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Commentators are agreed that while Du Bois names 'double-consciousness' – using the term once – and uses that *conception* in his own way throughout that 1903 text of *Souls of Black Folk*, the term does not reappear in any of his subsequently published texts. That does not necessarily mean he abandons the conception, of course, but most of the commentary on his employment of the conception focuses on the treatment of the issues it names in *Souls*. There have been some attempts to interpret various of his other works in terms of the conception, but the works used to demonstrate this tend to be his fictional writings, and the use made of these is not primarily to develop the 1903 conception but rather to show its uses by Du Bois in other contexts. And throughout, the primary focus is always on the conception as it is presented in the 'Strivings' text – that is the text of the first essay in *Souls*. This fact is due undoubtedly both to the canonical status of *The Souls of Black Folk* in African-American literature and social criticism, and to the fact noted above that the term 'double-consciousness' is used there alone. More than one writer has asserted that the passage in which Du Bois presents the term is the most-referenced text in all African-American letters. It seems problematic, however, to pin a full-blown account of a theoretical reconstruction on one passage in one work, however seminal or influential it may have been.

So I think it may be useful to examine several later texts of Du Bois's to see if the claim some commentators have made that Du Bois abandons the conception after 1903 can be substantiated or if it can be challenged and the 1903 conception developed, or, at least, given further legs. For there are discussions in Du Bois's later non-fiction texts that seem to involve aspects, at least, of the 1903 conception.

"The Souls of White Folks" in *Darkwater* (1920)

Darkwater, which Du Bois published in 1920, is the other published text of his most similar in format to *Souls*: both are sets of essays of various lengths and on various themes, both include a fictional story – *Darkwater*'s is a science fiction. While Du Bois does not present the 'double consciousness' concept in so many words in *Darkwater*, published in 1920, the second chapter of that text, 'The Souls of White Folks,' seems to involve something like the 'second sight' of the 'Strivings' text. In that chapter, Du Bois characterizes the development of what he calls 'the religion of whiteness' -- the ideology of white supremacy -- and discusses its impact on social relations in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Du Bois seems to make a claim for a special kind of knowledge of the psychology of white

people. He writes of himself that, about them, "I am singularly clairvoyant." After specifying that his knowledge is not that of the foreigner, nor of the servant or the worker, he writes:

I see these souls undressed and from the back and sides. I see the working of their entrails. I know their thoughts and they know that I know.

This knowledge can be related to the 1903 double-consciousness conception by noting that DuBois here claims a 'singular' insight into the psyches of white folk, one that depends in part on an awareness of the beliefs and attitudes of white folks that double-consciousness involves. But what DuBois claims here also seems to go beyond the 1903 conception, since that conception did not specifically and explicitly refer to *knowledge* of the souls of white folks. Several pages into the 'Souls of White Folks' chapter, after identifying the "discovery of personal whiteness" as an historically recent phenomenon associated with "this new religion of whiteness," Du Bois indicates that it is black folk generally -- "we" -- who have such powers of 'clairvoyance':

We whose shame, humiliation and deep insult [the white man's] aggrandizement so often involved were never deceived. We looked at him clearly, with world-old eyes, and saw simply a human being, weak and pitiable and cruel, even as we are and were.

Here is a condition of consciousness that allows 'the humiliated' to see more clearly the reality of the lives of those who humiliate them than the humiliators themselves can. This condition of consciousness is a kind of 'clairvoyance' -- a capacity for knowledge that escapes those who initiate the humiliation, who do not -- and lack the capacity to? -- see themselves as clearly. While such knowledge does not involve 'knowing the thoughts' of the humiliators *in detail* -- in their momentary particularity -- it does require that one know some *patterns* of what and how they think and feel. As the further unfolding of the chapter reveals, Du Bois is tracing out both the historical conditions of the 'religion of whiteness,' that is, the ideology of white supremacy, and its development and some of the psychological consequences it has for whites who accept it and live in and on the basis of it. Because and to the extent that whites accept the premises of white supremacy, and live and act upon them, they are deceived about themselves and act out a deception that the blacks who are subject to them are in an especially good position to see through. Though this is not the core of double-consciousness, it seems to be the sort of thing Du Bois had in mind when he referred in 1903 to 'second sight,' a key adjunct to double-consciousness, in the 'Strivings' passage in *Souls*. What Du Bois doesn't say there, but which seems clearly involved here, is that the basis of the 'second sight' is the sort of racial blindness that white supremacy subjects whites to.

