bois’s
romanticism, “there is something important in the implication that races matter because
membership in a race allows people – compels people – to work together for common
purposes.” Therefore, Du Bois sought a different account, one that prioritizes “ideals of

212 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 90

213 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 90-91. I want to point out how different this interpretation of Du Bois’s
meaning of “nation” as distinguished from “race” is from the reading I present in Part I of this
chapter.

214 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 92. I will argue shortly about the interesting parallel between Du Bois’s
patriotism and ethical humanism that will lead Appiah to read into this racial identity without races.

215 It is interesting that Appiah refers to Du Bois as a Romantic about race, especially considering he
writes the following: “for Romanticism the search for authenticity is demonstrated at least as much
in opposition to the demands of social life as it is in the recognition of one’s own real self” (“Identity,
Authenticity, Survival,” p. 153)

216 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 91
life” as a way to articulate clearly “how a group defined by common blood could share characteristics that were nevertheless not inherited in the blood.”

In the context of this discussion Appiah makes a distinction between cultural transmission and biological transmission. Biological transmission occurs when genes are transferred through bodily inheritance. He describes this process as the “literal meaning of the metaphor of “common blood.”” This is why Appiah argued in “The Uncompleted Argument” that dressed up with ‘a fancy craniometer, a dose of melanin, and some measure for hair curl’ Du Bois’s criteria of common blood reverts back to the final word of science - he was taking Du Bois’s mention of blood literally as a metaphor for shared bloodlines. Cultural transmission, on the other hand, operates through the dispersal of “language and other forms of public behavior” allowing it to “cross the boundaries of populations defined by common descent.” This distinction between biology and culture is contrasted to the geographical requirement of ‘shared space’ that caused Appiah to revise Du Bois’s definition to reflect a group of people who ‘share features in virtue of being descended largely from people of the same region’. He uses the process of cultural transmission to explain Du Bois’s eight racial categories and science’s three. Cultural transmission made it possible to see how neither culture nor subtle forces were physically shared characteristics but shared nonetheless within a group. Once the cultural historical view is taken it is easy to see why Du Bois proffers eight racial groups of which one (English) is a nation.

ii. The Problem of Circularity

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217 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 111
In Chapter 1 I emphasized the importance of the seven questions Du Bois asks in “Conservation” highlighting the placement of these questions, his response to each one, and how they inform his overall argument. *Lines* presents a careful analysis of Du Bois’s argument, and in the chapter entitled, “The Concept of the Negro,” Appiah shows a newfound attentiveness to these questions and the corresponding shifts in Du Bois’s argument. Appiah shares my view that the most important question Du Bois asks in “Conservation” is ‘*what is the real meaning of race*’ (the question of meaning). But what he does with this question and how he relates it to the other questions in the address indicates a point of divergence between my interpretation and Appiah’s. Appiah interposes the question of meaning between Du Bois’s discussion of the scientific conception of race and the question ‘*what is the real distinction between these nations*’ (the question of nationalism) to indicate a transition from talking about races to talking about nations. This interposition should quickly draw our attention to a substitution (bait-and-switch) rather than a shift in Du Bois’s argument. Where Appiah first claimed that the question of meaning is the most important question, he now says that the discussion of nationalism replaces the question of meaning, begging the question of what happened to the salience of meaning and why the talk of nations takes priority in Appiah’s reexamination of this text. On my reading (Chapter 1), the question of meaning retains its prominence in Du Bois’s address. Similar to Appiah, I think that Du Bois’s response to the question of meaning instantiates a definition of race that is able to expand and

219 The seven questions are: (1) What is the real meaning of race? (2) What, then, is a race? (3) What is the real distinction between these nations? (4) What shall be its [race difference] function in the future? (5) How shall this [full, complete Negro] message be delivered? (6) What, after all, am I? and (7) Have we in America a distinct mission as a race, or is self-oblation the highest end to which Negro blood dare aspire? It is important to add that he rounds these questions with a list of questions pertaining to the “pressing, but smaller questions” he stated we should rise above. By doing this he attended to the philosophical questions before attending to the practical questions.
constrict. Contra Appiah I do not think that each constriction indicates a limitation in the
definition of race that needs to be overcome or that each expansion signals a movement
away from the concept of race. Rather this expansion and constriction contributes to
what Appiah at the end of “The Uncompleted Argument” referred to as “all we need race
to do.” If Appiah is right that we need race to do more than expound common usage – it
must also transcend essentialism, tell us what binds people together, provide a definition
of race, distinguish between race and nation, allude to a broader notion of citizenship,
provide a racial teleology, etc. – then our conception of race must be both flexible and
coherent. But, I maintain, it must protrude from the question of meaning in order to
remain compatible with the human subject’s possible modes of being. So whereas
Appiah notices a shift, I observe continuity in Du Bois’s treatment of race and how it
responds to the distinction between race and nation in general.

Appiah’s attempt to supplant meaning to nationalism makes sense only if it is
understood as part of his aim to move away from talking about races altogether.
Therefore, in the remaining part of this section I argue that, similar to the conclusion he
draws in “The Uncompleted Argument,” Lines supports his racial eliminativism and its
refrain that there are no races. His subordination of the question of meaning to the
question of nationalism ebbs the purpose and significance of race, making it ultimately
inessential for the type of cosmopolitan partiality he defends. The structure of Lines,
therefore, assumes the eradication of race before it even attempts an earnest consideration
of its merits. In other words, and as he claimed against Du Bois, his argument in Lines is
equally susceptible to the fallacy of circularity. Appiah’s starting point – his concluding
remark in “The Uncompleted Argument” that there are no races – is both the major
premise and the conclusion of Lines. This will become important in a number of ways I will outline in the third section of this chapter. For now it is important to note the correlation between his call to abandon race without abandoning the salience of racial identity and his discussion of cosmopolitanism (the work of Chapter 2). The central point of this section is to show that, even in this new interpretation of “Conservation,” there is an erasure of (the salience of) meaning when Appiah theorizes race.

As I argued in the previous section, his argument for the elimination of race in “The Uncompleted Argument” and “The Concept of the Negro” hinges on the emphasis he places on “subtle forces” in his reading of “Conservation”. In the earlier essay Appiah considers Du Bois’s mention of ‘subtle forces’ as a tangential reference, hence, immaterial to an understanding of race. It is history that plays the vital role. However, in Lines ‘subtle forces’ are central to understanding history’s role in Du Bois’s definition of race, are able to differentiate the sociohistorical conception of race from the scientific account, and explains Du Bois’s eight great races (in comparison to Gobineau’s three, Haeckel’s twelve, and Trietchke’s “many” racial categories). This last advantage places “subtle forces” within the dialectic. He explains that Du Bois deferred to “subtle forces” only after ruminating on the question of the ‘real meaning of race’ a second time, and only then to explicate the antithesis to the denial of difference. “He [Du Bois] answered, first,” he writes, “that “[t]he final word of science, so far, is that we have at least two, perhaps three, great families of human beings – the whites and Negroes, possibly the yellow race.”” On Appiah’s reading “subtle forces” was poised in opposition to the scientific definition and presented after Du Bois had officially moved away from the biological notion of race. Reading “subtle forces” as part of the dialectic means that it is

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220 Appiah, Lines of Descent, 84
continuously juxtaposed with biology. This is why he makes a point to disaggregate (racial) genetic inheritance processes into biological transmission and cultural transmission, and why he claims that Du Bois ‘resists the biological model’ because ‘the subtle forces are not reducible to shared bloodlines’. And because these aspects of race elude the scientist who can only see physical peculiarities but are “clearly defined to the eye of the Historian and Sociologist,” Appiah prioritizes the gaze of the historian and the sociologist.

Nevertheless, there is nothing exceptional about the historian and sociologist vision Appiah adopts in Lines. In fact, his insights are no different from the claims he has always made against Du Bois’s writings on race. Even in “The Uncompleted Argument” we see that Appiah took literally Du Bois’s assertion that historians and sociologists can see the subtle differences of races but he was still lead to the conclusion that \textit{a posteriori} evidence cannot render visible racial solidarity or identity, and cannot tell us who is or is not a Negro. Instead of picking up on how the eye of the historian and sociologist is able to provide a definition of race as “a vast family…” Appiah uses his historian and sociologist’s eye in Lines to circumvent this definition and to see eight distinctively differentiated races instead of three. As I stated earlier, his willingness to see subtle forces as essential to Du Bois’s definition is a significant modification from his earlier argument. However, Appiah relies on this vision not with the consistency Du Bois stipulates, but as reading glasses he uses \textit{only when necessary}. As the explanatory thrust of the antithesis to the acceptance of difference, “subtle forces” can only justify historical analysis, differentiate the sociohistorical conception of race from the scientific account, and differentiate science’s three racial categories from Du Bois’s eight categories. He
mistakenly thinks that the historian and sociologist’s insights are only good for these purposes. My argument comes down to this: Appiah does not prioritize the historian and sociologist’s gaze enough. It is not the “subtle forces” that make history preferable or reveal the existence of eight distinct races but ‘the eye of the Historian and Sociologist’.

His quest to find the distinct rationale for Du Bois’s eight categories will continually elude him unless he understands the force of the historian and sociologist’s insights. He realizes his interventions are insufficient when he asks, “what is it that the historian and sociologist see so clearly?” But he disregards it to state first that “[i]n these disciplines as Du Bois conceived of them, what is visible, is first of all, not so much the property of individuals but of groups.”221 He adds a page later that “there is a simple conceptual point here that the new biological understanding, with its division of cultural from biological transmission, made it possible to see with great clarity,” namely, that “[e]ven if a group is defined by a shared heritable physical characteristic, that characteristic doesn’t have to be what accounts for everything the group has in common. As long as people recognize each other as fellow members by way of their visible characteristics, and especially if others do so as well, they can act together through that recognition.”222 Appiah is appealing to the politics of recognition to understand the need for someone to be racially identified. But as he aptly points out in his essay response to Charles Taylor’s *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*, “[t]he politics of recognition requires that one’s skin color, one’s sexual body, should be acknowledged politically in ways that make it hard for those who want to treat their skin and their sexual

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221 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 109
222 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 110
body as personal dimensions of the self." Prioritizing the historian and sociologist’s gaze would require Appiah to emphasize the social context’s overdetermination of the human subject. Appiah must understand that the vision of the historian and the sociologist is an existential-ontological gaze, inseparable from one’s being, especially for someone like Du Bois who was “never anything else”.

It is an existential-ontological gaze that sees eight clearly distinct races, that sees the ‘subtle, delicate, and elusive’ differences, and that sees the black man who must ride Jim Crow in Georgia. Du Bois is not speaking metaphorically when he talks about the sociologist and historian’s sight. What the eye of the Historian and the Sociologist see so clearly is the familiar spectacle of Jim Crow. This is not an allusion to a hyper-realistic depiction or, as Appiah describes it, a ‘hypothetical scenario that one can choose whether or not to entertain’. Du Bois sees people riding Jim Crow buses in Georgia, sees separate waiting rooms and ticket windows for the white and colored races in Alabama, and sees separate cars or coaches for white and colored passengers in Maryland. These visions are what the eyes of the Historian and Sociologist feast on when they attempted to discern the real meaning of the separate hospital entrances for white and colored patients and visitors in Mississippi. These were the subtle, delicate and elusive differences they were trying to make sense of not only when they tried to decipher which lives matter, but when they clearly observed who these laws applied to and that the lines affixed around racial categories were constantly contested, shifting, and shown to be artificial yet fiercely unyielding.

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The point Du Bois wants to make at this stage, one that feeds directly into the critique I articulate here and the distinction he draws between the scientific notion of race and the sociohistorical, is that the assignment of a racial identity to someone is a violent act (Du Bois mildly describes it as a “strange experience”), one that precipitates a psychological duality, a certain way of looking at oneself and viewing the world. Reading Du Bois’s definition of race alongside his notion of double consciousness exposes his definition as the very apprehension of the violence of this experience. Appiah rightly picks up on this fundamental twoness as he makes the transition from Du Bois’s “disciplinary schizophrenia” to his conception of the Negro. He is keen to relate the “parallax that arose from sharing the insider’s perspective and the outsider’s perspective, the subject’s view and the scholars”\textsuperscript{224} directly to “the question of questions, the Negro problem.”\textsuperscript{225} However, on Appiah’s account understanding the Negro requires a reconciliation of the Negro’s fundamental twoness. He describes it as a synthesis between an explanation of the discipline of fact and an understanding of the discipline of experience reminiscent of the wedge he predicted between history and experience that made it impossible to ground shared impulses and strivings on anything other than mere happenstance. What this account does make possible is what Wilhelm Dilthey called the “disciplining of subjectivity.” This subduction of subjectivity precipitated the mobilization of individuals towards human action (the ‘acting together through recognition’ that Appiah spoke about earlier). It was the reformation Appiah identifies in Du Bois’s hope “that identities could be reformed; that they could be made more

\textsuperscript{224} Appiah, Lines of Descent, 79
\textsuperscript{225} Appiah, Lines of Descent, 82
cosmopolitan and less insular.” Appiah hails *Dusk of Dawn* as Du Bois’s achievement of this reformation of racial identity.

Appiah contends that by the time Du Bois writes *Dusk of Dawn* the alterations in his race concept mimic the cosmopolitanism and political solidarity indelible to the divine providence awaiting the Negro. He writes:

> “And such “definitions” as he offers in *Dusk of Dawn* are not, in truth, an attempt to reflect the existing reality of race; rather they are an attempt to call his own race to action. Du Bois moved on from the biology and the anthropology of the nineteenth century, but he never left its world of idealistic ethical nationalism. Talk of race as a “vast family,” he realized, settled little. Indeed, he was happy to entertain the thought that races were ultimately no more than hypothetical entities, with no very close correspondence to the truth.”

Appiah notes that the growing elusiveness of the race concept and the intractability of the Negro question kept Du Bois formulating and reformulating his answer to the problem of the Negro until the end of his life. This is why, he continues, the definition of race changed from one autobiography to the next “implying that his [Du Bois] own understanding had changed over his long life.” He points to the transition of Du Bois’s definition of race from “a vast family, of shared descent and common impulses” to “The Black man is a person who must ride ‘Jim Crow’ in Georgia” as evidence of an alteration in his understanding of race. Appiah will rely on this interpretation for his view that Du Bois was an heir to a German intellectual history. But what is most striking about the change Appiah references is how it quickly begins to resemble the tensions he observed in “The Uncompleted Argument” and many of the distinctions he lays out in his writings on cosmopolitanism. By the end of *Lines* Du Bois looks more like a cosmopolitan patriot

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226 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 157
227 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 113
228 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 7
than a ‘person who must ride ‘Jim Crow’ in Georgia’. This I contend is not an accident, and in the next section I will discuss this cosmopolitan turn and how it is predicated on Appiah reading “Conservation” through the lens of cosmopolitanism.

Appiah points out that the definition of race in *Dusk of Dawn* as “a person who must ride ‘Jim Crow’ in Georgia” marks two modifications to his original definition that hasten an ethical turn in the form of a cosmopolitan call to action for all humanity. The first modification is the historicizing of the Negro. Appiah contends in “The Concept of the Negro” that Du Bois enlists the image of suffering and injustice to complement the “moments when he revels in the Negro race, exulting over its gifts and destiny.” Appiah read “the experience of black people in the Americas, with all its horrors” as “part of what has prepared them for their contribution to the human task” essentially closing off the Negro past to allow an opening up towards the future (a theme he saw accentuated in *Souls* and *Darkwater*). Du Bois’s preoccupation with the present and future created a temporal immersion that caused the ‘history that lay ahead’ to become the ‘future that bespoke of the true meaning and message of the Negro race’. The task of historicizing the Negro allows the Negro to be seen “not merely as an artifact of history but as a subject of history” one that is able to affect and progress human history stimulated by the significance of the Negro message and their experience of trauma. But this challenge unearthed a tension between humanism and individuality that will become the second modification to Du Bois’s original definition of race: the eventual perishability of race. He writes “Once [the Negro developed their gifts and delivered their special contribution to all mankind] their “race identity” need no longer be husbanded; it could disappear without harm. In the very course of insisting upon the ethical salience of race, then, he

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229 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 115
also remarks on its perishability.” The perishability of race echoes a radical humanism - a cosmopolitanism unfettered by the global significance of race – that hearkens back to the conclusion of “The Uncompleted Argument:” “The truth is that there are no races: there is nothing in the world that can do all we ask "race" to do for us.”

What gives the impression that Appiah deserts his original position on Du Bois’s definition of race is that his expurgation of race masquerades as an inevitability – similar to Douglass’s and Darwin’s suspicion about the inevitable extermination of the Negro race – when in fact it is a sublimation. It is true that Appiah abandons his determination that “Conservation” is unable to transcend the scientific conception of race, but the point this section raises is that he does not abandon his racial eliminativism. The only difference here is that Appiah’s racial eliminativism does not require us to abandon the significance of race-talk but, as we see, to subsume (racial) identity within nationality.

**iii. Appiah’s Cosmopolitan Reading of “Conservation”**

In this third section I focus on two chapters in *Lines to Descent* - “Culture and Cosmopolitanism” and “The One and Many” – in order to see how they are informed by Appiah’s work on cosmopolitanism and not simply a recap of Du Bois’s intellectual historiography as Appiah claims. The goal of this section is to explain how Appiah reads “Conservation” through the lens of cosmopolitanism. This argument will further substantiate the point I made in the previous section that he does not abandon his racial eliminativism. But it takes this argument a bit further and simulates the argument I developed in Chapter 2 that showed that Appiah’s racial eliminativism leads to the cosmopolitan ideal he defends in his ethical writings. Similarly, the goal of this section is

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230 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 93
to reconcile my statements in section two with Appiah’s cosmopolitan reinterpretation of
Du Bois’s “Conservation” in *Lines*.

