AUTOBIOGRAPHY, POLITICAL HOPE, RACIAL JUSTICE

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Abstract
After the overthrow of Jim Crow and the reelection of our first Black president, how should we conceptualize the tasks of a racially progressive politics in the United States? I address this question through (1) the lens of recent philosophical work on the relation between narrative and the justification of political hope and (2) a comparison of two autobiographies, Barack Obama's *Dreams of My Father* and W. E. B. Du Bois's *Dusk of Dawn.* In light of this comparison, the paper also evaluates some recent contributions to the American Political Science subfield of American Political Development.

Keywords: Barack Obama, W. E. B. Du Bois, Narrative, Political Hope, Reconciliation, Genealogy, Postracial, Racial Hierarchy, Racial Inequality

INTRODUCTION

After the overthrow of Jim Crow, and after the election of our nation's first Black president, how should we frame the tasks of a racially progressive politics in the United States? By "progressive politics" I mean what Thomas McCarthy (2009) has described as a "moral politics" (p. 150)—a politics driven by a "morally motivated pursuit of justice" (p. 144). And by "racially progressive politics" I mean, specifically, a politics driven by a morally motivated pursuit of racial justice. Raising the issue of racial justice will no doubt seem absurd to political observers who—still echoing former Secretary of Education William Bennett on the night of the 2008 presidential election—insist that the watershed event of Barack Obama's victory shows that African Americans no longer face a deck that has been stacked against them, and that American society may now properly be described as having left behind its past of race-based oppression. Here, however, I reject Bennett's "crude" (Taylor 2014) but common, triumphalist postracialism and presuppose that the United States has yet fully to satisfy the demand for racial justice.[1] Persuaded by the recent writings of Michelle Alexander (2010), Elizabeth Anderson (2010), Tommie Shelby (2007), and other social theorists, I assume that this demand remains urgent and devote the bulk of the essay to asking how a racially progressive politics should formulate it. In what terms should a racially progressive politics articulate that demand? In light of what account of the problem of racial justice should such a politics attempt to answer it, the persistence of triumphalist postracialism nothwithstanding?

Inspired by Immanuel Kant's idea of a universal history, McCarthy (2009) argues that moral politics demand "'reasonable' hopes for practically 'feasible' futures, hopes

Du Bois Review, 11:1 (2014) 159–175.
© 2014 Hutchins Center for African and African American Research 1742-058X/14 $15.00
doi:10.1017/S1742058X14000101

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X14000101 Published online by Cambridge University Press

that are supported by basic patterns of development and tendencies of contemporary history" (p. 154). In addition, he holds that when "our confidence in divine providence, in the power of reason to realize itself [Hegel], and in iron laws of historical motion [Marx] has been shaken . . . [p]ractical-political projections of feasible futures are . . . all that is left of 'reasonable hope'" (p. 154). For McCarthy, moral politics demand reasonable hopes, for the political pursuit of social justice will make sense to us only if we have reason to believe that the just future that is the goal of our politics is a politically achievable one. But what reason could we possibly have to believe this, if we have lost faith in providential and Hegelian-Marxist philosophies of history? The answer to this question, McCarthy proposes, is precisely the sort of reason we adduce when we construct plausible interpretations of persistent patterns and present tendencies of historical change in light of which the just future to which moral politics aspire can be said to be practically feasible.

McCarthy characterizes these interpretations of historical change, or development, as narratives that, while providing practical orientation to moral politics, may never pretend to scientific objectivity. Not to be understood on the model of what, recalling Kant, he calls "the mass of determinant judgments available from empirical inquiry" (p. 140), the sort of storytelling McCarthy endorses is a form of "reflective judgment" (pp. 140, 224) that, to be tenable, "must take account of, and be compatible with, known empirical data and causal connections" (p. 225); yet it must also go "beyond" (p. 225) those data and connections in presenting a reading of what is known that is credible and able to warrant our moral-political hopes.

McCarthy gives a compelling account of the role that narrative can play in buttressing the hope that moral politics demands. Still, his analysis stops short of an examination of the constructive, constitutive relation between the narrative interpretation of historical developments and the practically oriented projection of a feasible future. In defending the importance of reflective judgment, McCarthy seems to suppose that the narratives which buttress our hope have but an instrumental relation to the justice for which we hope. But this supposition is implausible, for the tales we narrate about past and present historical tendencies, if they chart a path to a just future, typically entail a particular picture of that future. To put the point otherwise, McCarthy's "reflective judgment" is not simply a judgment about the ways, or means, to a just future, but, additionally and perhaps inevitably, a judgment about the very character of that future.

To clarify this point, I turn to David Scott's (2004) writing on historical narrative and anticolonialism. Building on the work of Hayden White, Quentin Skinner, and Bernard Yack, Scott claims that one's choice to write a history diagnosing the "problem" of colonialism is a decision to conceptualize the postcolonial "solution" to that problem in terms implicitly dictated by the sort of history one has chosen to write. In *Conscripts of Modernity*, he illustrates this thesis through a reading of C. L. R. James's narrative of the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins* (1938). In particular, Scott (2004) shows that James's choice to write a history depicting the problem of colonialism as one of "totalizing" (p. 95) degradation and dehumanization is a decision to conceptualize the postcolonial solution to that problem in terms implicitly dictated by that depiction: "my argument is that insofar as we formulate our historical discontent around the picture of colonial slavery as degradation and dehumanization there is no way out of [the] . . . . Romantic . . . . language-game of revolutionary overcoming and rehumanization that supports and sustains it" (2004, p. 95). For Scott, the genre of romance presents history as a drama of redemption, imagining the future as fully triumphant over the darkness and death that have imprisoned the past. Scott argues that James's narrative relies on that genre's peculiar "mode of emplotment" (p. 96), for in characterizing colonial slavery as thoroughly dehumanizing it projects the future

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X14000101 Published online by Cambridge University Press

it anticipates as wholly transcending the woe-ridden past. James's decision to tell the kind of story he tells—because it is a decision to adopt a specifically *romantic* narrative convention—commits him to a distinctively romantic vision of a hoped-for future; or, in other words, of postcolonial racial justice as requiring the redemptive overcoming of the colonial past through total anticolonial revolution.[2]

While McCarthy lets us see that our narratives support our aspirations, Scott reminds us that they can also qualify them. By following the course of an evolving, hermeneutic circle, our hopes and ideals shape and lend focus to the narratives we forge to warrant them, even as those narratives commit us to specific characterizations of our hopes and ideals. McCarthy's and Scott's insights alike inform the pages to come, for the central point of the essay is to contrast and evaluate some alternative uses of narrative to frame the demand for racial justice. In particular, I consider Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* (1995) and W. E. B. Du Bois's *Dusk of Dawn* (1940). Each book is an autobiography that, like James's story of Toussaint's life, works as political allegory.[3] More exactly, each book models the struggle for racial justice in the United States, projecting a particular vision of racial justice as the goal of that struggle and offering reasons to hope that that vision can be achieved.

