

# **W. E. B. DU BOIS BETWEEN WORLDS**

## ***Berlin, Empirical Social Research, and the Race Question*<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

W. E. B. Du Bois once remarked that “It was in Germany that my first awakening to social reform began” (Aptheker 1982, p. 275). This essay examines the intellectual impact of Du Bois’s voyage to Berlin from 1892 to 1894. His acquisition of empirical social research methods under the tutelage of German historical economists, particularly Gustav von Schmoller, armed him with the intellectual and methodological tools he needed in his effort to attack pervasive biological determinist theories in the United States. Using empirical techniques grounded in a “system of ethics” as his conceptual guideposts, Du Bois analyzed race as not a biological but a social phenomenon. To be sure, this was no easy task. He was also a “race man,” who, loyal to his moral commitment to building a program of racial uplift, sought legitimacy as a social scientist from his fellow American sociologists, who summarily ignored his work. Struggling to serve his roles as both scientist and race man, Du Bois functioned within an intellectual space of double consciousness, constantly vacillating between two communities and two voices. In the end, Du Bois would successfully bring the scientific method to the race question, using inductive methods in his sociological studies on the African American experience. This approach made possible his seminal work *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) and, subsequently, his research at Atlanta University. In the final analysis, his empirical research stood its ground, successfully advancing a new paradigm for examining race based on the idea that the putative racial hierarchy, theoretically grounded in biological determinism, was nothing more than a social artifact buttressed by racism. He further demonstrated how the economic disparity between Whites and Blacks functioned as the prime catalyst for “a plexus of social problems” that plagued African American life (Du Bois 1898, p. 14). His conclusions were a radical departure from the work of many American sociologists, many of whom were sympathetic to social Darwinism—his most formidable challenge.

**Keywords:** Du Bois, Empirical Social Research, African American Intellectual History, German Intellectual History

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*Of greatest importance was the opportunity which my Wanderjahre in Europe gave of looking at the world as a man and not simply from a narrow racial and provincial outlook. . . . And above all I began to understand the real meaning of scientific research and the dim outline of methods of employing its technique and its results in the new social sciences for the settlement of the Negro problems in America.*

—W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois* (1968, pp. 159–160)

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, American and European scholars have paid varying degrees of attention to the impact W. E. B. Du Bois's two-year journey to Europe from 1892 to 1894 had upon his intellectual development as a social scientist. There remains, however, a need to more closely inspect the particular social science methods that Du Bois acquired during his brief time at the University of Berlin. This essay focuses on Du Bois's adoption of empirical social research methods that became the hallmark of his sociological work in the United States.<sup>2</sup> I argue that, in taking part in what Sieglinde Lemke characterizes as a "transatlantic academic migration" to Europe, Du Bois learned specific social science research methods that ultimately enabled him to successfully challenge the race question in the United States as a social, rather than biological, issue (Lemke 2000, p. 46). His German professors introduced him to an intellectual framework in which he imbibed, as Du Bois himself recalled, "the real meaning of scientific research," that is, the notion that science grounded in ethics ought to have social efficacy (Du Bois 1968, p. 160).<sup>3</sup> Studying empirical social research methods forced Du Bois to shift his intellectual emphasis to science, according it a primary role in his moral quest to bring about racial uplift and social reform for African Americans. Although this essay focuses on Berlin's impact on Du Bois's intellectual development, I also demonstrate that, in his attempt to establish his voice as a credible social scientist in the United States, Du Bois wrestled with a tension between his roles as a scientist and as a race man.<sup>4</sup> To a greater or lesser degree, he was mired in a double consciousness—an intellectual dubiety—oscillating between his professional scientific duty to conduct unbiased empirical social research and his moral commitment to build a program of racial uplift. The process of resolving this tension was one of the great challenges for his early sociological work.

In recent years, a consistent flow of scholarship has examined Du Bois's "*Wanderjahre* in Europe" (Du Bois 1968, p. 159). Among these scholars are Sieglinde Lemke, Kenneth D. Barkin, and Axel R. Schäfer, all of whom assert that Du Bois's training under German historical economists at the University of Berlin had the most profound influence upon his early social scientific research, as well as his racial thought. In her essay "Berlin and Boundaries," Lemke intends to show how the "intellectual germ" of Du Bois's scientific program to research African Americans originated in Germany. This is to say that Du Bois's critical perspective on race was "informed by European intellectual thought in general and by his German professors in particular" (Lemke 2000, pp. 57, 48). In "'Berlin Days', 1892–1894: W. E. B. Du Bois and German Political Economy," Barkin argues that Du Bois deliberately chose to study political economy at Berlin, and as a consequence "developed a strategy for dealing with the color line in the United States" (Barkin 2000, p. 89). Schäfer's "W. E. B. Du Bois, German Social Thought, and the Racial Divide in American Progressivism, 1892–1909" advances the position that the historical school introduced Du Bois to the theory of social ethics that had "radical implications" for his views on race. Additionally, he gives ample credit to the historical school's influence on transforming American progressivist thought in general (Schäfer 2001, p. 926). Taken

together, these scholars all paint a full, rich picture of the intellectual value of Du Bois's days in Europe, maintaining that Berlin was a vital intellectual point of departure, the point at which the young scholar's quest as a social scientist truly commenced.

Du Bois's two-year sojourn took him to *Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität zu Berlin*, one of the citadels of Western education. It was universally understood among scholars in the nineteenth century that a doctoral degree from the University of Berlin gave one the imprimatur of intellectual *par excellence*. Schäfer aptly points out that this phenomenon "took place within the context of the transatlantic transfer of ideas during the late nineteenth century" when, as Lemke adds, "as many as nine thousand American students and scholars studied in Germany, then considered to be an academic mecca" (Schäfer 2001, p. 926; Lemke 2000, p. 46). In fact, at various points in its history, the University of Berlin had been home to or associated with a number of intellectual and political luminaries—Hegel, Engels, Bismarck, and Marx. Owing to its robust academic legacy and reputation, American scholars such as Du Bois routinely sought training and advanced degrees in the social sciences at Berlin. At the time, the university was far more prestigious and highly developed in the social sciences than any American college or university, including Harvard. Thus, Berlin could offer Du Bois what Harvard could not: superior academic training and a more highly regarded *Philosophiae Doctor*. About this opportunity he said, "I was very anxious therefore on my account but especially for the sake of my race, to try to obtain this degree."<sup>5</sup>

Berlin was a twofold experience for Du Bois. It was an intellectual and social refuge away from "'nigger'-hating America!" (Du Bois 1968, p. 183). It fulfilled his desire to "finish [his] education, careful training in a European university."<sup>6</sup> Doubtless Germany had an indelible influence upon his intellectual growth, but this argument raises still new questions: What specifically did the German historical school provide for Du Bois? How did his training affect his social scientific research? To what extent did Du Bois influence American social sciences, particularly sociology?

## PRELUDE TO BERLIN

In the summer of 1892, several hundred American students set sail from the harbors of New York City en route to various European universities—mainly in Germany and France. Among those headed to Berlin was none other than twenty-four-year-old Fisk and Harvard alumnus, W. E. B. Du Bois—A. B. Hart's star doctoral candidate in history at Harvard. Earlier that year, Du Bois had begun to write his dissertation, a historical survey replete with statistical details on the economic patterns and practices of the African slave trade. Before becoming a graduate student of Hart's, Du Bois had studied philosophy under William James during his undergraduate days. Ultimately, however, it was Du Bois's mission to connect science, not philosophy, to the study of race and race relations. It was his impression, however, that Harvard had little interest in race—not an unreasonable assumption, given that several of the elite American colleges and universities (including Harvard) had begun integrating social Darwinist theories into their curricula. In challenging the predominant biological determinist theories of his day, Du Bois recognized the need to apply an empirical scientific method to a historical analysis of "the race struggle," but Harvard offered no "such science" (Du Bois 1968, p. 156; Du Bois 1940, p. 39).

Several American social scientists during the nineteenth century based many of their theories about human difference on a biological-evolutionary hierarchical model of progressive racial capacity.<sup>7</sup> It was commonly promulgated by American social

Darwinists that African Americans were constitutionally inferior and could not ascend the evolutionary ladder. As a natural consequence, African Americans, it was predicted, would decline into social decay and over time become extinct. In the 1890s, Du Bois was no stranger to biological determinism. Neither was Harvard, for that matter. “At Harvard,” Du Bois recalled,

I began to face scientific race dogma: first of all, evolution and “Survival of the Fittest.” It was continually stressed in the community and in classes that there was a vast difference in the development of the whites and the “lower” races; that this could be seen in the physical development of the Negro. I remember once in a museum, coming face to face with a demonstration: a series of skeletons arranged from a monkey to a tall well-developed white man, with a Negro barely outranking a chimpanzee. Eventually in my classes stress was quietly transferred to brain weight and brain capacity, and at last to the “cephalic index” (Du Bois 1940, p. 98).

Du Bois also remembered that some of most venerated social scientists of his era “ordinarily [spoke] of the Negro problem as though it were one unchanged question” (Du Bois 1898, p. 14). They understood African Americans to be “aliens, strangers, outcasts from the House of Jacob—niggers.”<sup>8</sup> Du Bois’s faith in science, however, was not dislodged. In his view, it was not science that was guilty of this sort of scientific racism. Rather, it was the use of science—“the continuous change in the proofs and arguments advanced”—that was faulty (Du Bois 1940, p. 99). Du Bois believed that he could launch a successful assault on biological determinism through scientific study that relied upon empirical facts, not racist “grand theories” (Bay 1998, p. 44). He made this his scientific and moral mission.

## FROM PHILOSOPHY TO HISTORY

### In Search of a Method Encompassing Science and Ethics

By the end of his undergraduate years at Harvard, Du Bois deliberately shifted away from philosophy under James toward history under Hart. It was at Harvard where Du Bois’s intellectual dubiety began to surface, manifesting itself in an internal struggle between his faith in science and his moral beliefs in racial uplift.