My argument thus far has been prefigured by what amounts to an early draft of
*Lines*: the presentation Appiah gave at the 2012 Henry Louis Gates Lecture Series.
While his presentation at Yale University provides a more comprehensive overview of his
project in *Lines*, it is not the first time he intimated that Du Bois was a cosmopolitanism.
At the 2005 W.E.B. Du Bois Lecture Series at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Appiah
presented a paper entitled, “Ethics in a World of Strangers: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Spirit
of Cosmopolitanism.” While he did not interrupt his address to point out a major
revision to his initial writings on Du Bois, this essay is the earliest presented draft of the
chapter in *Lines* that is the focus of this section, “Culture and Cosmopolitanism.” In this
presentation, Appiah completes for *Souls* what he intends to accomplish for
“Conservation” in *Lines*, namely, to reinterpret the text as an expression of Du Bois’s
cultural cosmopolitanism. It is in this presentation that Appiah articulates his main
correctives to “The Uncompleted Argument” I outlined in section one of this chapter: a)
the impact of “subtle forces”; b) the importance of the question *what is the real meaning
of race*; c) an interest in Du Bois’s slippage between talking about races to talking about
nations; and d) an attention to ‘the eye of the Historian and the eye of the Sociogolist’.

The question animating Appiah’s address at Humboldt-Universität is the same one
that inspires this current project: *how do we read Du Bois today?* The way one

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of Cosmopolitanism.” in *Justice, Governance, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of
http://sociology.sunimc.net/htmledit/uploadfile/system/20110331/20110331142653154.pdf
A shorter version appeared in *The Berlin Journal* later that year. See K. Anthony Appiah, “Ethics in
approaches this question depends on the continuity one sees between the problems and challenges of the world today compared with those during Du Bois’s lifetime. Du Bois famously wrote, first in his essay “To the Nations of the World” and twice in Souls, that “the problem of the twentieth-century is the problem of the color-line.” Appiah rightly picks up on the color-line as an enduring problem and describes it as “the double problem of racism within the West and racial imperialism outside it.”

But he then claims that the color line is “anti-cosmopolitan” and the “enemy of human hope.” He implies against Du Bois that although the “world has changed in the century since The Souls of Black Folk first appeared” the “spirit that animates it is, I believe, as relevant now as it was then.” This spirit is neither Hegelian Geist nor a euphemism for race relations. The spirit Appiah has in mind here is the transcendent cosmopolitan spirit. “I don’t know if it’s worth trying to decide what slogan would properly identify the problem of a century with so many problems” he writes, “but it was undeniably a century in which more of the cosmopolitan spirit – a little more respect, that is, for difference and a little more concern for the moral interests of strangers – would have made a huge difference for the better.”

As I pointed out in Chapter 2, the question of difference was a fundamental philosophical conundrum, always perplexing Appiah, especially in his earliest reading of Du Bois. He ultimately rested on an approach that affirmed a tolerance of difference – the positive valuation of the many human possibilities merged with a universal concern and respect for legitimate difference – and found recourse in the cosmopolitan ideal. He saw the cosmopolitan spirit as that which “already underlay the indifference and contempt for others that Du Bois dubbed “the problem of the color line.’”

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232 Appiah, Lines of Descent, 33
233 Appiah, “Ethics in a World of Strangers,” 39
Bois today he is “struck by how much his spirit engages this new [cosmopolitan]
challenge.” Du Bois found the right balance between the “recognition of the need for
partiality and the value of difference with the recognition of the value of encounter across
identities.” This balance is in fact what Appiah hoped to accomplish with his “rooted
cosmopolitanism” in The Ethics of Identity.

Appiah expounds on the foundation he lays in his 2005 address and, in the second
chapter of Lines, “Culture and Cosmopolitanism,” he contends that “Du Bois absorbed
not only Herder’s romantic conception of individuality but also the Herderian spiritual
life of nations,” explaining why Du Bois shifts from a question of the meaning of race
to a discussion of the Negro’s nationalistic impulses in “Conservation”. As I argued in
previous section of this chapter, Appiah reads Du Bois’s attempt to institute a new
vocabulary to talk about racial identity as the replacement of the scientific
rationalizations of race with the ambition for political recognition and ethnoterritorial
loyalty. His use of loyalty here does not imply unreflective commitments to superficial
commonalities among in-group members but, following Josiah Royce’s explanation in
The Philosophy of Loyalty (1908), it connotes the “willing and thoroughgoing devotion of
a self to a cause.” In other words, individuals are loyal to ideas that transcend their
particularities. Appiah asserts that Du Bois “always recognized the risk that black folk,
facing a world in which so many of the white people they met would disdain them, would
withdraw from contact across nations and peoples, the contact that the cosmopolitan

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234 Appiah, “Ethics in a World of Strangers,” 39
235 Appiah, “Ethics in a World of Strangers,” 33
236 Appiah, Lines of Descent, 45
237 Appiah, Lines of Descent, 72
claims is vivifying and essential.” To ward off potential ‘antisocial forms of sociability’ requires a rending of the weight of subjectivity, that is, any attempts to imprison black people within their race. In my discussion of the final chapter of *Lines of Descent,* “The One and the Many,” I will say more about the impossibility of shirking subjectivity and the danger of what Appiah is asking us to do as he puppeteers Du Bois. As for now I will point out, as Appiah does, that especially in *Dusk* Du Bois adopts an attitude towards race loyalty that rejects blind faith in one’s inner group without rejecting the attractiveness of rootedness that marked nineteenth-century liberal thought.

Appiah reminds us of Du Bois’s attack of the liberal individual in “Conservation” when he writes that we must not be misled by the “individualistic philosophy of the Declaration of Independence and the laissez-faire philosophy of Adam Smith” but that “the development of these race groups not as individuals but as races” must be our primary task. Appiah recognizes in these words a sublimation of the individual to the larger community that would have been familiar to Treitschke. He writes, the “individual, Trietschke has said, “must forget his own I and feel himself a member of the whole”; and the sentiment would have resonated with Du Bois, whose 1897 Negro Academy address supposed that “200,000,000 black hearts beating in one glad song of jubilee” were needed for the Negro to gain true historical agency (that number meant to include all the people of African descent in the world.” Appiah is pushing us to the point where we hear in Du Bois’s call to conserve racial identity our ethical responsibility to humanity. After all he did describe “the race idea, the race spirit, and the race ideal” in “Conservation” as “the vastest and most ingenious invention for human progress.”

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238 Appiah, *Lines of Descent,* 73
239 This is the same concern for sociability Appiah discusses extensively in *The Ethics of Identity.*
240 Appiah, *Lines of Descent,* 69-70
Appiah believed that racial groups were not preserved on the basis of their intrinsic worth but because they were “the first link in a series that would lead us to the love of mankind.” This point requires further explanation because it may seem incompatible with Du Bois’s claim in “Conservation” that the value of the Negro race is found in its ability to deliver its own unique message and with the Herderian notion that each Volksgeist possesses a distinctive value. As I stated earlier, Du Bois inherited three concepts from Herder: (1) his romantic notion of individuality; (2) his notion of culture; and (3) his notion of “national soul” (Volksgeist) which each nation expresses in every aspect of its social and cultural life. Undergirding these Herderian strains is an appeal to romantic nationalism that makes possible a cosmopolitan concern for humanity. Appiah argues that cosmopolitanism and nationalism were the “warp and weft” of nineteenth century liberal thought, simply a matter of degree not a difference in kind. Nationalism introduced the concept of bounded citizenship that enabled the leap from fellow citizens of the state to fellow citizens of the world. Cosmopolitanism expressed a moral demand for human dignity and responsibility without boundaries or restrictions, reminiscent of demands for nationalist rights in the country one resides. The interplay of cosmopolitanism and nationalism is seen most clearly in the relationship of Herderian Volksgeist to Humanity in general. Writing about Du Bois’s intellectual debt to Herder, Appiah writes, “part of the providential point of human history is that each people, each Volk, should express its distinct character through its history, because it is only through

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241 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 52
each nation’s following its distinctive path that history as a whole can achieve its meaning.”\textsuperscript{243} The distinctive value of each \textit{Volksgeist} is disciplined by the singularity of humanity. Each nation has a value only in so far as that value progresses humanity as a whole. Du Bois inveighed against a narrative suggesting that Negroes neither had any distinct value nor was their existence vitally necessary. Du Bois responded with the call to conserve the Black race and with an explanation of their reason for being.

Following his work in \textit{The Ethics of Identity} and \textit{Cosmopolitanism}, Appiah maintains that cosmopolitanism without nationalism and nationalism without cosmopolitanism are futile endeavors. And according to Appiah, Du Bois apparently shared this sentiment: “he [Du Bois] had no used for a nationalism that made claims only upon its own nationals; this was a nationalism of already established might. He had to make claims upon humanity. Nationalists […] recognized that the demand for national rights made sense as a moral demand only if it was claimed equally for all nations.”\textsuperscript{244} Appiah locates Du Bois’s cultural cosmopolitanism “in his openness to the achievements of other civilizations,”\textsuperscript{245} in his insistence on “adopting a globally comparative perspective even when he is talking about the United States,” and equally in “the task of articulating a distinct black identity” when he “accepts the fundamental cosmopolitan moral idea that, whatever his duties to the Negro, he has obligations to those outside his racial horizon.”\textsuperscript{246}

At all times throughout his reading of \textit{Souls} and “Conservation” Appiah tries to find an ethical terrain that allows for the flourishing of both a cosmopolitanism in which

\textsuperscript{243} Appiah, \textit{Lines of Descent}, 46
\textsuperscript{244} Appiah, \textit{Lines of Descent}, 53
\textsuperscript{245} Appiah, “Ethics in a World of Strangers,” 33 and Appiah, \textit{Lines of Descent}, 47
\textsuperscript{246} Appiah, \textit{Lines of Descent}, 63
individuals can give expression to a multiplicity of identities (and loyalties) while building an enlightened global community through dialogue and discovery. This is seen in his discussion of Wilhelm von Humboldt’s term *Bildung* and in his comments about the relationship between Du Bois’s mention of the soul and the German word for striving (*streben*), comments that deserve to be quoted at length:

“How can a person have more than one soul? […] We can think of the soul here not as an individual’s unique possession, but rather as something she shares with the folk to which she belongs: think of it, that is, as a Volksgeist. Think of each Volksgeist, too, as striving to realize itself against a resisting not-I. Then a person who belongs to more than one people could share in two souls each defined, in part, by its striving against a world that contains other souls. Furthermore, as Du Bois requires, a person who had both a Negro and an American soul could participate in the intellectual and cultural – the geistige – life of both, and thus see herself through both a Negro and an American lens. Because the two visions are at odds, this person would indeed, have two warring ideals, contending within a single body. In describing this putative affliction, Du Bois was, in effect, rejecting the notion that each of us could participate in only one Volksgeist; an individual person could be, in part, the product of the souls of the various folks to which she belonged.”

It is important to observe here that even this discussion is based on the equivocation of race and nation.

The expressed advantage of this merging of race and nation is that it inadvertently affords a type of patriotism that the Negro can embody (since they cannot be a nationalist in the same way white Americans can), a nationalism that unifies Du Bois’s expressed desire to be both a Negro and an American when he asks in “Conservation”:

“What, after all, am I? Am I an American or am I a Negro? Can I be both? Or is it my duty to cease to be a Negro as soon as possible and be an American? If I strive as a Negro, am I not perpetuating the very cleft that threatens and separates Black and White America? Is not my only possible practical aim the subduction of all that is Negro in me to the American?”

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It is incumbent upon me to stipulate that this is not the reading of this passage I endorsed in my rereading of “Conservation” in Chapter 1 or that I will pursue in my extended discussion of Du Bois’s existentialism in Chapter 4. However, I do concur with Appiah’s belief that there is a type of American patriotism open to the Negro that differs from the patriotism of the average white American. But, it should go without saying, we arrive at this juncture from different sides of the road. This is because Appiah views the Negro’s racial identity as always already a national identity, and therefore, always already beyond the individual. As I quoted in section one of this chapter, Appiah declares that: “It is quite proper to speak of Du Bois’s attitude to his racial identity as a form of nationalism: he believed about the Negro race everything that an American patriot of his day would have believed about America (or a German about Germany), except that he did not believe that it required a single country, a nation-state, to gather its people in.” Appiah concludes in this chapter that “[t]here is a word for the character of the nationalism that Du Bois expressed: it is cosmopolitan.”

The final chapter of Lines of Descent – “The One and the Many” – recalls the epigraph that begins the book: “His triumph is a triumph not of himself alone, but of humankind.” In view of this hominidal summons, a gradual subjugation of the individual develops alongside Appiah’s communitarian argument. His ethical writings already bespeak of the deference the individual is to play to the larger community and he thematizes this relation between the individual and community in this chapter. As I demonstrated in Chapter 2, Appiah does not intend to nihilate the individual but seeks to preserve the individual within the community. However, Appiah cannot simultaneously

\[\text{249 Appiah, “Ethics in a World of Strangers,” 30}\]
postulate that Du Bois was a cosmopolitan if he also maintains that the Negro question – the problem that Du Bois was to himself - tormented Du Bois his entire life. It seems then that Appiah’s attempt to characterize Du Bois as a cosmopolitanism contends with Du Bois’s expressed interest in understanding his particular Negro experience. In other words, Du Bois as a figure of thought is constrained by Du Bois as raced subject. Thus, the question becomes how will Appiah successfully etch out of Du Bois’s writings an interpretation that prioritizes community from a logic that valorizes the following subjective experiences: *the strange experience of a fundamental twoness, the experience of riding Jim Crow in Georgia, the incessant self-questioning, etc.?* To free the individual from an egocentric economy requires that Appiah dematerialize of the race concept.

A communitarianism which sublimates the individual is hindered by the same constraints as racial identity grounded on a theory of race: the weight of subjectivity. Individualism and racial identity must both be freed from the weight of subjectivity. However, the weight of subjectivity was Du Bois’s inescapable condition. Appiah reasons that what continues to profoundly vex Du Bois about the Negro was that his ruminations on the concept of race were unable to “truly imagine blackness as something other than a badge of “discrimination and insult.””250 Instead his arguments function like Sisyphus’s boulder: every time Du Bois felt he had mastered the concept, the weight of his race would roll back on top of him causing him to rework his concept. Appiah contends that it is not the boulder that rolls back onto Du Bois but that the boulder’s return is Du Bois’s own self (un)doing. As he explains, “the condition of being impoverished or oppressed isn’t a comfortable basis of a self-affirmative identity, given

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250 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 165
that this very condition is what the politics seeks to abolish.” The only way to break the curse of Du Bois’s eternal punishment is to abolish the Negro entirely. As I pointed out near the end of Chapter 2, Appiah believes race creates more conceptual difficulties than it is worth and because of their loyalties racial groups serve as a hindrance to community building on a global scale. But he also knows that, as a sociohistorical artifact, racial identity cannot be transcended because it serves as a source of great injustices against groups of individuals. So as he argues in Color Conscious he creates a way to uphold differences among groups while erasing differences within groups and to etch a cosmopolitan view of the Negro by thinking racial identity without the weight of race. To think the Negro within the cosmopolitan ideal is to jettison the conceptual apparatus that adheres to the Negro, in this case the “badge of “discrimination and insult”. Appiah presents us with a very important conundrum: Is it possible to think the Negro and black identity free from the constraints of Africa, memory, history, nationhood and oppression? Or to put it in Appiah’s own terms, is it possible to think racial identity without race?

Appiah responds with a new hermeneutical framework, one that moves from speaking about race as an individual identity to talk about race as a social identity – from the one to the many. And in this chapter he provides four main dimensions to theorize racial identity in this contemporary philosophical way. Continuing where Du Bois left off with the declaration that Negro identity is a social identity, Appiah identifies the role of labels as the first widely shared understanding of social identities. His rationale is uncontestable: “because people respond to others and think of themselves by way of

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251 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 145
these labels.” Although he acknowledges that these “social-identity labels are often contested at the boundaries” he adds that its contestability has no bearing on their semantic value and is, rather, a colorful trait built into the existing common usage of the race concept. He concludes with this first point that “nominalism about social identities is preferable to ontological realism.” The second dimension of racial identity pertains to normativity: norms of identification and treatment that dictate ways members of certain identity ought to behave and should be treated. The third dimension follows from the second in that the norms of identification and treatment inform member’s conscious thoughts and actions. The combination of the second and third dimension is the consensus that social identities are socially constructed, that is, “nominal, normative, and subjective.” The fourth and final dimension involves the creation of a ‘distinctive human life’, or what Appiah qualifies as individuality. These four dimensions capture what philosophers mean when they speak of “social selves.”

This definition of social identity is a broad simulacrum of Du Bois’s definition of race. Interestingly enough it closely resembles - almost verbatim - the definition of racial identity Appiah presents in Color Conscious: “a label, R, associated with ascriptions by most people (where ascription involves descriptive criteria for applying the label); and identifications by those that fall under it (where identification implies a shaping role for the label in the intentional acts of the possessors, so that they sometimes act as an R); where there is a history of associating possessors of the label with an inherited racial essence (even if some who use the label no longer believe in racial essences).” The difference between Appiah’s definition of racial identity in Color Conscious and the definition of social identities in this chapter of Lines of Descent is the absence of history.

