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Du Bois and James at Harvard: The Challenges of Fraternal Pairings and Racial Theory

Saladin Ambar
Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Abstract: This article seeks to illuminate the relationship between two of the most important figures in American political thought: the pragmatist philosopher William James, and the pioneering civil rights leader and intellectual, W.E.B. Du Bois. As Harvard's first African American PhD, Du Bois was a critical figure in theorizing about race and identity. His innovative take on double consciousness has often been attributed to his contact with James who was one of Du Bois's most critical graduate professors at Harvard. But beyond the view of the two thinkers as intellectual collaborators, is the fraught history of liberal racial fraternal pairing and its role in shaping national identity. This article examines Du Bois and James's relationship in the context of that history, one marked by troubled associations between friendship and race.

Keywords: W.E.B. Du Bois, William James, race, fraternity, double consciousness, pragmatism, American political thought, Harvard.

INTRODUCTION

Few American thinkers have shaped popular and scholarly discussions about the nature of modern identity over the past century as have William James and W.E.B. Du Bois. That James was Du Bois's philosophy professor at Harvard upon his enrollment in 1888, and an acknowledged influence upon his thinking is well known. What has been less well established is the degree to which Du Bois, if at all, influenced James's thinking. More significantly, there has been little scholarly

Address correspondence and reprint requests to: Saladin Ambar, Department of Political Science, Rutgers University-New Brunswick, New Brunswick, NJ. E-mail: saladin.ambar@eagleton.rutgers.edu

writing on why James's considerations of identity, and more specifically, consciousness, did not more readily incorporate race into his matrix of variables that make up one's personality; this is particularly notable given Du Bois's unique contributions in this area. One way to evaluate James's limited appreciation for the power of race—both philosophically and politically—is to examine the relationship between Du Bois and James at Harvard, one that was at once historic for its defiance of social custom, but also for the ways in which it has been typologized by liberal biographers and historians as one variation in a long line of troubling, and at times, inspiring fraternal racial pairings.

Getting at the heart of James's relationship to Du Bois matters for a number of reasons. First and foremost, it is an invitation to revisit what Wilson Carey McWilliams called the "means to the ends of freedom and equality"—fraternity.[1] And, while I will depart from McWilliams's and other more traditional definitions of fraternity here, I nevertheless affirm that the pre-political nature of friendship holds important implications for understanding American politics, perhaps none more so, than the politics of race. As Danielle S. Allen explains in her discussion of friendship's early political significance in the West, "Justice and friendship are analogous in that each is a potential solution to the problem of conflicting desire; both friendship and justice cultivate habits of resolution. Aristotle's parallel between justice and friendship implies that political consent should resonate with the goodwill that arises in our successful friendships."[2]

The resolution of conflicting desires matters a great deal in politics—particularly in large, heterogeneous republics. As Allen reminds us, some friendships in Aristotle's evaluation are deeper than others, ranging from ethical, pleasurable, and the strictly utilitarian.[3] Where ethical forms of fraternity involve shared virtue, pleasurable ones are premised upon, well, pleasure—the joy brought about by sharing the relationship. Utilitarian friendships are those that are "profit-driven."[4] For my purposes, utilitarian friendships can be viewed as those political friendships lacking in deeper personal significance and are largely performative. These relationships are designed in part, for public consumption, to instruct the populace about the political directionality of the actors' intent within the friendship. In the broader sweep of American politics, it is worth considering the performative role of friendship over time—even where more meaningful connections are present among political actors.

In the context of modern societies, particularly in the West, racial fraternity has been largely unable to escape the performative quality of

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friendship. This is because the structural qualities of white supremacy and racial hierarchies make even genuine friendships among people defined as racially different inherently self-conscious. Questions of sincerity, power, and social value, all tinge the relationship with an ambiguous quality otherwise lacking (or at least different) in intra-racial friendships. Paul Gilroy has used the term "politics of conviviality" for what moving beyond the "empty, interpersonal rituals" that make up what I call the performative dimension of racial fraternity, looks like.[5] Because of the dynamics of power, inequality, and unique features of friendship among racial groups—the performative quality, where the actors in question either consciously or unconsciously "create" something for the public out of the relationship—speaks to the inherent difficulty of such fraternal endeavors. Du Bois and James's relationship was no different. It must be stressed, however, that some performative dynamics are more helpful, and far less corrosive than others. That between Du Bois and James was far more instructive of a better model for racial fraternity going forward than most, imperfect though it was.

The second reason for exploring the politics of racial friendship historically has to do with the national stories that persist, the ones that explain the nature of the country, its people, and its origins. How fraternity is interpreted and presented by individual actors in the historical moment is important; how that relationship is presented historically, provides powerful insights for understanding the dynamics of American political development. For it is often the stories used to buttress or frame particular narratives about one's country that shape, or at least attempt to shape, public conceptions of the state's political maturation. This is especially true in America, where fraternity has been tacitly proscribed along racial lines, and race so interwoven with the story of national development. This makes fraternity a subtler, but perhaps more valuable tool for understanding how race has been theorized over time, than say, sexual relationships, which have been a signal feature of American law governing racial interactions. While Randall Kennedy and others have explored the political history of American "interracial intimacies," removing sexual relationships from the story of national identity compels us to consider the politics of race and identity outside of biological longings or the fetish of taboo.[6] The question of who can be friends, and under what circumstances, may be less alluring than the question of who can be lovers, but it carries with it equal purchase for understanding ideas of national belonging. And, I would argue, it is less fraught with the temptation to eroticize our quest for greater understanding of the politics of race. I'll return shortly

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to the political development of racial fraternity, but suffice it to say, it is an important and surprisingly overlooked feature of American political discourse.