After completing a number of graduate-level history courses, including three with Hart between 1890 and 1892, Du Bois began to consider the value of philosophy, even thinking at one point that he could apply it to a “historical interpretation of race relations” (Du Bois 1968, p. 148). Under Hart, he acquired historical methods, which entailed rigorous data collecting, the primary method he used to retrace the historical development of the slave trade in his dissertation research, a topic suggested to him by Hart. Du Bois had formed close relationships with some of Harvard’s most venerated intellectuals, and he was a member of the Philosophical Club, where he had an especially intimate connection with James. But it was the demanding Hart with whom Du Bois had worked the closest; it was Hart who pushed Du Bois in the direction of historical research.

What drew Du Bois toward philosophy eventually pushed him away. He became frustrated with James’s formulation of science and ethics, that is, the idea that pragmatic philosophy existed somewhere between the cleavage of value-free science and value-oriented ethics. This was the Jamesian dichotomy. In graduate school, Du Bois began to wrestle with this duality: “While I think a Science of Ethics possible,

I cannot see the way to it clearly” (Lewis 1993, p. 93). Du Bois believed that there was an intellectual path to a science of ethics while James maintained that no scientifically based program entailed a “system of ethics” (James 1988, p. 185). Du Bois’s idea of using philosophy, which he termed the “science of sciences,” had to be abandoned because pragmatic philosophy would not allow him to address the problem of race as he saw fit. To him, the field was a “sterile land of philosophic speculation” (Du Bois 1968, pp. 124, 148).

In an effort to resolve this dichotomy, in 1889 Du Bois wrote a term paper in James’s Ethics (Philosophy IV) course. The fifty-two-page handwritten essay, “The Renaissance of Ethics: A Critical Comparison of Scholastic and Modern Ethics,” offers a heavy prescription for dealing with the dichotomy between the *is* and the *ought*. In one section, Du Bois sets up a split between science and metaphysics:

Today science discusses what is, metaphysics what may be; science is daily narrowing the field for available hypotheses, metaphysics is widening hers; science sees every where a gradual convergence to the Unity of Truth, metaphysics a wider divergence, new and bewildering theories, nice hairsplitting and words, words, words (Du Bois 1889, p. 21).

Du Bois eschews metaphysics here, because its aim did not entail the unity of knowledge. By lauding science for making greater sense of the natural world, Du Bois in this respect pays homage to Enlightenment thinking. Yet, he argues, science still has ignored its higher objective, which is to be ethical—that it ought to have a felicitous purpose. “The object then of science,” he writes, “is Truth; Truth is the one path to teleology, teleology is ethics” (Du Bois 1889, p. 35). From Du Bois’s perspective, the problem at hand was shifting science from the realm of facts—the *is*—to the realm of ethics—the *ought*. In this light, he attempted to illustrate how one can rearrange the “corner-stone of a world structure” with questions grounded in ethics: science ought not to be value free, but should encompass values (read: ethics) (Du Bois 1889, p. 52). Only then science would reach its highest objective in its quest for unity of knowledge (Zamir 1995, pp. 57–60). Du Bois did not have much confidence that this would happen: “The fact that a science of ethics today is not possible for lack of facts upon which to base it ought not to hinder ethical conduct.” In the right-hand margin next to this point, James scrawled: “All becomes obscure here” (Du Bois 1889, p. 37). However, in his overall evaluative comments on the essay, James praised Du Bois’s effort as “a very original thesis,” but at the same time the professor worried that Du Bois had not found “his way into clearness and [had] a great deal of *extrication* still to perform on his ideas.” Further, he suggested that Du Bois needed “especially to define how . . . the *facts* of the world . . . could be ‘scientifically’ made certain” (Du Bois 1889, p. 52).<sup>9</sup>

Du Bois was impressed by James’s advocacy of a plural society, his opposition to imperialism, his intolerance of religious fundamentalism and racism, but he did not accept James’s philosophical ideas wholesale. Intellectually, Du Bois was not a Jamesian. As he explains: “It was James with his pragmatism and Albert Bushnell Hart with his research method, that turned me back from the lovely but sterile land of philosophic speculation, to the social sciences as the field for gathering and interpreting that body of fact which would apply to my program for the Negro” (Du Bois 1968, p. 148). As “The Renaissance of Ethics” highlights, Du Bois had grown frustrated with philosophy even before studying under Hart. When James asserted in the margins of his paper that bridging the gap between science and ethics “is

impossible—we can only trust in its ends being what we sympathize with,” Du Bois subsequently shifted his course of study to history (Du Bois 1889, p. 52).

It was at Harvard that my education, turning from philosophy, centered in history and then gradually in economics and social problems. Today my course of study would have been called sociology; but in that day Harvard did not recognize any such science. . . . The turning was due to William James. He said to me, “If you must study philosophy you will; but if you can turn aside into something else, do so. It is hard to earn a living with philosophy” (Du Bois 1940, p. 39).

Du Bois saw his move to study history under Hart as an initial step toward “sociology as the science of human action” (Du Bois 1968, p. 148). Considered one of “Hart’s favorite pupils,” Du Bois was “guided by him through [his] graduate course [of study],” as the professor introduced him to the skill of close reading of primary sources (Du Bois 1940, p. 38).<sup>10</sup>

Hart, whose background was political and constitutional history, taught Du Bois that history was a science whose methods entailed documentary research and induction. To get an idea of Hart’s view of history, one could look to a statement he made during a 1910 presidential address before the American Historical Association:

What we need is a genuinely scientific school of history which shall remorselessly examine the sources and separate the wheat from the chaff; which shall dispassionately and moderately set forth results. For such a process we have the fortunate analogy of the physical sciences. . . . History, too, has its inductive method, its relentless concentration of the grain in its narrow spout, till by its own weight it seeks the only outlet (cited in Novick 1988, p. 38).

Hart was a pure believer in the Rankean method; it was in this tradition that he trained at Freiburg during the 1880s. To be clear, history was akin to a quantitative science to Hart. He promoted the idea that history required a commitment to empiricism, “the bare truth,” echoing the method’s creator, Leopold von Ranke (Herbst 1965, p. 103). Ranke, a professor at Berlin from 1825 until 1871, sought general, universal, historical truth through the accretion of facts: “My object is to simply find out how things actually occurred” (*Encyclopedia Britannica* 1911, p. 894). His method entailed organizing and interpreting historical facts methodically in the same fashion as physical science. Ranke’s essential contribution to history was his advocacy of strict research techniques, the most important aspects of which were the use and citation of primary sources, the reconfiguration of collected evidence, and critical analysis (Wagner 1951, p. 207). Historical study was to achieve scientific certainty based on insight acquired from vast knowledge (Wurgaft 1969, pp. 412–413).

Before embarking on his voyage to Berlin, Du Bois, by way of transitivity, was himself a Rankean historian. He respected Hart’s rigorous methods, adopting them in his own work as he scoured colonial laws, state and national statutes, and legal records for material on the transatlantic slave trade.<sup>11</sup> His dissertation, he promised, was going to be a contribution to the “scientific study of slavery” (Broderick 1959, p. 36). At the time, Du Bois believed that historical research would allow him to raise important and relevant questions for investigation and to engage in painstaking research through the “gathering and interpreting [that body of] fact” (Du Bois 1968, p. 148). But he would learn that Harvard “had in the social sciences no such leadership of thought and breadth of learning as in philosophy, literature and physical

science. She was groping and [was] still groping toward a scientific treatment of human action” (Du Bois 1968, p. 141). Under Hart, Du Bois lacked the complete set of tools that he needed to pull off the kind of interpretive, ethical, and moral-based research he endeavored to carry out. The essential methodological ingredients he sought were missing from Du Bois’s course of study in history. This explains why he considered Harvard to have no “such science,” i.e., *social science* (Du Bois 1940, p. 39). According to Schäfer, it was Berlin that would provide Du Bois with the ethical component that he needed for his research:

[Berlin professor Gustav von] Schmoller and Du Bois subscribed to the same theoretical and normative assumptions in their research. They thought of social science research in terms of cultural archaeology. They designed their research as a method to uncover submerged ethical feelings and their incomplete and warped manifestation in existing institutions within defined communities (Schäfer 2001, p. 936).

For Du Bois, Germany offered an opportunity to construct an intellectual roadmap that merged science and ethics.

### **GESELLSCHAFTSWISSENSCHAFTEN IN GERMANY**

Between 1848 and 1914, the German historical school of economics carried out much of the empirical social research which, Anthony Oberschall argues, became the “most important contributor to the emerging discipline of sociology” (Oberschall 1965, pp. 3, 11). Opposed to British classical economics and “universally valid” theories, historical economists believed that economic principles should be inductively derived through the gathering and analysis of historical facts. More crucially, Yuichi Shionoya notes, historical economists built “an institutional framework in which ethics was embedded” (Shionoya 2001, p. 1). Under the leadership of Gustav von Schmoller, the German historical school sought to understand the development of morals, laws, and institutions through examining humans’ “place in history” (Nau and Steiner, 2002, p. 1007). Using science as its foundation for social policy and reform, historical economics—also known as political economy—was considered an established *Gesellschaftswissenschaft*, i.e., a scientific study of society. Hugely popular in the German academy, the intellectual relevance of the historical school cannot be overstated, as its ideas were far-reaching, extending to academies all over the world. The ideas of the historical school dominated most of the German universities in the late nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

Empirical social research was characterized by the use of large-scale social surveys in the form of questionnaires. It was in Germany where this practice first became commonplace, taken directly from the bureaucracy and the university professors who were part of the *Kathedersozialisten* (“socialists of the chair”). Oberschall characterizes members of the historical school as an intellectually energetic, socially conscious, task-oriented group:

Large scale social surveys by means of questionnaires were a commonplace means of social factfinding in Germany before the first World War. All the leading historical economists, Schmoller, Bücher, Brentano, Adolf Wagner, as well as those of the next generation who are known to us as the founders of sociology, Tönnies and Max Weber, became involved in planning and directing surveys, writing out questionnaires and analyzing the returns (Oberschall 1965, p. 3).

The returns were used to assess the material and moral conditions of the working class. The motivation behind the surveys was reform and legislation.