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252 Appiah, Lines of Descent, 148
Moving from individualism to community requires the agnosticism of history, as history is the enemy of the nation (read as “community”). Appiah writes, borrowing from nineteenth century French philosopher Ernest Renan, that “history—real history, truth told about the past—[is] the enemy of the nation, precisely because the nation subsisted on fable and forgetting, as well as on the reality of a remembered past.” Similar to his condemnation of history in “The Uncompleted Argument” Appiah argues here that it is the reliance on history that condemns Du Bois’s understanding of race to perpetual failure. But not all references to shared history are problematic, only Du Bois’s general methodology of using history to explain what binds people together. For example, Appiah does not find fault in using historical memory as a criteria for community building. In fact he mentions Josiah Royce’s notion of a “community of memory” to show how a collective memory is coextensive with his idea of community. Collective memory is “constituted by the fact that each of its members accepts as a part of his own individual life and self the same past events that each of his fellow members accepts”.

The problem with Du Boisian appeals to history is that they are too steeped in individualism and must be loosened from their self-affirmative shackles. Then and only then, will it be clear that the concept of community underpins all theories of racial identity grounded in a notion of sociality. According to Appiah, “‘community’ means more than you, me and everyone we know, it’s a construct that is bound to draw upon the imaginings of its members.” These imaginings transform communities of memories into “communities of hope” or “communities of expectation”. A community of expectation is one in which its members are “brought together by a shared projection to

253 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 146
254 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 147
255 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 147
the future: a community in which each of its members accepts, as part of his own individual life and self, the same expected future events that each of his fellows accepts.”

Appiah’s agnosticism of history reorients him towards the future.

Appiah reformulates social identity as inherently communitarian and no longer burdened by the oppression, racism, dreams of Africa, history, memory or national loyalty undergirding. Additionally, Appiah’s notion of social identity moves from the idea of one social self to many social selves. And his reference to many identities not only explains what binds people together but also how they will achieve shared goals. Appiah’s reference to many identities is reminiscent of Amartya Sen’s view of social identities in *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. According to Sen the illusion of identity occurs when many-sided persons are seen through the hazy lens of sectarian singularity as having exactly one identity. It refers to the process of distinguishing onself from so-called “others” through a sense of shared identity. This process of “othering” erupts into violence when members of particular groups create hostility towards non-members and both sides are led by an illusion of what constitutes the ‘other’s’ identity.

In a chapter entitled, “Making Sense of Identity” Sen argues that our deference to singular identities form out of a tendency to base identity on an attachment to a shared history and a sense of affiliation based on this history. In response, the groups to which we belong tend to echo this self-formation and create for us membership groups that become quite important. We think that we can inhabit only one identity at any given time and conclude that we must ignore all affiliation and loyalties other than those emanating

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256 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 147
from one restrictive identity. Therefore, we make the decision to be identified along one single marker, category or characteristic (what I will later describe as the solitarist or singular-affiliation view of individuality). When put under intelligent scrutiny, Sen argues, we realize how extremely misguided this imagined singularity becomes. He terms this phenomena the *illusion of singularity*. Sen employes the language of choice – that we can choose among our identities, emphasizing those we share with others rather than those we do not – as a means to ease out of this illusion of singularity.

The singular-affiliation view (or the solitarist view) of the individual fails to realize that “in our normal lives, we see ourselves as members of a variety of groups” and, furthermore, that “we belong to all of them.”\textsuperscript{258} The choices we make about “what relative importance to attach, in a particular context, to the divergent loyalties and priorities that may compete for precedence”\textsuperscript{259} go “well beyond the purely intellectual into contingent social significance.”\textsuperscript{260} And when these identities conflict, the social context becomes more salient and the choices we make about the priorities to attach to our different affiliations and associations become less of a free choice and more of a forced choice. The choices we can make are constrained by feasibility and these constraints rule out all kinds of alternatives as being nonfeasible.\textsuperscript{261} Singular identity would be less plausible if the choices we make about our identity were not constrained by feasibility. Similar to Appiah, Sen argues that the connection between the choices we make about our identity and the preferential treatment we give to members of a particular group are undermined by communitarianism. The communitarian-affiliation view

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\textsuperscript{258} Sen, *Identity and Violence*, 45
\textsuperscript{259} Sen, *Identity and Violence*, 19
\textsuperscript{260} Sen, *Identity and Violence*, 28-29
\textsuperscript{261} An example of a nonfeasible alternative would be the extent to which we can persuade others to take us to be different from or more than what they insist on taking us to be.
demands that we always think of ourselves as members of a community and always choose communitarian memberships as our most important identity. Sen claims that this communitarian view will not always be chosen as the most important because we have different ways of identifying ourselves.

Returning to Appiah, there are problems with his appeal to community that this discussion of Sen’s argument fleshes out. The first problem is a prescriptive one. Appiah poses a question to Du Bois concerning his use of history that must be returned to him in regards to his “many selves” view: Could such a “many selves view” do the work Appiah hoped it would? Taking another look at Sen’s solitarist view of individuality, the answer is doubtful. If the illusion of identity is the result of intellectual error, and if the error of solitarism is so blatantly obvious, why do we disown that knowledge and continue to prioritize one identity over another? Sen refers repeatedly to manipulation by malevolent propagandists who reify singularity. Appiah argues, following George Herbert Mead, that the intellectual error of solitarism occurs during the organization of particular individual attitudes and social attitudes of the generalized other. Both rely on the assumption that solitarism is an originary position that reconciles particularist-universalist perceptions. But if we already think of ourselves as possessing a multitude of identities – which both Appiah and Sen say we do – then multitudiality is the default position and not solitarism. And if we are in fact multitudinal but still express solitarist tendencies it seems that either the transition from viewing ourselves as a multitude to viewing ourselves as singularly affiliated (from community to individualism or the many

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262 Appiah, Lines of Descent, 146. Appiah’s question to Du Bois was in regards to whether his reference to the “long memory” would be enough to solidify the trust between Negroes. Appiah asks, “Could such a collective memory do the work Du Bois hope it would?” He answered this question in the negative and followed it with a discussion of community. Appiah supposes that Du Bois needs a thorough account of community to ‘bind Negroes as Negroes’.
to the one in Appiah’s terms) is the point of contention and not, as Sen would have it, the other way around.

Additionally, I find myself rather unsatisfied by Sen’s solitarist explanation of violence. Ultimately I am left wondering whether Sen fails to understand the dynamic connection between identity and violence and, more problematically, whether the memory of Kader Mia that frames his investigation at the same time limits his analysis. It is precisely the recalling of this memory that overdetermines Kader Mia’s identity. This is captured in the act of freezing (suspending) Kader Mia and his attackers in a self/other, us/them relationship. Sen can only understand Kader Mia as an Other because his otherness overdetermines him. And as such one cannot completely deny the otherness of an Other but can only make the Other more complex, which Sen proceeds to do by intimating Mia’s multitude of identities. But the complexity and plurality of the Other does not diminish their otherness but confirms them as an-other, distinct from me and distinct from my-self. Hence, Sen is imprisoned in the same analysis that he hopes he would be able to transcend, namely seeing the Other in a singular way – as Other. But Sen is also involved in the alteration of the Other. Sen recreates the protagonist in his

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263 Sen describes Kader Mia as “a Muslim day laborer” who “was knifed when he was on his way to a neighboring house, for work at a tiny wage. He was knifed on the street by some people who did not even know him and most likely had never set eyes on him before” (Sen, *Identity and Violence*, 173). Sen recounts this image of a “profusely bleeding unknown person suddenly stumbling through the gate” and remembers that while he was being rushed to the hospital “Kader Mia told my father that his wife had asked him not to go into a hostile area during the communal riot. But he had to go out in search of work, for a little income, because his family had nothing to eat” (Sen, *Identity and Violence*, 173). *Identity and Violence* was written more than sixty years after Mia’s death. In his attempt to think through this memory Sen turns back to the unknown Mia and returns knowing one relevant thing about him – Kader Mia is a Muslim “and no other identity was relevant for the vicious Hindu thugs who had pounced on him” (Sen, *Identity and Violence*, 171). His identity as a Muslim becomes the vehicle to which Sen struggles to understand this scene and the questions that linger in its aftermath – Why should someone suddenly be killed? And why by people who did not even know the victim, who could not have done any harm to the killers? – all which forces Sen to think about and grapple with the violence in identity.
tale by attaching to Kader Mia various identities and choosing to see him as more than a Muslim. And without questioning whether this multiple identity resembles who Kader Mia sees himself as, he commits the same mistake in reasoning he is critiquing when he states, "Violence is fomented by the imposition of singular and belligerent identities on gullible people championed by proficient artisans of terror" – he imposes an identity on Kader Mia, not the singular identity he is weary of, but a multitude of identities. And to make it more intrusive, this recreation is offered as a solution. Sen insists that we reconceptualize each Other, not as an-other, but as Others – a plurality of distinctions. Even with these inadequacies he fails to answer the question that lingers from his experience - *why should someone suddenly be killed?* The plea for recognition of our plural identities does not explain why conflict should come to the point of being a life-or-death struggle. We understand how it causes conflict but not why the threat of the Other causes the fervent desire to destroy the Other. So again, we are forced to ask the question why identity kills and “kills with abandon.”

Neither the singular-affiliation model, themultitudinal view of social identity nor its communitarian foundations will be able to address the problems of the “unity of self” unless we interrogate the emergence of a self out from the social process. Said differently, unless we take seriously the social condition that leads to the experience of self-coherence, the cosmopolitan’s dialectic is irrelevant. Mead reiterates this same claim: “There are all sorts of different selves answering to all sorts of different social reactions. Is it the social process itself that is responsible for the appearance of the self; it is not there as a self apart from this type of experience.” It cannot be done, as Appiah attempts, through a discussion of Mead’s famous distinction between the “I” and the

*264 Appiah, Lines of Descent, 156*
“me”, or Appiah’s version, individuality and identity. Reviewing Sen’s argument in *Identity and Violence*, Kenji Yoshino explains, “Hutus and Tutsis will not lay down arms because they are told they are Kigalians, laborers or human beings. Sunnis and Shiites will not be coaxed into a group hug by a reminder of the religion and cultural attributes they share.”265 The problem is not found in this transition from the one to the many, but the crisis that causes an overdetermined identity. This is not simply a response to ‘manipulation by malevolent propagandists’ or general ideas of “otherness” but the shadows of an ontological violence and precariousness. When we are constrained in our choices, when choice is taken from us, when choosing ourselves becomes the only way to avoid being overly determined from the outside, how do we change singularity into plurality? And furthermore, *why would we want to*? This problem is not resolved by an appeal to community because the problem is precisely community (or in this case society, e.g., social structures of racism, classism, sexism, and oppression), in essence, an overdetermined *outside*. Appiah’s communitarianism (and by association, his cosmopolitanism) is an apostasy of the sociohistorical phenomena that create the community, the social context and the individual. Or, as Du Bois would argue, it is ahistorical.

The second problem is the intelligibility of the concept of “community” for a racial nominalist. Near the end of the subsection entitled, “Identity Before “Identity,”” Appiah determines that “Du Bois’s social constructionism is precisely a kind of nominalism. It is a nominalism that urges us to move from thinking of the Negro race as a natural, biological kind to thinking of it as composed of people who share a socially made

identity.” It is unclear what type of nominalist Appiah thinks Du Bois is – one who rejects abstract ideas or one who rejects universals – but we can reasonably infer from the context that, if he is a nominalist at all, Du Bois would be a nominalist about universals. Nominalists about universals believe only in particulars, and question the alleged existence of universal entities like racial properties (this on its own would make Appiah a nominalist as well). Du Bois’s writings about race stop short of calling “race” a universalizable concept; he only goes as far as to state that there is a shared condition that marks the Negro experience and anyone else who falls under its racist and oppressive decrees. The particularity of the Negro situation, the reality to which this social convention spawns the particular experience of a group of people with a particular history, these views would be upheld by a universalist nominalist. Du Bois would be a universalist nominalist also if his definition of race could be shown to be inapplicable to all eight great families he names in “Conservation” (this point has often been in dispute). It would be accurate to say that by claiming race is a social construct Du Bois endorses the spatiotemporality of racialized beings, relegating the application of racial identity to the historical context which exerts itself onto the concept.

The attribution of nominalism to Du Bois’s writings on race is pertinent to Appiah’s cosmopolitan reading of Du Bois because it opens up the following problematic: Is there a way for a nominalist – someone skeptical about the universalizability of concepts – to think “community” – a universalist concept – or is community unthinkable for a nominalist? The implications of this question are significant. If Appiah is correct and Du Bois is a nominalist (about universals), it

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266 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 158
267 To say that Du Bois is a nominalist is to also call him an anti-realist. As I have shown in Chapter 1
would mean that Du Bois is steeped in particularism, as his nominalism necessitates, and is unable to concede a universalist account of “community” or to express a cosmopolitan form of social identity. Therefore, Appiah’s notion of “community” is unthinkable for Du Bois and represents a foreign idea that competes with Appiah’s cosmopolitan reading, potentially invalidating the very project of *Lines*. The best Du Bois can do is to offer a provisional version of “community” that resembles the group loyalty or nationalism (a view that Appiah’s cosmopolitanism reproaches) on its way to a cosmopolitan application. But this may be much too patriotic for Appiah and would invalidate his main argument.

This is not to say, however, that Du Bois remained silent on the notion of community, only that it does not resemble Appiah’s (“rooted”) cosmopolitanism (an identification with all of humanity based on the value of human rights and universal principles, the respect of cultural differences, and the encouragement of cross-cultural, cross-contextual conversation). Insofar as he moved from biology to sociohistory in order to institute a comprehensive definition of Negro identity, thought about mixed race people, talked often about a greater Negro vanguard, and reflected on Africa in order to think more broadly about transnational blackness, Du Bois thought in terms of community. Community is equally entailed in his definition of race and its references to collective memory, common blood, common language, common history, traditions, and

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Appiah straddles a tenuous line between realism and anti-realism. “The question that realists and nominalists about universals try to answer is: What makes F-things F? For the realist about universals if something is square, this is in virtue of the thing instantiating the universal squareness. In general, for the realist about universals, things have the sparse properties they do in virtue of instantiating universals. How do nominalists answer this question? A popular nominalist theory of properties is so-called Trope Theory, which has been held by Donald Williams (1953), Keith Campbell (1990), and Douglas Ehring (2011) among others. Trope theory does not reject the existence of properties, but takes properties to be certain entities usually called ‘tropes’. Tropes are particulars, in the same sense in which individual people and individual apples are particulars.”
impulses, as well as in the duplicity of his definition, the coalescence of sociohistory and scientism (see Forethought), and his mention of a social condition and context. Appiah wants to strip all the other elements and keep community. But that requires transliteration because Du Bois’s conception of community is not Appiah’s. Du Bois’s “community” follows a conception more prevalent in phenomenology: interrelationality. As Appiah states: “We can see with him, too, that the meaning of an identity is determined not only by the bearers of the badge, but also by the responses of others; that “the black man is a person who must ride ‘Jim Crow’ in Georgia. He did not suppose that the group had an independent character apart from these norms and practices.”

The individual and the social interpenetrates in a matrices of relation. Their interrelationality are not mere interweavings of successive. Although Appiah separates them into four distinct dimensions of (social) identity, each dimension emerges simultaneously within the same phenomena. For Du Bois to think community he has to conceive it concretely, as a matrix of interaction. Community is a matrix of relation, and race is an axis of interaction where the particular and the universal interact.

Appiah informs us that by positioning himself between “the contingency of social forms” and “their [social forms] sense of their power, value, and even necessity,” Du Bois “could glimpse a strategy that sidestepped certain of his difficulties and brought him close to a notion of race as what we’d now call a social identity.” Here Appiah seems to understand that Du Bois’s account of race is neither particularist nor universalist precisely because it is conscious of the social conditions and experience that informs it. But he understands the outcome of this strategic positioning only as evading the

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268 Appiah, Lines of Descent, 159
269 Appiah, Lines of Descent, 147
difficulties of race. One can evade the difficulties of race as much as Du Bois could elude the fact of his blackness. Alas, we know as Appiah did that “it was the angel he [Du Bois] wrestled with his entire life.” Unable to roll the weight of race away there is a need to do more than sidestep the difficulties brought by a close notion of race as a social identity. And making the race concept universalizable is an implausible rejoinder. It might circumvent the difficulties so that race theorists can “imagine blackness as something other than a badge of “discrimination and insult.”” But its utopian motifs will never accomplish the real project of racial identity, that is, the existential project of theorizing what one feels on a day-to-day basis. We live in a society that can do anything – go to the moon, cure infectious diseases, replicate and extend life, etc – and with all these great advances it is quite maddening that the one thing our society cannot do is rid itself of the malady it caused. If the problem is that we find it difficult to think race without reverting back to overused tropes like oppression, etc. we need to retheorize the connections that we form between the ideas of oppression, etc. and race. Only an interpenetrating analysis would resolve the difficulties of race because the crisis occurs within the experience of this interrelationality. Read in this way, questioning the thinkability of community exposes the terrain one will need to traverse in order rethink race, as well as the difficulties why race cannot neatly align with Appiah’s language of “community”.

iv. A Return to Ontology

Unlike Appiah who claims that we need a new hermeneutical framework to think racial identity beyond the tropes of oppression, racism, and biologism, I contend that

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270 Appiah, Lines of Descent, 162
271 Appiah, Lines of Descent, 163
what we need is a return to the ontological (existential) framework. The revival of an Existential construal of racial identity offers a relational dynamism that one does not find in the strict programmatic of Appiahian ethics, but one which seems to be in the background of Appiah’s writings. My argument is that a critical existential analysis, spearheaded by Du Bois’s writings on “the question of questions, the Negro problem” is able to reconstruct a philosophical account of lived experience that does justice to the the experience of race. By way of making this point, and to instantiate a shift from Appiah, I conclude this discussion of Appiah’s legacy by shifting to an existential account of racial identity. The points I raise in this short analysis derive from the existential analyses of Jean-Paul Sartre and Emmanuel Levinas and will be expounded in the final chapters of this project (Chapter 4 and the Conclusion). I introduce them here to assist in this turn to an ontological-existential framework, and to explain the salience of Du Bois’s explication of the lived experience of the Negro.