Finally, the case of Du Bois and James matters a great deal as I will discuss further, for a variety of reasons. Unlike the stilted or formalistic feints at friendship suggested in the correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and the free black naturalist and surveyor, Benjamin Banneker, for example, the late nineteenth century relationship between Du Bois and James occurred at a time of more avowedly open transracial friendships. Indeed, fraternity had its limitations, none more so in the American South, and its parameters were ever shifting, as President Theodore Roosevelt discovered in the aftermath of his controversial dinner invitation to Booker T. Washington. Yet, the politics of the Gilded Age and early Progressive Era were far enough removed from the Civil War to suggest that the bonds of fraternity could be extended beyond members of one's own race. Abraham Lincoln's self-described and open friendship with Frederick Douglass was an early moment in this period's eclipse of the largely closed era of racial fraternity that preceded it. That the most famous of transracial American friendships in American literature emerged with Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* published in 1885, suggests that Twain's controversial (for varying reasons) liberty taking in having the white boy Huck befriend the elder slave Jim, was not simply ahead of its time, but also, in some respects, *of* its time.[7]

This more open period in racial fraternity was made possible in part by the troubling and yet "progressive" notions of Darwinian science which suggested that the "best" of the races shared important commonalities. These were sufficient to warrant public displays of the equality of friendship among the races—and increasing acts of social equality. James's invitation to Du Bois to join Harvard's Philosophical Club, was just one such symbolic, yet important act from the period. Their relationship offers important insights into how racial fraternity was politically charged, despite often being presented in apolitical terms. And this is very much part of James's story with respect to his understanding of race and American politics; for while James clearly recognized racial power's work at home and abroad, he nevertheless occluded much of race's significance in his scholarly work.[8]

Before plunging into the particular case of Du Bois and James at Harvard, a word about fraternity and its definition is required. I define fraternity as the public presentation, evaluation, and commemoration of

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friendship. Thus, all fraternal relations (in this view) stem from friendships, while not all friendships rise to the level of fraternity. I employ the universal and non-gendered dimension of fraternity—as placed on par with liberty, and equality—from the French revolutionary national ideal. This solves several problems, the first being the exclusive association of fraternity with male brotherhood or friendship. While etymologically honest, that association lacks the breadth to define a host of politically relevant associations that cross gender lines—as any number of cases in American political history (and elsewhere) quite naturally do.

The second problem resolved by defining fraternity in this way, is that by elevating friendships of political consequence from the realm of private association and giving them the larger consideration of representing a form of discourse on nationhood and belonging, we may unmask the often veiled effort to "perform" friendship either by the actors themselves, or those recording their relationship for history. This will become evident in how Du Bois and James think about their relationship—but especially so when considering how scholars have written of it. When viewed outside of the isolation of the singular case, we may begin to see Du Bois and James's relationship at Harvard as a useful model within a larger framework implicating what might be called the political development of fraternity in America.

RACE, FRIENDSHIP, AND AMERICAN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Well-considered applications of periodization have long defined the methodological approach within the subfield of American political development.[9] Imposing periodization choices upon the politics of racial friendships in American history adds great explanatory value for thinking about political narratives that emerge and persist. With this in mind, I argue the United States' history can be divided into periods when racial fraternity was at once *closed*, *indeterminate*, and finally, *open*. Each of these periods has their exceptions, but the general arc of American history travels from restrictive, to more open forms of racial fraternity.

These periods are largely defined by the exhibition of public friendships among highly visible political actors, including presidents, activists, writers, and cultural icons. These figures frequently tested the bounds of racial fraternity in America, shaping possibilities for democratic life beyond

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formally (and formerly) held views on race. That these relationships involved unequal forms of power among whites and blacks is critical for understanding the nature and direction of the type of racial fraternity "performed" at the time. The power dynamics involved also help tell the story of fraternity as a proxy for citizenship and social status in America. Americans know many of these stories—what they may not so readily see is how they are connected to a larger political narrative of belonging in America. The relationship between W.E.B. Du Bois and William James highlights the power of racial fraternity in America over the centuries. Their story illustrates one of the ways in which what appear to have been isolated features of racial progress, and in some cases, racial retrenchment, are actually part of a single strand running through American history. I'll say more about the ways in which Du Bois and James's friendship fit within the broader context of American political development, but first, it is important to consider the kinds of categories racial fraternity in America fall into.

There are four types of relationships that encompass the paradigm of racial fraternity and American political development, each with their own unique, and at times, peculiar set of rules, histories, and political circumstances. Because of the persistence of institutional structures undergirded by male dominance, the most basic form of racial fraternity in America has involved black and white men. The dynamics at play here have been rooted in white male power, but the forms of power employed, and the character of these relationships have changed dramatically over time. Some examples include the distant connection between Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Banneker; the stillborn friendship between Theodore Roosevelt and Booker T. Washington; and most recently, the deeper, but nevertheless performative friendship between Barack Obama and Joe Biden. Despite important differences, there have been subtle elements of continuity, small indicators that Ralph Ellison's character Emerson in *Invisible Man* spoke to over 65 years ago: "With us it's still Jim and Huck." Which is to say, however ironically, that even in the most transparent of interracial friendships, there are hints of power imbalances—rough corners that need smoothing out.

Another type of racial fraternity is perhaps the one most fraught with racially based fears and mythology: friendships among black men and white women. Unfortunately, racial relationships absent sexual narratives and mythologies seldom get the attention they deserve. The friendship between mid-twentieth century writers Shirley Jackson and Ralph Ellison, to cite an example, has other important elements that

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speak to forms of oppression within the American experience—namely patriarchy—but theirs was not a relationship fraught with "sexual taboos" or other eroticized musings into their interactions. That Ellison wrote to Jackson in a letter otherwise critical of her short story "The Lottery," pleased to see they were "beginning to work the same vein," speaks to something well beyond the utilitarian (or pleasurable) idea of friendship possible for black men and white women.[10]

A third form of racial fraternity is that between white men and black women. Again, these relationships have often been seen strictly through the lens of sexual taboo or the erotic. It is an understandable but regrettable bit of reductionism. Slavery and Jim Crow both privileged white men over black women in these relationships—if under many circumstances these interactions could even go by that name—and yet, white men and black women have forged friendships that defy the larger historical record. An interesting example is the very public, and in many regards, uncanny friendship between George W. Bush and Condoleezza Rice. Although their form of racial fraternity was not characterized by the dynamics of sex or eroticism, it did not quite escape such speculation. The audience for racial fraternity in the United States—the American media and public—are often critical features in narratives of racial fraternity in need of troubling.