In 1872, Schmoller, the leader of a young corps of historical economists, formed a social policy group, the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*, which Oberschall describes as “that unique association of reform minded men, part professional association, part pressure group” (Oberschall 1965, p. 4). Lemke adds that social reform in Germany entailed two fundamental pillars: the German historical school and the *Verein*: “While the German Historical School was the more academic or empiricist branch, the Association for Social Policy was oriented more toward implementing social reforms” (Lemke 2000, p. 53). The *Verein*, which recognized the significant cleavage between the working and middle classes, wanted to bring about social and political reforms. Between 1848 and 1914, the German states unified under the hegemony of Prussia, and, over the decades, the wedge between the working class and the rest of society widened dramatically. The *Verein* advocated political intervention as a means of alleviating the country’s economic and social gulfs. The “pre-eminent representatives of the idea of the state,” wrote Schmoller, “must seize the initiative for a great legislative program of social reform.”<sup>13</sup> Along with some of Germany’s top younger historical economists—Adolf Wagner, Franz Brentano, and statistician Ernst Engel—he pledged to “help clarify opinions through thorough, strictly scientific investigations and publication of economic conditions; to resist laissez-faire views” (Conrad 1910, p. 430). Historical economists, in this context, were political economists who, by rejecting classical economics, stood for liberal reforms through scientific investigation.<sup>14</sup>

Contemporary scholar Barkin gives considerable attention to Du Bois’s connection to German historical economists Heinrich von Treitschke, Wagner, and especially Schmoller. He analyzes the ways in which Du Bois’s studies under historical economists affected his thinking, pointing out that it was his interest in political economy that “gave him hope for changing the situation of American blacks” (Barkin 2000, p. 92). The useful linkage Barkin provides here is that political economy was the embodiment of empirical social research, the methods that Barkin implicitly credits to Schmoller. For Schmoller, writes Barkin, “political economy meant careful scholarly research of clearly defined questions. He distrusted abstractions and any generalizations that were not grounded in a detailed knowledge of the sources” (Barkin 2000, p. 90). Barkin also provides a useful context:

Taking into account the successes of Du Bois’s German mentors is the key to understanding his continuing conviction that Germany provided him with a strategy for changing race relations in the United States (Barkin 2000, p. 95).

The intellectual discipline of political economy, Barkin argues, provided Du Bois with a strategy—a methodology—that could also provide hope for his future research on African Americans in the United States. Still, Barkin scarcely addresses what this strategy entailed; he leaves out the specifics associated with the methods of empirical social research. For his part, Oberschall notes that “the university professors were an extremely hard working and productive group, whose highest duty was the advancement of science in a tradition of careful scholarship” (Oberschall 1965, p. 10). He is correct that “careful scholarship”—empirical social research—drove the tradition of the historical school.

In Germany, Du Bois found himself in “contact with several of the great leaders of the developing social sciences: in economic sociology and in social history” (Du Bois 1968, p. 162)—a very different intellectual setting from that at Harvard. Hart



and Schmoller offered Du Bois different methodological approaches: empirical research versus empirical *social* research. Hart, coming from the Rankean tradition, promoted scientific inquiry severed from speculative philosophy, being committed to the method of observation, experiment, and induction. This approach, however, did not afford Du Bois the opportunity to incorporate ethics. Schmoller, in contrast, endeavored to use empirical social research to bring about social reform, i.e., an ethical enterprise:

the economic organization of a people is not a product of nature; . . . it is primarily a product of the respective ethical views about what is right and just in the relationship between the different social classes (cited in Schäfer 2001, p. 934).

With this infusion of ethics, empirical social research aimed at the patterns of thought and behavior characteristic of a collective whole, which would be revealed through the systematic and detailed study of culture.

From the outset, Du Bois believed that the methods of empirical social research as applied to the working-class question in Germany could also be applied to the Negro Problem in the United States, given that the two issues were parallel. What Barkin provides is an important perspective on the intellectual context—the political economy—of the German historical school that helped Du Bois to acquire a strategy in terms of empirical social research methods. Without delving into details about research techniques of the historical school, Barkin does synthesize the many lessons that Du Bois learned from his professors:

The young Du Bois was clearly quite impressed by the cool determination of Schmoller, especially his effort to combine the authority of science with the use of ethics and only then to provide solutions to serious social problems (Barkin 2000, p. 94).

Barkin strongly intimates here that Du Bois was on his way toward surmounting the intellectual dubiety that troubled him since his days at Harvard. In the final analysis, empirical social research was the integrated strategy needed—the product of intellectual and activist impulses. Lemke offers an apt summation: that this interrelated approach gave rise to a “‘scientific approach’ to economics that was based on ethics” (Lemke 2000, p. 53). This, I contend, made the all the difference to Du Bois in Berlin.

### **The *Methodenstreit***

Du Bois’s seminar notes at Berlin quote Schmoller as saying: “My school tries as far as possible to leave the *Sollen* [should be] for a later stage and study the *Geschehen* [what is actual] as other sciences have done.”<sup>15</sup> Francis Broderick credits Schmoller with providing “an empirical base for economic theory”:

Schmoller, more totally committed to this school than Wagner, believed that innumerable small accurate studies of all phases of man’s social life would accumulate a body of information on which social policy could be based. For him political economy was primarily a normative science, and the information once accumulated was to be used to establish “justice in the economic system” through state action (Broderick 1958, p. 369).

When Du Bois arrived in Germany, Schmoller was embroiled in a fierce battle of words over epistemology with Austrian economist Carl Menger, a disagreement that

had begun in the 1880s. In 1883, Menger initiated an unexpected attack on the historical school in his book *Untersuchungen über die Methode der Sozialwissenschaften und der politischen Oekonomie insbesondere* [*Investigations on the Method of the Social Sciences and Political Economy in Particular*]. This attack ignited the infamous *Methodenstreit*, or “battle over methods.” It was a contentious battle between two schools: the German historical school versus the Austrian School or, more precisely, Schmoller versus Menger. In the simplest terms, the *Methodenstreit* was about the clash between economists who used inductive research methods and those who employed theory. David Lindenfeld explains:

[Menger sought an] “exact” direction, which sought to define its concepts and laws as rigorously as possible. Menger emphasized not so much the deductive side of this method as the constructive one: such concepts were formed by deliberately isolating a particular aspect of reality from its empirical context without much regard for the latter (Lindenfeld 1997, p. 253).

In attempting to grapple with the epistemological status of economic theories, Menger, the leader of the Austrian School, tried to distinguish economics from other fields of inquiry such as the natural sciences, mathematics and logic, morals and ethics, and philosophy and metaphysics. Members of his school questioned whether economic ideas of the historical school could be regarded as empirical questions decidable by experience. Schmoller, upholding the opposing position of the historical school, regarded Menger as extremely narrow, “an epigone, who, schooled exclusively in Mill’s natural-scientific logic, . . . [cultivates] a corner of the great building of our science” (Lindenfeld 1997, p. 254).

Lindenfeld characterizes this period as a healthy one for the German intellectual community overall. It was a time, he argues, when those on both sides of the debate began to assume an identity. He suggests that most fields at the time benefited from the rich—albeit acrimonious—discussions that appealed to and demanded scientific rigor and standards. In the end, the *Methodenstreit*, Lindenfeld posits, brought about “heightened awareness of methodological issues” (Lindenfeld 1997, p. 255). The context of the *Methodenstreit* provided Du Bois with the opportunity to experience an intellectual atmosphere rife with debate and ripe for change. In the course of his own intellectual development and later work, it would become clear that he had absorbed the energy of the *Methodenstreit* and embodied its spirit.

## THE INFLUENCE OF SCHMOLLER, TREITSCHKE, AND WAGNER UPON DU BOIS

*In the Fall I went up to Berlin and registered in the university. In my study, I came in contact with several of the great leaders of the developing social sciences: in economic sociology and in social history. My horizon in the social sciences was broadened not only by teachers, but by students from France, Belgium, Russia, Italy and Poland.*

—W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois* (1968, p. 162)

Du Bois took few notes during lectures at Berlin. Scrawled in the few handwritten pages in his economics notebook are two barely decipherable—but telling—sentences: “[The foundation] of science is the order [it brings to] the world by the

Unity of [common concerns]. Science is a correct image of the world.”<sup>16</sup> These were Schmoller’s words, recorded by Du Bois during a lecture, “On Method,” in 1893. That semester Du Bois had enrolled in Schmoller’s Political Economy seminar, in which he learned firsthand the techniques of empirical social research. He formed a close bond with Schmoller and, under the professor’s tutelage, Du Bois wrote a thesis “*Der Gross und Klein Betrieb des Ackerbaus, in den Südstaaten der Vereinigten Staaten, 1840–90*” [“The Large and Small-scale System of Agriculture in the Southern United States”]—a paper inexplicably missing from the Du Bois archives.<sup>17</sup>

Du Bois’s association with Schmoller, Treitschke, and Wagner steered him in a direction that allowed him to “unite . . . economics and politics” for his research (Du Bois 1968, p. 162). It was Schmoller, especially, who led Du Bois toward the empirical social research that linked, rather amorphously, economics, statistics, sociology, and history.<sup>18</sup> Schmoller stressed the use of empirical (mainly statistical) source work over deductive theories and generalizations. Students were expected to understand economic life within the perspective of social customs, values, and institutions, privileging culture over nature, environment over biology, and historical facts over universal laws (Schäfer 2001, p. 934). The basis of this empirical method was history, which Schmoller pressed was the “pragmatic teacher” whose “final and most ambitious goal” was to understand and explain the patterns of our social, not biological, nature. He maintained that “In the general description of the mass phenomena, history is nevertheless more effective in explaining the typical structure of social life, particularly the penetration into the finer psychological and moral causes of social conditions” (Schmoller 1893, pp. 39, 42).