But there is a bit more here, and other than, 'second sight' -- the capacity to see whites as they cannot see themselves under conditions of white supremacy. For what Du Bois presents in this chapter is a critical analysis of the American ideology of white supremacy that is informed by historical understanding and backed up by social-scientific data. Du Bois both begins and ends the chapter by noting his own position

"high in the tower." This refers both to his distanced, observer status relative to those who he is discussing, and, I think, to his own achieved position as an academically trained social theorist, bringing powers of analysis to bear on the 'souls of white folk' in white supremacist America. In 'The Souls of White Folks,' we have combined a case of informed and nuanced historical analysis that is built on a 'clairvoyant' insight into the psyche of the white person who is 'under the influence' of white supremacist ideology, thus an analysis predicated on the second sight consequent to double-consciousness.

If this is right, it also suggests that taking 'second sight' seriously can suggest something of an inversion of the standard view of double-consciousness, along the following lines. While the double-consciousness conception is often taken to be the idea of a source of self-doubt, embarrassment, vacillation and uncertainty in those whom it afflicts, it is counterposed to the ideology of white supremacy and racism in the whites who constitute the social mainstream and impose their will on black folk. In 1903, Du Bois did not write as though the social position of the oppressed might provide the possibility of a clairvoyant social perspective that was denied to those in the racialized social mainstream. He did not develop there the idea of 'second sight' as a privileged epistemological position. In the 'Souls of White Folks' chapter in *Darkwater*, he can be seen as beginning to develop such an account of 'second sight.'

There is another passage in *Darkwater* that bears, if somewhat indirectly, on this idea of an inversion of the 1903 conception of double-consciousness:

Pessimism is cowardice. The man who cannot frankly acknowledge the 'Jim-Crow' car as a fact and yet live and hope is simply afraid either of himself or of the world. There is not in the world a more disgraceful denial of brotherhood than the 'Jim-Crow' car of the Southern United States; but, too, just as true, there is nothing more beautiful in the universe than sunset and moonlight on Montego Bay in far Jamaica. And both things are true and both belong to this our world, and neither can be denied. (*Darkwater*, 135)

What is this passage if not a statement aimed against the debilitating effects of the facts of life for Black folk in the Jim-Crow south? But surely it is also an attack on an inability to keep seemingly antagonistic or contradictory facts -- facts in tension with one another -- evenly balanced in one's attitude toward the world. Recall that the struggle to maintain just such an equilibrium -- the ability to embrace the two contradictory thoughts in one integral 'soul' -- is part of the goal of overcoming double-consciousness, according to the 'Strivings' text. And yet, in a sense, this very struggle and the possibility it presupposes, is itself a version of double consciousness in an inverted sense: the possibility of embracing in one consciousness both facts without denying either one. And this involves an expanded, and expansive, conception of 'this our world,' one that owns the world in all its manifold, stunning complexity. So here we have again, in the form of a somewhat impatient commentary on 'pessimism', another backhanded affirmation of the persistence of the sort of self-doubt, induced by oppressive mistreatment, that the 1903 conception of double-consciousness referred to.

“On Being Ashamed of Oneself: An Essay on Race Pride” in *Crisis* (40:9, Sept. 1933)

In the September, 1933 issue of *Crisis* – the house journal of the NAACP, a journal Du Bois both founded and edited from 1910 to 1934 – Du Bois published his article “On Being Ashamed of Oneself: An Essay on Race Pride.” The overall point of the article is indicated in its subtitle: in the piece Du Bois argues the need for “new group loyalty, new pride of race, new racial integrity” to combat the continued “equality of rights, of employment and social recognition to American Negroes....” In arguing for ‘pride of race,’ the Negro must confront the phenomenon identified in the main title – the shame often expressed by Negroes about themselves. In detailing this phenomenon, Du Bois presents something akin to the 1903 conception of double-consciousness, though differing in one important respect.

Du Bois starts off with a story about his grandfather, Alexander Du Bois, who expressed dismay over an invitation he’d received to a ‘Negro’ picnic. As Du Bois puts it, “the implications of a Negro picnic were anathema to his fastidious soul. It meant close association with poverty, ignorance and suppressed and disadvantaged people, dirty and with bad manners.” Du Bois then characterizes this attitude, which he finds widespread among “a certain social aristocracy” of Negroes, as one of being “ashamed of ourselves.” This attitude produces, in turn, “attempts to escape from ourselves.” Du Bois draws out the class contours of this attitude by arguing that as an “upper social group” of Negroes arises,

[t]his leaves a mass of untrained and uncultured colored folk and even of trained but ill-mannered people and groups of impoverished workers of whom this upper class of colored Americans are ashamed. They are ashamed both directly and indirectly, just as any richer or better sustained group in a nation is ashamed of those less fortunate and withdraws its skirts from touching them. But more than that, because the upper colored group is desperately afraid of being represented before American whites by this lower group, or being mistaken for them, or being treated as though they were part of it, they are pushed to the extreme of effort to avoid contact with the poorest classes of Negroes. This exaggerates, at once, the secret shame of being identified with such people and the anomaly of insisting that the physical characteristics of these folk which the upper class shares, are not the stigmata of degradation.