In the last section I found a problem with Appiah’s efforts to avoid race because it is much too cumbersome and also censured his pithy attempts to imagine blackness as something other than a “badge of “discrimination and insult”. To articulate my criticism and to suggest a plausible solution I return to Appiah’s response to the weight of subjectivity: abolish the Negro. While Appiah’s rooted cosmopolitanism reforms identities and shows that it is possible to have racial identity without races, it does not take into account the fact that race is a particular “kind” of identity that functions illogically nor the fact that racism reproduces itself in many different forms. I would like to consider the following: the perplexities of race and the occult manner of structural

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272 I would be remiss if I did not point out that this description of race as a particular kind is vastly different from Ian Hacking’s notion of a ‘kind of person’.
racism require that we never feel comfortable enough to think that we figured it out or uncovered all of its inner workings. For all of Du Bois’s attempts to get out from under the weight of his race his writings show that it continually returns back to him. Here I agree with Appiah: the concept of race contains its own undoing. This is not insanity as Appiah would have us believe but productive repetition, a necessary self (un) doing. It is an undoing that the human subject instigates and maintains. Like Du Bois every time we feel we have mastered the concept, the weight of race should roll back on top of us causing him to rework this concept. Therefore it is neither correct nor appropriate to intimate the transcendence of subjectivity, as the subject is vital to the activity of (critically) theorizing race. Du Bois maintains the reality of race and writes an analysis of racial identity from within a personal experience, from a place of persecution. Sartre will argue that the subject must continuously be undone, that self-identity is a perpetual failure, but it is within that failure that we start to become conscious and see our freedoms and possibilities. Instead of eradicating the difficulties we must perpetually be undone by them so that we can realize the truth of our condition: we exist in a tenuous situation, from which there is no escape.

CONCLUSION: The Final Words of Appiah

In the penultimate subsection of Lines of Descent, “Go Down, Moses,” Appiah concludes his book with the same sobriety characteristic of Du Bois’s writings near the end of his life. He describes Du Bois’s life as one dedicated to solving the problem of his Negro self, a problem “that vexed him profoundly,” one that “he never felt that he had mastered” and a concept “he felt undone by.”

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273 Appiah, Lines of Descent, 161
Du Bois’s Pan-Africanism after his emigration to Ghana, Appiah’s final moments of reflection describe the failure of concepts to clarify and describe experience. He writes: “The race concept vexed him [Du Bois] with “illogical trends and irreconcilable tendencies,”” and he wondered if “[p]erhaps it is wrong to speak of it at all as ‘a concept’ rather than as a group of contradictory forces, facts, and tendencies.” He could qualify, define and redefine, but he could not quite gain the upper hand.”

Echoing this same futility, he continues a page later stating: “Du Bois would say that the race concept should be retained, or that a black identity should be preserved, until justice and freedom reigns on earth. But here, once more, we move from sociology to soteriology: insofar as blackness contains the seeds for that blessed state, it strives, ultimately, for its own disappearance.”

Appiah’s final words mark the inutility and prescient eradication of the concept of race.

To explain the significance of these final words I return to the question that originally sparked Appiah’s query into Du Bois’s definition of race: the juxtaposition of Du Bois’s sociohistorical conception of race with the scientific conception of race. The final word of science is that “we have at least two, perhaps three, great families of human beings—the whites and Negroses, possibly a yellow race.” But the reason why science has determined there to be three races is because, Du Bois tells us, they have acknowledged that “as great as is the physical unlikeness of the various races of men their likenesses are greater, and upon this rests the whole scientific doctrine of Human Brotherhood.”

Employing a different scale, Du Bois “find[s] upon the world’s stage today eight distinctly differentiated races”: Slavs, Teutons, English, Romance nations, Negroses,

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274 Appiah, Lines of Descent, 162
275 Appiah, Lines of Descent, 163
276 Du Bois, "Conservation," 109
Semitic people, Hindoos, and the Mongolians. He bases this on “the sense in which
History tells us the word [race] must be used” and concludes from this application of the
sociohistorical concept of race that “as a race we must strive by race organization, by race
solidarity, by race unity to the realization of that broader humanity which freely
recognizes differences in men, but sternly deprecates inequality in their opportunities of
development.” Reading the scientific and sociohistorical definitions of race several
similarities in their “final words” are present. To begin with, race signifies both
difference and similarity. Second, race is used to explain group formation on the basis of
a variegated combination of ‘physical powers, intellectual endowments, and spiritual
ideals’. Finally, both the scientific and sociohistorical definitions strive towards the
realization of a universal human sisterhood and brotherhood.

By aligning Du Bois’s sociohistorical conception and the scientific conception of
race Appiah comments on their shared reliance on the concept of race, and challenges us
to question whether this dependence on race is necessary. Appiah points out that “the
more exalted his [Du Bois] talk of universal brotherhood and sisterhood, the more his
struggle could sound like a lost cause.” In explaining this statement he writes the
following:

toward the end of his life, he moved from the language of striving to that of
struggle, from streben to kämpfen, and sometimes thought that he found that
message in the global gearings of class warfare. Often he supposed that Pan-
Africanism could provide a new, global vanguard. Sometimes he thought the key
to uplift was to be found in a supra-racial communion of shared struggle. […] Du
Bois needed an idea that would unite the dark masses and inspire their strivings,
and a naked account of social identity wasn’t adequate to the task. Identity theory
is an account from outside, an explanation without true understanding.

277 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 114
278 Appiah, Lines of Descent, 164
279 Appiah, Lines of Descent, 162
Hence, they have not truly “deprecated and minimized” race.

To glean from Appiah’s cosmopolitan project and the arguments I make towards it the conclusion that, after an almost 30 year search, Appiah was able to “find the Du Bois he had wanted Du Bois to be” and presents this doppelgänger in *Lines of Descent* would be at best too simplistic and at worst imprecise. In the final words of the book Appiah relays his implicit intention for this new reading of Du Bois: “to see the day the country of his [Du Bois] birth would truly imagine blackness as something other than a badge of “discrimination and insult.”” Appiah’s cosmopolitan ideal was his attempt to help “usher in the dusk of that dawn,” of which Du Bois spoke of. At first Appiah thinks that the best way to ‘usher in the dusk of that dawn’ would be to conceive racial identity without races, and he imagines completing Du Bois’s argument with these final words and ultimately leaving his early writings on Du Bois the type of transcendence of science, and the ‘badge of discrimination and insult’ married to the concept of race. But Appiah is not able to transcend the reality and real impact this concept has on the lives of individuals, even if it has managed to escape metaphysical constraints. In other words, Appiah’s writings reflect an immutability in the existential experiences of racialized subjects ultimately failing to present a valid critique of a Du Boisian sociohistorical concept of race. Consequently, his new book is minimally effective. But what this analysis has done is that it forces us to ask three very important questions when we theorize race: (1) When we decide what to do with race, whether or not to eliminate it because it is much too cumbersome, must we keep in mind the sociopolitical project of eradicating oppression, discrimination, inequality, and bringing about justice? (2) What is

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the best way to “deprecate and minimize” the effects of racial distinctions? (3) How do we achieve a human sisterhood and brotherhood with the concept of race? I will turn to these question in the remaining chapters of this project.
This chapter builds upon my reading of “Conservation” from Chapter 1. It concerns the development of Du Bois’s concept of racialization, primarily, what he manages to accomplish at the height of 19th Century racial biologism. In Chapter 1 I explored what Du Bois means when he defines race as “a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life.” I essentially made five points about Du Bois’s sociohistorical account of race. First, I argued that the key to understanding Du Bois’s definition is to recognize that for him what race is, is predicated on the meaning one gathers from their lived experience. I identified the real meaning of race as the psychosomatic experience of being a problem. Second, I claimed that Du Bois’s definition intentionally contained both the biological assumptions about race and the conclusions he derived from his sociohistorical analysis. Third, I argued that the disparity between these two warring ideals in the black body was understood the experience of double consciousness. This discussion segued in to the fourth intention of Du Bois sociohistorical definition, that is, the significance and exceptionalism of the Negro community. I argued that his defense of a Negro message that could only be given by members of the Negro race responded to the question of why annihilation could not be the Negro’s destiny. Finally, I argued that throughout his works Du Bois is writing from a particular subject position of which his statements, including his definition of race, should be filtered through. His treatment of race and racism is shaped by the way he sees
himself as a problem. The fragility of this condition can neither be grasped from the outside looking in nor from any analytical delimitations about race.

In this chapter, I take a step away from Du Bois’s definition of race, or rather, a step towards the existential elements of his definition. Vital to this chapter is a careful distinction between the theories of race Du Bois presents in “The Conservation of Race”, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), *Darkwater: Voices From Within the Veil* (1920), *Dusk of Dawn* (1940), *The Negro* (1915) and *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (1935). More than examining whether a consistent theory of race threads these texts, the explicit work of Part II is to clarify what is meant when his definition of race is described as a *sociohistorical* conception of race. I return to section four of “Conservation” (what I referred to in Chapter I as “Existential and Critical Reflections on the Predicament of the Negro”) and focus on two questions that connect the discussion of Du Bois’s sociohistorical definition of race in Part I to the central tenets of Existential Philosophy. The two questions are: (1) *What, then, is a race* and (2) *What, after all, am I*? I intend to mark the distinction between the ‘what am I’ question and the ‘what is a race’ question through an Existentialist analysis, framed around the problem of being a question to oneself.

**PART I: THE SOCIOHISTORICAL CONCEPTION OF RACE**

In “The Uncompleted Argument,” Appiah writes:

“Du Bois managed to maintain Pan-Africanism while officially rejecting talk of race as anything other than a synonym for color. We can see how he did this by turning to his second autobiography, *Dusk of Dawn*, published in 1940. In *Dusk of Dawn* – the “essay toward an autobiography of a race concept” – Du Bois explicitly allies himself with the claim that race is not a scientific concept. […] But we need no scientific definition, for […] as he put it pithily a little later, “a black man is a person who must ride ‘Jim Crow’ in Georgia.”

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281 Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument,” 32-33
Similarly in *Lines of Descent* Appiah repeats that “At times, as we’ll see, he [Du Bois] spoke of a vast family, of shared descent and common impulses; at other times, of the inheritors of a common memory; but in the pithiest of his many attempts at definition he said, “The black man is a person who must ride ‘Jim Crow’ in Georgia.” From “Conservation,” we get the idea that race is a mélange of science, history, and colorism, and from “The Superior Race,” we get the idea that race is a badge of color and a social heritage of discrimination and insult. The story Appiah would have us believe is that Du Bois has two definitions of race, one representing his earlier thinking marked by the address given at the American Negro Academy, and the other, more sophisticated reading, in *Dusk of Dawn* represents a more mature and pithy Du Bois. But in between “Conservation” (1897) and “The Superior Race” (1923) are a number of essays on race and racial politics including the renowned *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). Howard Winant describes *Souls* as Du Bois’s “most nuanced and powerful theory of race and racism ever developed.” In *Souls* Du Bois describes the Negro as “a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, – a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world.” Yet Appiah fails to mention *Souls* as a plausible theory of race on par with Du Bois’s description in “The Superior Race,” even though it introduced into racial theorizing the indispensible notion of double consciousness, the metaphor of the veil as a way to describe Black-white racial dynamics, and the ontological situation of being a problem.

282 Appiah, *Lines of Descent*, 7
Even after his definition of the Negro in “The Superior Race” Du Bois publishes four extended iterations of his theory of race: *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (1920), *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860-1880* (1935), his second autobiography, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward An Autobiography of a Race Concept* (1940), and his final autobiography, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life for the Last Decade of Its First Century* (1968). In his second autobiography *Dusk of Dawn* Du Bois reprints and extends the essay from “The Superior Race.” *Dusk of Dawn* reads as a shedding of his soul, a place where he unpacks his psychical and emotional conflict on to every page, but Appiah can only focus on his mention of the ‘badge of color’ without connecting with what it means to be donned with this badge and having to pass it off as a medal of honor. Appiah tends to integrate these two understandings of race as along the same continuum of racial biologism and even implicates the badge of hair and color in both “Conservation” and *Dusk of Dawn*.

By way of attesting to the maturation of Du Bois’s definition of race in “The Superior Race”, and elucidating the utility of his sociohistorical conception, in what remains of Part I, I will provide a critical analysis of his essay, “The Superior Race” comparing the original iteration to its reproduction in *Dusk of Dawn*. This is necessary because, after all, Du Bois’s statement that “the black man is a person who must ride ‘Jim Crow’ in Georgia” is not part of the chapter entitled “The Concept of the Negro” but appears in *Dusk of Dawn* within the chapter entitled “The White World.” The motivating question becomes, how does Du Bois’s statement about who rides the ‘Jim Crow’ buses in Georgia connect the white world to his concept of the Negro.

**The Problem with Having Two White Friends**
i. The White Friend with the Superiority Complex

In “The Superior Race” Du Bois narrates a conversation with one of his white friends. He does not provide us with much descriptive content about this ‘white friend’ other than the fact that he is male, a blood relative of the Van Diemans, and obsessed with his race consciousness. We can surmise from his narration that this is not their first colloquy on race, only that this particular race talk is extra-ordinary. The topic that sparks this conversation is the question of which race is the superior race - the Negro race or the white race. The position of the white friend is clear – “of course you know Negroes are inferior” – as is Du Bois’s – “I sit here and maintain that black folk are much the superior race.” To assess the superiority of each race they identify four criteria for superiority: (1) beauty and health of body, (2) mental clearness and creative genius, (3) spiritual goodness and receptivity, and (4) social adaptability and constructiveness. The white friend argues that the white race excels in beauty and health of body, mental clearness and creative genius, and social adaptability and constructiveness, and is “well abreast” in spiritual goodness and receptivity. Du Bois contends that the Negro race excels in beauty and health of body, spiritual goodness and receptivity, and social adaptability and constructiveness, and is adept in mental clearness and creative genius. The conversation ensues as arguments for the superiority of each man’s race are presented for each category.

The white friend begins with a pithy remark he believes settles the dispute for the criterion of ‘beauty and health of body’: “Compare the Venus of Milo and the Apollo Belvedere with a Harlem or Beale Street couple.” However, as Du Bois points out,
comparing aesthetic production is a poor measure of aesthetics proper since no one can fail but esteem the beauty of Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel, for instance.\footnote{This is not an example Du Bois gives but one I provide that makes the same point.} As he explains, “compare humanity at its best or worst with the Ideal, and humanity suffers.” The test his white friend suggests proves only that Blacks have the same norms of taste and beauty as whites, and as such, this comparison cannot adequately measure the superiority of one race over another. If ‘beauty and health of body’ is the characteristic in question, Du Bois suggests that it is the physical attributes of beauty that must be examined. Therefore, he offers, “as colors bronze, mahogany, coffee and gold are far lovelier than pink, gray and marble. His white friend “prefer[s] the colors of heaven and day: sunlight hair and blue eyes, and straight noses and thin lips, and that incomparable air of haughty aloofness and aristocracy.”\footnote{Du Bois, “The Superior Race,” 62} A bit of back and forth ultimately ends in a stalemate as both accede that beauty of the body is a matter of simple personal opinion.