Upon close inspection of Schmoller’s ideas, however, it is evident, as Lindenfeld points out, that “the underlying premise of Schmoller’s views was that of complexity.” In essence, historical economics “lacked the clear lines delineating the various components of the whole” (Lindenfeld 1997, pp. 235, 237–238). Du Bois might have sensed a similar disposition upon meeting Schmoller for the first time, describing him as “a man of strong prejudices, fearless and sharp in expression of opinion, but a tireless investigator.” Du Bois observed: “He strikes me as more of a historian than economist” (Du Bois 1968, p. 166). While Du Bois does not elaborate in any particular detail why he felt this way, nor from where he gleaned this perception, it certainly speaks to the intellectual milieu of the German historical school under Schmoller’s leadership at the time. During Du Bois’s time in Berlin, Schmoller was smarting from the fallout during the *Methodenstreit*, while also dealing with his own intellectual vacillation about the status of historical economics relative to the natural sciences and the humanities, as Lindenfeld explains:

Schmoller’s immersion in historical sources qualified him for dual membership in the historical and economic communities of scholars. Yet this immersion has raised the question—both in his own time and since—whether he had anything to contribute to economic theory, indeed whether his dislike of abstract thinking decisively undermined that tradition in Germany (Lindenfeld 1997, p. 234).

The historical school treated history as a social science, located somewhere between the *Geisteswissenschaften* (human sciences) and the *Naturwissenschaften* (natural or physical sciences).<sup>19</sup> Empirical social research drew from both groups in the sense that it required the application of the strict, rigorous, empirical methods in the study of society. During the late nineteenth century, however, a vigorous debate over the status of the *Geisteswissenschaften* took strong root in the European intellectual

community, the fundamental question being whether the *Geisteswissenschaften* were to be distinguished from the *Naturwissenschaften*.

In 1883, Wilhelm Dilthey outlined in *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften* [*Introduction to the Human Sciences*] the methodological differences between the humanities and the natural sciences. Knowledge in the *Geisteswissenschaften*, he argued, was objective and acquired through “*verstehen*” [understanding].<sup>20</sup> It required the interpretation of meanings and their objectification in individual experience. Dilthey’s main goal was to establish an objective basis for psychology and cultural history. In contrast, the *Naturwissenschaften* dealt with reality *external* to the mind; in this view, knowledge was a product of causal relations. Lindenfeld notes that Schmoller was fully engaged with this debate, so much so that he wrote a sympathetic review of Dilthey’s work:

Schmoller noted the affinities between the two in 1893: both [of the methodological writings by Dilthey and Schmoller] were reactions to the simplifying methods of the natural sciences as applied to human society; Schmoller’s ethical and cultural phenomena were essentially the same as the subject matter of the *Geisteswissenschaften* as Dilthey defined them (Lindenfeld 1997, p. 235).

Although he expressed sympathies toward the *Geisteswissenschaften*, Schmoller never fully accepted the assimilation of economics under that heading. Du Bois would likewise vacillate between the *Geisteswissenschaften* and the *Naturwissenschaften* in his early writings about method. This is particularly evident in his essays “The Conservation of Races” (1897) and “Sociology Hesitant” (1905). In any case, as I will discuss below, Du Bois, too, was caught up in his own epistemological conundrum. On occasion, in his attempts to break from a biological understanding of race, he would cleverly play between *Geisteswissenschaften* and *Naturwissenschaften* as a way to add a certain authority to his voice as a social scientist.

In the preface of *Grundriss der allgemeinen Volkswirtschaftslehre* [*Outline of General Political Economy*], published in 1900, Schmoller wrote: “My view and disposition is always to make the beginner attentive to the complicatedness and difficulty of phenomena and problems, to show him the different sides of an object” (Lindenfeld 1997, p. 235). On the one hand, historical economics appeared to have strong connections to the *Geisteswissenschaften*, yet it also had, as Lindenfeld explains, “a foot in the [*Naturwissenschaften*] inasmuch as it dealt with technology, ethnography, and demography” (Lindenfeld 1997, p. 236). Lindenfeld implies that Schmoller appreciated this complicated positionality because it allowed for the inclusion of a “complex of factors” that could affect the economy at any particular moment. Thus historical economics came to be characterized as a “science of the typical rather than a science of the cyclical” (Lindenfeld 1997, pp. 236–237). This gave the historical school an advantage, for its complexity enabled it to acquire its empirical reputation for wide-ranging social research. But the main criticism of the historical school had more to do with its repudiation of theory, as Helge Peukert explains:

Among schools of economic thought none has a worse reputation, especially in the English-speaking world, than the German historical school. . . . This verdict—that the historical school placed little or no value on theory—is shared by new and even some old institutionalists. It could be argued that this is a half-informed judgment due at least in part to the language barrier (Peukert 2001, p. 71).

Du Bois also attended a series of lectures (in a course called *Politik*) by Heinrich von Treitschke, whom he described as “the German Machiavelli” (Du Bois 1968, p. 164). The professor, known for his brash delivery of ideas, exclaimed that “the more a human action is disinterested in affairs of the state, the less it belongs to history” (Wagner 1951, p. 276). The purpose of history, he believed, was to affect affairs of the state, that is, the historian was a scientist of the state. He also said,

History wears thoroughly masculine features; it is not for sentimental natures or for women. Only brave nations have a secure existence, a future, a development; weak and cowardly nations go to the wall, and rightly so. In this everlasting for and against of different States lies the beauty of history.<sup>21</sup>

By the 1890s, Treitschke was no longer actively engaged in political affairs, but he remained in step with German political developments. Du Bois might have been attracted to Treitschke’s seminar in part because it focused on Du Bois’s idol, Bismarck. Treitschke sought in his lectures to convey, as an outspoken supporter of the Bismarckian regime, an understanding of the chancellor’s politics through critical analyses of German political affairs. The professor’s lectures had three main stated objectives: 1) to identify the basic concepts of the state by examining the actual political world; 2) to scrutinize historically what nations have wanted, developed, and accomplished in political life; and 3) to investigate the causes of political action and, at its base, a historical law.

Treitschke and Schmoller were intellectual adversaries. Schmoller was the moderate nationalist reformer, a temperate contrast to Treitschke’s fiery politics. Schmoller placed great focus on economic development and extolled the use of empirical evidence over the Treitschke-type generalization. Schmoller’s method called for the critical assessment of industrial capitalism. Schmoller and Treitschke, however, were in agreement on the question of nationalism. Both admired Bismarck and believed that a unified Germany “with an orderly modern constitution and power and prestige” was vital. Schmoller saw the need for a strong government, but he warned that “We should and will not pursue a chauvinist world power policy” (Jarausch 1982, p. 197).

It is uncertain whether Du Bois fully accepted Treitschke’s views on history, or his politics for that matter.<sup>22</sup> Nor do Du Bois’s writings about Treitschke’s reveal much in the way of an intellectual affinity. But it is clear that Du Bois admired the professor’s strong nationalist convictions and sense of patriotism; they stirred his senses. Because in the U.S. South, “Negroes simply did not speak or think of patriotism for the nation which held their fathers in slavery for 250 years,” a real sense of national pride was new to Du Bois (Du Bois 1968, p. 168). Before arriving in Berlin, Du Bois had been an admirer of German nationalism—especially Bismarck’s—because, as an African American, he could identify with the nation’s aim to reclaim its own political and historical identity, an aim that Du Bois himself envisaged for African Americans.<sup>23</sup>

If Treitschke tested Du Bois’s political and racial sensibilities, and Schmoller piqued an intellectual charge in him, it was Wagner who introduced Du Bois to new economic and political theories germane to socialism.<sup>24</sup> Wagner was an outspoken and conservative political economist who rejected the inductive approach of historical economics. Instead, he searched for what he called “typical regularities” using deduction and statistics (Jarausch 1982, p. 198). Wagner hailed state power and advocated a “social monarchy” to be led by educated property owners. In this sense, he saw himself as a state socialist and thought it best for the state to own the means

of transportation, the banks, and the insurance, water, and electric companies. According to Wagner, the state was the ultimate guardian that took care of the weak and chastised the ruthless and indolent: state authority was essential. Wagner argued that if state power could reign efficiently while considering the plight of the worker, then it should do so.

In the end, Du Bois did not obtain a Berlin Ph.D.<sup>25</sup> Europe nonetheless was an invaluable intellectual and social experience that provided Du Bois with an excellent vantage point from which to view race relations upon his return to the United States. As an outsider in Germany, Du Bois “could bring criticism from what I knew and saw touching the Negro” in the United States and encapsulate this within this newfound framework of fresh ideas and novel methods. In contrast to the climate at Harvard, where socialism was “dismissed as unimportant,” Du Bois found Berlin welcoming—at least intellectually (Du Bois 1968, pp. 156, 133). David Levering Lewis has noted that Du Bois at this early stage in his development was thought by some scholars to have “remained in the iron grip of an ideology of culture in which human progress was measured in terms of manners, the arts, great literature, and great ideals, a secular creed” (Lewis 1993, p. 144). Such accounts have unfortunately led to the view that while in Germany Du Bois was caught up in the finer things of materialism and culture. But that is only one part of the story.

Du Bois, then in his midtwenties, was witnessing a Germany under major political and social transformation. To an African American who brought with him a strong personal understanding of American race relations, Germany in all facets—the ideas, culture, arts, and music—was overwhelmingly new and intellectually invigorating. This was a large part of his education: to bear witness to the intersection between politics and intellectual ideas, and between culture and society. There was no similar phenomenon in the United States, for such social movements were generally driven underground or viewed as radical. The U.S. government forbade socialist—what it regarded as “subversive”—activities. Thus Germany was different. When Du Bois first arrived, he “put [himself] to considerable pains to ascertain just the sort of reception a Negro receives in Germany socially, both in public and in private,” and he obtained “curious and instructive results.”<sup>26</sup> Germany taught Du Bois some new lessons:

I began to see the race problem in America, the problem of the peoples of Africa and Asia, and the political development of Europe as one. I began to unite my economics and politics; but I still assumed that in these groups of activities and forces, the political realm was dominant (Du Bois 1940, p. 47).

In the final analysis, Germany offered a panoply of experiences. Du Bois’s initial curiosity about socialism in Berlin propelled his thinking forward beyond the specifics of American racism to a greater understanding of the impact that social and political structures had on individuals and groups and how systemic oppression actually functioned. Du Bois was learning that disparities between human groups (read: racism) were structural, caused by politics and reinforced within culture, not caused by biological constitution and enforced by nature.