Finally, friendships between black and white women have not been well explored for their political relevance and potency for illuminating what women in America hold in common, and what also divides them. For example, the relationship between Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary McLeod Bethune, took on a number of subversive qualities—in no small part because of the special relevance of gendered politics crossing currents with race. This category of racial fraternity involves a shared status of oppressed groups (women), with the alternate dynamic of power imbalances present (white supremacy), making it highly revelatory about the complexity of narratives of racial friendships and political alliances.

In short, different kinds of interracial friendships—say between the Marlon Brando and James Baldwin, as opposed to Rabbi Abraham Heschel and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—may shed light on similar questions of magnitude concerning American democracy, including the question of what it means to be an American in the first place. The American literary tradition has done a better job on this front than many of us in the academy. Which is why Mark Twain, Ralph Ellison, Herman Melville, Toni Morrison, and indeed, Shirley Jackson, to

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name a few—have been so vitally important in making the case that American democracy must return at some point to the question of friendship. With great insights and absent any artifice, they did not shy away from the peculiar, superficial, and at times inspiring power of racial fraternity in the United States. On the contrary, they frequently put it at the heart of their work.

DU BOIS AND JAMES IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*, "a Swiss and an Indian in the woods of America" are introduced as members of pre-civil society engaged in some form of exchange. The transaction, economic in nature, binds them, not because of the law (indeed, they are in "a state of nature" as Locke points out), but rather, because as "men," they have obligations owing to a bond that predates, and in a sense, surpasses that found among citizens.[11]

This example serves as a point of emphasis—Locke does not begin with this pair, precisely because it is so striking. On the contrary, Locke's first example is borrowed from Garcilasso de la Vega's history of Peru.[12] Vega's men remain racially unspecified—we may, without too much travail, presume them to be white. But Vega's example—men stranded on "a desert island" and engaged in primitive exchange, does not evoke the deep sentimentality for the state of nature Locke hopes to elicit. Whites trade among themselves all the time. A Swiss and an Indian rendering, however, convey the radical premise of his initial idea. In pre-civil society, not only those members of the same community, but men from polar opposite worlds (Locke would also perhaps suggest, intellects and creative abilities), have an instinctual bond founded in necessity. It is not friendship, but in its staging, Locke portrays a form of reciprocity that may suggest more than mere trade.[13]

This early liberal model is important for several reasons. First, Locke lays the groundwork for establishing the singular importance of market-based relationships; he also demonstrates that the trust of "natural" friends (i.e., members of the same race) is not required for trade, which is a powerful incentive for expanding the bounds of (potential) fraternity. Finally, his "Swiss and Indian" is perhaps the first illustration within liberal theory of a fraternal racial pairing that serves to establish the possibilities (and limits) of belonging. This shared sense of community is based on the common "language" of the market or necessity.

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In this way, Locke's image is a prototype for Mary Louise Pratt's idea of the "contact zone." For Pratt, the contact zone refers to "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as lived out in many parts of the world today."[14] I would extend Pratt's definition to include a zone not only of clashing cultures, but also, when convenient, of *constructed fraternity*. That is to say, the contact zone may well be made up of portraits of imagined relations used to build a narrative of community—in this case, liberalism's cherished community of markets. These constructions of racialized fraternity occur in the "aftermath" of colonial foundings precisely because they reiterate an initial premise validating the newly established community. Mexico's casta paintings portraying indigenous, white, and racially mixed New World "Spaniards," are but artistic renderings of what Locke and later liberal theorists would achieve in words.[15] The fault of the Lockean contract model of racial fraternity is that it presents a two-dimensional, purely utilitarian view of a theorized connection between whites and nonwhites. It has remained the founding model for liberal (economic-based) considerations of racial fraternity, a consistent narrative, where Christian-based premises have been subject to alternating theories of monogenesis (blacks and whites as members of the same family of God); polygenesis (blacks as a lesser form of humanity, created separately form whites); and lastly, subhuman portrayals of blacks *qua* human beings.

As I've discussed, the American racial context of fraternity went through varying stages of development. It is important to note that Du Bois and James's relationship at Harvard occurred during a time of racial retrenchment—a period defined by Reconstruction's reversal and the establishment of Jim Crow. Yet this system of secondary citizenship was also said to comport with founding ideals of liberty and equality ("separate but equal"), and as such, fraternal racial narratives were important to rationalizing the social, political, and economic subjugation of blacks. This was true for race relations in the North as well as the South. Some of these narratives were more benign than others, but they were all charged with, to one degree or another, the same form of racial mythology embedded in Locke's generative example.

The American founding period of Virginian presidencies was tilted toward southern power and slaveholding interests, as Garry Wills and others have pointed out.[16] There are no early transracial fraternal presidential narratives, aside from those of loyal or unusually close slaves. Literature follows suit, with only Melville breaking new ground, well ahead of his

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time. This closed period (1789–1850), from roughly the first US Census to the Compromise of 1850, held up Locke's model of fraternal racial pairing with only the market as an entrée for something approaching friendship. And, it was the presentation of American Indian "nobility" that tended to carry the model forward, most illustratively demonstrated by James Fennimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1835).

Published in that same year, Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* also questioned the plausibility of Native American and white fraternity—primarily owing to a presumption of native "dignity" and independence. It is in his chapter on "The Future of the Three Races in America," where Tocqueville places the three races in what Claire Jean Kim has called a field of racial positions—a triangular model where white supremacy is upheld by either a greater "insider" status or degree of presumed proximity to white civilization.[17] Where Kim's "third party" is Asian Americans, Tocqueville's is Native Americans. The critical point for Tocqueville is that the pride found in American Indians, while admirable, creates its own form of alienation. In meeting a white girl cared for by a Native American woman and a black woman also present in the woods of Alabama, he illustrates the dynamic at play making transracial fraternity difficult, if not impossible in the American setting:

> Crouched before her mistress, watching for each of her desires, the Negro woman seemed equally divided between an almost maternal attachment and a servile fear; whereas one saw a free, proud, and almost ferocious air prevailing even in the effusion of tenderness from the savage [Native American] woman.[18]

The "sentiment of superiority" in the white child results from the black woman's imitation of her in dress, while the Creek woman fails to belong to European civilization at all. Neither can enjoy the equality found in fraternal relations with whites.