The second criterion – mental clearness and creative genius – his white friend determines is the ‘real point’ of contention anyway. Recall that Du Bois sets apart this criterion from the others as a mark of Black superiority. Du Bois describes with fervor the ‘conspicuous failure’ of the white race to be au courant with ‘clear thinking, pure reason, mathematical precision and creative genius’. He calls the white and European system of culture “idiotic, addle-brained, unreasoning, topsy-turvy, [and] without precision,” credits their genius as pronounced only in the areas of enslavement and enriching the few, and claims that his white friend can defend white superiority in this category only within a system where “white” serves as both the judge and jury. In defense of white superiority the white friend points to the prosperity suffused throughout
the white race. Because well-being and general intelligence is more common among whites it proves that the white race is more advanced. But more importantly it shows that genius is part of the white stock, intrinsic to the white race, that is, as essentially genetically inherited. This last comment shifts the conversation to questions of heredity. Similar to how he inveighed against Darwinism and racial amalgamation in “Conservation,” Du Bois challenges his white friend’s claim to white “native intelligence.” Against the idea that careful breeding can breed out hereditary degeneration he asserts that geniuses and dullards breed one another, not linearly but quite sporadically: “Lincoln from Nancy Hands, Dumas from a black beast of burden, Kant from a saddler, and Jesus Christ from a manger.”287 And these wonders, he adds, are much greater than the accomplishments of eugenics. But these examples, his white friend maintains, fails to dislodge his point. Rather they prove the “persistence of good blood.” Du Bois’s response is worth quoting in length:

“when anything good occurs, it is proof of good blood; when anything bad occurs, it is proofs of bad blood. Very well. Now good and bad, native endowment and native deficiency, do not follow racial lines. There is good stock in all races and the outcropping of bad individuals, too; and there has been absolutely no prof that the white race has any larger share of the gifted strains of human heritage than the black race or the yellow race. To be sure, good seed proves itself in the flower and the fruit, but the failure of seed to sprout is no proof that it is not good. It may be proof simply of the absence of manure—or its excessive presence.”288

To show that native endowment and intelligence does in fact follow racial lines, the white friend suggest that Du Bois “[g]o out upon the street [and] choose ten white men and ten colored men [and select] [w]hich can carry on and preserve American civilization.”289

287 Du Bois, “The Superior Race,” 63
288 Du Bois, “The Superior Race,” 63 This is an interesting contrast to Appiah’s reduction of Du Bois’s definition of race in “The Uncompleted Argument” to common blood. However, I have neither the space nor the scope to pursue this line of argumentation in this current chapter.
289 Du Bois, “The Superior Race,” 63
His white friend offers ‘American’ as a universal designation open to both whites and Blacks alike. But understanding that Jim Crow disallows the Negro from embodying a national identity in the same way as whites, and that the moniker ‘American’ cannot possess anything akin to “native” in the way whites denote, Du Bois asks quite incisively, what precisely allows the native gift of intelligence and endowment to persist? With the same tone in which he declared that humanity suffers when it is compared to the Ideal, he summarily rebuffs his white friend’s claim: “when we compare the gift of one human soul with that of another, are we not seeking to measure incommensurable things; trying to lump things like sunlight and music and love [and] if a certain shadowy Over-soul can really compare the incomparable with some transcendental yardstick, may we not here emerge into a super-equality of man?”

His mention of the differential gifts and the equal value of human souls should prompt us to recall the passage in “Conservation” where he defends the divine and unique Negro message. And it is on the coattails of this statement that Du Bois and his white friend move on to the third criteria, spiritual goodness and receptivity.

The first criterion concluded with the determination that it is futile to compare tastes and opinion. The second criterion concluded that native human endowment is an obscure problem. Du Bois and his white friend hope that the lack of obscurity in spiritual values will render this category a more abiding criterion on which to determine racial superiority. Recall that his white friend claims the white race is particularly astute in spiritual goodness. Spiritual goodness and receptivity is measured not by an ethical code or piousness but by vitality (and in this way I contend that their entire conversation has

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290 Du Bois, “The Superior Race,” 64
been motivated by the Socratic oath to pursue a “live worth living”\(^{291}\). With scathing boldness Du Bois states,

> “Why, man of mine, you would not have the courage to live one hour as a black man in America, or as a Negro in the whole wide world. Ah, yes, I know that you whisper to such accusation. You say dryly that if we had good sense, we would not live either; and that the fact that we do submit to life as it is and yet laugh and dance and dream is but another proof that we are idiots. This is the truly marvelous way in which you prove your superiority by admitting that our love of life can only be intelligently explained on the hypothesis of inferiority. What finer tribute is possible to our courage?”\(^{292}\)

Black life, Du Bois argues, produces “two of the finest things in the industry of the West” – the Black laborer’s Saturday off and the greatest gift of God, laughter. His white friend corrects Du Bois by pointing out that the finest thing in the industry of the West is the modern industrial state and the wealth, commerce, and opportunities of labor it has created. This he declares is the true mark of culture, civilization, and value in that its productions benefit and progress white, black and yellow life alike. Even if we grant that the Black race is industrious and of superior intellect and genius, the white friend retorts, where are the Black marks of culture, civilization and human progress? Furthermore, “why have you black and yellow men done nothing better or even as good in the history of the world?”\(^{293}\) By asking this question the white friend recasts the third and fourth criteria as a comingling of the spiritual and the sociohistorical. The “pageantry of the world” the white friend continues, “belongs to white men; it is the expression of white power; it is the product of white brains [and who] can have the effrontery to stand for a moment and compare with this white triumph, yellow and brown anarchy and black

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\(^{291}\) The concept of life was thematized at the very onset of this conversation. The white friend initiates this interlocution by asking, “Now, superiority consists of what,” to which Du Bois replies, “Life is, I remark, (1) Beauty and health of body, (2) Mental clearness and creative genius, (3) Spiritual goodness and receptivity, and (4) Social adaptability and constructiveness.' (Du Bois, “The Superior Race,” 60 my emphasis).

\(^{292}\) Du Bois, “The Superior Race,” 64

\(^{293}\) Du Bois, “The Superior Race,” 66
Du Bois offers an epigrammatic response: “Lions have no historians.” His response discloses to the reader that his white friend has regressed into his obsession with his race consciousness, and must compel him to relinquish it. The force that projects the world, Du Bois reminds his friend, is not the power of demigods but the courage of men propelled by what he refers to as the “Law of Being”. The history that produces the triumph the white man exuberantly relies upon is not his alone. It is not the might or will, power or brains of white men against the defeat and anarchy, savagery and inferiority of yellow, brown, and black men, but it is ‘white, black, red and yellow’ men who work together for the progression of humanity. Du Bois concludes his oration with the words epigraphed in Appiah’s *Lines of Descent*: “His triumph is a triumph not of himself alone, but of humankind, from the pusher in the primeval forests to the last flier through the winds of the twentieth century.”

Du Bois ends the conversation with a final indictment of white culture: “the greatest and most immediate danger of white culture, perhaps least sense, is its fear of the Truth [its] childish belief in the efficacy of lies as a method of human uplift.” Du Bois is accusing his white friend – and the white culture he represents – of a deliberate type of deception so pervasive in the human psyche that it is no longer the other who deceives us, but we deceive ourselves. Even the most intelligent among us are prey to this deception. It is reminiscent of the deception he spoke of in “Conservation” when he writes, “back of most discussions of race with which he is familiar, have lurked certain assumptions as to his natural abilities, as to his political, intellectual and moral status, which he felt were

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296 Du Bois, “The Superior Race,” 67
wrong.” It is a deception that “raise[s] Propaganda to a capital “P,”” a deception that began with a lie the white man first told to ‘white, black, red, and yellow’ people about the world, and now this deception constitutes and reproduces itself in the world. Du Bois describes the deception of the world in the following way: “[w]hen in other days the world lied, it was to a world that expected lies and consciously defended them; when the world lies today it is to a world that pretends to be true.”

The immemorial world is an “unknown, unapprehended Truth.” But the world as reconstituting concept is deception and propaganda. Supposing Du Bois is still speaking within the context of their discussion (clearly demonstrating the pervasiveness of his self-imposed imprisonment within himself) his white friend finally speaks up and says, “according to you [Du Bois] white folk are about the meanest and lowest on earth.” Showcasing the transcendence of his meaning beyond mere racial partitions, Du Bois keenly observes “they are human, even as you and I.” The weight of his unspecified use of the third person pronoun “they” is dispossessed by Du Bois’s invocation of humanity. The world outside of dynamics of relationality does not exist; it is a metaphor.

So, “[w]hy don’t you leave them then? Get out, go to Africa or to the North Pole; shake the dust of their hospitality from off your feet,” his white friend suggests. Du Bois’s answer is quite remarkable:

“First, they have annexed the earth and hold it by transient but real power. Thus by running away, I shall not only not escape them, but succeed in hiding myself in out of the way places where they can work their devilry on me without photography, telegraph, or telephone. But even more important than this: I am as bad as they are. In fact, I am related to them and they have much that belongs to

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299 Du Bois, “The Superior Race,” 68
In one paragraph Du Bois summarizes his cosmology (the world is an intricate system of power relations), the pervasiveness of white supremacy, the inescapability of his Black condition, but more importantly, his complicity in this global Manichean system. This passage signifies an important fluctuation in the dialogue. The white friend who appeared very keen and knowledgeable throughout the exchange now comes across aloof and confounded by racial dynamics. For example, the white friend, like Appiah, makes the mistake of taking Du Bois’s mention of blood literally to mean shared bloodlines, and informs Du Bois that, since he is related to whites by blood he cannot call himself Black or Negro. “What then” his white friend inquires “becomes of all your argument, if there are no races and we are all so horribly mixed as you maliciously charge?”301 If the intermingling of blood divests him of a Black identity, then, Du Bois retorts, no one can claim a (pure) racial identity because we are all racially bastardized. Yet, Du Bois does not actually mean “shared bloodlines”. Rather he intends to call humanity co-conspirators in the sins of this world, equally responsible for the world and indebted to it. As if to predict that some will be lead by his statements about the intermingling of blood to conclude that ‘there are no races’ (in Appiah’s “The Uncompleted Argument” for example) Du Bois writes:

“No, no. Human beings are infinite in variety, and when they are agglutinated in groups, great and small, the groups differ as though they, too, had integrating souls. But they have not. The soul is still individual if it is free. Race is a cultural, sometimes an historical fact. And all that I really have been trying to say is that a certain group that I know and to which I belong, as contrasted with the group you know and to which you belong, and in which you fanatically and

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300 Du Bois, “The Superior Race,” 68
301 Du Bois, “The Superior Race,” 68
glorifyingly believe, bears in its bosom just now the spiritual hope of this land because of the persons who compose it and not by divine command.”

Unimpressed by Du Bois’s response the white friend presses him further: “But what is this group; and how do you differentiate it; and how can you call it ‘black’ when you admit it is not black?” Frustrated by his white’s friend’s inability to understand what he means by race and his division of human categories, Du Bois makes the statement Appiah furtively refers to as his second (and more mature) definition of race ultimately settling (and concluding) the issue of racial superiority between Du Bois and his white friend: “I recognize it quite easily and with full legal sanction: the black is a person who must ride “Jim Crow” in Georgia.”

ii. The White Friend with the Doubled Conscience

Du Bois describes his other white friend as “free, white and twenty one” and elaborates more on his biographical information: he is “respectable,” educated and literate; he belongs to the Episcopal Church, the Union League and Harvard Clubs and the Republican party; he listens to the Metropolitan Opera on Tuesdays; he is a son of the American Revolution, a reserve officer and member of the American Legion; he reads the Times, Evening Post and the Atlantic, he owns a home in Westchester valued at fifty thousand dollars; he drives a Buick; and has a wife and a fifteen year old child. But the most important fact Du Bois stipulates about his white friend is that he faces a dilemma: as a white man could he actually live up to the Christian Ideal today? Or stated.

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302 Du Bois, “The Superior Race,” 68
303 Du Bois, “The Superior Race,” 68
304 Du Bois, “The Superior Race,” 68. If Appiah is correct that the statement “the black man is a person who must ride “Jim Crow” in Georgia” represents an alternate definition of race, then the white friend’s question, “what is this group; and how do you differentiate it; and how can you call it ‘black’ when you admit it is not black” is a variation of Du Bois's “what, then, is a race” question from “Conservation.”
differently, is it possible to simultaneously be a white man and a Christian? The white friend is told by his pastor, Reverend J. Simpson Stodges, D.D., that the Christian doctrine requires that each believer seek peace on Earth as the message of Christ, good will, freedom, and toleration to all persons, upholds the Golden Rule (treats others the way you want to be treated), and sacrifices oneself for humanity. In response to his white friend’s dilemma Pastor Stodges explains, “[t]his Christian business of Peace, Good Will, The Golden Rule, Liberty and Poverty, was, of course, the Ideal” and “we can’t all always attain the heights, much less live in their rarefied atmosphere.” The Ideal was to remain supernal and not meant to be brought down to the level of the living. The best we can do, Pastor Stodges continues, is to simply aim at them and “at least live a Gentleman with the “G” capitalized.”

If the quandary were simply about whether to pursue the Christian Ideal instead of the ideals aimed by a white man then this would fail to have the significance of a dilemma, for even a white man aspires for Ideals beyond his limited existence and acknowledges his required deference before them. The white friend’s burden is not about transcendent ideals but a matter of the kind of life it is possible for him to live in the world today. Does a white man live as a white man or a Gentleman? Is it necessary to renounce whiteness in order to obtain gentility, or compulsory to yield gentility for whiteness? And if he capitulates to whiteness is it possible to simultaneously capitulate to the needs of humanity? Therefore, this white friend’s dilemma is better recast as the

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305 Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, 155
306 Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, 155
307 Here I am attempting to illuminate the contrast between Du Bois’ representation of the Ideal and his depiction of “life”.

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obscenity over his foremost obligation: authenticity to his race or responsibility to humanity.  

A Gentleman, the white friend surmises,  
“relies on the Police and Law for protection and self-assertion; he is sustained by a fine sense of Justice for himself and his Family, past and present; he is always courteous in public with “ladies first” and precedence to “gray hairs”; and even in private, he minds his manners and dignity and resists his neighbor’s wife; he is charitable, giving to the needy and deserving, to the poor and proud, to the inexplicable artists and to the Church […] he is exclusive; picking his associates with care and fine discrimination and appearing socially only where the Best People appear.  All this calls for money and a good deal of it.  He does not want to be vulgarly and ostentatiously rich.”

To be a gentleman is to be well mannered, have a sense of justice, trust in the police and law, be exclusive in one’s associations, and have a tasteful aggregation of opulence.  This mode of white existence is a comfortable aristocracy, compatible with his Christian edicts and his autobiographical narrative.  His gentility is a moderate whiteness, highbrow without exception but also without overt racist ideology.  He derives influence and status from his respectability, not from his proximity to whiteness.  But if a genteel demeanor were all that was required of the white friend he would not be suffering a dilemma.  The problem is not in locating the mode of existence we can comfortably and recurrently embody but, as his question illuminates, living up to the expectations of that identity in the prevailing day-to-day.  Our identities have to constantly compete with an already unfolding epoch of contingencies.  As this white friend reads his newspapers and frequents the associations he belongs to, he comes up against a reality that makes it

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308 Later in this project I will pose the same question in a way that links this discussion to Du Bois’s rumination on the opposition of racial identity versus radical humanism. As for now my interest lies in Du Bois’s manner of grounding his concept of race within a discussion of race as lived (and embodied). Recall from my discussion of Appiah my gesticulations that he fails to understand Du Bois’s theory of race because he downplays the additive “lived experience.” As I show in this section through these vignettes Du Bois’s racial concept is thought through and from lived spaces in the (white) world.

309 Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 156
difficult for him to live out his Christian Gentleman persona. For instance, Christian
gentility meets up against nationalism: “As Americans we’ve got to be “prepared” for
“defense. […] What is the sense of man, even though he be big, strong, well, sitting down
empty-handed while around him are grouped a dozen men armed to the teeth with every
device that brains and money can furnish?” He can neither be comfortably Christian
nor genteel in a world that is constantly threatening him from the outside.

The conflict between these two identities emerges alongside his awareness of the
world around him, and his patriotism intensifies with each perceived threat: “England
wants her trade, France wants her gold, Germany, wants her markets, Russia wants her
laborers remade into Bolsheviks. Italy wants her raw material; and above all—Japan!
Japan is about to conquer the world for the yellow race and then she’ll be ready to
swallow America. We must, therefore, be prepared to defend ourselves.”

Cyclically, his patriotism renews his self-aggrandizement and his perceived threat reinforces
the power of America. Fortunately America is always under attack so his stability of self will
rarely placates. Most importantly America needs his allegiance. It is not enough to
simply be American; Americanism requires feelings of pride, regular assertions of
nationalism, and even “seeing to it that other people are patriotic; looking about carefully
when the “Star Spangled Banner” is played to see who is sitting down and why; keeping
a watchful eye on the flag.” Americanism is always already a radical nationalism. As a
form of extremism it often utilizes violent, power-induced tactics to expand its
commerce, territory, and influence.

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310 Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, 157
311 Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, 157
312 Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, 159
The white friend is an American, and this identity rightly overwhelms him, forcing him to assimilate to a new ‘code of action’. To defend America requires, first, an abandonment of universal human equality. An American knows “perfectly well that Negroes, Chinamen, Mexicans and a lot of others who are presuming to exercise authority in this country are not our equals.”313 An American treats human beings as facts knowing that they have no capacity for possibility. America is the best because it has the best at the top (and submission and thrift at the bottom). To defend America is to defend its hierarchy; it is to defend its deception with propaganda. Deliberate propaganda “assist[s] the truth and hurries it on; it may at times exaggerate and distort but all this is for a defensible end, and newspapers, radio channels, and news distribution agencies should be owned and used for this end.”314 Instead of offending this bustling Christian Gentleman, Americanism intrigues the white friend, ‘swells his breast’ when he thinks about what a great country America is and its reputation in the world.

Somewhere between his pursuit for gentility and his stiffening patriotism, Du Bois’s white friend turns thirty. Du Bois tells us that “until my friend had reached the age of thirty he had not known that he was a white man, or at least he had not realized it.”315 As a thirty-year-old free, white, American gentleman, his whiteness sends him into a sudden revelation: to be American is to be white. The white friend’s Americanism is bound up with his whiteness, not ostentatiously but by “logical imputation”. Whiteness was the logical conclusion of his Christianity, gentility, and patriotism; it undergirds these three identities. Whiteness, a fourth code of action, “seemed in fact opposed to [his definition of “gentleman” and] yet, somehow all gentlemen that he knew were strongly

313 Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, 158
314 Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, 158
315 Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, 160
for it [and it] was found in unfinished assumption rather than plain words; in unfinished sentences, in novels, in editorials written for country papers by city sciveners; in organizations like the Ku Klux Klan which he thought was extremely silly, or the Security League, which was very respectable.”