## APPLICATION OF LESSONS IN THE UNITED STATES

*I was going to study the facts, any and all facts, concerning the American Negro and his plight, and by measurement and comparison and research, work up to any valid generalization which I could. I*

*entered this primarily with the utilitarian object of reform and uplift; but nevertheless, I wanted to do the work with scientific accuracy. Thus, in my own sociology, because of firm belief in a changing racial group, I easily grasped the idea of a changing developing society rather than a fixed social structure.*

—W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn* (1940, p. 51)

The first sentence of Francis Broderick's 1958 essay "German Influence on the Scholarship of W. E. B. Du Bois" states that Du Bois "went to Europe in 1892 an historian; he returned two years later a sociologist" (Broderick 1958, p. 367). Although Du Bois remained committed to empirical social research and refounded affinities to Schmoller's vision of science, he was in search of his own voice as a credible social scientist within the American context. Over time, he carved out his "own sociology"—to quote him—in an effort to change the field's methodological approach to social questions. Neither endeavor was an easy feat. Although this was not always clear from his early writings, Du Bois held on to a persistent faith that scientific research could aid in the moral quest to bring about racial uplift. With regard to executing his research, Du Bois was at key moments wedged between two extremes: his craft (science) and his race (the Negro Problem). As an African American social scientist, his double consciousness—his intellectual dubiety—caused him to vacillate between his two roles as scientist and race man.

Few American sociologists recognized Du Bois as a colleague during his time. This is ironic considering that sociology in the United States did not have a strict disciplinary focus, but was amorphous. The collection of American social scientists—economists, political scientists, psychologists, and philosophers—could all claim sociology as their field at any given point. In the main, however, as Dorothy Ross points out, American social scientists were "determined to . . . orient their disciplines toward natural science," and many "found points of attraction across the entire range [of the natural sciences]" (Ross 1991, pp. xiv, xvi). Du Bois understood this and endeavored to distinguish himself as an empirical sociologist, an inductive methodologist, which was a challenge, intellectually.

Du Bois, much like his mentor Schmoller, wrestled with epistemological questions such as the relation between the *Geisteswissenschaften* and the *Naturwissenschaften*, as well as, eventually, the viability of science as an agent of social reform. In the American context, his challenges were even more difficult owing to racism. In order to accomplish his ultimate goal, he developed a three-prong process that would: 1) connect his empirical social research skills with his social and moral aims, 2) transcend the pervasive influences of biological determinist discourse, and 3) effect a new methodological focus within the field of American sociology.

In 1905, Du Bois wrote a critical essay about the then current state of sociology. The typewritten essay, "Sociology Hesitant," was never formally published and was for decades thought to be lost.<sup>27</sup> Once recovered, the brief essay revealed the most telling example to date of how Du Bois situated his ideas vis-à-vis those of his contemporaries:

For far more than forty years we have wandered in this sociological wilderness, lisp[ing] a peculiar patois, uttering fat books and yet ever conscious of a fundamental confusion of thought at the very foundations of our science—something so wrong that while a man boasts himself an Astronomer, and acknowledges himself a Biologist, he owns to Sociology only on strict compulsion and with frantic struggles.

And yet three things at the birth of the New Age bear weighty testimony to an increased and increasing interest in human deeds: the Novel, the Trust, and the Expansion of Europe; the study of individual life and motive, the machine-like organizing of human economic effort, and the extension of all organization to the ends of the earth. Is there a fairer field than this for the Scientist? Did not the Master Comte do well to crown his scheme of knowledge with Knowledge of Men? (Du Bois 1905, p. 38).

As per its title, Du Bois is posing in “Sociology Hesitant” a methodological challenge for his field. He asks: “Why did Comte hesitate so strangely at the ‘parts which constitute’ Society, and why have men so strangely followed his leading?” (Du Bois 1905, p. 40). He goes on to say that among his contemporaries, there is “a hesitancy in attacking the great central problem of scientific investigation today—the relation of the science of man and physical science” (Du Bois 1905, p. 43). Clearly, this statement echoes the debate that Schmoller had with his German contemporaries in the latter part of the century about the relation between the *Geisteswissenschaften* and the *Naturwissenschaften*. It also shows that Du Bois, to a greater or lesser degree, absorbed some of this complex debate into his own intellectual repertoire, incorporating it as a dimension of his own deeply personal intellectual dubiety. Nonetheless, the dilemma Du Bois points to in “Sociology Hesitant” is, in fact, his *own* hesitation about taking a firm stand regarding his own thinking on the question of *Geisteswissenschaften* vis-à-vis *Naturwissenschaften*. Toward the end of the essay, Du Bois advocates their synthesis:

We would no longer have two separate realms of knowledge, speaking a mutually unintelligent language, but one realm, and in it physical science studying the manifestations of force and natural law, and the other, Sociology, assuming the data of physics and studying within these that realm where determinate force is acted on by human wills, by indeterminate force (Du Bois 1905, p. 43).

Ronald A. T. Judy helps us to understand that:

The principal concern of “Sociology Hesitant” is methodology, and in methodology, hypothesis is a principle offered as a conditional explanation of a fact or a group of facts. It is also a principal provisional assumption about something, used as a guiding norm in making observations until verified or disproved by subsequent evidence (Judy 2000, p. 12).

Some eleven years after his return from Germany, Du Bois had still not resolved the tension between the *Geisteswissenschaften* and the *Naturwissenschaften*. Somewhere between “Law and Chance,” he asserts, lies the truth, the fruit of the systematic search for answers to social questions. Perhaps, then, “Sociology Hesitant” was “lost” or overlooked for decades because it reveals a side of Du Bois that is more sympathetic to the natural sciences. The tone of the essay reflects an uncharacteristic scientificity that would conflict with his more prominent discussions about the possibility of an *ethical* science.

Du Bois’s written work and research leading up to *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899) reveals a young scholar making an extraordinary epistemological effort to construct an empirical sociology that could bring about the type of social reforms he envisioned. Even after studying in Germany, he had difficulty bridging science and ethics in a program of empirical social research. He still held separate *science as truth*, on the



one hand, and *racial uplift as moral*, on the other. But, Judy reminds us, science for Du Bois was a fundamental means toward racial uplift:

For Du Bois, not only are facts products of complex social and historical processes, but science as a particular activity is a moment in the social process of production and is not self-sufficient. The fact that concerns Du Bois above all others is the Negro, his status as an object of analysis within the particular and various fields of science, both physical and social (Judy 2000, pp. 28–29).

Judy offers a compelling argument that Du Bois is undoubtedly committed to the Negro Problem even when his language stands on the slippery slope of scientism. Du Bois's devotion to the plight of African Americans is encapsulated in his commitment to sociology, particularly his aim to devise a methodology that would allow the "broad and systematic study of the history and condition of the American Negroes" (Du Bois 1898, p. 22).

In "The Study of the Negro Problems" (1898), Du Bois attempts to balance his strong allegiance to the scientific method with his moral and social commitment to racial uplift. As he works through this conflict, he finds himself at times caught between priorities, privileging the goals of science over his moral aims:

The right to enter this field undisturbed and untrammelled will depend largely on the attitude of science itself. Students must be careful to insist that science as such—be it physics, chemistry, psychology, or sociology—has but one simple aim: the discovery of truth. Its results lie open for the use of all men—merchants, physicians, men of letters, and philanthropists, but the aim of science itself is simple truth. Any attempt to give it a double aim, to make social reform the immediate instead of mediate object of a search for truth, will inevitably tend to defeat both objects (Du Bois 1898, p. 23).

But what was the value of "truth"? What if the truth—the data—revealed what biologists had been saying all along: that African Americans were inferior? Du Bois does not address these questions head on. He had come face-to-face, again, with Professor James's marginal comment in Du Bois's class essay "The Renaissance of Ethics"—that it "is impossible" to merge science with a "system of ethics" (Du Bois 1889, p. 52; James 1988, p. 185). Here, Du Bois appears to be promulgating the notion that truth for truth's sake is the ultimate imperative. He continues:

Finally, the American Negro deserves study for the great end of advancing the cause of science in general. No such opportunity to watch and measure the history and development of a great race of men ever presented itself to the scholars of a modern nation. If they miss this opportunity—if they do the work in a slipshod, unsystematic manner—if they dally with the truth to humor the whims of the day, they do far more than hurt the good name of the American people; they hurt the cause of scientific truth the world over, they voluntarily decrease human knowledge of a universe of which we are ignorant enough, and they degrade the high end of truth-seeking in a day when they need more and more to dwell upon its sanctity (Du Bois 1898, p. 19).

This statement, which appears in the January 1898 issue of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, reveals Du Bois's strong attempt to establish his voice within the social science academy as a legitimate social scientist. He does not

sound like a race man in this essay. Rather, he appears to be a methodologist interested in using race as a lens through which to conduct sociological research. Throughout the article, much of Du Bois's tone is sterile and distant, but cleverly methodical, with every intention to provide the field with a method. He divides into four parts how a sociological "study of the Negro" ought to be carried out: 1) Historical study; 2) Statistical investigation; 3) Anthropological measurement; 4) Sociological interpretation. But Du Bois also claims that a study must examine two essential components: the individual and the individual's environment (Du Bois 1898, p. 24).

What gets overlooked or ignored here is vital and requires note. The field of sociology in the 1890s, to reiterate, had no empirical methodological design. Yet Du Bois provided in this article what in essence became the methodological hallmark of an empirically driven American sociology many decades later. He masterfully crafted a methodological palette which resembled, not by coincidence, that of the German historical school. For decades, however, this important framework, buried in a major academic journal, was neglected. Over the decades and into the new century, sociology in the United States continued to promote grand theorizing, not empirical research.