It cannot be controversial to suggest that Obama's autobiography speaks to contemporary discussions of racial justice. But Du Bois's autobiography was published more than seventy years ago, and so to propose that it too speaks to those conversations may seem implausible. I argue, however, that it is not implausible, for Du Bois's narrative expresses his hope for racial justice in terms still instructively and pertinently different than those shaping Obama's book. Briefly put, if Obama's basis for hope is the possibility of racial reconciliation through the discovery of common ground, Du Bois's (1940) is the possibility of undoing racial domination through what he dubs a "long siege" (p. 6).

I focus on *Dreams* in the next section of this paper, and then on *Dusk* in the following section. In the third and final section, I consider a pair of Desmond King and Rogers Smith's recent contributions to the Political Science subfield of "American Political Development" (APD)—an article (2005) and then a book (2011)—in the perspective of my examination of Obama's and Du Bois's autobiographies. Each contribution uses historical narrative to interpret and explain the place of race in American politics.[4] Notwithstanding the obvious similarities between the stories they tell, the two works express conflicting if not equally tenable reflective judgments regarding the contemporary prospects for racial justice in the United States.

I rely on the Obama and Du Bois autobiographies to frame my analysis of King and Smith's works for three reasons: (1) King and Smith themselves invoke *Dreams* to elaborate the argument of their 2011 book, even if their 2005 essay has an affinity to *Dusk*; (2) to show, via concrete example, how narratives of reconciliation that appear to warrant our moral-political hopes may serve nonetheless to obscure the demands of racial justice, exchanging a robust hope for one that is, perhaps inadvertently, too limited; and (3) to suggest that, after Jim Crow and the election of a Black president, Du Bois's idea of a "long siege" remains pertinent to the conceptualization of current struggles to subvert racial hierarchy, and hence to advance racial justice.

Dreams From My Father

In the introduction to *Dreams*, Obama (2004) reveals that, when people who do not know him well discover his racial background, they guess at his "troubled heart…the mixed blood, the divided soul, the ghostly image of the tragic mulatto trapped between two worlds" (p. xv). Significantly, he suggests, that were he to respond properly to their surmise, he would explain that the tragedy is not his, or at least not his "alone,"

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but equally that of "the sons and daughters of Plymouth Rock and Ellis Island," of his fellow, Black American "children of Africa" (p. xiv), and of "both" his wife's cousin and the boy's White classmates who "refused to play with him because of his dark unblemished skin" (p. xv). In short, rather than deny the validity of the guess, Obama would tacitly endorse it, figuring himself and the division within him as representing a division that runs throughout the polity. But the story Obama wishes to tell—as his subtitle puts it, a story of "race and inheritance"—is *not* a tragedy, but deliberately an allegory of the possible "break down" of America's "tragic cycle" (p. xv) of racial division and, indeed, of the possible achievement of racial reconciliation. From the beginning, Obama invites his readers to regard the narrative of his life as an attractive model for representing the history, and possible future, of the Black-White racial divide in the United States. This, in a nutshell, is what I wish to argue.

For Obama, the problem of racial division is the problem of learning how to heed the legitimate demands of each of the racial worlds that claim him without having tragically to sacrifice one set of demands to the other, and of learning how to belong to each one of these worlds without ceasing to belong to the other. The fraught lived experience shaping the plot of *Dreams* is no doubt familiar, a clear echo of *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). For Obama, in his introduction, as for Du Bois in the opening chapter of *Souls*, a story of a White child or White children spurning a Black playmate (for Du Bois, the story of the visiting card exchange; for Obama, the story of his wife's cousin and his classmates) quickly gives way to a meditation on the inner experience of a troubled, racial two-ness that reflects the racial divisions at work more generally in American society. And for Obama, as for Du Bois, much of the narrative that follows is meant to show that and how racial two-ness is possible without conflict.

As Obama depicts his path towards conflict resolution and racial reconciliation, it proceeds through a variety of phases. For example, an important early experience is marked by an anxiety about being Black, where young Barry (Obama's nickname) interprets being Black as a stigmatizing source of inferiority. Obama recounts that, while attending grammar school at Hawaii's Punahou Academy where, on his first day, a "ruddy-faced" (p. 60) classmate asks him if his father eats people, he finds that, besides himself, there is only one other Black child in his class, a girl called Coretta. One day, when he is playing with Coretta, some of the other children tease him that she is his girlfriend, a taunt to which he responds by shouting that she is not his girlfriend, shoving her, and finally telling her to leave him alone. Later, however, the ten-year-old seems to learn that the judgments of Whites who link him to other Blacks need not be stigmatizing, for when his father visits his school, the ruddy-faced boy remarks that his dad is "pretty cool" (p. 70). And when Barry observes Coretta observing his dad with a "look of simple satisfaction" (p. 70), he sees that his fearful effort to dissociate himself from the stigma she represented to him—what he calls an "act of betrayal" (p. 62)—was not so damaging to Coretta as to preclude for her the possibility of a race-based self-affirmation.

But if Blackness is not to be felt as a stigma, marking one as inferior, what sense should be attached to it? How otherwise should it be scripted? By the time he is a teenager, Obama begins to entertain an alternative answer to this question—that is, an alternative interpretation of the condition of being Black—through his conversations with his friend, Ray. For Ray, being Black is always a matter of "playing on the white man's court . . . by the white man's rules" (p. 85). And if a White man treats you well, Ray insists, it is because of the "fundamental power" (p. 85) he holds over you, so that you couldn't even be sure that "everything you had assumed to be an expression of your Black, unfettered self—the humor, the song, the behind-the-back pass—had been freely chosen by you. At best, these things were a refuge; at worst, a trap" (p. 85).

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In essence, then, Ray's dark, despairing vision casts being Black as a matter of being oppressed to the point of being dispossessed of one's self.