Here we see Du Bois posing the issue of a divided consciousness in the upper stratum of black folk, both in relation to ‘the masses’ of blacks, and also in relation to their own association with these masses in the eyes of white society. He goes on to describe the ‘shame and embarrassment’ that this upper stratum experiences when it must confront the necessity of joint action and organization based on race pride and common goals. These feelings are exacerbated by the fact that this upper stratum is incapable of controlling the lower class blacks, and so stand to be ‘represented before American whites by this lower group, or being mistaken for them.’ This account more or less coincides with the 1903 account of double-

consciousness, while bringing out a feature implicit in 1903 but not identified as such nor argued there. This is the close connection of a certain kind of double-consciousness with social stratification in the world of black folks. Here Du Bois makes explicit the ambivalence of upper class Negroes who are 'caught between' the demands of white society, on the one hand, and the realities of their association with an oppressed social group. Du Bois does not engage the question, in this short essay, of whether the lower class 'colored folks' also experience shame in their condition: this is a matter that is left open. And so the phenomenon described here might be a specific form of double-consciousness, and not the whole of it.

Dusk of Dawn (1940)

There is a discussion of what appears to be more or less the same phenomenon as that identified in *Souls* as 'double-consciousness' in Du Bois's book *The Dusk of Dawn*, published in 1940, two years after Du Bois turned seventy. Indeed, since *Dusk of Dawn* is more nearly autobiographical in design than *Souls* (it is subtitled *An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*), it's not surprising that Du Bois writes more expansively there of the experience of living in conditions of segregation and white supremacy, even though he doesn't use the term famously employed in *Souls*.

A number of things change in the account given by Du Bois in *Dusk of Dawn* (1940) of the phenomena that, in *Souls*, are brought under the sign of double-consciousness. The first is that the *Dusk of Dawn* treatment of the issues is subsumed much more fully under a thematics of 'environment,' which is articulated as social, geographical, and cultural in its dimensions as well as both dynamic and relatively stable in historical terms. But the 1940 text never goes as far as to assert a basic inner duality within the Negro: missing entirely from the *Dusk of Dawn* account is any mention of inward two-ness, of the psychic splitting that was so crucial to the account given in *Souls*. In the later work the issue is characterized in the terminology of 'Negro self-criticism' (179), a 'lack of faith in essential Negro possibilities' (191), and the 'inner contradiction and frustration which [segregation and white racist intransigence] involves' (187) -- a terminology that, while still conveying some of the ambivalence and complexity of the treatment in the earlier text, falls far short of an assertion of a dramatic and overriding psychic duality. I should emphasize this is not because the text does not address the 'felt experience' of being a Negro in America: a central, and the longest, chapter in *Dusk of Dawn* is titled 'The Colored World Within.'

There are, 'naturally,' problems with the unitary consciousness of a soul within the double environment Du Bois depicts, but these fall short of causing a split in the psyche itself. There is resentment, frustration, and anger verging on madness; there is a faithlessness, and, often, consequent despair; there are the temptations to turning one's back on the folk, and also temptations to reject absolutely anything the

'environing' white world offers or proposes. And there is what Du Bois calls "that bitter inner criticism of Negroes directed in upon themselves, which is widespread. It tends often to fierce, angry, contemptuous judgment of nearly all that Negroes do, say, and believe...." (179) But what doubling or two-ness there is in the *Dusk of Dawn* account has been removed from the inwardness of souls, and is situated instead in the 'environing' world.

Writing about "the facts of the Negro's double environment," Du Bois, characterizes the situation thus:

The Negro American has for his environment not only the white surrounding world, but also, and touching him usually much more nearly and compellingly, is the environment furnished by his own colored group. There are exceptions, of course, but this is the rule. The American Negro, therefore, is surrounded and conditioned by the concept which he has of white people and he is treated in accordance with the concept they have of him. On the other hand, so far as his own people are concerned, he is in direct contact with individuals and facts. He fits into this environment more or less willingly. It gives him a social world and mental peace. (173)