The white friend was in fact a White Man, and this identity demanded the most attention and responsibility. Whiteness, he learned, was “fraught with tremendous responsibilities, age-old and infinite in future possibilities.” Therefore, this white code came with an implicit obligation to ensure its survival. Fortunately for whiteness, as for Americanism, it is always under attack. The white friend came to understand that ‘colored folks’ were a ubiquitous threat, responsible for the fear in America, the trepidations among his fellow white neighbors, and because they could potentially marry his fifteen-year-old daughter, they were a threat to his future possibilities. In other words, ‘colored’ existence was the greatest threat to the (white) world.

The code of whiteness begins with war, specifically a war against the darker races. It is impossible to fight the type of war whiteness requires “without full-bellied Hate.” Analogous to America’s reliance on public assertions whiteness also requires reiterations. It is insufficient for whiteness to remain suppressed, lie dormant in the background; whiteness must continue to impress itself in the world. Each reaffirmation of whiteness inscribes misanthropy and xenophobia, eventually regimenting the interchangeability between whiteness and hate. Whiteness has three laws: suspicion, exploitation and empire. Each law functioned to govern the world according to the bounds of peaceful living, not by policing whites (as whiteness needs no justification or delimitation) but as a mechanism of surveillance for the darker races. As the greatest

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316 Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 160
threat to the (white) world the yellow red, and (especially) black races needed to be monitored and any potential uprising thwarted. Suspicion and hate go hand-in-hand: “War, righteous Hate and then Suspicion. […] Meet them by full-blooded contempt for other races. Teach this to children so that it will become instinctive.” Suspicion was not so much an *a posteriori* property of non-white racial groups; it is a predisposition as innate to the white man as breathing is to humanity. To the white man the darker races were always already guilty. Exploitation merely meant transforming the dark race’s guilt into production: “using the world for the good of the world and those who own it; bringing out its wealth and abundance; making the lazy and shiftless and ignorant work for their soul’s good and for the profit of their betters, who alone are capable of using Wealth to promote Culture.” Exploitation implies empire – “the white race as ruler of all the world and the world working for it, and the world’s wealth piled up for the white man’s use.” Exploitation and empire fomented a destiny for both whites and colored races, destinies forged by white empire, constrained by white conceptions of value, and structured according to white devices of progress. Coincidently, the white man’s fate becomes intertwined with the Negro’s destiny. And instead of being cast into the unknown future open to irregularities, improbabilities, and mishaps, the white man wills a world all to familiar, a world where all destinies are white! For his part, Du Bois’s white friend “could not conceive of a world where white people did not rule colored people, and certainly if the matter actually came to a trial of force, would he not naturally have to stand for War, Hate, Suspicion, and Exploitation in order to put over the Empire

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317 Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 162
318 Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 162
319 Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 163
of the Whites?" Surprised by his subconscious acquiescence to whiteness the white friend was doomed to be white and live this identity wherever its misanthropic whims lead. More informed about what his identity entailed this white friend was convicted by a troubling realization: he is not suffering a dilemma, but a “quadri-lemma.” He had to all at once put into action four disparate codes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Gentleman</th>
<th>American</th>
<th>White Man</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Defense</td>
<td>War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Will</td>
<td>Manners</td>
<td>Caste</td>
<td>Hate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Rule</td>
<td>Exclusiveness</td>
<td>Propaganda</td>
<td>Suspicion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty</td>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Patriotism</td>
<td>Exploitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Wealth</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Empire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the verge of collapse from his quadri-lemma the white friend sits down with Du Bois to figure out how to resolve his problem. Said to the reader and not to his white friend, Du Bois informs us that his friend’s appeal to “logic” allows this quadri-lemma to persist. Christianity, gentility, patriotism, and whiteness all require an un-reasoning, or rather, a singular motivation: “to make America the greatest country on earth for white supremacy.” As Du Bois interrogates his white friend’s anxiety it becomes clear that his white friend is not particularly interested in rebuffing either identity. Rather he wants Du Bois to help him figure out how to make all four codes compatible:

“This can’t be a world of saints. We have got to have wealth and servants. Servants must be cheap and willing and the mean ought not to be so sensitive. Perhaps they are not. Bu why not have a world of gentlemen—well-policed, everybody in his place; all the rich, courteous and generous and all the poor appreciative; propaganda for the right, love of country and prosperous business;

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320 Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 163
321 In *Souls* Du Bois tells us that the Negro suffers a dilemma. In *Dusk of Dawn* Du Bois describes white consciousness as a quadri-lemma. And in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon writes that he exists in triplicate. What are the implications of this dissonance?
322 Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 164
White World leading the Colored as fare as the darkies can go. Certainly despite all your democracy, blood will tell. Now that seems to be practical.”

And a few lines later the white friend states:

“We cannot run this world without the police and courts of Justice. We must not be discourteous even to the pushing, careless, imprudent American fellow-citizen, but something is due our own self-respect. Can we get on without being exclusive? I don’t mean downright snobbishness, but be careful, nice, ‘aristocratic’ in the best meaning of the term. Finally, we of the upper class must have money. We must have it, no matter how we get it, or civilization is lost.”

The white friend suffers very little from his commitments. His goal is to become a more companionable Christian, genteel, American white man.

iii. Two White Friends, One White World

Du Bois’s two white friends make up what he calls in Dusk of Dawn “The White World.” The apposition of these two characters makes this chapter in his ‘essay towards an autobiography of a race concept’ a significant contribution to his theory of race.

When “The Superior Race” is included in Dusk of Dawn, Du Bois does not simply duplicate this text; he extends the essay by annexing a narrative of his other white friend with the quadri-lemma. Additionally, he prefaces the essay from “The Superior Race” with a cosmological discussion in which he postulates ‘a new socio-physical environment’ he has come to call “the white world.” He uses this chapter in Dusk of Dawn to explain the world in which he is not American, not a man but “by long education and continual compulsion and daily reminder, a colored man in a white world; and that white world often existed primarily, so far as I was concerned, to see with sleepless vigilance that I was kept within bounds.”

What will be important for my discussion in this section is that Du Bois describes the white world as “the modern

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323 Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, 166
324 Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, 167
325 Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, 135
counterpart of the class structure.” Against Sartre who in “Orphée Noir” (“Black Orpheus”) subordinates race to the class struggle, Du Bois describes class disparities pejoratively as a sixteenth-century preoccupation. Conversely, the twentieth century has been marred by the Negro problem, and the white world dominated human culture and impressed upon it the subordination of non-white races.

The white world simultaneously conditions individuals and forces their actions, not by directly acting upon them but by constituting the environment they live in – their movements, associations, family life, projects, economy, principles, life plans, etc.

“[M]ountains and rain, heat and cold, forest and desert…ideas and customs, laws and ideals” all directly modify and affect the individual and the white world is as powerful as these natural and social expedients. But Du Bois argues that the white world is not a physical or a social environment. Distinguishing the white world from both the natural world and the social world, he denaturalizes the world, reconstituting it artificially as the product of social construction. Furthermore, he argues that the white world undergirds our natural, physical and social environments: “this greater group environment was not a matter of mere ideas and thought; it was embodied in muscles and armed men, in scowling faces, in the majesty of judge and police and in human law which became

327 Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 134-135
328 Lewis R. Gordon points out the problems with social constructivists explanations of race. Saying that race is a social construction, he argues, gives the appearance that it is artificial disregarding that race has real effects. “How can African Americans take seriously the constructivity of their situation when social reality continues to smack them in the face as a reality that is hardly fictitious?” (Gordon, *Existentia Africana*, 94). Therefore, following the tenets of Existentialism, he privileges a phenomenological account of race that shows that race “relies on social reality for its existence without being fictions” (Gordon, *Existentia Africana*, 81). See Gordon, Lewis R. “What Does It Mean To Be A Problem? W.E.B. Du Bois on the Study of Black Folk” in *Existentia Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought.* (New York: Routledge 2000)
divine.”329 Identifying this suzerain force is not instinctive but Du Bois could feel it ‘limiting his physical movements and provincializing his thoughts and dreams.’ He writes:

“I could not stir, I could not act, I could not live, without taking into careful daily account the reaction of my white environing world. How I traveled and where, what work I did, what income I received, where I ate, where I slept, with whom I talked where I sought recreation, where I studied, what I wrote and what I could get published—all this depended and depended primarily upon an overwhelming mass of my fellow citizens in the United States, from whose society I was largely excluded.”330

The white world looms in the shadows of obscurity. And as it recedes behind the veil of the “natural” world, it evades direct reference. It becomes impossible to speak about the white world causing Du Bois to appeal to what he feels rather than what he is able to grasp by cogitation. The language of “affectivity” incites a new vocabulary in which to talk about racial consciousness, one that is attentive to how race discloses itself in the seemingly imperceptible. “Being raced” is an affectation that does not always expose itself in overt and forceful impositions. Often times it is in the subtext of various interactions: the sudden tension that flares up in a white woman when a black man enters an elevator; the cancelled requests to speak to the supervisor when the person making the requests finds out the supervisor is Black; any request to have a white or Asian doctor; the muffled undertones in a salesclerk’s voice when they ask a person of color if they were planning on purchasing the item in their hands. Du Bois’s point, however, is more pronounced than these tacit examples; he seeks to capture the totalizing situation that the white world inaugurates. More than this he points out that, although this white world is all encompassing, it maintains itself on a system of exclusions.

329 Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, 135
330 Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, 136
Interestingly, his examination of the white world as a system of exclusion proceeds alongside his discussion of (white) civilization’s resistance to the idea of equality. Equality prevented “the cultural and spiritual desire to be one’s self without interference from others; to enjoy that anarchy of the spirit which is inevitably the goal of all consciousness.”\textsuperscript{331} The rhetoric of individual freedom was deployed to grant rights and freedoms to a chosen few and to enslave those it denied rights and freedoms to.\textsuperscript{332} As a visible sign of difference skin color became the mark of race distinctions and, contrarily, the symbol for equality. Because Black existence is the greatest threat to the white world (white) civilization could not accept the equality of the races without also calling forth its (the white world’s) self-destruction. Therefore, the rejection of equality doubles as a limitation of individual freedom and a denial of the equality of the races. Although “this fact of racial distinction based on color was the greatest thing in my life and absolutely determined it,” Du Bois knew “[o]f course, there was no real wall between us.”\textsuperscript{333}

This introductory discussion of “The White World” serves to augment the allegorical meaning of these two white characters. Du Bois describes “The Concept of Race” as his “attempt to rationalize the racial concept and its place in the modern world.”\textsuperscript{334} We can infer that his rationalization of the race concept is meant to fit into “the white world”. If this is true then he must also contend that the “world” proxies for “white,” and that the “world” apart from the qualifier “white” does not exist, or rather, the world exists but only as white. This must be kept in mind whenever liberal concepts

\textsuperscript{331} Du Bois, \textit{Dusk of Dawn}, 134
\textsuperscript{332} This should explain his attack on individualism in “Conservation”.
\textsuperscript{333} Du Bois, \textit{Dusk of Dawn}, 134
\textsuperscript{334} Du Bois, \textit{Dusk of Dawn}, 133
like “universal,” “global,” “democracy,” “nationalism,” and the like are invoked. Moreover we must be equally suspicious of positions that think from the world. This is a criticism Chike Jeffers aptly reinforces in his essay, “Appiah’s Cosmopolitanism” when he describes Appiah’s cosmopolitanism as Eurocentric. It is only when we read the “world” as “Euroworld” that we begin to understand why “the black man is a person who must ride “Jim Crow” in Georgia.” Therefore, the narratives of the two white friends must be read in tandem, along a continuum of existence in which Black lives live. It is only in substituting references to the “world” as “white world” that we can begin to unpack more definitively “The Concept of the Negro,” and the chapter that follows these discussions of Du Bois’s two white friends, “The Colored World Within”. To comprehend their impact on Black life, we must detail how each white friend constitutes the world for Du Bois, and in essence, how the world is constituted by these two white actors.

Du Bois describes his first white friend as “that famous average, standardized and astonished at anything that even seems original.” Rather than accept this as a tangential comment, given the analysis of the white world just presented, I propose that the ascription “average” and “standardized” is intended to situate this particular dialogue within a normative understanding of race. Even the failure to give this white friend a name (even a pseudonym) reflects the way in which this character is intended to be generic. I argue that Du Bois’s white friend with the superiority complex represents “ordinary” ideas about how race functions – as a system of oppositions, a designation that the ascription “Black” is a mark of inferiority, as a rationale for discrimination and group

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336 Du Bois, “The Superior Race,” 60
division, etc. More than this I contend that this white friend symbolizes one of the main
types of confrontations one can have on the subject of racial identity: the conversation
with the unabashed racist. This white friend’s racism is undeniable. Du Bois does not
even suggest that his white friend attempts to conceal his racism. His eager loquacity
equally shows that he is genuinely fascinated by anything “original” and “exceptional”
and that this fascination can easily turns into fetishism when he slips into his race
consciousness. He is motivated mostly by his desire to prove the inferiority of non-white
races, to convince the black person “by emphasis and omission” to “believe that every
great soul the world ever saw was a white man’s soul; that every great thought the world
ever knew was a white man’s thought; that every great deed the world ever did was a
white man’s deed; that ever great dream the world ever sang was a white man’s
dream.”

Knowing only his own superiority, this white friend claims to understand how
racial dynamics work. But as the conversation ensues it becomes clear that he fails to
comprehend the true reach of white supremacy, the fact that he is a direct benefactor of
this system and the deception entailed in the racial narrative he promulgates.

Contradistinct from this first white friend is Du Bois’s second white friend. This
white friend constitutes the white world differently. He has very few lines of dialogue,
compared with the first white friend whose entire speech unapologetically takes on a
racist tone. Rather than his voice we have prose and exasperated statements that give
us a sense of the nature of this friend. We see this white friend not in overt racialized
language, but through his movements, associations, family life, projects, frustrations, and

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337 Du Bois, *Darkwater*, 56
338 At times it is unclear whether Du Bois is speaking directly to his white friend. Parts of “The
Superior Race” read as a soliloquy, as though the white man is speaking in earshot distance to Du
Bois and Du Bois is capturing his thoughts.
techniques of racial commerce. He has all the appropriate motivations – ideals of justice, willingness to sacrifice for humanity, seeks peace, good will, freedom, and toleration to all persons, and upholds the Golden Rule (treats others the way you want to be treated) – to give the impression that he has truly minimized and deprecated racial distinctions and can even make Blacks forget that they are Black in the world or that they live in a “white world” altogether. But, Du Bois warns, this white friend is equally dangerous. As with the first white friend, the second white friend eventually retreats into his own race consciousness and realizes he too is a white man in a white world. And for Du Bois this means that his second white friend can make him feel himself as a problem in some instances and as an exception in others. The white friend’s quadri-lemma is poised within a white world. But to him the world is not white, it is just the world – a matter of fact, already justified. The dispensation of the Ideal (as whiteness) allows him to move through the world in a state of denial, to see the world as only what he sees. He reads the tenets of the Christian doctrine as Peace for all! Good Will towards all! Liberty for all! Sacrifice for all! But his whiteness interrupts these universalist edicts and demand Peace for all Whites! Good Will towards all Whites! Liberty for all Whites! And sacrifice for all Whites!

339 This is the world Appiah took for granted in the first chapter of *Lines of Descent*, “The Awakening,” when he spoke of Du Bois “becoming more human” (Appiah, *Lines*, 28) as if the personal liberation he felt cast him into a scathing universality.

340 The countenance of the first white friend as he sparks the conversation about racial superiority reads to Du Bois as a statement equivalent to, “it is “horrible” to be an Exception” (Du Bois, “The Superior Race, 60). An interesting project, but one I do not have the space to devote, would be to contrast the feeling of exceptionalism against Du Bois’s statements about being a problem. This is relevant especially considering how “Asian” has become the model race, but also, and in an interesting way, as it pertains to African and African–American relations. The language of ‘exceptionalism’ grounds some of the frictions between these two communities, stemming from, for example, the fact that Africans were given special privileges that African Americans were not given such as an ability to obtain degrees at Ivy League Institutions at a time when African Americans were denied that same opportunity. It is necessary to interrogate these examples and others like it because, as Du Bois tells us, it is as horrible to be treated as an exception as it is to have your existence “kept within bounds” by white gatekeepers.
In “The White World” Du Bois divides the world into two parts – an overt racist world and a pseudo-universalist world with white supremacist tendencies. Although there are two separate worlds, the Black person exists in both, and exists differently in both. This clarifies why Du Bois describes the Negro as having a double consciousness. Yet, this cosmological depiction is not exclusive to Du Bois or to a portrait of the situation of the Negro. Because of the parallel between this discussion of the white world and Sartre’s description of the Jew, I proceed in the next section to outline Sartre’s cosmology through his discussion of the Democrat, the Anti-Semite and the Jew in *The Anti-Semite and Jew* (1946) and his lecture, “Reflections on the Jewish Question” (1949).

**iv. Sartre’s Jewish World**

*In what does the Jewish world consist?* While Jewish identity is predicated on a world that sees them from an anti-Semitic perspective, a world that sees and takes them as a Jew, what has been undervalued in Sartrean scholarship is that his analysis of the Jewish question is propelled by two characters: the anti-Semite and the Democrat. More than just representing two kinds of people or two historical figures, the Democrat and the anti-Semite represent a reality in which the Jew moves through, lives through, and must be understood through. To discuss the Jew only from the viewpoint of the anti-Semite without taking note of the extreme humanism of the Democrat is to miss the simultaneous play of two realities.