While an imperfect model for this discussion, Desmond King and Rogers Smith's argument for a racial orders approach to thinking of American political development is useful in considering the specific periods where transracial fraternity were more or less possible. As King and Smith write:

> [T]he American systems of white supremacy had to be restructured because of the successes of the transformative egalitarian order in institutionalizing enduring bans on overt racial subordination. But restructured as it was, this

> system of segregation, disfranchisement, and immigrant exclusion remained a white supremacist order that made largely formal, limited concessions to the more egalitarian institutions and actors that opposed it.[19]

Du Bois and James's friendship encompass this era (1890–1930) and in many ways reflects the duality of the period—one of presumed equality among the races, while remaining largely one supportive of white racial supremacy. How scholars, historians, and indeed, Du Bois and James themselves reflect on the relationship, further substantiates the ambiguities of the period. The era leading up to the Civil War through the end of Reconstruction (1850–1890) was closer to the period of limited transracial fraternity that succeeded it, although there were more powerful public examples of its possibilities.[20] To better understand why Du Bois and James's fraternal relationship matters in the context of this history, it is important to place their intellectual relationship at the fore.

JAMES AND DU BOIS AS INTELLECTUAL INTERLOCUTORS

The significance of Du Bois and James's friendship may be said to revolve around a single, albeit powerful intellectual contribution associated with Du Bois—that of double consciousness. For it is the closeness of the two men that presumably contributed to the felicity with which Du Bois is said to have appropriated the idea from James. As Kim Townsend has written, "It is tempting to try to establish a strong Jamesian influence on Du Bois."[21] Townsend begins this line of reasoning by challenging the notion that Du Bois's most widely scrutinized idea (double consciousness), as espoused in *The Souls of Black Folk*, was derived from James's classroom instruction. Townsend is but one of numerous scholars who've pointed out that Du Bois's famous account of the black psyche in his 1903 text was a unique take on a much older discourse of duality in self-identity. For Du Bois, double consciousness—"the sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others"—is a novel development in that the American socio-political condition has brought about a hollowed out sense of self. The feeling of "two-ness" of being both an American and a Negro, as described by Du Bois, really is a search for a true self, now lost in the refraction of the white gaze.[22]

Because there is no similar far-reaching concept of Du Bois's associated with any of his other professors while at Harvard, fraternal racial pairing takes on a kind of logical connectivity to James for Du Bois's work; this

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is so in part, because Du Bois does not volunteer fraternal attachments other than to James during his graduate studies. Only James is his "friend" in his writings and recollections.

Martin Raitiere is one of a number of historians who chronicle the origins of the term double consciousness in America. Raitiere notes that the term goes back at least as far as Herbert Mayo to describe "depression of the cerebral forces," in 1838. While Dickson D. Bruce, Jr. traces the earliest usage of the term to 1817. The most proximate, relevant usage as far as Du Bois is concerned belongs to that of the French psychologist Alfred Binet, whose book *On Double Consciousness*, William James was likely familiar with.[23] But even this is a tenuous direct link as Binet's book was published in 1896 (Du Bois's first published use of the term is in his 1897 article in the *Atlantic*, "Strivings of the Negro People") and James used a version of the term as early as 1890 in his highly influential *Principles of Psychology*. Here, James wrote of the "split-off" self or consciousness, one "buried" yet nevertheless fully conscious.[24] In the same year (1890), James cited Binet as a leading source in his work on "The Hidden Self," the subject and title of an article he published in the March edition of Scribner's.[25]

Dickson D. Bruce, Jr. notes that Ralph Waldo Emerson used the term in his 1843 essay, "The Transcendentalist." In it, Emerson writes "The worst fear of this double consciousness is, that the two lives, of the understanding of the soul, which he leads, really show very little relation to each other: one prevails now, all abuzz and din; the other prevails then, all infinitude and paradise."[26] Why not connect Emerson's "soul" to Du Bois's "Souls" for forming a racial theory of double consciousness? Why does James warrant the better claim on Du Bois's thinking, suspect as it may be?

As Alexander Livingston has argued, "[C]ritics are correct to warn against any direct parallelism of James and Du Bois's account of double consciousness. But this alone does not repudiate the possibility of reading Du Bois as appropriating and reworking Jamesian concepts in an innovative manner."[27] Likewise, I see little reason not to concede that Du Bois had been exposed to, and more consequentially, instructed directly by James, in use of this term as a phenomenon of personal identity. What is undisputed is that Du Bois's use of the expression was truly innovative—connecting the dimension of racialized experience in America to dissociative thinking.

But there are strong counterarguments to this Jamesian connection, and they tend toward obviating the fraternal pairing theory, insofar as its use

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places James in a superior intellectual position to that of Du Bois. Shamoon Zamir makes a strong case in arguing that James's influence has been overstated, and that Du Bois was just as likely, if not more so, to have appropriated the concept, if not the term, from Hegel through his courses in History with George Santayana. We are likely to never know for certain, but I am more convinced by Livingston and Shawn Michelle Smith's arguments, insofar as they see a closer connection to James.[28] Nevertheless, in all of this "consciousness" talk of connections, Zamir's analysis is helpful, insofar as it troubles the fraternal pairing of Du Bois and James in ways that are helpful. As Zamir notes, "The sketching of a generalized field of "influence" must be put in the service of a more detailed investigation of Du Bois's critical reading of the relevant materials available to him."[29]

For Zamir, it is not James's "medicalization of self-consciousness" that hits the mark for Du Bois. Instead, it is Hegelian historical conflict (and dialectics) as presented by Santayana—and most importantly, where "the focus on consciousness is central."[30] Zamir's argument is intricate and very much dependent upon Du Bois's course work at Harvard under Santayana and close readings of the historian's texts. Zamir is right to extend the sphere of influences upon Du Bois's thinking—but he does so in ways that leave James far, and I think, unfairly behind. What is most invaluable, I think, is, as Smith puts it, the ways in which Du Bois adapts, rather than adopts Jamesian (or other) perspectives related to consciousness, thus, creating something quite new in racial discourse (and perhaps within psychology itself).[31]