Du Bois himself had some difficulty breaking away from some of the language and tone that characterized the racist sentiment of many American social scientists. In his 1897 essay "The Conservation of Races," he writes:

Nevertheless, in our calmer moments we 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. . . . Although the wonderful developments of human history 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, yet there are differences—subtle, delicate and elusive, though they may be—which have silently but definitely separated men into groups. While these subtle forces have generally followed the natural cleavage of common blood, descent and physical peculiarities, they have at other times swept across and ignored these. At all times, however, they have divided human beings into races, which, while they perhaps transcend scientific definition, nevertheless, are clearly defined to the eye of the Historian and Sociologist (Du Bois 1897, pp. 5–7).

Adolph Reed argues that "Du Bois's double consciousness was embedded most significantly in the neo-Lamarckian thinking about race, evolution, and social hierarchy" (Reed 1997, p. 91). This point is finely supported in "Conservation," as well as in "The Study of Negro Problems," where Du Bois writes that "the Negro is a member of the human race, and as one who, in light of history and experience, is capable to a degree of improvement and culture" (Du Bois 1898, p. 24 ). Certainly Du Bois's point that the race can—and will—"improve" gestures toward Lamarckianism. In "Conservation," one of his earliest major essays written after his return to the United States, the language is oddly taxonomic and, to some extent, deterministic. The essay also reflects Du Bois's intellectual dubiety, for while he attempts to sound scientific and critical, as a race man, he sometimes slips into an unclear mode of racial essentialism. To be fair, however, Du Bois was to a large degree the product of his social Darwinist generation, and his language to the same extent echoed that

period. Du Bois deserves credit, nevertheless, for understanding the difference between racial essentialism and biological determinism. As evidence of this point, Du Bois saw himself as working against deterministic claims. He firmly believed that “race lines were not fixed and fast” (Du Bois 1940, p. 101). He wanted nothing to do with the likes of Herbert Spencer and the many social Darwinists who advocated biological determinism. Even in “Sociology Hesitant,” one recognizes that his harangues criticize the very premise upon which Spencerianism rested. He labeled the work of social Darwinists “imperfect—woefully imperfect.” Du Bois saw that much of social Darwinism was based upon “rumor and tradition, vague speculations, traveller’s tales, legends and imperfect documents, the memory of memories and historic error” (Du Bois 1905, p. 39). Although he had no respect for this kind of speculative theorizing, Du Bois, as Reed suggests, was nevertheless mired in a language at times redolent of social Darwinism.

### **THE PHILADELPHIA NEGRO AND ATLANTA**

*The Philadelphia Negro*, as many scholars have noted over the past century, was the first empirical survey on race in the United States. It was a study in descriptive statistics that showcased Du Bois’s ability to use a systematic approach to address the question of racial disparity. The net effect of the study was that social scientists now had to contend with a dynamic debate about race that gave primacy to the conclusions drawn from data based on empirical social research. The most compelling aspect of this story is not that Du Bois was an African American, but that he successfully broke away from the standard biological deterministic orientation and recast the race question within a credible scientific framework. In so doing, Mia Bay argues, he “heralded an important shift within the critical tradition of African American challenges to scientific racism” (Bay 1998, p. 42).

A year before the publication of *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois outlined in “The Study of the Negro Problems” a methodological approach to studying African Americans. In that article, he stressed that two areas must be studied in order to successfully execute empirical research: 1) the group itself, and 2) the group’s environment. In *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois did both. He identified four factors that contributed to social problems of African Americans: 1) slavery, which left many African Americans unskilled, uneducated, and poor; 2) racial prejudice; 3) the influx of southern migrants to the North; and, most importantly, 4) the environment itself. In order to gain a full comprehension of the Negro Problem, one

must specially notice the environment; the physical environment of city, sections and houses, the far mightier social environment—the surrounding world of custom, wish, whim, and thought which envelops this group and powerfully influences its social development (Du Bois 1899, p. 5).

Du Bois brought important traditions to American sociology from Germany that would become mainstays in subsequent sociological research in general: participant observation, census taking, interviewing, as well as the historical and economic analysis of collected data. Yet, for all of the proper, well-deserved accolades that *The Philadelphia Negro* has received over the decades, it is worth examining more closely areas in which the study might have been deficient. In reexamining the study’s statistical merit, Tukufu Zuberi has pointed out that it is hard to ignore Du Bois’s own personal biases and internal battles:

The very nature of his investigation presented the objects of his study—members of the African [American] community of Philadelphia—as a “strange species” from which he would gain information for the College Settlement Association. Yet the community did not fancy itself as an “Other” in need of a great intellectual savior (Zuberi 2001, p. 83).

Zuberi (formerly known as Antonio McDaniel) argues that Du Bois was put in the

position of reporting on Philadelphia’s African [American] community as an outside observer, to an outside agency. He was very much aware of his outside audience, of the distance this intellectual orientation placed between him and the community and of the tensions that accompanied that distance (McDaniel 1998, p. 156).

Zuberi further suggests that Du Bois’s latter struggle—his moral aim—affected the conclusions of the research in a potentially deleterious way:

Du Bois’s analysis presented two pictures of Philadelphia’s African [American] community. In one view, the problems of African Americans resulted from enslavement and capitalism within the United States; in the other, they stemmed from African Americans’ moral failings and included their lack of integration into the “greatest of the world’s civilizations.” Du Bois sought to explain the African Americans’ plight from a moral perspective that was both Eurocentric and socially conservative. He attributed moral failure to a lack of culture among African Americans. This lack of culture, he argued, resulted from racial exclusion. He suggested the need for more acculturation with European Americans. This culturally conservative perspective influenced Du Bois’s interpretation of his empirical results (McDaniel 1998, pp. 156–157).

Du Bois was fully aware of the problems inherent to the type of research that he was performing. It was his first undertaking of a major research project. He was cognizant that “being born in a group, does not necessarily make one possessed of complete knowledge concerning it. I had learned far more from Philadelphia Negroes than I had taught them concerning the Negro Problem” (Du Bois 1968, p. 198). As Zuberi illustrates, Du Bois struggled to temper a voice that encompassed both halves of him: the scientist and the race man.

Yet the Philadelphia study had virtues as well. For example, Du Bois’s discussion of African American mortality rates displays his ability to counter biological determinist arguments—he challenges Frederick Hoffman’s statistics head on.<sup>28</sup> Social Darwinists believed that the high death rate among African Americans at the end of the century was proof that they were biologically inferior and destined to die off.<sup>29</sup>

The 1890s were an era that, as George Fredrickson indicates, “saw an unparalleled outburst of racist speculation on the impending disappearance of the American Negro” (Fredrickson 1987, p. 246). Du Bois countered that thesis with statistical evidence. In seeking to understand the high death-rate phenomenon among African Americans, he cautioned that “On the whole, then, we must remember that reliable statistics as to Negro health are but recent in date and that as yet no important conclusions can be arrived at as to historic changes or tendencies” (Du Bois 1899, pp. 147–148). Du Bois provided estimates of mortality for 1890 and for the 1884–1890 period. He concluded that the death rate among African American populations was “not extraordinarily” high by comparison to patterns observed in Europe. This

fact, he presumed, weakened the biological argument tremendously, as it showed no racial difference under similar social and environmental conditions. The African American mortality rate was high relative to that of Whites in the United States. In this case, Du Bois had both historical data and social data to back up his claim that environmental factors such as poor housing, bad food, and bad sanitary surroundings, as well as behavioral factors such as neglect of infants, accounted for the high mortality rate. Still, Du Bois made his position clear: the *source* of the Negro Problem was found in the social and environmental conditions—largely determined by racial prejudice. The problem, Du Bois outlined, was as follows:

The most difficult social problem in the matter of Negro health is the peculiar attitude of the nation toward the well-being of the race. There have, for instance, been few other cases in the history of civilized peoples where human suffering has been viewed with such peculiar indifference. Nearly the whole nation seemed delighted with the discredited census of 1870 because it was thought to show that the Negroes were dying off rapidly, and the country would soon be well rid of them. So, recently, when attention has been called to the high death-rate of this race, there is a disposition among many to conclude that the rate is abnormal and unprecedented, and that, since the race is doomed to early extinction, there is little left to do but to moralize on inferior species (Du Bois 1899, p. 163).

Invoking his statistical and historical evidence, Du Bois concluded:

Now the fact is, as every student of statistics knows, that considering the present advancement of the masses of the Negroes, the death rate is not higher than one would expect; moreover there is not a civilized nation to-day which has not in the last two centuries presented a death-rate which equaled or surpassed that of this race. That the Negro death-rate at present is anything that threatens the extinction of the race is either the bugbear of the untrained, or the wish of the timid. What the Negro death-rate indicates is how far this race is behind the great vigorous, cultivated race about it. It should then act as a spur for increased effort and sound upbuilding, and not as an excuse for passive indifference, or increased discrimination (Du Bois 1899, p. 163).

To his credit, Du Bois never lost sight of his goal: to use science to ethical ends, as the death-rate example shows.

What Du Bois had amassed in *The Philadelphia Negro* had never been accomplished before. This wide-scale study was destined to secure his legacy. Along the way, he admitted that, as with any scientific study, his Philadelphia inquiry had a statistical margin of error—perhaps there were “defective facts and statistics” (Du Bois 1968, p. 198). However, the main thrust of the research “revealed the Negro group as a symptom, not a cause; as a striving, palpitating group and not an inert, sick body of crime; as a long historic development and not a transient occurrence” (Du Bois 1968, pp. 198–199). Du Bois had effectively developed, as historians Nancy Stepan and Sander Gilman argue, a “new sociology, which [he] saw as an essential tool to fight against racism” (Stepan and Gilman, 1993, p. 184). While working through his own complexities as a social scientist, Du Bois’s research ultimately exposed the social foundations of the race question.

Between 1897 and 1910, Du Bois served as chair of the sociology department and editor of the Atlanta publications at Atlanta University; he taught history and economics while running what he called a “laboratory in sociology” (Du Bois 1903,

p. 61).<sup>30</sup> His leadership at Atlanta bears the impression of the positivist professors he had encountered at Berlin, as Du Bois himself owns: “Without the general orientation I got in a German university, I would not have been able to do it” (Ingersoll 1963, p. 109; Barkin 2000, p. 98). While running “the only institution in the world carrying on a systematic study of the Negro and his development,” Du Bois designed a highly ambitious long-term “program of study on the problem affecting the American Negroes, covering a progressively widening and deepening effort designed to stretch over a century.”<sup>31</sup> This was dubbed the “Program of a Hundred Years,” a plan to study a segment of African American urban life at the rate of one topic per year for ten years—including issues such as high morbidity and mortality, disease, illiteracy, crime, vagrancy, and unemployment.