Here the white world is 'surrounding' the world of the colored group, with which the Negro individual is, as a rule, 'in direct contact.' This double environment is the basic reality, overwhelmingly, of the Negro in the 1940 text. This characterization of the situation quoted above also suggests that, while the inhabitants of the 'white world' and the 'colored world' look at one other each through 'the concept' they have of one another, individuals within the 'colored world' know each other directly, being aware of 'individuals and facts.' Here we have a reformulation of the figures of the veil, the color line. Writing of his own personal experience, Du Bois details the effect of this environing white world, and its assumption of Negro inferiority, on him

I was 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. All this made me limited in physical movement and provincial in thought and dream. 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. (135-6)

Notice that in addition to the definite limitation of possibilities and outlook determined by this white world, here Du Bois presents also an active appropriation, and employment in strategic calculation, by Negro American (in this case Du Bois), of the understanding s/he has of the white world. This is worth noting, for it suggests another mode in which double-consciousness – if that is in fact what we are dealing with here – can operate. If double-consciousness can also be a form of *practical* consciousness, one of 'taking into careful daily account' the reactions of those in the 'environing' white world – tinged as they are by prejudice and by expectations grounded in that prejudice – in one's plans, one's own expectations, and, ultimately, what one allows oneself to imagine and hope for, that would not in itself involve internalizing the prejudiced viewpoint itself, though it might surely engender considerable disturbance of the soul. Here, then, is a conception of something like a double-consciousness, but one emphasizing the

affective and practical, and downplaying the strictly cognitive, impact of the enviroing conditions on the Negro soul.

There is also, indeed, according to the *Dusk of Dawn* account, a further, more telling and insidious effect of the white world on the Negro soul, here exemplified by Du Bois: "... this fact of racial distinction based on color was the greatest thing in my life and absolutely determined it, because 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. It was impossible to gainsay this. It was impossible for any time and to any distance to withdraw myself and look down upon these absurd assumptions with philosophical calm and humorous self-control." (136) The 'absurd assumptions' can and often do infiltrate the Negro's psyche, and affect how s/he thinks and feels about herself in ways that stubbornly resist her own efforts to override or undermine them. Writing in a less autobiographical vein, Du Bois notes that despair of racial progress "too often" results from the Negro's "lack of faith in essential Negro possibilities parallel to similar attitudes on the part of the whites." This attitude itself is, he continues, "a natural phenomenon," since Negroes share "average American culture and current American prejudices." Because of this, it is "almost impossible for a Negro boy trained in a white Northern high school and a white college to come out with any high idea of his own people or any abiding faith in what they can do." (191) This formulation seems to bring out the painful features of Du Boisian double-consciousness (as Gooding-Williams interprets it) manifest in the *Souls* account, even though the emphasis on duality is diminished.

There are, however, two other important ways in which the *Dusk of Dawn* account diverges from that of *Souls*. The first is that what we might call the brute facticity of what Du Bois calls the 'inferiority' of the colored world is asserted in this text quite explicitly, and its effect upon the attitudes of Negroes described tellingly. Du Bois presents this stark reality as undeniable, while at the same time, as contrasted to the claims made by racist prejudice concerning black folk, claims he takes the trouble to explicitly reject:

It is true, as I have argued, that Negroes are not inherently ugly nor congenitally stupid. They are not naturally criminal and their poverty and ignorance today have clear and well-known and remediable causes. All this is true: and yet what every colored man living today knows is that by practical present measurements Negroes today are inferior to whites. The white folk of the world are richer and more intelligent; they live better; have better government; have better legal systems; have built more impressive cities; larger systems of communication and they control a larger part of the earth than all the colored peoples together. (173-4)

By invoking this set of what he regards as undeniable facts, Du Bois is identifying historically contingent yet palpably certain realities that an accounting of 'black experience' of the world cannot escape. Consequently, for Du Bois, 'Negro self-criticism' is, in part, grounded in "a perfectly obvious fact" (179),

namely, “that most Negroes in the United States today occupy a low cultural status” and a “low social condition” (180), which he specifies by discussing ‘Negro ignorance,’ the death rate, ‘criminal tendencies,’ poverty, and ‘social degradation.’ These, it is worth emphasizing, are discussed by Du Bois not as representations of white prejudice but as the determined recognition and acknowledgement of patent if painful observable realities. The facts on the ground are undeniable. Du Bois says as much. What is presupposed, I think, by his case, is this: even if the causes of these facts, both present and past, count against the prejudiced conclusions often drawn from these facts, the causes are less visible, less undeniable. And it is this that adds to the power of the facts to reinforce the prejudice and self-doubt.