Although Obama resists Ray's vision by denying its inevitability, he remains haunted by the authority Ray presumes as a "bad-assed nigger" (p. 82). He resists the vision because while he finds it corroborated in the anguish, doubt, and self-contempt animating the writings of James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Langston Hughes, Richard Wright and Du Bois—all of them "exhausted, bitter men, the devil at their heels" (p. 86)—Obama himself is drawn to Malcolm X's Black nationalism. He is not drawn to the talk of blue-eyed devils and apocalypse, which he regards as incidental to the nationalist program, but to Malcolm's "repeated acts of self-creation . . . his unadorned insistence on respect" (p. 86). Preferring an affirmative account of being Black to one that can only engender bitterness, Obama also aspires, here as when he later becomes a community organizer in Chicago, to disentangle Black self-affirmation from the repudiation and hatred of all things White.

Still, Obama falls prey to that repudiation due to the authority Ray exercises over his self-understanding; or, in other words, due to the power Ray wields, in the pose of a "bad-assed nigger," that reinforces Obama's already anxious doubts as to his racial authenticity—what Obama describes as Ray playing "his trump card" (p. 82). A number of years later, while Obama is a student at Occidental College, the memory of Ray playing his trump card still lurks in the back of his mind, causing him to question his "racial credentials" (p. 100).

Obama undertakes to allay his doubts, first, by distinguishing himself from other multiracial students, assimilationists who wish to avoid Black people; and second, by persuading himself (and others) that he is not "compromised" (p. 100). That is, by persuading himself that he is "alienated" (p. 101) from bourgeois society, steadfast in his "loyalty to the black masses" (p. 101), and, therefore, not a "sellout" (p. 100). In effect, Obama the college student inverts his childhood effort to resolve his conflictual two-ness—again, his effort to dissociate himself from a Blackness he perceived as stigmatizing—by embracing a supposedly "authentic black experience" (p. 101) that he now interprets as demanding a rejection of the claims of anything and everything White.

Marcus and Regina, fellow Black, Occidental students hailing from St. Louis and the South Side of Chicago respectively, help Obama to see his way beyond both thesis and antithesis. Marcus, responding to Obama's effort to establish his racial credentials by calling Tim, another student, an "Uncle Tom," suggests that he should look at himself before passing judgment on others. And Regina, remarking on what she perceives to be Barack's self-centeredness, upbraids him for leaving messes for "old Mexican cleaning ladies" (p. 109) to pick up. Reflecting on both comments, Obama soon sees that his efforts to "escape the imagined traps that white authority had set for him" has led him mistakenly to "cede the values of . . . [his] childhood," as if they were "irreversibly soiled by the endless falsehoods that white spoke of black." Put more precisely, he recognizes that the values that Marcus and Regina endorse—thoughtfulness, diligence, and kindness—are identical to the putatively white values that he learned from his mother and grandparents; thus, that "morality" has no "color" and that he need not spurn those values in order to be authentically Black (p. 110). Going forward, Obama can reject what he now takes to be the illegitimate demands, or values, of the racial worlds that claim him (on one hand, the falsehoods Whites speak of Blacks; on the other, Blacks' repudiation of all things White), yet heed the legitimate ones (again, thoughtfulness and the like) without sacrificing one set of legitimate demands to the other, because the demands in each case are the same. No longer driven by the "fear that had caused [him] . . . to ridicule Tim," or the "fear that had caused [him] . . . to push Coretta away"—both times "a crippling fear that [he] . . . didn't belong somehow,

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that unless [he] . . . dodged and hid and pretended to be something [he] . . . wasn't [he] . . . would forever remain an outsider, with the rest of the world, black and white always standing in judgment" (p. 111)—Obama will henceforth take his stand, with regard to the racial divisions within and without him, on the common ground of universal values.

If Obama's universalist turn serves to resolve his conflictual two-ness, and so to imply that two-ness is possible without conflict, it still fails to satisfy his desire to belong to a "community" (p. 115), and to appease his "longing for place, and a fixed and definite history" (p. 104) that his conversations with Regina have evoked in him. "My identity might begin with the fact of my race, but it didn't, couldn't, end there," he proclaims, having envisioned "all" of his grandmothers (not only his White grandmother (Toot) and his Indonesian stepfather's (Lolo's) mother, but Regina's grandmother and the Mexican maid Regina tells him could have been her grandmother) as asking the "same thing" (p. 111) of him, as making the same moral claim on him. Obama's identity cannot end with race, for, having positioned himself on the normative, common ground that is the common bequest of each of one of his grandmothers, he transcends what is specific, or distinctive, to his identity as a Black American. Moral inheritance, he suggests, trumps race. What sense, then, can Obama give to his racial distinctiveness without gainsaying his commitment to values he regards as universal? His answer to this question comes to light, we shall see, precisely through his recounting of his successful effort to satisfy his aforementioned desire for history, place, and belonging by becoming a part of a Black community on the South Side in Chicago—home both to Regina and his future wife. For having "come to understand himself as a black American" (p. 115), Obama then undertakes to anchor his self-understanding in the meaningful claims of that community.

The substance of the answer is the proposition that "stories" (p. 195) constitute communities. Rather than hateful rage towards Whites, or notions of racial or cultural purity—what he describes as Black nationalism's "narrowing vision, of blood and tribe" (p. 197)—stories are the stuff through which community must be built, and through which the positive, self-affirmative, and self-respecting message of Black nationalism is to be preserved. "Our sense of wholeness," Obama the community organizer writes, "would have to arise from something more fine than the bloodlines we'd inherited. It would have to find root in Mrs. Crenshaw's story and Mr. Marshall's story, in Ruby's story and Rafiq's; in all the messy contradictory details of our experience" (p. 204). Self-respect and a sense of what it means to be a Black American must be sought in the stories that lend texture to and ground the collective life of individual Black communities.

Supposing that to be so, however, it would still be another step to argue that the ethical claims informing the stories of one Black community do not conflict with the ethical claims informing those of another; or, moreover, that the claims that appear to bind together all Black communities do not conflict with the claims that bind together various White and other non-Black communities. Put otherwise, Obama's communitarian turn raises the possibility that the commitments one adopts in tying one's identity to a particular place and community may well prove to reflect the peculiar character of that place and community, and thus to conflict with one's endorsement of the values that one takes to be universal.

Like the Du Bois of *Souls*, Obama resolves this sort of problem by representing the ethos of a particular group as expressing more generally held values. For Du Bois, this is a matter of suggesting that the unifying message animating the Black *Volksgeist*, rather than convey a message that is peculiar to that folk spirit, expresses an ideal shared by Black and White Americans alike, and that Du Bois himself endorses.[5] For Obama, writing, again in the shadow of Du Bois, it is a matter of insisting, in the

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course of recounting the epiphany he experiences the first time he hears Reverend Wright preach at Trinity Church, that a commitment to community can coincide with a commitment to universal values.