From the outset, Du Bois decided to carve out his own space in a field that had, at best, an inchoate disciplinary structure. He took his strong passion for data collecting a step further by adopting Schmoller’s second emphasis: comparative study. For example, in the seldom recognized 1906 study *The Health and Physique of the Negro American*, Du Bois dealt with “the subject of the physical condition of Negroes” (Du Bois 1906, p. 5). One of the essential missions of the study was to counter earlier ethnological and comparative research that consistently concluded that Blacks on average “measured” lower than Whites in cranial and other physical capacities and were, therefore, intellectually and biologically inferior.<sup>32</sup> Du Bois relied upon the reports from many colleagues around the country, including the U.S. Surgeon General’s reports, census and life insurance data, vital records from “various cities and towns,” reports from medical schools, and data from “Negro hospitals and drug stores” and physicians. More fascinating is his reliance upon data taken from a sample of “1,000 Measurements of Hampton students.” This sample comprised college-aged, well-nourished, middle-class African American students. He considered physical measurements of all sorts, e.g., body weight, brain weight, height, etc. Examining a larger sample than even what Samuel George Morton used in his racist craniometric studies in 1839 and 1844, Du Bois drew conclusions that challenged previous “anthropological science,” concluding that if social factors such as age, physical stature, social class, employment, nutrition, and cause of death were taken into account, there would be no appreciable differences between Blacks and Whites. He said “[e]xact studies and measurements prove this [point]” (Du Bois 1906, pp. 13, 16). But, as he pointed out, “even such [a] matter, however, has an historic interest” (Du Bois 1906, p. 6). Much of the putative racial differences was social, ultimately linked to racism.<sup>33</sup> However, Du Bois’s case here is much more complex than a matter of a division between Blacks and Whites. He relies on and constructs several racial “types”—from pure Negro to mixed—in his report. One wonders whether this study did more to further exacerbate the problems associated with the taxonomies of racial division. More extensive examination of Du Bois’s research at Atlanta should be pursued.

## CONCLUSION

Although Du Bois brought credible challenges to the race question, that work did not bring him direct success or even adequate professional recognition. He committed nearly two decades of his life to sociological research, producing some of the most critical works of the time. Yet, “[much of the academy] paid not the slightest attention to this challenge and for 25 years thereafter not a single first-grade college in America undertook to give any considerable scientific attention to the American

Negro” (Du Bois 1968, p. 199). Du Bois himself modestly evaluated the importance of his work:

When we at Atlanta University say that we are the only institution in the United States that is making any serious study of the race problems in the United States, we make no great boast because it is not that we are doing so much, but rather that the rest of the nation is doing nothing, and that we can get from the rest of the nation very little encouragement, co-operation, or help in this work. (Willcox 1908, p. 835).

The elite in the profession ignored his work. Albion W. Small—founder of the first American department of sociology at the University of Chicago (in 1892), the *American Journal of Sociology* (*AJS*) (in 1895), and the American Sociological Society (in 1905)—also had been trained in Berlin by Schmoller. In spite of their similar pedigree, and although his journal occasionally published articles on social welfare issues, Small did not consider Du Bois’s work. Yet, the *AJS* readily reviewed books by avowed biological determinists, often citing them as important works in sociology. Throughout the 1890s and well into the new century, the *AJS* never published any of Du Bois’s work on race (Rudwick 1974, p. 47). The *AJS* did once publish some remarks that Du Bois sent to the American Sociological Society annual meeting in Madison, Wisconsin, in December 1907, a conference that he did not attend. Unfortunately for Du Bois, “[the paper] did not reach Madison in time to be read at the meeting [panel] devoted to the discussion of [Mississippi planter and lawyer Alfred H.] Stone’s paper [on race relations].” As a consolation, Cornell professor W. F. Willcox, claiming that Du Bois’s perspective reflected those of “a distinguished Negro educator,” published his remarks in the body of a response to Stone’s paper:<sup>34</sup>

It has been my dream for many years that we could in the United States begin at a small Negro college a movement for the scientific study of race differences and likenesses which should in time revolutionize the knowledge of the world. . . . As I have said [whether African Americans are inferior] is primarily a scientific question, a matter of scientific measurement and observation; and yet the data upon which the mass of men, and even intelligent men, are basing their conclusions today, the basis which they are putting back of their treatment of the Negro, is a most ludicrous and harmful conglomeration of myth, falsehood, and desire. It would certainly be a most commendable thing if [the American Sociological Society] and other learned societies would put themselves on record as favoring a most thorough and unbiased scientific study of the race problem in America (Willcox 1908, pp. 835–836).

By 1910, Du Bois had recognized the limitations of science. After all of his productive years as a social scientist, his identity—and ego—was scarred by racism. His laboratory at Atlanta was a near-defunct operation, his controversy with Booker T. Washington had made him *persona non grata* in southern pro-Washington circles, and the field of sociology had not recognized his work—nor taken him seriously. Lawrence Bobo remarks:

Yet, for much of Du Bois’s long and productive life he was an empirical social scientist. He pioneered in the conduct of comprehensive community social surveys, in the documentation of black community life, and in the theoretically

grounded analysis of black-white relations. Were it not for the deeply entrenched racism in the United States during his early professional years, Du Bois would be recognized alongside the likes of Albion Small, Edward A. Ross, Robert E. Park, Lewis Wirth, and W. I. Thomas as one of the fountainheads of American sociology. Had not racism so thoroughly excluded him from placement in the center of the academy, he might arguably have come to rank with Max Weber or Emile Durkheim in stature. Today, urban anthropologists, historical economists, political scientists, social psychologists, and sociologists all attempt to claim a piece of the Du Boisian legacy (Bobo 2000, p. 187).

Du Bois knew that it was time for him to move on:

My career as a scientist was to be swallowed up in my role as master of propaganda. This was not wholly to my liking. I was no natural leader of men. I could not slap people on the back and make friends of strangers. I could not easily break down an inherited reserve; or at all times curb a biting, critical tongue. Nevertheless, having put my hand to the plow, I had to go on (Du Bois 1968, p. 253).

Du Bois eventually shifted most of his attention to becoming exclusively a race man, writing articles and major works that “aggressively and unconditionally demanded” civil rights for African Americans—a political voice absent from the Atlanta publications (Rudwick 1974, p. 50). For a few years, he continued to edit the Atlanta publications, but his interests had begun to shift almost entirely toward political activism. In the face of lynchings among African Americans in the South, “laboratory” research became less meaningful to Du Bois. The call for social activism was far more pressing.

Yet, Du Bois’s sociological work was not done in vain, and his methods would be revived decades later. His early efforts served as the precursor to the type of work in urban sociology done at the Chicago School in the first half of the twentieth century. Under the leadership of sociologist Robert E. Park, the University of Chicago’s sociology department would become a major center for the study of American race relations. Charles S. Johnson and E. Franklin Frazier, both African American sociologists trained at Chicago, would produce work that owed much to Du Bois’s influence. Although Du Bois stopped conducting sociological research after 1910, his influence on students of the African American community was profound. His work provided a model for the surveys of African Americans in New York City and Boston during the period before World War I. Future studies—such as Frazier’s *Negro Youth at the Crossways* (1940), Allison Davis and Burleigh and Mary Gardner’s *Deep South* (1941), and St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton’s *Black Metropolis* (1945)—would bear similarities to Du Bois’s sociological work.

Du Bois revolutionized sociology. In the context of studies on race, his influence on sociology can be compared to that of Franz Boas’s on anthropology. Boas himself evidently drew from Du Bois’s earlier framework—both placed a great deal of emphasis on the importance of empirical analyses (and the rejection of biological determinism) in the evaluation of individuals and groups. Du Bois bucked the established biological determinist trends in sociology, incorporating into his research empirical methods that became the staple for analyzing social phenomena within the discipline. He was, as Reed aptly remarks, one of “the most systematic thinker[s]” of his time (Reed 1997, p. 3). Du Bois’s early work not only challenged, but reconfigured the way we understand the race question.