Another important departure of the 1940 text from that of 1903 is an explicit recognition in the latter text that the psychic phenomena attributed to Negro Americans under the name ‘double-consciousness’ are not distinctive; as Du Bois writes, “[s]imilar phenomena may be noticed always among undeveloped or suppressed peoples or groups undergoing extraordinary experience. None have more pitilessly castigated the Jews than the Jewish prophets, ancient and modern.” (179) He goes on to cite as further examples the Irish and the Germans of the *Sturm und Drang*. This is part of a broader recognition by Du Bois, subsequent to *Souls*, that “the imprisoning of a human group with chains in the hands of an environing group” was not “a singularly unusual characteristic of the Negro in the United States in the nineteenth century,” but that “the majority of mankind has struggled through this inner spiritual slavery....” (137)

Conclusion

Any account of double-consciousness rooted in the sweep of Du Bois’s writings impinging on the phenomenon must, I want to suggest, acknowledge his taking it as both a state of consciousness of individuals as members of an oppressed group and also as a more expansive reality that encompasses an entire social situation in which that group finds itself.

Du Bois gives up the moniker ‘double-consciousness’ for a variety of reasons, but at least in part because he wants to resist the impression that this is simply a problem or phenomenon *of* consciousness, but without a ready way of characterizing the thing so as to embrace both the consciousness-effect – what he calls ‘double-consciousness’ in 1903 – as well as its source in the social structures of the environing condition.

Part of what he wants to distance himself from is the idea that collectivities can as such be treated as entities with their own consciousnesses, can be reified in what he seems to have regarded as mistaken idealist theoretical overreach. He explicitly rejects such reification in *Dusk of Dawn*. And so he engages

alternately in first- and third-personal description of 'what it is like,' psychologically – or, perhaps more accurately, spiritually – to live in conditions which we might say give rise to double-consciousness, either through autobiographical writing or by personifying the feelings, attitudes, and thoughts associated with double consciousness in fictional or composite characters, on the one hand, and discussing and referring to 'customs' and 'irrational,' 'subconscious' attitudes and modes of being as characteristic of a related set of groups and permeating their social environments, on the other. All previous critical attention has been fixed steadily on the first aspect of the problem, virtually none on the second. This second, *material* condition of the phenomenon might be characterized as

a condition of a social system in which distinct yet linked social groups, one marked or believed by the other to be marked by distinguishing superficial indices of identity, and existing in dramatically different conditions with respect to their status, access to property and power, possibilities for recognition and acknowledgment by the wider society, come to have characteristically different forms of social consciousness which are at odds in significant ways, often tinged with animosity and/or anger, fear, or extreme antipathy toward members of the other group, and are seemingly incommensurable with respect to crucial matters affecting their mutually recognizing and 'getting along' with one another.

Its *spiritual* correlate, then, would include at least these aspects:

- a tendency on the part of a member of such a group to a confusion of the two distinct sets of attitudes, feelings, and beliefs, or to being 'all mixed up' and/or in a state of two-mindedness, ambivalence, inner turmoil or indecision in relation to conflicting or opposed views and feelings about themselves and/or some social situation;
- an individual's awareness of herself as characterized by others in an unfavorable or demeaning way in keeping with disparaging descriptors associated with her racialized 'kind' and/or her kinship with a racially disfavored group;
- a person's reflective confrontation with a stable social situation characterized by consistent disparities in the life-prospects, achievements, social station, power, wealth, and cultural recognition typically available to members of her 'kind' relative to those of others;
- a consciousness of and feelings related to a tension associated with being taken for, or acting as, a representative of a racially devalued group to members of the dominant racial group, in either a cultural or a political capacity;

- a practical attitude or orientation, for strategic purposes related to the pursuit of socially recognized goods or personal goals, that necessarily involves the ascription to others of beliefs, intentions, expectations or reactions to one's acts or words predicated on a falsely degrading, fearful, or dismissive judgment of who or what one is, and revision or adjustment of one's plans on the basis of such ascriptions;
- a pervasive sense of uncertainty regarding the reception of one's activities and projects and/or perceptions and expectations of one by others under the weight of inappropriate, prejudicial, false and/or demeaning generalizations based on one's appearance, background, and/or other inessential markers of one's identity;
- a felt need to constantly reposition oneself in one's relations with other members of the racialized group to which one has been assigned by broader racialized social consciousness, and to develop dissociated repertoires of behavior and approach to persons perceived as members of distinct racialized social groups and classes;
- the experience of a feeling or feelings of despair, rage, anger, frustration, distress, or any combination of these arising from and in keeping with recognition or awareness of any of the sorts listed above.

This suggests a more nuanced and subtle account of a raft of psychic phenomena that might well all be brought under a common rubric. Presumably it would have to be one distinct from the more narrowly conceived 'double-consciousness' of Du Bois's 1903 text. But that does not seem to be a matter on which Du Bois published any thought.