Zamir's critique of the Du Bois–James pairing has the added benefit however, of deconstructing the scholarly trope of racial fraternity that does little to advance our understanding of just what Du Bois and James's significance to identity and racial discourse at the turn of the century might have been. In considering the Du Bois–James relationship, it is worth viewing the two outside of the professor–student relationship and more broadly, as intellectual interlocutors and indeed, effectual collaborators. This is not to suggest that the two men were engaged in a literal race or psychology project, per se; but what we might accrue from a different kind of understanding of them in some joint fashion, is what the two were able to produce in the respective fields of racial politics and studies and modern psychology. To what extent did their intellectual engagement engender a form of collaboration? How, if at all, were Du Bois and James colluders in rethinking race and psychology—by connecting them? And equally important—what opportunities were overlooked—particularly

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owing to James's more limited personal map for grappling with race as a socio-political and psychic phenomenon?

The political theorist Joshua Miller states that Du Bois "revered James for being first among Harvard's transformational national intellectual leaders, 'unshackled in thought and custom who were beating back bars of ignorance and particularism and prejudice.'"[32] Did James's social openness toward Du Bois translate into his public discourse? And did Du Bois shape James's views on race over the course of their two-decade long relationship? Miller notes James's anti-lynching stance, along with his opposition to American imperialism in Venezuela, the Spanish American War, and support for racial intolerance in general. But where scholars see Du Bois readily adopting Jamesian conceptions of psychology, there are scant references to the ways Du Bois might have shaped James's thinking. As Adolph Reed warns, however, in his coolness toward efforts to link James's influence upon Du Bois's thought (particularly the idea of double consciousness), we should take care not to overstate "what propositions in what great books remind the author of what propositions in what other great books."[33] Du Bois's great biographer, David Levering Lewis put these inferences regarding James's role in shaping Du Bois's thinking best:

> At this distance, James's imprint on Du Bois is somewhat less distinct than some recent students of ideas have believed. In a general sense, the professor's extolling of a pluralistic society, robust espousal of democracy, opposition to imperialism, and hostility to religious and racial intolerance shaped his student's views of politics and society—especially as these positions were accompanied by a natural aristocrat's flattering accessibility and unconcern for posturing. . ..But to what extent, if at all, the insights in James's Principles of Psychology were the source of Du Bois's own special insights into what he would describe as the double nature of the African-American psyche remains highly dubious.[34]

Ross Posnock has argued that Du Bois's ideological shifts over the course of his life were owed to the continuing presence of Jamesian thought in his writings and activism. "So profound was Du Bois's investment in James's strenuous ideal that its heroic colors suffuse his 1944 retrospective narrative of his career."[35] Here, Posnock cites Du Bois: "I was continually the surgeon probing blindly, yet with what knowledge and skill I could muster, for unknown ill."[36] This was the gift or curse of pragmatism—relentless and restless experimentation—one that compels a remaking of the self, in pursuit of changing truths.

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This is a sober point—all the more so because despite Du Bois's having lived some additional 50 years after James's death in 1910, there is a relative dearth of scholarship on Du Bois's influence upon James, and more broadly, modern psychology. Aldon Morris's recent work shows Du Bois's influence in shaping the field of modern sociology, for instance.[37] But we have few similar occasions to consider Du Bois's iteration of double consciousness (or other insights) as a formative moment within psychology. As Morris notes, "Du Bois affected the study of race across the social sciences and the humanities."[38] For obvious reasons, Du Bois's own personal experiences with race shaped his intellectual map in ways that escaped James. Du Bois's confrontation with race within the color line invited the formulation of constructs not only useful for navigating the social sciences, but primarily useful for navigating the murky waters of black life in America. The liberal tradition of political thought has not ignored race as such; what it has ignored is the centrality of race to national political development—and in this instance, James's silence on the connections between race and consciousness is staggering—all the more so because of his exposure to Du Bois.

We know, for example, that Du Bois challenged prevailing notions of black inferiority in intelligence during the First World War as psychological testing was done to determine soldiers' fitness for combat.[39] Alfred Binet's intelligence test, ironically enough, was one of the earliest employed before being deemed too limited. We see no such social considerations of race in James's psychological studies, though he shows a keen interest, as many of the early psychologists do, in gender.[40] But what beyond refutations by Du Bois of black inferiority in intelligence? We can readily see suggestive evidence of Du Bois's influence upon black scholars of psychology and psychological trauma—none more so perhaps than Frantz Fanon.[41] T. Owens Moore's "A Fanonian Perspective on Double Consciousness" in the *Journal of Black Studies* (2005) explores this evident link.[42] This subfield of "black liberation psychology" linking Du Bois and Fanon is critical, but it also tends toward equating or limiting Du Bois's psychology strictly to that of double consciousness.[43] And it leaves James's distillation of Du Bois (and other white psychologists and liberal theorists) unaddressed. Even when Du Bois's influence on James is discussed, the tendency seems more away from psychology to sociology.

Eugene Taylor hints at "evidence" that "Du Bois's sociological study of the American negro and his sensitivity to the Afro-American religious experience exerted an influence on the development of James's little

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recognized social psychology."[44] But Taylor's reference here is to an unpublished paper. Such silences in the chain of influence are relevant insofar as they posit in their quietude a happy place for James and Du Bois within mainstream scholarship—and largely within the confines of the fraternal racial pairing paradigm. An exception is Michael Raposa's critique of Shannon Sullivan's book on white privilege (2006), which suggests Du Bois's influence on modern psychology evolved out of not only Jamesian understandings of the conscious (or more rightly, unconscious), but also his own interpretations of Freud connected back to James's *Principles of Psychology*. The effect was apparent later in Du Bois's work (after 1930), but is less evident in its shaping of psychology as a discipline or its grappling with race and its effect on identity. What role if any, did friendship play in the direction of these intellectual causal arrows, for both Du Bois and James, and those who wrote of their relationship?