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## NOTES

1. This essay would not have been conceived without the steady support and constant pushing of my dear friends and colleagues, all of whom have read or heard this paper at various stages: Anne Harrington, Robert Brain, Stephen C. Ferguson, Fanon Che Wilkins, Craig Koslofsky, Matti Bunzl, Peter Fritzsche, Frederick Hoxie, Dianne Pinderhughes, Jason E. Glenn, Bernadette Atuahene, Adam Biggs, Charlton Copeland, and Bikila Ochoa.
2. For a thorough analysis and history of empirical social research methods in Germany, see Oberschall (1965). For an extensive analysis of Du Bois's acquisition of and use of empirical social research methods, see Edwards (2001).
3. In this essay, *science* (when used alone) is defined in the broadest sense so as to accommodate the diverse understanding and use of the term in the nineteenth century. Herein *science* refers to a system of knowledge that establishes testable, replicable, and self-correcting methods that privilege empiricism over rationalism.
4. Acknowledging that Du Bois's "personal interest . . . has always depended primarily upon [the] race concept," I define "race man" in historical terms, opposed to the more critical contemporary use. (Du Bois 1940, p. 97). Herein, I specifically refer to Du Bois's commitment to racial uplift through his work as a social scientist and political activist. For a more critical perspective on "race man," see Carby (1998).
5. Du Bois conveyed this in a letter to himself while in Berlin. ("Berlin, Germany: 23 February 1894," University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Special Collections and Archives of the W. E. B. Du Bois Papers.)
6. Du Bois wrote this statement in a letter to former President Rutherford B. Hayes, who was at the time chair of the Slater Fund for the Education of Negroes [Du Bois to Rutherford B. Hayes correspondence dated April 3, 1892 (Rubin 1959, p. 246)]. See also Du Bois (1968, pp. 152–153).
7. During the 1890s, many American sociologists focused their attention on the forces that governed economic change—expanding corporations, growing cities, the increasing immigrant population, and labor—not race. Yale sociologist William Graham Sumner, the most widely known American social Darwinist, opposed governmental interference in the free-market economy. Instead he championed a *laissez-faire* political and economic structure that privileged competition and self-interest. Not all American sociologists, however, were social Darwinists. Others, such as Franklin H. Giddings, Charles H. Cooley, and Edward A. Ross, were Lamarckian. They believed that environmental influences could affect the biological constitution of individuals; that the lower races were plastic and could, therefore, improve. In the main, the leading American sociologists subscribed to an evolutionary perspective, promulgating the idea that society itself had its own, immutable prescribed natural order. See Ross (1991), Bellomy (1980), Cooley (1909), Ross (1901), McKee (1993), and Fredrickson (1987).
8. "House of Jacob—niggers" is taken from Broderick (1959, p. 10).
9. James found himself lauding the paper's virtues on the one hand and criticizing its analyses as "hazy" on the other. His final comments were: "The last dozen pages or so especially need more thinking. On the whole, however, I regard it as an exceptionally promising production" (Du Bois 1889, pp. 40, 52).
10. Even Hart, of abolitionist heritage and a proud mentor of Du Bois, was influenced strongly by the social Darwinist consensus that African Americans were biologically inferior (Hart 1910, pp. 91–105). In riding the tensions between social versus biological, nature versus nurture, Hart commented that "Race measured by race, the Negro is inferior, and his past history in Africa, and in America leads to the belief that he will remain inferior." He exclaimed that African Americans were "permanently inferior to the white race in capacity" (McPherson 1975, p. 338). See Hart (1910, p. 105).
11. Du Bois prepared an outline of his dissertation topic by the end of the academic year (1890–1891). In December 1892, he read a shortened version of his first draft before the American Historical Society at one of its annual meetings in Washington, D.C. The *New York Independent* reported that his paper at the conference was among the "three best papers presented" . . . "The voice, the diction, the manner of the speaker were faultless. As one looked at him, one could not help saying 'Let us not worry about the future our country in the manner of race distinctions'" (Du Bois 1968, p. 149).

12. The German historical school had three generations: the older (Wilhelm Roscher, Karl Knies, Bruno Hildebrand); the younger (Gustav von Schmoller, Lujo Brentano, Karl Bücher, Friedrich Knapp, Adolph Wagner); and the youngest (Arthur Spiethoff, Werner Sombart, Max Weber) (Shionoya 2001, p. 7).
13. See entry “Schmoller” in *Der Neue Brockhaus: Allbuch in fünf Bänden und einem Atlas* (1965). F. A. Brockhaus Wiesbaden, p. 519.
14. The main focus of surveys dealt with contemporary issues, such as the condition of rural labor, the condition of the workers engaged in trade, in peddling, in shipping, and in transport. The bulk of the questions referred to the material condition of the lower classes. For example, in an 1881–1883 survey of rural labor, Question #23 read as follows: “Is the resident population increasing? Is the number of children and child mortality a great one? Are the strength to work and bodily energy endangered by poor nourishment and overexertion? Is the age at marriage an average one or do many marriages occur at an early age?” This is very similar to the types of questions Du Bois would ask in his study of the seventh ward in *The Philadelphia Negro* (Oberschall 1965, p. 22).
15. See “Schmoller u. Wagner Notebook, 1893–1894,” University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Special Collections and Archives of the W. E. B. Du Bois Papers.
16. Du Bois listened to Schmoller’s lectures in German and, in translation, wrote his notes in both German and English—sometimes mixing the two languages in mid-sentence. This statement was written originally thus: “The bottom of science is the order brought with the world by the Unity of concerns. Science is a *richtiges Bild* of the world.” See Du Bois’s notes, titled “On Method: Schmoller in Seminar,” found in *Economics Notebooks 1893–94*. University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Special Collections and Archives of the W. E. B. Du Bois Papers. (Translated by Barrington Edwards.)
17. Adolf Wagner read the thesis and commented that “this careful as well as comprehensive work, resting on a basis of wide-study, has impressed me very favorably. The author has succeeded in bringing much material together to prove that American experience offers no ground for the assumption that Agriculture tends to develop toward the large-farming system, as the most advantageous.” See Adolf Wagner to D. C. Gilman correspondence, March 28, 1894, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Special Collections and Archives of the W. E. B. Du Bois Papers. See also Aptheker (1973, p. 27).
18. Modern nineteenth-century disciplines, such as economics, sociology, anthropology, and even history, were not strictly formed.
19. *Geisteswissenschaften* and *Naturwissenschaften* can be translated as the human sciences and the physical or natural sciences, respectively. In essence, the nineteenth-century debate about the relation between these categories was about the relation between the *natural sciences* and the *other* disciplines, such as, psychology, history, sociology, philology, anthropology, law, and even comparative literature. The suffix, *Wissenschaft*, refers to systematic, rational, objective knowledge, but not necessarily to science as in natural science. For a comprehensive definition and understanding of these categories, see Bynum et al. (1981, pp. 161–162).
20. *Verstehen* “is possible only if we cast ourselves into the individual character of our historical subject matter. This process is not accomplished by abstract reasoning, but by direct confrontation with the subject we wish to understand.” (Iggers 1968, p. 10).
21. Treitschke’s lectures of 1892 and 1993 were compiled and published posthumously from the notes of some of his students. The lectures were carefully collated and organized based on more than twelve student notebooks. “The gist of the work is no doubt accurate,” Treitschke historian Andreas Dorpalen maintains, “but the [material] has to be read with some care. The notes consulted record versions of the course which span a range of twenty years” (Dorpalen 1957, p. 228). “History wears thoroughly masculine” taken from Treitschke (1914, p. 11).
22. In most Du Bois biographies, Treitschke has become associated with his comment on race, made during one of his lectures. Du Bois wrote that the professor “started me [one day] by suddenly declaring during a lecture on America: ‘*Die Mullatten sind niedrig! Sie fühlen sich niedrig.*’ (Mulattoes are inferior; they feel themselves inferior.) I felt as if he were pointing me out; but I presume he was quite unaware of my presence. However my presence or absence would have made no difference to him” (Du Bois 1968, p. 165).
23. In 1936, Du Bois returned to Germany, and upon his return to the United States, he rendered a scathing critic of Hitler and his regime. Werner Sollors writes about this important visit, noting that Du Bois “unambiguously condemned the Nazi political

- system while he remained distinctly fond of Germany . . . and of Europe in general” (Sollors 1999, p. 221).
24. Barkin (1998) argues that Du Bois learned and understood a great deal about socialism, and in the young scholar’s writing on the subject, he demonstrated a strong facility for its variations and details. See Barkin (1998, p. 165).
  25. Schmoller and Wagner were pleased with Du Bois’s academic performance. They supported the idea of Du Bois receiving a doctoral degree. However, the rules of the university stood as an obstacle. The university normally required that doctoral candidates study for six semesters; Du Bois completed only three. In a letter to the Slater Trustees, Schmoller admitted that the “philosophical faculty might, indeed, on the recommendation of Professor A. Wagner and myself, have possibly dispensed with 2 semesters, because we were able to express so favorable opinion in regard to Mr. Du Bois.” The Slater Fund did not renew Du Bois’s funding. See Gustav von Schmoller to Slater Fund, March 5, 1894, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Special Collections and Archives of the W. E. B. Du Bois Papers. See also Aptheker (1973, p. 28).
  26. W. E. B. Du Bois to Slater Fund, March 10, 1893, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Special Collections and Archives of the W. E. B. Du Bois Papers. See also Aptheker (1973, p. 23).
  27. The original essay is available in microforms. University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Special Collections and Archives of the W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (Reel 82).
  28. Frederick L. Hoffman published *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro* in 1896. At the time, it was regarded within the academic community as a ground-breaking statistically based study that in part examined the mortality rates among African Americans. Hoffman, a statistician for the Prudential Insurance Company, couched his arguments within social Darwinist theory and, in so doing, reiterated assiduously that African Americans were indeed losing in the struggle for existence. He predicted that African Americans would eventually be eliminated naturally owing to a higher death rate influenced by “race traits and tendencies,” not to any social “condition of the lower races.” Africans Americans, he said, were naturally weaker than Whites; and therefore it was in the nation’s best interest not to intervene in nature’s progress toward a social equilibrium. See Hoffman (1896, pp. 1–2).
  29. The 1890 United States Census published data reporting that the population of “persons of African descent,” most located in the South, was increasing at a rate below that of White Americans. In the report, racial groups were broken down into subcategories. Under “Persons of African Descent” were Blacks, Mulattoes, Quadroons, Octoroons; other minority groups were listed as Chinese, Japanese, and “Civilized Indians.” See *Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890, Part I—Population* (1890). Robert P. Porter (Supt.), Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, p. 470.
  30. In university literature, “Sociological Work” is listed as a major area: “The University makes a specialty of the careful, scientific investigation of the social, educational, economic and moral conditions of the Negro population, for the purpose of supplying accurate information and stimulating efforts for social betterment.” University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Special Collections and Archives of the W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, Microfilm, Reel 1, Frame 261.
  31. W. E. B. Du Bois’s original unpublished essay, “A Program for a Sociological Society,” University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Special Collections and Archives of the W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, pp. 3–4. (Reel 80).
  32. For a comprehensive analysis of and study on craniometry, see Gould (1996, pp. 62–104).
  33. Although Du Bois relied heavily on the research and data of colleagues at other institutions, he said that “Atlanta University has been conducting studies similar to this for a decade . . . [but] the further prosecution of these important studies is greatly hampered by the lack of funds” (Du Bois 1906, p. 5).
  34. Taken from Willcox (1908, p. 834). The Willcox paper was in response to Alfred H. Stone’s (1908) paper, “Is Race Friction between Blacks and Whites in the United States Growing and Inevitable?”

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