> And in that single note—hope!—I heard something else; at the foot of that cross, inside the thousands of churches across the city, I imagined the stories of ordinary black people merging with the stories of David and Goliath, Moses and Pharaoh, the Christians in the lion's den . . . . Those stories—of survival, and freedom, and hope—became our story, my story; the blood that had spilled was our blood, the tears our tears; until this black church on this bright day seemed once more a vessel carrying the story of a people into future generations and into a larger world. Our trials and triumphs became at once unique and universal, black and more than black; in chronicling our journey, the stories and songs gave us a means to reclaim memories that we didn't need to feel shamed about, memories more accessible than those of ancient Egypt, memories that all people might study and cherish—and with which we could start to rebuild. And if a part of me continued to feel that this Sunday communion sometimes simplified our condition, that it could sometimes disguise or suppress the very real conflicts among us . . . I also felt for the first time how that spirit carried within it nascent, incomplete, the possibility of moving beyond our narrow dreams (Obama 2004, p. 294).

In Obama's vision, his personal, individual story merges not only with the stories of ordinary Black people, but with the story of Blacks, *as a people*, a story that he identifies with the stories of the Judeo-Christian tradition writ large, and that he claims to be at once Black and more than Black—at once unique and universal. There is, indeed, a vision of communion here, of a particular Black church, functioning as the consecrated vessel of story-born Black memories that, in contrast to provincial (perhaps Afrocentric?) memories of ancient Egypt, speak to "all people" everywhere. And while Obama allows that the communion he imagines is not seamless, that his vision may obscure genuine conflict, he likewise suggests that it is robust enough to preclude the sacrifice of universally compelling commitments (to "survival, and freedom, and hope") to Black nationalism's "narrowing" and "narrow" visions and dreams.

In fine, Obama's universalist resolution of his conflictual two-ness is compatible with his effort to anchor his sense of what it is to be a Black American in his identification with a particular Black community—and, for that matter, with a particular Black church—because the normative claims that orient the life of that community and church are fundamentally universal, however inflected they may be what is unique to the Black experience. We are given to believe that commitment to community and commitment to universal values need not conflict, for the ethical ground of community is the common ground of universal values. It is this common ground, finally, that provides the basis for Obama's hope for the prospects of a racially progressive politics that would "start to rebuild" the Black community.[6]

Dusk of Dawn

If *Dreams* depicts Obama's experience of race as that of a conflictual two-ness that Obama feels driven to resolve, *Dusk* depicts Du Bois's experience of race most prominently as an experience of domination. And if Obama envisions progress towards racial justice as proceeding on the basis of shared normative commitments that can resolve the conflicts between Blacks and Whites, then Du Bois posits no such shared commitments, and envisions progress toward racial justice as a "long siege" against

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the economic motives, entrenched habits, and unconscious urges that sustain racial domination.

To appreciate Du Bois's theory of racial domination, we can begin with *Dusk*'s philosophically intriguing subtitle, "An Essay Toward An Autobiography Of A Race Concept." The subtitle is philosophically intriguing, because while one may typically think that concepts can be defined through an explication of the necessary and sufficient conditions of their proper use, they do not normally admit of biography, let alone autobiography. Thinking otherwise, it seems, would be a category mistake. What, then, can Du Bois (1984) be thinking when he claims that his book is "not so much [his] autobiography as the autobiography of a concept of race, elucidated, magnified, and doubtless distorted in the thoughts and deeds which were [his]" (p. xxx)? Or, later, when he writes "that his autobiography is a digressive illustration and exemplification of what race has meant in the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries," and that, therefore, his book is "an autobiography of race rather than a merely personal reminiscence" (p. 221). Du Bois proposes that his thoughts and deed exemplify and elucidate the race concept, and that narrating the tale of those thoughts and deed is tantamount to spelling out the content of that concept. As the story that is his life evolves from the nineteenth through the twentieth centuries, he claims, so too does the meaning of the concept of race. Du Bois intelligibly transforms autobiography into a mode of conceptual analysis, I shall argue, because he historicizes the concept of race.[7] In what follows I call his philosophical strategy to this effect "genealogical," due to its striking affinity to Friedrich Nietzsche's (1998) innovative approach to the analysis of concepts.[8]

Nietzsche, it will be remembered, thought that making sense of the concept of punishment must be a matter of unpacking the dense, synthesis of meanings (purposes, functions) that, over time, have been willfully interpreted into and forcibly imposed on specific procedures for inflicting harm. In a similar vein, he held that grasping the concept of Christianity must be a matter of reconstructing "a history of successive attempts on the part of a variety of different 'wills' to take control of and reinterpret a complex of habits, feeling, ways of perceiving and acting" (Geuss 1994, p. 281). More generally, Nietzsche understood that conceptual analysis can take the form of genealogy—that is, of historical inquiry that distinguishes distinct meanings that have been joined together and even conflated through episode after episode of reinterpreting one and the same, more or less stable set of phenomena (procedures, complexes of habits, feeling, ways of perceiving, and so forth). In sum, he suggested that historically formed concepts, like our notion of punishment, "are like ropes held together by the intertwining of strands, rather than by a single strand running through the whole thing. To analyze such concepts is not to find necessary and sufficient conditions for their use but to disentangle the various strands that have become so tightly woven together by the process of historical development that they seem inseparable" (Clark 1994, p. 22).

In *Dusk* (in chapter 1, "The Plot," and elsewhere), Du Bois (1984) proposes that by the late nineteenth century, when he "was born and grew to manhood" (p. 5), differences in the color of men had emerged as the more or less stable set of phenomena undergirding the concept of race. But analyzing the concept of race requires historical inquiry, Du Bois believes, for while racial distinction is persistently "based on color" (p. 136) and differences of color, the *concept* of race is an intricate web of manifold and often conflicting interpretations of those differences formed over the course of his lifetime.[9] Autobiography, a narrative form of historical inquiry, is the vehicle through which Du Bois genealogically analyzes that web of interpretations, for to reconstruct the story of his life is, in his view, to disentangle these interpretations,

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one from the other, in order to show that and how they have been exemplified in his life.[10] In the final paragraph of "The Concept of Race," the fifth and central chapter of *Dusk*, Du Bois (1984) summarizes this approach to conceptual analysis:

> This was the race concept which has dominated my life, and the history of which I have attempted to make the leading theme of this book. It has as I have tried to show all sorts of *illogical* trends and *irreconcilable* tendencies. Perhaps it is wrong to speak of it at all as a "concept" rather than as a group of *contradictory* forces, facts, and tendencies. At any rate I hope I have made its meaning to me clear. It was for me as I have written first a matter of dawning realization, then of study and science; then a matter of inquiry into diverse strands of my own family; and finally consideration of my connection, physical and spiritual, with African and the Negro race in its homeland. All this led to an attempt to rationalize the race concept and its place in the modern world (p. 133, emphasis mine).