JAMES AND DU BOIS AS FRIENDS

Nearly 50 years after his time at Harvard University as William James's student, Du Bois recalled the great psychologist–philosopher's influence upon him. "I was repeatedly a guest in the house of William James; he was my friend and guide to clear thinking."[45] It was in *Dusk of Dawn* where Du Bois recalled being thrown into the Harvard of 1888s "extraordinary aggregation of great men."[46] James is the only Harvard faculty member ever described by Du Bois as a friend. That list includes Du Bois's influential professors Josiah Royce, George Santayana, Nathaniel Shaler, and Albert Bushnell Hart. James was also singled out for particular attention, as Du Bois's gratitude for pursuing studies in philosophy was described as having "landed me squarely in the arms of William James of Harvard, for which God be praised."[47] These passages would be cited over the years as evidence of James's profound intellectual, and indeed, *personal* influence upon the young Du Bois. Indeed, Cornel West would cite long passages from Du Bois's *Autobiography*—these in a section in which Du Bois is classified as "The Jamesian Organic Intellectual"—in his work on pragmatism, in a then striking effort to fold Du Bois into the canon of American pragmatism and its philosophic tradition. But West holds fraternity in abeyance.[48] West's project is giving Du Bois the status of an early pragmatist, not in making him part of a liberal transracial icon.

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This was not so for William James scholar Eugene Taylor, to whom the literary critic and biographer Arnold Rampersad said Du Bois assured him that "the two most important people in my life were my mother and William James."[49] Granting his memory the benefit of the doubt, Taylor is effusive in ways that go beyond the oral historical record. For Taylor, the "indication [is] that James and Du Bois were something more than just casual acquaintances. In fact, James appears to have been one of Du Bois's spiritual mentors."[50] There is a propulsion toward deep friendship, bordering on the mystical here, well beyond what might be justified by the evidence, including Du Bois's words. Even Francis Broderick's mid-century interview with Du Bois where the aging scholar-activist recalls James as his "favorite teacher and my closest friend," doesn't quite capture the intimacy conveyed in Taylor's description.[51] Did Du Bois "unconsciously" adopt even James's writing style? Taylor seems to think so. Indeed, for Taylor, friendship was James's chief influence upon Du Bois. "Could James's real impact on Du Bois's thinking have been in just such an atmosphere of intimacy and friendship, with all the notebooks and published references providing us with empirical but only peripheral clues?"[52]

Few scholars have gone so far as Taylor, but we can glean an aspirational tone in some of the language of fraternity surrounding James and Du Bois—language that goes well beyond what either of them said or wrote of the other. Du Bois's "my friend and guide to clear thinking" rendering of James is found in almost any discussion of note where their relationship is touched upon. But the line is rarely, if ever, interrogated, and friendship hangs as a presumed state. It can be found in Louis Menand's *The Metaphysical Club*, for instance, where James's influence is emphasized (pushing Du Bois away from the impractical field of philosophy into the social sciences).[53] This is not so much wrong as it is short. Trygve Throntveit's *William James and the Quest for an Ethical Republic* is a rare instance where friendship is stripped of its banality and reconsidered. James's relationship to Du Bois is not cheapened, but rendered more meaningful, when considered in light of what Throntveit calls James's "casual racism" as reflected in his private allusions to Booker T. Washington as "the darkey."[54] Scholarly recollections of those Harvard philosophical dinners are worthy of such inclusive accountings.

Would James have ever referred to Du Bois as his "friend?" It does not appear he ever did. This may be altogether immaterial in evaluating the depth of the relationship, particularly in an inherently unequal relationship between professor and student. Nevertheless, Du Bois does invoke

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the term. While James seems not to have used it, his sentiments toward Du Bois, in more staid terms to be sure, suggest something cooler, but not without meaningfulness: something more like fondness. James's 1891 letter inviting his then graduate student Du Bois to a "philosophical dinner" at his home on February 14th is as austere as can be. But, it is clear that it meant a great deal to Du Bois—and it was but one of numerous occasions where Du Bois and James conversed together outside the bounds of the academy.[55] James would later write with pride about "my old pupil Du Bois, whose 'Souls of Black Folk' is a very remarkable literary production—as mournful as it is remarkable."[56] That letter, coming after the publication of *Souls*, adds a bit more depth to understanding the relationship—but scholars are prone to draw more meaning from it and similar missives, than is perhaps warranted. Herbert Aptheker posits a different tone in his edited volume on Du Bois's correspondence, describing "the relationship between Du Bois and William James [as] always cordial."[57] While it is difficult to assess James's inner feelings toward Du Bois, it is possible to know the value he placed on friendship. As James biographer, Robert D. Richardson has written, "friendship mattered intensely to him. Isolated and lonely as he often felt, he wrote long letters to Ward, Arthur Sedgwick, to Henry Bowditch, to Wendell Holmes, and always to Alice and Harry."[58] None of these were James's students, however—an important factor to consider.

One point few scholars if any have posited is the extent to which Du Bois's language of friendship toward James may have been a personal effort to fold himself within the great intellectual canon of American letters, if not the more limited terrain of pragmatism. By associating himself so closely with James, perhaps Du Bois was choosing to do what other liberal scholars and thinkers would not do—namely, graft Du Bois into the American philosophical tradition as a first rate thinker on par with James and the rest. I raise it here, not because it can ever be truly known absent evidence in the historical record, but rather because liberal scholars have gone to further lengths to establish fraternal ties that defy reason.

Take the case of James and Booker T. Washington. In a lengthy footnote concerning James's reference to Washington as a "darkey," James biographer, Gerald Myers, goes to some length to depict the descriptor as actually a form of respect for Washington by James, rather than one of opprobrium.