The Jew is thrown into the world, and the world awaits the Jew. Though this world sometimes meets them with unwelcomed stares and anti-Semitic responses, these moments of explicit assault do not constitute the most prevalent confrontations. It is not the contentious anti-Semitic imaginary that overwhelms the Jewish imagination but the
“official, democratic society”. It is the perspective of the democrat that dominates the Jew’s world and anti-Semitism lies behind this democratic society. The anti-Semite who creates the Jew is concealed by a society that refuses to see them as Jew, a society that provides only categorical explanations to the Jewish question. This is not to deny anti-Semitism and the effect it has on the Jewish psyche but to insist with more emphasis that the anti-Semite exists. And the Jew encounters the anti-Semite through the constant deprivations “of the possessions to which he has the right in whatever domain it might be to or of the free exercise of his civil rights.”\textsuperscript{341} In the world the Jew is both wo/man and not-wo/man, Jew and not-Jew. The situation of the Jew is such that she is a Jew in the mode of not being a Jew. In other words, the Jew is caught between these two realities, present within two social structures. Thus, an investigation into the situation of the Jew will reflect the Jew as a universal being (through the perspective of the democrat) and as a particular type of human (through the perspective of the anti-Semite). And because the official society is that of the democrat, my discussion of the Jewish world will begin with what Sartre calls the “analytical conception of society and of man.”\textsuperscript{342}

A social structure built on democratic values tries to show that society is only a stage that, on occasion, temporarily brings individuals with divergent interests together.\textsuperscript{343} To think of society as a space that confirms individual difference is to see social transformations as the manifestations of inherent human difference, or rather, to equivocate human nature and society. According to the democrat, human nature, as the “prime unit of society,” does not function like a society. Whereas individuals are able to

\textsuperscript{341} Sartre, Jean-Paul. “Reflections on the Jewish Question, A Lecture”: October, Vol. 87, (Winter, 1999), 41 Hereinafter abbreviated as “Reflections”.
\textsuperscript{342} Sartre, “Reflections,” 34
\textsuperscript{343} Sartre, “Reflections,” 35
“escape every deep transformation [and] remains the same in every circumstance,” Democratic societies can (and have) undergo massive change in their form. Human nature is able to escape such severe transformation because the body is a “sum of atoms that are not submitted to the action of the whole and […] can enter different ensembles without being significantly modified.” To the Democrat, there is nothing exceptional about the Jew; they are individuals among other individuals. By referring to the Jew as an individual the Democrat does not mean to suggest that there are any distinctive qualities particular to the Jew but “the incarnation is a single example of the universal traits which make up nature.” Sartre’s analytic conception of ‘woman’ understands the Jew as one of many “members of humanity”. The traits that anti-Semitism designates as the Jewish nature the Democrat thinks could be found anywhere: “if the anti-Semite reproaches the Jew for his avarice, the democrat will reply that he knows Jews who are not avaricious and Christians who are.” Because they view persons as nothing but a sum of elements, they also consider identities as irrelevant to the justification of systems of discrimination. Democrats pride themselves on being the friend of the Jew but their friendship is dependent on seeing Jews as members of humanity. Because “humanity has other members whom he must also defend,” the Democrat advocates for humanity in general and not the Jew in particular.

Following this “analytic spirit” we can understand Jewish identity as a misnomer; there is no identity that is uniquely Jewish, nor is there any idiosyncratic way of being.

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344 Sartre, “Reflections,” 35
345 Sartre, “Reflections,” 35
347 Sartre, The Anti-Semite and Jew, 56
348 Sartre, The Anti-Semite and Jew, 73
Jewish. There is only one way to be — *human* — and it exists as an ensemble of universal traits of which the Jew possesses *qua* individual. As Sartre puts it, there is “only man — man always the same in all times and places.” In order for the Jew to overcome the weight of their Jewishness, they must transcend the structures that imprison them, of which identity is the most ferocious. The Jew lives in a world that fails to recognize their Jewishness, not out of a practice of discrimination but out of a commitment to civil liberties for all and a ubiquitous recognition of equal rights. And in response the Jew must maneuver through the world by denying their Jewishness and elevating their humanity. In this way the first utterance the Jew makes to the world is a demand that it sees them as citizens of the world.

Sartre held a democratic view until 1939 when an encounter with a Jew made him realize that the Jew, “attached to his people, utterly patriotic” becomes “rather disappointed to realize that I [Sartre] was not ready to see in him anything but a man similar to others and that I was missing — because I viewed things that way — some components of his person that he himself considered to be something of value and worth being respected.” This conversation led Sartre to conclude that “the whole does not exist and that there are only individuals.” Sartre does not mean here the abstract, universal individual the Democrat represents but a person or specific group of people with distinctive traits, deeply historical narratives and particular experiences not shared by the entirety of humanity. He means a person who does not deny their Jewishness but is more conscious of their Jewishness than their humanity. Opposed to the Democrat’s view, the synthetic conception of the Jew portrays an individual who has “forced them to

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349 Sartre, *The Anti-Semite and Jew*, 55
350 Sartre, “Reflections,” 35
351 Sartre, “Reflections,” 36
think of themselves as Jews” and who others have made “conscious of their solidarity with other Jews.”352; an individual who has formed a synthetic whole with the idea of themselves as Jew.

The problem with the idea of a liberal individual is that people do not see themselves simply as individuals devoid of spiritual significations and practices but as individuals with certain customs and affinities that are shared with a community of others. In other words they already understand themselves as having a specifically Jewish (or African American, African, Latino/a, White, male, female, heterosexual, homosexual, etc.) identity. The perspective of the Democrat is problematic for the Jew because “his defense of the Jew saves the latter as a man and annihilates him as Jew.”353 Sartre argues that in failing to see the Jew’s “synthetic reality” the Democrat exposes a fundamental flaw in his account. More than just being mistaken about what Jews consider to be the most salient feature of their identity, the deficiency of a liberal individual amounts to a fear of identity. The Democrat is afraid that human nature is not homogenous and that there are true differences among peoples. The Democrat fears the “awakening of the Jewish consciousness” in the Jew, that is, he fears that the Jew will acquire a consciousness of the Jewish collectivity.”354 The Democrat worries that equal representation to human particularities will eventually lead to anarchy; they are concerned with the political ramifications of Jewish identity. In retreating back to their interiority – as opposed to, remaining in the realm of a collective, universal humanism – the Jew spearheads the destruction of humanity. Therefore, the Democrat “suppress[es]

352 Sartre, The Anti-Semite and Jew, 145
353 Sartre, The Anti-Semite and Jew, 56
354 Sartre, The Anti-Semite and Jew, 56
the Jew for the sake of the man”\textsuperscript{355} and plunges them “into the democratic crucible whence he will emerge naked and alone, an individual and solitary particle like all the other particles.”\textsuperscript{356} The Jew is assimilated into society.

Against a Democratic society structured on the assimilation of persons is a social structure that denies the Jew the luxury of assimilation. Under the veil of this other, hidden society arises Sartre’s famous declaration that the anti-Semite creates the Jew. What informs anti-Semitism is not an \textit{a posteriori} encountering but an idea that produces a particular experience, situation, taste, passion, existence and response towards an identified Other: the Jew. But what has been invented is not a fact about the Jew but an idea – an idea impregnates other ideas. Anti-Semitism is this process of conceptualization, the making of a Jew who is inseparable from the idea. But more than this it is the brazen attempt to seal the Jew within that concept by contextualizing Jewish nature within a social-historical condition. The idea of the Jew, as made and manipulated by the anti-Semite, has been projected onto the world and structures the society that the Jew is thrown into. This “exteriority of the interior” is captured by Sartre’s description of anti-Semitism as an “involvement of the mind, but one so deep-seated and complete that it extends to the physiological realm,”\textsuperscript{357} and leads Sartre to conclude that the Jew is not only recognizable by his physical nature but by his character and his situation.\textsuperscript{358} But as we have just seen an inquiry into the situation of the Jew leads one back to the idea of the Jew constructed by the anti-Semite. So even if one takes the path of the Democrat and attempts to consider the Jew in abstraction and exteriority alone (i.e. outside of their

\textsuperscript{355} Sartre, \textit{The Anti-Semite and Jew}, 144
\textsuperscript{356} Sartre, \textit{The Anti-Semite and Jew}, 57
\textsuperscript{357} Sartre, \textit{The Anti-Semite and Jew}, 11
\textsuperscript{358} Sartre, \textit{The Anti-Semite and Jew}, 10
Jewishness) one will always retreat to particularities. In Sartre’s experience, “whatever effort we made to reach the person, it was always the Jew we encountered.” Therefore, Sartre instructs us that in order to understand the condition of the Jew we must start by acknowledging one fact: “[t]he Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew.” As demonstrated above, the Jew is suspended in two realities – the gaze of the Democrat and the gaze of the anti-Semite. “The former wishes to destroy him as a man and leave nothing in him but the Jew, the pariah, the untouchable.” Sartre tells us, but “the latter wishes to destroy him as a Jew and leave nothing in him but the man, the abstract and universal subject of the rights of man and the rights of the citizen.”

**Conclusion:**

Sartre’s analysis of the Jewish world includes an aspect that we do not find in Du Bois’s white world, namely a humanistic superstructure foregrounding the Jewish world. But in Du Bois’s white worldview there is no Democratic superstructure dominating a racist substructure. Rather, there is *only* the white world, and it is a world of race/racism superimposed on race/racism. Some may object and argue that it is possible to read Du Bois’s interlocutions with his second white friend as an allusion to this Democratic world, and, therefore, to see Sartre’s Democrat as a white man experiencing a quadri-lemma. There are certainly undeniable similarities between the two, but to hold a truly Democratic position this white friend must be able to conceive Du Bois as a man independent of his racial identity. Yet, in neither of these vignettes do his white friends see Du Bois as anything but a Negro. Every interaction contains an implicit, “Look, a Negro!” The Negro, unlike the Jew, is not caught in two different worlds – one that sees

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359 Sartre, *The Anti-Semite and Jew*, 77
360 Sartre, *The Anti-Semite and Jew*, 69
361 Sartre, *The Anti-Semite and Jew*, 57
them as a Negro and one that sees them as a human – but exists perpetually under the
gaze of the white man, whether that gaze is from an other or a self-reflection.

**PART II: WHAT, AFTER ALL, AM I? WHAT, THEN, IS A RACE?**

**BEING A QUESTION TO ONESelf**

Having explored the existential situation of the Negro and the cosmological
underpinnings that ground Du Bois’s reflections on race I would like to return to his
sociohistorical conception of race in an effort to draw some final conclusions. After
stating what I take Du Bois’s sociohistorical definition of race to mean, I connect the two
questions from “Conservation,” – *What, then, is a race* and *What, after all, am I* – to the
definition of the sociohistorical conception of race I defend. My aim is to mark the
distinction between the ‘what am I’ question and the ‘what is a race’ question through an
Existentialist analysis, framed around the problem of being a question to oneself.

As I argued in the third section of Chapter 1 (“The Sociohistorical Conception of
Race”), “Conservation” presents the first articulation of the sociohistorical definition of
race as a doubling concept. In “Conservation” Du Bois bridges two opposing definitions
of race: the concept of race that the scientists have given (vast family, inheritance
schemes, common blood and language) and that aspect of race that is “clearly defined to
the eye of the Historian and Sociologist” (common history, traditions and impulses,
strivings, and ideals of life). As he reflects on race in *Souls* he describes the Negro as a
strange doubling of consciousness: the sense of looking at oneself through the eyes of
another, of having “two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring
ideals in one dark body,” and of being simultaneously an American and a Negro (this latter doubling was introduced in “Conservation”). And by Dusk his investigations into race lead him to discuss the double structure of the white world: an overt racism coupled with a subterranean pursuit for global white supremacy. With his binomial definition of race Du Bois inaugurates a new hermeneutical framework that prioritizes the fundamental twoness at the core of racial subjectivity (as lived, conscious and embodied). He shows that this duality is not given by apriority but through experience. And it is through this ontological structure that one begins to apprehend the permanence of the lived experience of race. But the novelty of Du Bois’s conception of race, in line with this doubling effect, is that his definition is both social and historical.

History has been the operative term in Du Bois’s analysis of race. It concerns itself with the movement and progression of human groups, and these groups are constituted not by national affiliations but by their racial identities. As a social and a historical fact, the Negro is the explicit subject matter of human history. Therefore, she is vulnerable to the movement of history and serves as the locus (and measure) of human progress. She is profusely impacted by the world because she is ontologically connected to the survival of humanity; her fate is tied ineluctably to everyone else’s. She is imprisoned by her responsibility to humanity and must at all times possess a deeply felt

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363 I think of philosophy in the same way. There is a threat of self-obliteration hampering philosophy on a grand scale. The failure of black philosophers and black thought in philosophy portends a surreptitious pathology that will eventually infect all philosophy down to its roots. Any philosopher interested in the renewal of thinking or the future of philosophy without interest – not just nominally, but through direct action and as a conscious political reaction to the practice of philosophy – in the demographics of their Department, the diversity of thought that accompanies demographic alterations, and in the positioning – marginalization and silencing – of black and brown bodies within the discipline should take care to guard their loins. Their work is liable to regurgitate the same cycle of mundanity that stops short of “breaching” philosophy with philosophy. The eternal return of the same is the specter that stalks philosophy.
sense of herself. For this reason, her fate must out of necessity be inescapable. The sociohistorical conception of race is an attempt to understand this abiding dynamic of racial identity. In this way, it is clear to see that the sociohistorical conception of race is no longer implicated by the preoccupations of biological inheritance. In fact, Du Bois has surpassed these facile explanations of race. He claims, “it is easy to prove that physical characteristics are not so inherited as to make it possible to divide the world into races […] that the possibilities of human development cannot be circumscribed by color, nationality, or any conceivable definition of race.”

“All this,” he adds, “has nothing to do with the plain fact that throughout the world today organized groups of men by monopoly of economic and physical power, legal enactment and intellectual training are limiting with determination and unflagging zeal the development of other groups; and that the concentration particularly of economic power today puts the majority of mankind into a slavery to the rest.”

Therefore, I follow Nahum C. Chandler’s characterization of the sociohistorical conception of race as the recognition of “the historical problem, or the historical form of the problematization of existence, the kind of problematic, that has organized its emergence and rendered both its necessity and its possibility.”

**What, After All, Am I?**

In the midst of his existential reflections on the predicaments of the Negro in “Conservation”, Du Bois asks, *What, after all, am I?* His response to this question differs sharply from how Appiah takes up this question in *Color Conscious* and *The Ethics of Identity*. Appiah begins by first distinguishing the ‘what I am’ question from the ‘who I am’ question qualifying the first as a question of identity and the second as a matter of

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364 Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 137
individuality. Then, following Ian Hacking, he responds that ‘what I am’ is a kind of person. Du Bois approaches this question differently from Appiah. He refuses to answer the question simply because this question cannot be answered. For Existentialists the ontological question of the form ‘what am I’ is not a matter of “kind”; it is not a taxonomy or classificatory system. The question ‘what am I’ pertains to one of many ‘modalities of being’. It is an experience of being that is both embodied and conscious, that privileges “the way things are announced in or as existence”. As we see in “Conservation,” in asking this question further questions arise:

“There are a few observations I would like to make about Du Bois’s response to the question ‘what am I’. The first is that ‘what I am’ is always in the form of a question; it is not already settled, determined, or justified but must be continuously posed and suspended. As a question that cannot be answered it instead returns its own set of questions to me that call into question the “meaning” of my existence and, because it inquires into my racial identity, the “being” of Blackness. By producing further questions, the question ‘what am I’ is primordially an “incessant self-questioning”.

367 Appiah, Color Conscious, 78-80 and Appiah, The Ethics of Identity, 65-71
368 Du Bois, “Conservation,” 113
369 There is a subtle slippage in my claim that Du Bois does not write about the being of the Negro as such, but about meaning as he moves from seeing the ‘what am I’ as a question of meaning versus an ontological question that requires attention. To raise the ‘what am I’ question as a question of meaning rather than a purely ontological question about the being of an existent is to resist an attempt to say anything definitive about the unencumbered self. There is a need to maintain the interpretive (some theorists would say “creative” or “openness”) aspect of ‘what I am’ and the meaning of my Blackness. I am not sure what is at stake for me in this discussion other than a pressing need to uphold Blackness is an “interpretive” Blackness.
was a point I brought out in Chapter 1. When Du Bois inquired into the situation of the Negro in “Conservation” he described the situation of the Negro race in America as an “incessant self-questioning” and “hesitation” that renders the condition of the Negro a sequence of “vacillation and contradiction”. In other words, the Negro is an eternal question, the oldest question in history. ‘What I am’ is a being in a situation that is an incessant question to herself.

**WHAT, THEN, IS A RACE?**

*What, then, is a race?* My aim in this project has been to remain loyal to the definition Du Bois provides in “Conservation” as “a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life.” But, as I have also argued throughout this project, Du Bois’s answer to the question what, then, is a race becomes synonymous with what, then, does race mean. This method of returning analysis to the question of meaning is characteristic of the Existentialist tradition, especially the view that meaning is given in a non-formalistic way since meaning is decided in and through existing itself. The question of meaning was intended not only to show that the ‘what am I’ question is coextensive with the ‘what is race’ question but was also the manner by which I united Du Bois’s writings on race from “Conservation” through *Dusk of Dawn*.