If Du Bois worries here that what he has called a" race concept" is not, strictly speaking, a concept, it is, I suspect, because he sees that the race concept is *not* the sort of concept that can be defined by specifying a set of non-contradictory and hence logically coherent conditions for its correct application. But contradiction happily inhabits the race concept, for Du Bois like Nietzsche supposes that historically formed concepts may comprehend discordant assessments of the point or other significance of some stable set of phenomena. The race concept is "illogical," but is not for that reason without the efficacy characteristic of "forces," "facts," and "tendencies." Indeed, the efficacy of the concept is such that, internal inconsistencies notwithstanding, it has *dominated* Du Bois's life. Du Bois's exemplification of the race concept is his subjection to it. Again, echoing Nietzsche, Du Bois holds that historically formed concepts can function as mechanisms of power and control.

As we have seen, Du Bois represents the interpretations of color differences that historically have constituted the concept of race as impinging on his thoughts and deed alike. In "The Concept of Race" he stresses his thoughts, recounting how, through the course of succeeding phases of his intellectual development, his thinking exemplified and elucidated alternative interpretations of color differences. For the purposes of "study and science" (p. 133), for example, Du Bois discriminated between differently colored groups of human beings using criteria of: (1) physical development, (2) inheritance of physical traits, (3) distinctions in culture and cultural history, and (4) inheritance of physical traits *and* cultural distinctions. Later, reflecting on his own family tree, he began to think that it is misleading to think of color differences as dividing the species into "great primary groups" (p. 100), with "fixed and fast" (p. 101) lines between them, rather than as indicating the strikingly widespread intermixture of racial types. Finally, recognizing that neither descent-based nor cultural accounts of the importance of color differences could explain his tie to Africa, Du Bois notes that he found himself interpreting those differences with reference to a notion of common history.

Du Bois initiates his account of the impact of the race concept on his deed when he begins to "rationalize . . . [the] concept and its place in the modern world"—that is, when he begins to explain Whites' persistence in adhering to "race theories" that interpret color differences between Europeans and Africans to indicate "the inferiority of colored folk to white" (p. 129). Having first noticed that, consciously or unconsciously, Whites seized on these theories to vindicate the economic exploitation of Black slaves, he gradually comes to see that they had invented and then passionately endorsed race theories ranking the dark skinned lower than the light skinned precisely *because* they had seen that race prejudice could advance their interest in exploiting

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Black labor—or, in other words, that race prejudice had "an income-bearing value" (p. 129). In the chapters following "The Concept of Race," Du Bois continues to elaborate his rationalization of the race concept, arguing that Whites' persistence in the belief in their racial superiority is caused not only by their interest in economically exploiting Blacks, but by "conditioned reflexes; of long followed habits, customs and folkways; of subconscious trains of reasoning and unconscious nervous reflexes" (p. 172).

For Du Bois, Whites' unyielding disposition to regard Blacks as their inferiors is causally overdetermined: it is due to economic interests, as well as to entrenched habit, unconscious impulse, and the like. And that disposition, in its turn, plays a critical, causal role in maintaining and reinforcing Blacks' subjection to the domination of Whites; that is, in perpetuating and reinforcing their subjection to Whites' power arbitrarily to determine the nature and scope of their deed. "[R]acial distinction based on color," Du Bois insists, "was the greatest thing in my life and absolutely determined it," for his White, fellow citizens were "settled and determined upon the fact that . . . [he] was and must be a thing apart" (p. 136). And because they were settled upon this fact, these citizens thought they were entitled to constrain his actions at their discretion: "[h]ow I traveled and where, what work I did, what income I received, where I ate, where I slept, with whom I talked, where I sought recreation, where I studied, what I wrote and what I could get published—all this depended and depended primarily upon an overwhelming mass of my fellow citizens in the United States, from whose society I was largely excluded" (p. 136). In sum, Du Bois argues that his actions exemplify the race concept by telling a causal story highlighting the emergence and salient effects of the concept. In the story's first half, so to speak, he identifies causes that give rise to, and sustain Whites' disposition to endorse interpretations of color differences representing colored folk as inferior; in its second part, he characterizes these interpretations as mechanisms of power—or, again, as the forces, facts, and tendencies that have functioned to bolster the domination of his life and deed.

For two reasons at least, the Du Bois of *Dusk* may well have taken issue with Obama's view that the path to racial justice is a path beyond conflictual two-ness and racial division through the discovery of the common ground. One is the belief that Whites tend to qualify their allegiance to principles they otherwise *seem* to share with non-Whites—to a point that effectively eviscerates that allegiance. To illustrate and defend this thesis, Du Bois sketches a fictional dialogue between himself and a respectable, White "friend" (p. 153) belonging to "the Episcopal Church, the Union League and Harvard Clubs, and the Republican Party" (p. 154). In the course of the dialogue, we learn that the friend endorses four often conflicting "codes" of "action" (p. 163)—those of the Christian, the Gentleman, the American, and the White Man, the choice between which Du Bois simplifies by putting "a line between 'Christian Gentleman' on the one hand and the 'American White Man' on the other," thus arranging a "puzzling dilemma" (p.164). Du Bois suggests that, despite the contradictions between the codes, most Whites prove impervious to reason—tending to equivocate, they qualify their endorsement of the Christian Gentleman's principles of peace, liberty, and good will to accommodate the American White Man's appreciation for the importance of war, exploitation, and hate (e.g., "They are filled with Good Will for all men, provided these men are in their places and certain of them kept there by severe discountenance" (p.164)). But Du Bois's friend is "logical" (p. 164) and, acknowledging the contradictions between the codes, resolves his dilemma by embracing the code of the American White Man. In contrast to the Whites who equivocate, Du Bois's friend embarrassingly sees through the illusion that there is a normative common ground that Du Bois and he share, recognizing that his devotion to the code of American White Manhood

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requires, at best, that he regard Du Bois as an "Exception" (p. 169) to the masses of colored folk whose exploitation and domination that code most unequivocally prescribes.