> I interpret James's use of *darkey* differently. . .Using *darkey* was James's way of trying not to be stilted, artificial, or sentimental, but to indicate that he was himself relating with respect and admiration to a person whom many

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> described, whether endearingly or otherwise, as a "darkey." I think it was not condescension but rather James's show of confidence that in *his* use, a word like *darkey*, could take on positive connotations. Because of this confidence, he could afford to show, to his brother [Henry, to whom he was writing] anyway, a lack of fear toward a borderline epithet.[59]

Myers's defense has the ring of contemporary equivalents of casual slurs used on occasion by whites seeking a tenor of validation or affiliation with subaltern black culture. But in light of the broader historic need, and to me, it seems very much a need, to establish a fraternal pairing at nearly all costs (and here, Myers goes to impressive lengths), James's language is important. While the reference to Washington may not be an instrument of erasure to James's profound life's work with respect to democratic theory and egalitarianism in the world (and in his philosophic pragmatism) we also needn't be compelled to overlook every thorn for every rose of James's, either. Sometimes—and I'd argue almost always—the appellation "darkey" is what it seems to be—a slur. But the powers of racial fraternal pairing are great and manifold.

The need to fashion friendship out of such thin gruel (or worse, contrary evidence) is itself, a telling flaw of liberal racial fraternal pairing. Consider James's note to his brother Henry, this one concerning Du Bois's *Souls*. In it, William writes of *Souls*: "I am sending you a decidedly moving book by a mulatto ex-student of mine, Dubois, professor [of] history at Atlanta (Georgia) negro College. Read Chapters VII to XI for local color, etc."[60] Aside from the poor rendering of Du Bois's name in James's letter, the note is not in any way hostile, nor is it particularly effusive. James's mulatto ex-student has written a decidedly fine book. This is well enough. One must squint to find friendship within it however. All caring isn't deeply personal, and all bonds aren't fraternal. Better still, they aren't always tied as tightly at both ends. James's view of his relationship with Du Bois seemed to be tied more in line with collegiality; Du Bois's with admiration and affection. Both determinations are understandable—and there is no need to embellish the record, absent a project of fraternal racial pairing—an effort to construct or reimagine American political development along more comfortable liberal political lines.

CONCLUSION: RACE AND CAUSAL ARROWS

The late nineteenth century was a period characterized by America's growth in global power and rapid advancement in scientific discovery.

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The racialized paradigm of white superiority was largely bolstered by these developments. Still, the search for a fraternal racial theory to augment liberal theory—and practical politics—went hand-in-hand with the age. As the historian John Pettegrew has pointed out, popular journalistic and state accounts of the Spanish American war were used to unify black and white sentiments concerning American imperialism. "Although the tributes to black soldiering did not last very long past the end of the war against Spain," Pettegrew reminds us, "the ideological formulation that heroic masculine character rather than race determined true American identity would be used effectively throughout the twentieth century to mobilize an increasingly heterogeneous U.S. citizenry to foreign war."[61]

While James was an opponent of American imperialism, it can be said of him, as Eddie Glaude, Jr. has written of John Dewey, that James "failed in some significant way to address the evils of white supremacy in his work."[62] Despite the possible reconsideration of his racial stereotypes during his visit to Brazil and the Amazon with Louis Agassiz at 23, there are few meaningful accounts of James pondering race with any degree of depth.[63] In an 1865 letter to his parents from the expedition along the Amazon, James writes of the Indians he encountered. "We slept on the beaches every night and fraternized with the Indians who are socially very agreeable, but mentally a most barren people."[64] Such pithy and presumptive insights raise the question: did the causal arrow of friendship and influence merely point from James to Du Bois? Was James largely unchanged (or uninterested) in matters of race after meeting Du Bois in 1888 and being in contact with him up until 1907?

James did have occasion to address the issue of race in his Memorial Day oration of 1897 at the unveiling of the Robert Gould Shaw monument commemorating the white colonel who led the 54th Massachusetts's famed assault on Fort Wagner in the summer of 1863. James's brother Wilky fought at the battle and was wounded. At the unveiling of the monument James referred to the "social plague of slavery" and honored the black soldiers who gave their lives to preserve the Union. James's oration which addressed the black soldiers' contributions somewhat tangentially, nevertheless went further than a great many similar literary and oratorical remembrances. The poet Robert Lowell recalled James's words as powerful:

> Two months after marching through Boston,
> half the regiment was dead;

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at the dedication,
William James could almost hear the bronze Negroes breathe.[65]

The reference to James is an allusion to James's comments that day, recognizing the realistic depiction (beyond caricature) of the black soldiers. "So true to nature," James described their images in his oration, "that one can almost hear them breathing."[66]

James also published a series of letters opposing lynching in the period immediately after the release of Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*. According to Robert D. Robertson, Du Bois's influence on James was undeniable. "It seems clear that it was James's personal association with Du Bois that brought the subject home to him."[67] James's public utterances against lynching were picked up by newspapers and his opposition to the practice was well received in the North. "It is where the impulse is collective, and the murder is regarded as a punitive or protective duty," he wrote, "that the peril to civilization is greatest."[68] This was a rare instance of James interjecting himself into the racial politics of his time.

Maria De Guzman may have put James's encounters with race best in her essay on "Anglo-American Identity." Noting James's membership in the Anti-Imperialist League, De Guzman writes that

> James did not engage in racial stereotyping with respect to Spaniards or Spanish-speaking people as did his peer and self-proclaimed "anti-imperialist" Charles Francis Adams. Nevertheless, James did not entirely abandon the enterprise of racial stereotyping promoted in his day as a respectable form of "knowledge" by scholars such as the Harvard based naturalist Louis Agassiz to whom James had served as an assistant. Although James's writings do not amount to a critique of racial typing, they do reveal a concern with the end that discourse was serving: justified imperialism.[69]

De Guzman captures the essence of this type of late-nineteenth century liberal discourse on race in her final assessment. "James's writings," she argues "suggest a person guiltier of Anglophilia and hope about 'American' exceptionalism than of racially motivated 'anti-imperialist' isolationism."[70] By Du Bois's own account, he too was a fledgling imperialist in these early years.[71] But Du Bois's concern with race and to be sure American imperialism (certainly by the publication of *Souls*) appear to have had little impact on James's systematic thinking or predilections concerning race.