Returning to *Dusk*, Du Bois writes: “this surrounding group, in alliance and agreement with the white European world, was settled and determined upon the fact that I was and must be a thing apart.” With these words Du Bois provides an answer to the ontological question he poses in “Conservation” – *what, after all, am I?*  

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370 Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 136
responds that he is and must be “a thing apart.” I would like to briefly begin my commentary on these ontological statements with a brief discussion of Du Bois’s ontology of embodiment and the problem of difference. Du Bois concludes that he must be “a thing apart” because of the white world’s response to his skin color. Therefore, his body became the expression of difference, doubling as a physical object (Cesaire’s “thingification”) and a repository for difference. But, interestingly enough, his body was not the source of difference. The source of difference was his being and it seeped into every aspect of his life: “how I traveled and where, what work I did, what income I received, where I ate, where I slept, with whom I talked where I sought recreation, where I studied, what I wrote and what I could get published.” Like the white world (and because of it) Du Bois’s difference was totalizing.

What race means to Du Bois is the psychosomatic experience of being a problem. Du Bois always poses this problem as a question – *How does it feel to be a problem?* – and he tells us in “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” that this question cannot be said directly. It often goes unasked, unsaid, and is constantly caught in the act of saying, through feelings of delicacy. And yet, he tells us “being a problem is a strange experience.” What I have hoped I offered through this reading of Du Bois, and the connection between the ‘what am I’ question and the ‘what is race’ question, is that race is the psychosomatic experience of being a problem, and this is fundamentally a problem of being a question to oneself.
CONCLUSION: RACIAL IDENTITY’S PROBLEM OF DIFFERENCE

In this project I have endeavored to retheorize racial identity – what we mean by racial identity, how it operates in political and philosophical discourses, how it is affected by the (a)symmetry of theoretical discourse and common usage, whether it is viable outside localized contexts (e.g. America, “Euroworld”, Black Studies, etc.), and whether it is necessary to unpack this compound-complexity before we can understand how “race” and “identity” enclose onto an existent. I have taken up this project of retheorization because I am primarily concerned with the unrestricted use of “black/ness,” the (mis)appropriation of black identity, and black political rhetoric within African Diasporic experiences, more broadly. My concern stems from the growing tendency to jettison racial identities in favor of a conception of universal humanism. More concretely, it is a concern with how we think racial identity politics within new coding systems where “black,” “identity,” and “race” are intertwined with universalized ideas such as “justice,” “morality,” “human,” and “difference,” and such geospatial ideas as “citizenship,” “the economy of violence,” “democracy,” and “nationalism”. This might appear as a standard configuration of racial identity but contextualized by a world where #BlackLivesMatters, where xenophobic killings of Africans in South Africa are becoming rampant, and where there is currently an ethnic cleansing of Haitians in the Dominican Republic we must seriously think through how racial identity operates in the politicized world we live in today. As an American racial theorist it is imperative that this titivation of “racial identity” occur, especially considering how the case of Rachel Dolezal has shown the need for racial identity to be rethought since our current conceptual repertoire is
incapable of thinking Dolezal’s racial identity. This case alone shows the incoherence of our current philosophical and societal resources. And this is just within the localized unfolding of American life and has not begun to breach the terrain that constitutes the “cosmopolitan” (or, “Afropolitan”) worldview.

For these reasons Appiah is a very helpful resource. He encapsulates the theoretical inversion of the position I defend in this project. Appiah’s treatment of race represents a version of transnational racial politics that is impractical for those who have to confront the futility of and shrill apathy towards their existence. His rather domesticated prescription fails to observe that participation in a cosmopolitan ethics requires a rending sacrifice, a sacrifice that those who have never had their beings returned to them as a question relate to differently and may fail to truly appreciate. Appiah attenuates the significance of the subject’s position, and in so doing he trivializes the difference in responsibility and sacrifice for the Black subject and the imperial white subject. He seems to forget that the world he is trying to make more congenial is a racist world whose colonial history makes the identity of the subject and the mitigation of her identity tenuous. It is not as simple, as he attempts to make it, to reify the community at the expense of the individual. Selecting where to begin theoretical analysis is not a matter of convenience or preference, nor is it arbitrary. Rather, it is a political decision that has real consequences for real people. Therefore, the way one approaches the question what is racial identity depends on how one understands the problems and challenges of the world today and, more importantly, from whose perspective.

Appiah asserts that Du Bois “always recognized the risk that black folk, facing a world in which so many of the white people they met would disdain them, would
withdraw from contact across nations and peoples, the contact that the cosmopolitan
claims is vivifying and essential."³⁷¹ Appiah tries to find an ethical terrain that allows for
the flourishing of both a cosmopolitanism in which individuals can give expression to a
multiplicity of identities (and loyalties) while building an enlightened global community
through dialogue and discovery. Apart from an ethical deficiency, he believes that the
problems and challenges of the world today stem from an inability to express
individuality, and to have that expression (of difference) respected and deemed valuable,
without curtailing the sociability of the broad-scale recognition underlining it. Therefore,
he proposes genuine dialogue across societies “with people who hold views other than
your own.” The goal of these cross-experiential conversations, he continues, is to
“discover that there is no non-question-begging way of settling on the basic facts,
whether moral or nonmoral, from which to begin the discussion.”³⁷² As he points out,
“[t]here are no guaranteed foundations.” By instituting ethical dialogues he successfully
locates a way of thinking identity that recognizes both the centrality of difference within
human individuality and the fundamental moral unity of humanity.

Emmanuel Levinas has a similar problematic in mind as he writes Totality and
Infinity (1961): how can I coexist with the other without reducing my identity to the other
or the others to mine? How can I maintain my identity while keeping the other’s
otherness intact? How can I live my own existence without penetrating the experience of
the other? Like Appiah, Levinas claims that the solution to the problem of alterity is
language. The question raised by the presence of the other creates a distance that can only

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be bridged by a response. The goal of this communication is to reach out to the other, to escape egocentrism and form a community with others. This he tells us requires more than a word in passing; it calls for genuine efforts to communicate with others. However, and unlike Appiah, in this Levinasian framework community building requires both generosity and sacrifice. Generosity allows me to give freely of myself to others and for others and sacrifice allows the escape from self to occur. The type of sacrifice that Levinas imagines here does not imply a form of submission to the other that is either binding or limiting but the formation of a relationship.

Communication creates a genuine relationship, one that is neither forced nor planned. It is difficult to think about how this relationship can be forged without, as Levinas prescribes, generosity and sacrifice. I began this concluding with a statement about Appiah’s failure to recognize that participation in a cosmopolitan ethics requires sacrifice and claimed that the sacrifice of the ego is different for those whose being returns to them as a question than for the imperial white subject. One way to interpret this statement is to see it as a claim that requires that, because the white imperial subject presents itself as the only legitimate subject, whiteness be deracinated in order for cosmopolitan ethics to be realized. But Appiah does not centralize racism and white supremacy in his discussion of racial identity. He only recognizes that racism has “moral consequences” and that we need to move beyond racism, therefore, failing to see the role whiteness plays in global systems (or even the provincialism in his own work as Chike Jeffers and Nkiru Nzegwu argue). Thus, his notion of “rooted cosmopolitanism”

can only minimally execute the interventions his ethical framework requires.

Additionally, because his communitarianism seeks to free the individual, imprisoned within racial systems of denigration, from the weight of subjectivity in an attempt to imagine blackness as something other than a badge of “discrimination and insult” the subject position he actually eliminates is Black racial subjectivity - to abolish the Negro entirely. It comes down to the aim of his wishy-washy cosmopolitanism: not to nihilate the individual but to preserve the individual within the community. In other words his “rooted cosmopolitanism” never attempted to deracinate the white subject. Instead Appiah’s cosmopolitanism keeps the ego within the conversation with the other, reflecting neither sacrifice nor generosity.

An alternative way to express the same idea is to situate the decentering of whiteness within Appiah’s demand for cross-experiential dialogue. In order to see the pitfalls and dangers of Appiah’s prescription, and because of their overall similarities, I turn now to a discussion of Maria Lugones’s notion of “world”-travelling. Lugones defines “world”-traveling as the willful exercise of flexibility animated through playfulness. It is a cross-cultural, cross-contextual, cross-racial loving attitude that emphasizes and affirms plurality as an ontological and epistemological truism. The skills involved in this type of flexibility requires one to move in and out of bounded spaces in which one is simultaneously constructed and Othered, and in which one is more or less ‘at home’ in the world. Playfulness is both the ability to make oneself ‘at ease’ in a world and the willingness to travel between worlds. It depends on the way in which I take

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376 To be at ease in a “world” requires (1) becoming a fluent speaker in that world (2) being normatively happy in that world (3) being humanly bonded (having people in the world who I love and who love me) (4) having a shared (daily) history with citizens of that world.
a certain proprietorship to the world, that is, the way in which I claim certain worlds as “mine”.

But “world”-travelling also requires an uneasiness with the world, one that propels me to travel to other worlds. Lugones argues that it would be dangerous for me to be maximally easy in a world or fully comfortable at home. A certain level of arrogance arises from maximal ease. I must be at ease in some respects and not others. The outsider’s consciousness she explores in her paper is sensitive to her marginalized position and is aware of the feelings that accompany the insider and outsider experience. This is how she can feel herself differently in worlds. Traveling entails a shift from being oneself to being a different person. Travelling also entails an understanding of alterity, that there is a chasm that separates you from the citizens of another world. The more one travels the less the world as a totality of experiences seem foreign or alien. Lugones encourages us to travel to other territorialized spaces and to exercise a playfulness that makes us at ease in these elsewheres. As a “world”-traveller I am thought to exist in a world that is bounded and that I territorialize for myself. It gives me a coherent understanding of myself that forces me to remember myself in each world I travel (which requires a memory of a self) without Husserl’s transcendental ego unifying conscious experience. It is this world that I must leap outside of and from which I must feel myself free to travel.

When Appiah describes Black racial identity as always already a national identity, (thus always already beyond the individual) he reconstitutes Blackness as primordially itinerant and socially conversant. Therefore, always already in a state of play. But the main problem with the symbol of tourism is that tourists end up returning to the West,
serving the West, and forming their identities as Westernized subjects, begging the question of whether only Westerners travel. “World”-travellers belong to a narrow, privileged class, where travel is easy and products are singular. This rhetoric suggests that a tourist can be positively characterized as a person who temporarily travels outside of their normal environment for hedonistic purposes, and negatively characterized as a passerby who holds passive, neutral and objective spectatorial views of places they only visit, and whose motivations for travel are egocentric. What these tourists take as souvenirs are stationary, fixed cultural images they display on cliché-ridden mantels for the world to see how they maintain the differences and nuances of otherworlds. And Appiah’s cross-experiential dialogues serve this economercial industry by perpetuating this elistist and ‘Western- subject-centered-I’.

Appiah’s requirement of travel seem like a first world artifice and luxury that maintains the antipodal bond between blackness and the (white) world forgetting that it is whiteness that interrupts a Black persons free play of consciousness. Therefore, his allusion to world traveling and cross-experiential dialogue also fails to dislodge whiteness from its imperial subject position.

My point is this: Appiah is insensitive to the interpenetration of race, individuality and subjectivity. The notion of “rooted cosmopolitanism” he developed over the span of 30 years and more than seven books returns the same problematic picture: the illusion of the global significance of race. To avoid race because it is much too cumbersome or to consider race inessential is to practice utopian ethics. Therefore, I call for an ontology of racial identity that supports the relations of power, history, and intersubjectivity.

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377 Here I am thinking of Mbembe’s explanation of why many have been unable to produce a new narrative about Africa. Under the first reason – societies compose and invent themselves in a present tense that is always ahead of the knowledge produced about them - he writes: “What binds societies, made up of multiple assemblages and disjunctive syntheses, is some kind of artifice they come to believe in” (Writing the World, 349).
intertwined in the ascription “racial identity” or “Afropolitan,” and even “human” (in the way Raven Simone articulates it). This is not to dismiss the complexities in the concept of race that Appiah’s oeuvre has rigorously detailed, but to argue that taking the individual into transcendent life and dressing her up with universal words, universal commitments, and moral language in order to overcome the problem of racial distinction is not a viable solution. The solution must be, following Du Bois in “Conservation,” to begin with the existential predicament of the Negro.

Appiah’s attempt to transcend the problem of difference does not attend to Du Bois’s main existential conundrum: How does it feel to be a problem? To surmount the problem of difference requires that we somehow escape this ontological truism of Blackness. Given that the situation of the Negro is one who cannot escape their facticity, how does Appiah propose to overcome the problem of difference when it is their fundamental being that is problem? Neither assimilation nor transcendence is a rational possibility. Only existentialism provides “a concern with existential bodies that are shaped by the world that they occupy even while they give shape to it” which is the key to understanding racial identity.

I want to return to the central objective of this project: to deploy existential critical philosophy of race to explore what might remain of Du Bois’s sociohistorical definition of race as we move towards a new conceptual framework from which to understand racial identity. This objective can be divided into three parts: (1) an analysis of what remains of Du Bois’s sociohistorical definition of race once the existential tradition has framed our reading of the “Conservation”; (2) whether a definition of race

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can be sketched from my analysis; and (3) whether my analysis tells us more about
‘racial identity’ than it does about race. As I address each part in these concluding
remarks I intend to emphasize the contribution this project makes to Critical Philosophy
of Race scholarship.

To the first point, I argued throughout this project that when an examination of
the “Conservation” is framed around the challenges Du Bois faces as he tries to articulate
his own experience in a segregated world, it provides us with a different conceptual and
lexical repertoire from which to think about racial existence. Appiah mistakenly accepts
the entire definition as the sociohistorical view, allowing him to deny the sociohistorical
account wholesale. But Du Bois means to underline the convergences and divergence, the
meaningfulness and the absurdity of race. He identifies his task as providing the means to
transcend physical difference, to surpass biology in order to allow for the possibility of a
(Negro) future. These aspects of his definition of race remain at the end of this analysis,
albeit in a more sophisticated form.

To the second point, I attempted to explore the definition of race that arises from
my analysis, focusing on the connection between the idea of race and the notions of
politics, culture, nation and citizenship. I argue that Appiah is correct in Lines of Descent
when he claims that there is some slippage in how Du Bois uses the term race. As he
argues, sometimes race “suggests a form of membership that can be defined
independently of politics”379, sometimes Du Bois uses it interchangeably with nation to
describe a form of belonging, and at other times he identifies the Negro race as a people
who have their identities as a question, those who are not yet conscious of themselves,

and those who have not achieved the self-consciousness and freedom that is their history.

If my comments about race in this project suggest that it can be separated from politics, and insofar as it cannot, then the conception of race I develop will always be foregrounded by a commentary on racism.

Finally, the underlying goal of this project has been to offer an account of *racial identity* that serves as a response to Appiah’s project to create racial identities without races. Appiah writes in *Color Conscious* that

> “what Du Bois was after was the idea of racial identity, which I shall roughly define as a label, *R*, associated with *ascriptions* by most people (where ascription involves descriptive criteria for applying the label); and *identifications* by those that fall under it (where identification implies a shaping role for the label in the intentional acts of the possessors, so that they sometimes act as an *R*), where there is a history of associating possessors of the label with an inherited racial essence (even if some who use the label no longer believe in racial essences).”

This allows him to suggest that “racial identities could persist even if nobody believed in racial essences, provided both ascription and identification continue.” After further thought I still wonder if my preoccupation with the concept of race was presumptuous and this analysis (especially the emphasis on lived experience) centers on racial identities and not race proper, and therefore, might be guilty of promoting a version of racial identity without races (- Appiah *light*). I have in mind Fanon’s supposed humanistic project near the end of *Black Skin, White Masks* where it is indeterminate whether race must be transcended, and if so, how to read the experiences he has just outlined. In other words, does Fanon weep because he must turn his back to race or does he weep as a result of the permanence of his condition? Additionally, neither Sartre nor Levinas speak about race, per se, but in terms of racial identity. And insofar as Jews are not thought to

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381 Appiah, *Color Conscious*, 82
be a racial or religious group, Levinas’s comments might not directly provide a conception of racial identity (although his statements about identity broadly conceived allows for his account of identity to extend to a conception of ‘racial identity’). Sartre on the other hand observes that racial identities are thought to be recognizable through collective somatic characteristics. But to define a group’s identity on the basis of physical distinctions is a complex problem. This makes it difficult to sketch a coherent portrait of a racial identity on both the group and individual level. So I would like to continue to explore what we learn about the concept of race at the intersection of race and racial identity.

It is my goal in this project to complicate our understanding of the meaning of racial identity in an ever-expanding global world, by referring to comparative approaches to that task of dealing with the difficulties of constructing a theory of race. My interest in retheorizing race occurs within the throes of globalized ideology and diasporic misappropriations of racial identity (as evidenced in my autobiographical narrative). This is why Appiah’s cosmopolitanism requires further consideration and leads me to investigate one more time whether Du Bois (and by proxy, any appeal to racial identity) is relevant today. In addition to exploring the possible implications I detail above. I also address the dichotomy between conserving race and a possible self-obliteration in the form of radical humanism or cosmopolitanism in the conclusion. Du Bois asked it best in “Conservation”: Have we in America a distinct mission as a race – a distinct sphere of action and opportunity for race development, or is self-obliteration the highest end to which Negro blood dare aspire? Along these lines I am forced to return this same conundrum to myself: “Has racial identity in the Black world a distinct mission – a
distinct sphere of purpose and action, or is self-obliteration the highest end to which appeals to racial identity (and to a large extent, the Critical Philosophy of Race as a discipline) dare aspire?
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