The second reason that Du Bois may well have taken issue with Obama's narrative allegory of the path to racial justice is closely related to the first: that it would be bad politics to predicate hope for racial justice on the possibility of racial reconciliation through the discovery of common ground if, as Du Bois would have worried, the assumption of normative common ground is an illusion. Consistent with his explanation of racial domination, Du Bois himself holds that hope for racial justice must be based on the prospect of a successful struggle against the forces—economic motives, entrenched habit, irrational, unconscious urges, and so forth—that continue to perpetuate racial domination through their encouragement of Whites' disposition to regard Blacks as their inferiors. And that struggle, Du Bois argues, will require "not sudden assault but long siege . . . careful planning and subtle campaign with the education of growing generations and propaganda." For all this, finally, "time" will be needed "to move the resistance in vast areas of unreason and especially in the minds of men where conscious present motive is built on false rationalization" (p. 6).

RACE AND AMERICAN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT: TWO NARRATIVES

In their 2005 essay, "Racial Orders in American Political Development," Desmond King and Rogers Smith maintain that the United States "has been pervasively constituted by systems of racial hierarchy since its inception." But throughout American history, they claim, these hierarchies have been "contested" by other political institutions, as well as by the victims of racial injustice and other political actors. In sum, King and Smith (2005) argue "that American politics has historically been constituted in part by two evolving but linked 'racial institutional orders': a set of 'white supremacist orders' and a competing set of 'transformative egalitarian orders'" (p.75).

King and Smith conceptualize institutional orders as coalitions of "governing state institutions, nonstate political institutions, and political actors…bound together by broadly similar senses of the goals, rules, roles and boundaries" (p. 78) with which the members of a given order wish to shape political life in certain domains. Institutional orders count as "racial" within their framework, just in case they "seek and exercise governing power in ways that predictably shape people's statuses, resources, and opportunities by their placement in 'racial' categories" (p. 78). Finally, King and Smith understand meaningful racial political "development" to occur "when one predominant order gives way to another, or when the prevailing order's leading concepts of racial goals, rules, roles and boundaries are substantially revised, as when most white supremacists felt compelled to abandon slavery or when most racial egalitarians came to insist on equal voting rights, not just civil rights" (p. 79).

Tracing the history of meaningful, racial political development in the United States from the nation's inception to the time of their writing, King and Smith detail a rich account of the rivalry between White supremacist and transformative egalitarian alliances as it evolved from the Revolutionary-era through the Civil War, Reconstruction, and finally to twentieth-century struggles around Jim Crow. Arriving at an analysis of what they "see as the current descendant of 'white supremacist' racial orders," they stress that: (1) while most "institutional occupants" of this descendant-order disavow the label "white supremacist," it still may be accurately described as "antitransformative;" (2) the fundamental, racial agenda of this post-Reagan, conservative alliance is its strong opposition to "measures explicitly aimed at reducing racial inequalities;" (3) this opposition helps to "maintain many superior white statuses and

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privileges;" and (4) however much some members of the conservative alliance "hope" to see racial inequality diminished in the "long run," or "wish" to see "entrenched racial disadvantages reduced," the alliance's categorical rejection of explicit and "direct" measures "leaves few options for doing so" (p. 83). In sum, King and Smith depict the current, "antitransformative" coalition as an institutional order that—no less than the avowedly White supremacist racial orders from which it derives—works to perpetuate racial hierarchy and inequality. As to the current, transformative egalitarian order, they argue that it faces serious problems, for it has "struggled in the last quarter century to find a unifying agenda" and, with respect to concrete policies, "often lacks the power to overcome its antitransformative opposition" (p. 84).

Although King and Smith's book, *Still a House Divided* (2011), tells a story similar to their 2005 essay, the narrative it presents significantly differs from the earlier tale in its terminology, substance, and description of "modern" racial politics. With regard to terminology, *Still a House Divided* exchanges reference to an historically overarching conflict between "antitransformative" (White supremacist and White supremacist descendant) and "transformative egalitarian" racial orders for a description of the recurrent structuring of American racial politics as an opposition between "rival policy alliances" (p. 16) that differ with regard to their views as to how "the central racial policy issues of their eras—slavery, segregation, race-conscious policy making—should be resolved" (p. 17). Corresponding to this terminological shift is a striking change in the substance of the narrative. Where the "Racial Orders" essay represents the nation's history as a still continuing fight between, on one hand, coalitions that deploy governing power effectively to support race-based hierarchies in the form of superior White statuses and privileges and, on the other, coalitions that deploy governing power to undo those hierarchies, the book, while stressing that the coalitions it studies are indeed "in control of some governing institutions" (p. 18), depicts that history as largely shaped by repeated disputes about the proper way to decide questions of racial public policy. Put differently, the thread *unifying* the story that *Still a House Divided* tells is not the earlier essay's central theme of relentless antagonism between the forces perpetuating racial hierarchy and those struggling to dismantle it, but the iteration of disagreement between differently opinionated parties to a series of race-related policy debates.

To be sure, none of this is to claim that King and Smith's book ignores the battle over the reproduction of racial hierarchy that marked the slavery and Jim Crow eras. In contrast to the 2005 essay, however, the 2011 book omits to depict the modern era as the latest phase in the evolution of that battle. Thus, where the "Racial Orders" essay presents the modern post-Jim Crow, post-Reagan era of racial politics as a genuine protraction of past struggles between governing institutions that help to maintain racial hierarchies and transformative, egalitarian forces that work to subvert them, *Still a House Divided* suggests that this era's racial politics may better be described as a "clash between generally cohesive color-blind and race-conscious alliances" (p. 253). The book invites us to regard this clash not as an ongoing fight over the existence of still persistent racial hierarchies, but as a conflict over the proper means to decrease the "racial gaps" (p. 93) in material well-being attributable to Jim Crow era racial hierarchies.[11] In *Still a House Divided*, more exactly, King and Smith portray modern racial politics as a contest between blinkered policy purists whose one-sided partisanship renders them oblivious to the steps Americans might fruitfully undertake to become "one" in "their commitments to racial progress" (p. 292), where racial progress is essentially a matter of shaping public policy to reduce "harsh material racial inequities" (p. 280).