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That leaves a number of important avenues of research left less than well traversed. There have indeed been new and important examinations of pragmatism's relationship with race, but few focused studies of James's thought within this context. Second, Du Bois's relationship to James and more broadly, the then burgeoning field of modern psychology seems inadequately studied—at least as far as the connection between Du Bois's ideas of self (including, but not only limited to racial conceptions) and the discipline as a whole are concerned. Lastly (if not finally), how are we to situate Du Bois and James's relationship within the larger question of "social" rather than political democracy? How can we revisit the idea of fraternity between these two enormously important and iconic thinkers whose intellectual meeting point was at once tied to historic national (re)identification with segregation, imperialism, and white supremacy? What kind of friendships were plausible across the color line, as Du Bois called it—and to what extent might such a reality matter to American political thought, and our own prevailing woes related to racialized inequalities? We may not be much closer to answering these questions today than previous scholars concerned with race, fraternity, and the intellectual tradition in America, but we may hope, in the best sense of Jamesian and Du Boisian hope, that such a project merits a deeper understanding of our crisis than it did before.

NOTES

1. See McWilliams (1973, 7).
2. Allen (2004, 126–27)
3. Ibid., 127.
4. Ibid.
5. Gilroy (2005, xv)
6. See Kennedy (2004).
7. I engage the white–black binary for my discussion of fraternity for a number of reasons, not the least of which is it has been the most enduringly fraught form of friendship in American life. But that should not negate other literary and historical examples that engage the subject of fraternal pairing and racial theory that go beyond black and white; these include powerful counter-narratives to the Lockeian strain which predominates. Here, I am thinking of Melville's bond between Queequeg and Ishmael, well ahead of Twain's example, but less central to the story. *Moby Dick's* transracial friendship is also less fraught with the danger of the black–white dichotomy. Indeed, it is Queequeg's paganism that occupies much of the underlying tension in *Moby Dick's* most significant fraternal story, not race.
8. For a comprehensive view of James's thoughts on race and American empire, see Livingston (2016).
9. See Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek (2004).
10. Ruth Franklin (2016).
11. John Locke (2003, 106).
12. Vega was a Mestizo, born of an Incan princess and Spanish conquistador. See Benhabib (2002, 22–23).
13. Racial inferiority does not negate rationality for Locke in this illustration. See Armitage (2012, 84–111).

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14. Pratt (1991, 34).
15. See Katzew (2004).
16. See Wills (2005).
17. Kim (1999).
18. de Tocqueville (2000, 307).
19. King and Smith (2005, 81).
20. See Freedman (2012).
21. Townsend (1996, 248).
22. Du Bois (1999, 11). Kimberly S. Drake adds a class dimension, highlighting the "white middle-class gaze" as part of the process of black (dis)identification with self. See Drake (2011, 12).
23. The *Medical Repository*, a New York medical journal published an account of what would today be called a split personality. See Bruce, Jr. (1992, 303). For Binet, see Raitiere (2012, 185).
24. James (1890a, 1890b, 209).
25. See James, (1890a, 1890b) "The Hidden Self," *Scribner's*, March. Available online: https://kassanoff.wikischolars.columbia.edu/file/view/william%20james.pdf/592235924/william%20james.pdf.
26. Bruce, Jr. (1992, 300).
27. Livingston (2016, 145).
28. See Smith (2004, 26).
29. Zamir (1995, 154).
30. Zamir (1995, 156, 161). There is some omission of James's historical approach to consciousness. James T. Kloppenberg makes the case for such a historically based view of consciousness in James. See Kloppenberg (1986).
31. Smith (2004, 27).
32. Miller (1997, 57).
33. Reed, quoting John Dunn, goes to some lengths to disavow the racial-fraternity-pairing reasoning that infects much of the Du Bois–James discussion. See Reed, Jr. (1997, 105).
34. Lewis (1993, 96).
35. Posnock (1998, 118).
36. Ibid.
37. Morris (2015).
38. Morris (2015, 217).
39. See Pickren and Rutherford (2010, 132).
40. See James's conscious and exclusive use of female subjects in one of his more famous studies. James (1890).
41. See Black (2007).
42. Moore (2005).
43. See Afuape (2011).
44. Taylor (1979, 2).
45. Du Bois (1986, 581).
46. Du Bois (1986). Du Bois and James both adhere to the period-rife references to "men" and maleness as universal terms. But the hyper-masculine language goes well beyond a cue for humankind. See Pettegrew (2007).
47. Du Bois (1986, 578).
48. West (1989, 139).
49. Taylor (1979).
50. Taylor (1979, 8). The two men did undoubtedly bond beyond the classroom. In 1892 James and Du Bois made what appears to have been an impromptu "excursion" to meet with Helen Keller at the Perkins Institute in Roxbury, an experience that clearly moved Du Bois. See Andrews (2007, 173).
51. Broderick (1958, 15).
52. Taylor (1979, 22).
53. Menand (2001, 394).
54. Thronveit (2014, 130).
55. The invitation is housed at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst Special Collections Library (W.E.B. Du Bois Papers), and can be viewed online. William James Letter to W.E.B. Du Bois, February 9, 1891. http://credo.library.umass.edu/view/pageturn/mums312-b003-i123/#page/1/mode/1up.

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56. William James letter to Sarah Wyman Whitman, June 8, 1903. James (2002, 261).
57. Du Bois (1973, 133).
58. Richardson (2006, 92).
59. Myers (1986, 596). Emphasis in original.
60. I'm quoting the letter from Kwame Anthony Appiah's *Lines of Descent: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Emergence of Identity*. Appiah (2014, 169).
61. Pettegrew (2007, 240–41).
62. See Eddie S. Glaude, Jr.'s "Tragedy and Moral Experience," in Lawson and Koch. (Eds.). (2004, 115).
63. Richardson (2006, 70).
64. James (1920, 67).
65. Robert Lowell, "For the Union Dead," see https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57035/for-the-union-dead.
66. Axelrod. (1978, 168).
67. See Richardson (2006, 442).
68. Ralph Barton Perry (1996, 249).
69. Cited in Scott-Childress (1999, 111).
70. Scott-Childress (1999).
71. "I am less sure now of this war attitude," Du Bois wrote in *Dusk of Dawn* (1940), in a moment of self-criticism, as he recalled his support for "Our Country" during the Spanish American War at the outbreak of the Second World War. Du Bois (2007, 127).

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