At several places in their concluding chapter, King and Smith actually do propose that Americans enjoy a widely shared commitment to racial progress. "Few" Americans

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"applaud" (p. 283) racial inequalities in income and wealth, they insist, and "*probably* most" (p. 280, emphasis mine) would like to see "declines . . . in racial inequalities" (p. 280). Similarly, they proclaim that "*probably* most" (p. 257, emphasis mine) proponents of colorblind policies believe that those policies "will prove broadly *beneficial* in the long run" (p. 257, emphasis mine), thereby implying that these persons, like their race-conscious counterparts, regard racial progress as a genuine good. In general, King and Smith portray Americans as largely united in their commitment to the end of racial progress—the reduction of racial inequality—but as divided in their assessment of the different kinds of policies proposed to realize that end.[12] They argue, therefore, that truly to become one in their commitments Americans must come to a broad consensus about means as well as ends—specifically, that they must come to a consensus that there can be no increase in racial equality without "some *mix* of race-neutral and race-conscious measures" (emphasis mine). Their expressed "hope" that it will be possible to build a successful political coalition around such a mix seems *reasonable* (in McCarthy's sense) to them, because they purport to have discovered a *common ground*—a commitment to the end of "greater racial equality"—in light of which the partisans of rival policy coalitions will be able to agree on "some sensible combination of their most tested and proven programs." Adopting a tone of superior political morality, the authors suggest that were these partisans to renounce "obfuscation and evasion" (p.287) and henceforth "frame the nation's racial choices more accurately and honestly than they have done for the last three decades" (p. 292), then their reasonable hope could well be realized.

Given that King and Smith, circa 2011, assume that the commitment to reduce racial equality is widely shared, it comes as no surprise that they align themselves with the spirit of Obama's autobiography, quoting from the president's recounting of his Trinity United vision of communion, and praising him for telling a story that depicts Americans as united by "shared purposes" and "similar needs" (p. 288). In effect, they praise Obama for telling just the sort of story that they have aspired to tell—one that presents hope for racial progress as warranted because the members of an otherwise polarized polity share a commitment to that end. To be sure, King and Smith also take Obama to task for not giving adequate attention in his campaign speech about race, "A More Perfect Union," to "policy challenges" (p. 8) and, in particular, to the need for colorblind and race-conscious partisans to compromise and unite around "mixed measures" (p. 288). In short, they criticize the speech for not modeling a policy-oriented, instrumental rationality that identifies mixed measures as the means necessary to achieve racial progress. It appears that King and Smith press this criticism because it points to Obama's failure to take strategic advantage of the common ground that they suppose as the basis of their hope for racial progress.

Is King and Smith's assumption of common ground believable? Significantly, the two authors adduce no convincing, empirical support for their aforementioned, cautiously probabilistic conjecture that it is true. Yet they *require* this assumption, for their exhortation to embrace the middle course of mixed measures makes little sense absent the presupposition that partisans on both sides of the policy divide truly endorse greater racial equality as a desirable end. But perhaps there are good reasons to doubt this assumption, not the least of which is their own insight, clearly expressed in the "Racial Orders" essay, that conservatives' categorical rejection of direct measures for reducing racial inequality *practically* compromises their supposed "hope" to see it reduced—an insight that, *mutatis mutandis*, echoes Du Bois's recognition that, when Whites professed commitment to racial equality contradicts their professed commitment to principles and policies that reinforce or leave in tack racial inequality, they typically qualify the former to accommodate the latter. The "Racial Orders" essay

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also aligns itself with Du Bois—or, at least, with what I have suggested would have been Du Bois's critique of Obama's allegory of the path to racial justice—when, rather than imagine a racially progressive politics that derives hope from the assumption of a common ground that may not exist, King and Smith (2005) argue that an indispensable task facing such a politics is the articulation of a unifying agenda that can focus and advance the struggle against a "resurgent 'antitransformative' order" (p. 84).

There are in fact other reasons to doubt King and Smith's assumption, including the considerations that: (1) as of 2008, nearly half the number of White Americans believed that Blacks had already achieved racial equality (Dawson 2011); and (2) racial resentment of Black "cultural" differences drives White opposition not only to race conscious, racially egalitarian public policies, but to race-neutral, racially egalitarian policies that tend to be stigmatized as Black (Anderson 2010; Kinder and Dale-Riddle, 2012). With so many White Americans seemingly oblivious to the reality of racial inequality, it strains credulity to suppose that Whites widely share a commitment to reducing it; and because racial resentment drives White opposition to race conscious policies *and*, indeed, to select race neutral policies, it is not plausible that the agents of that opposition sympathize with the desire to reduce racial inequality.

To return to the framework I sketched at the start of this essay, I read the "rival policy alliances" narrative as a *putatively tenable* reflective judgment that, to warrant our hope for racial justice, appeals to the conjecture that Americans generally, and the partisans of rival, racial policy alliances specifically, share a commitment to greater racial inequality. But the tenability of King and Smith's reflective judgment is doubtful, for that conjecture can easily be squared neither with the empirical evidence as to Whites' beliefs regarding Blacks' achievement of racial equality, nor with the fact that racial resentment drives White partisans' opposition to racially egalitarian public policies. Finally, the tenability of that judgment is additionally undermined by, again, the Du Bois-inspired consideration that it is not at all credible to assume a commitment to racial equality when the profession of that commitment is rendered suspect by consistent opposition to the policies required to satisfy it.

Considered in the persuasive perspective of the "Racial Orders" essay, the story King and Smith tell in their book can also be criticized for suggesting that the substance of a racially progressive politics is sensible compromise among competing policy instruments, not political struggle against forces that serve to reproduce and perpetuate racial hierarchy. Because the "Racial Orders" essay insists that racial hierarchy still shapes the nation's formative, institutional structure (for, again, the nation "has been pervasively constituted by systems of racial hierarchy since its inception" (King and Smith, 2005, p. 75)), it implicitly ties *its* critique of ongoing, material distributional inequities to the idea that these inequities reflect and reinforce the persistence of the sort of unjust social relations (modes of conduct) that constitute racial hierarchy: social relations that conflict with Blacks' just claim to stand in relations of equality with their fellow citizens.[13] Thus, while their essay is *not* an argument to the effect that still existing racial hierarchies can best be described as a version of the sort of Jim Crow era, racial domination that Du Bois describes in *Dusk* (thus, as a "new Jim Crow" (Alexander 2010, passim)), it still echoes *Dusk* in proclaiming the continuing existence of unjust inequalities of standing. Read in light of their essay, then, King and Smith's book comes into view as giving an incomplete account of the contemporary demand for racial justice. Due to its focus on policy instruments for altering the current, racially disproportionate allocation of material resources, it loses sight of the still normatively pertinent ideal of equal standing, which the "Racial Orders" essay implies has driven the anti-hierarchical, transformative egalitarian tradition since the nation's inception.

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To return again to the framework sketched earlier, the key point here is that the "Racial Orders" narrative implicitly characterizes the realization of racial justice—thus, the fulfillment of our hope for racial justice—differently than *Still a House Divided*. And that characterization is more convincing than the vision of justice (the reduction of material inequalities through mixed measures) implicated in the final chapter of King and Smith's book, for it better accords with our best accounts of contemporary racial injustice, which stress the ongoing persistence of hierarchical relations of unequal standing (Anderson 2010; Shelby 2007).[14] In addition, then, to expressing an untenable reflective judgment, King and Smith's "rival policy alliances" narrative obscures the larger demands of racial justice, exchanging the robust hope of radically reforming the nation's formative institutional structure for the hardly insignificant but deflated hope of reducing material inequalities.

CONCLUSION

As Du Bois would likely have argued, and as the "Racial Orders" essay strongly suggests, advancing the cause of racial justice demands the continuation of a "long siege" against White supremacist and White supremacist-descended political forces in a polity that remains divided in its commitment to the end of racial equality. What, however, warrants the political hope that efforts to perpetuate that siege will be effective in undermining social relations of unequal standing? In *Dusk*, Du Bois (1984) implies that hope is justified by the expectation that, over time, "education" and "propaganda" (p. 6) can undo the resistance of the economic interests, entrenched habits, and unconscious urges that support racial hierarchy. In contrast, King and Smith intimate in the "Racial Orders" essay that despair may well be warranted, stressing the recent failure of the transformative egalitarian order to produce a unifying agenda. Yet they also stress that the transformative egalitarian order "is now authoritative in American law and many governing agencies," and that a rhetorical allegiance to egalitarian ideals "has become de rigueur" (King and Smith, 2005, p. 83)—considerations that, to my thinking, give us reason to hope that our struggles to prolong the long siege will continue to unmake racial hierarchies. Extrapolating into the future the story that the "Racial Orders" essay narrates, I, therefore, suggest that precisely *because* egalitarian principles have acquired a sort of peremptory (authoritative, imperative) force, both institutionally and discursively, there is reason to hope that a transformative egalitarian politics will effectively advance a new, unifying agenda by exploiting that force to rearticulate the demand for equal standing. I offer this suggestion as a tenable, reflective judgment as to the prospects for a racially progressive, transformative egalitarian politics in our putatively "postracial" era.[15] I also offer it, finally, to encourage such a politics, for narratives give us ideas of the just futures for which we may hope, "but only if we are prepared to engage ourselves in bringing them about" (McCarthy 2009, p. 225).

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NOTES

1. For the distinction between crude postracialism, which treats watershed events like the election of Barack Obama as having consigned race-based injustice to the dustbin of history and, on the other hand, more sophisticated but still untenable versions of postracialism, see, in this issue, Taylor (2014).

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2. In this paragraph, I summarize David Scott's reading of the 1938 edition of *The Black Jacobins* as romance, but do not discuss his interpretation of the revised 1963 edition.
3. Scott (2004) describes *The Black Jacobins* as an allegory of "emancipationist redemption" (p. 57).
4. On the importance of both explanation and interpretation to the historical construction of politics in APD, see Orren and Skowronek (2004), particularly chapters 1 and 5.
5. See Gooding-Williams (2009), particularly pp.150–157.
6. For an account of the affinities between Obama's appeals to the common ground of universal values and John Rawls's notion of an overlapping consensus, as well as for the suggestion that Rawls's thinking influenced Obama, see Kloppenberg (2011). James Kloppenberg notes that Obama explicitly echoes Rawls in a 2006 speech, but Rawls's influence may well have predated both that speech *and* the publication of *Dreams*, for Rawls's lecture, "The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus," initially appeared in 1987.
7. In focusing on the relationship between autobiography and conceptual analysis, I consider just one of a number of ways in which, as Lawrie Balfour (2011) remarks, "Du Bois does not, and cannot, offer 'mere autobiography'" (p. 71).
8. My account, here, of Friedrich Nietzsche's understanding of genealogy draws on the scholarship of Raymond Geuss (2001) and Maudmarie Clark (1994).
9. If my analysis of W. E. B. Du Bois's approach to the understanding of race in *Dusk* is correct, then recent philosophical approaches to the understanding of race that echo Du Bois include Paul Taylor (2004) and Sally Haslanger (2014). For example, Taylor holds that race-thinking is a way to assign "meaning to human bodies and bloodlines" (p. 15). And Haslanger writes that "*race is the social meaning of 'color'*" (p. 128).
10. Eric Porter (2010) sees that the argument of *Dusk* presents a "destabilized" (p.44) concept of race, but gives no account of what it is to destabilize a concept, or of what destabilizing a concept entails for Du Bois. Balfour (2011) likewise applies the notion of genealogy to Du Bois, but her sense of the relevance of this category to *Dusk* is different than mine. In his discussion of *Dusk*, Nahum Dimitri Chandler (2014) gives an insightful account of Du Bois's treatment of the relation between concept and exemplification that has some significant affinities to the account presented here.
11. Desmond King and Rogers Smith (2011) title Part Two of their book, which focuses on slavery and then Jim Crow, "The Making and Unmaking of Racial Hierarchies," thus suggesting that their subsequent discussion of the trajectory of "modern" racial alliances (Part Three) is predicated on the assumption that struggles to perpetuate or, alternatively, to subvert, racial hierarchies have ceased to be a part of racial politics.
12. The assumption of a widely shared commitment to racial progress is already evident in the introduction to the book, where King and Smith (2011) write that "most participants in the political debate over color-blind versus race-conscious policies are expressing deep, sincere, and understandable disagreements over genuinely difficult questions of how and how far persisting racial inequalities can best be addressed" (p. 12), thus suggesting that the divide in this debate is not *whether* it is desirable to reduce racial inequalities, but, again, over how and the extent to which it is possible to reduce them.
13. See Anderson (2010).
14. In this and the preceding paragraph, I lean quite heavily on Elizabeth Anderson's (2010) account, particularly chapters 1, 4, and 5.
15. For pressing me on a number of issues left unclarified and unresolved in the final section of an earlier draft of this essay, I am especially grateful to Steven Klein, Ashleigh Campi, Tanner McFadden, Daragh Grant, Jim Wilson, Brandon Terry, Jack Turner, and Nathan Tarcov. For additional, helpful commentary, thanks to Tom McCarthy, Michael Dawson, Cathy Cohen, Tommie Shelby, Derrick Darby, Charles Mills, Lawrie Balfour, Cristina Beltrán, and Ainsley Lesure.

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