

Philosophy and the Black Experience



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APA NEWSLETTER ON

Philosophy and the Black Experience

GEORGE YANCY AND JOHN H. MCCLENDON III, CO-EDITORS

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FROM THE EDITORS

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In this edition of the *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience*, we are delighted to include an article by Stephen C. Ferguson II, which is entitled "Understanding the Legacy of Dr. Wayman Bernard McLaughlin: On the Problem of Interpretation in the History of African American Philosophy." In his article, Ferguson examines the philosophical legacy of Wayman Bernard McLaughlin. The latter's intellectual friendship with Martin Luther King, Jr., during their tenure as graduate students at Boston University was an important chapter in the history of African American philosophers. At Boston University, King and McLaughlin, in conjunction with other Black graduate students, organized a philosophical club called the Dialectical Society. Because of the barriers of Jim (and Jane) Crow, McLaughlin spent all of his academic career teaching at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), primarily in North Carolina. Because of the material obstacles associated with working at HBCUs, McLaughlin did not have the opportunity to publish his philosophical writings. Ferguson examines McLaughlin's contributions to the doctrine of Personalism and his understanding of Black music, particularly what W. E. B. Du Bois referred to as the "Sorrow Songs." While he was a relatively unknown philosopher in Black intellectual history, his story is a significant chapter in the history of African American philosophy and philosophers.

The next two articles were written as response pieces to a paper delivered by George Yancy at the University of British Columbia. Yancy's paper was entitled "Putting Whiteness in Crisis: White Gazes, Black Bodies." Both Kal Heer's article, "Philosophy by Emotional Ambush: Dr. George Yancy and the Phenomenology of Race," and Paulina Semeneč's article, "'Dwelling Near' Difficult Conversations: Fostering Engagements with White Privilege and Race in a Not So Color-Blind Society," philosophically probe Yancy's work in fruitful and astute ways.

We are also honored to have three book reviews. Kelly Epley reviews Alexis Shotwell's *Knowing Otherwise: Race, Gender, and Implicit Understanding*. Albert G. Mosley reviews Falguni Sheth's *Toward a Political Philosophy of Race*. Lastly, Janine Jones reviews Sally Haslanger's *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique*.

ARTICLES

Understanding the Legacy of Dr. Wayman Bernard McLaughlin: On the Problem of Interpretation in the History of African American Philosophy

Stephen C. Ferguson II
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The measure and magnitude of one's contribution to the dialectical development of philosophy is oftentimes established on the basis of published articles and monographs detailing the merit, creativity, and depth of their various accomplishments. In the case of the so-called gadfly of the Harlem Renaissance Alain Locke, there exists a host of books, articles, and monographs detailing his philosophical legacy and focusing on his contributions to philosophy of education, value theory, aesthetics, and the Harlem Renaissance in general. Yet, we still witness today many instances in which African American philosophers of historic meaning suffer scholarly neglect and are left to the dustbin of history. This is particularly evident when we examine the virtual absence of scholarship on the African American philosopher Wayman Bernard McLaughlin.

In recent years, we have been assisted by the trailblazing work of George Yancy and John McClendon. Their contributions will be of great service to future generations. Of course, many people are familiar with Yancy's classic anthology *17 Conversations*, but I would also like to mention his groundbreaking article published in the historic *A. M. E. Church Review* on Thomas Nelson Baker. For years, John McClendon has put together the bricks and mortar of the history of African American philosophers. His watershed bibliographical essay, "The Afro-American Philosopher and the Philosophy of the Black Experience: A Bibliographical Essay on a Neglected Topic in both Philosophy and Black Studies," published in *Sage Race Relations Abstracts* (November 1982), serves in many respects to take us beyond public intellectuals like Alain Locke or, more recently, Cornel West.

This essay is an exercise in the history of African American philosophy. I want to briefly examine the life and legacy of the African American philosopher Wayman Bernard McLaughlin. My guiding assumption is that the history of African American philosophy is rooted in the broader dimensions of African American intellectual and material

history. African American philosophers, particularly the first generation, faced the intellectual and material barriers of Jim Crow. Consequently, Black philosophers have been seen historically as minor philosophers relegated to a footnote in the history of philosophy. Their achievements and greatness as intellectuals have been grossly overlooked not because they lacked originality or intellectual depth. Their historic neglect, quite frankly, has been a result of racism and sexism pure and simple.

THE FORMATION OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHER, 1865–1965: ON THE PROBLEM OF INTERPRETATION IN THE HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY

When we judge according to scholarly attention, Alain Locke, Cornel West, and, perhaps, W. E. B. Du Bois are the only major African American philosophers. Despite the lack of scholarly attention to the history of African American philosophy, there is a rich history and tradition, which began as early as 1865 when Father Patrick Healy received the Ph.D. from the University of Louvain.

The “Color Line,” as W. E. B. Du Bois so aptly called Jim (and Jane) Crow, objectively determined that African Americans in the late nineteenth and throughout most of the twentieth centuries were afforded little opportunity to pursue either undergraduate or graduate study in philosophy at white colleges. One of the significant obstacles was the Hampton-Tuskegee philosophy of education. The debate between advocates of industrial education versus liberal arts education for African Americans, Michael Winston argues, is fundamentally about the status of African Americans in the United States polity. Winston writes,

One group, believing that Negroes should have no higher status than laborers, argued for industrial education and social subordination, while the other, believing that Negroes had the same intellectual aptitude as whites, argued for higher education and social equality.¹

The dominance of academic racism can be gleaned from an address by President William Howard Taft to Black students at Biddle University (now Johnson C. Smith University) in May 1909. In his address he concluded, “your race is adapted to be a race of farmers, first, last, and for all times.”² Even more telling are the remarks by the distinguished Harvard historian Albert Bushnell Hart, who wrote, “the theory that the Negro mind ceases to develop after adolescence perhaps has something in it.”³ What makes Hart’s statement particularly interesting is that he served as W. E. B. Du Bois’s dissertation advisor! In addition, for twenty-three years, he served on the board of trustees of Howard University. More alarming is the fact that Hart was one of the board of trustees who, in 1926, opposed the appointment of an African American as president of Howard University.⁴

In the antebellum period, nineteenth-century political and legal powers openly restricted the right of African Americans to receive an education. Therefore, prior to 1840, approximately no more than fifteen Black students

attended white colleges. Given the racist obstacles to acquiring an education, African Americans, in some instances, were forced to leave the United States to study and teach abroad. For example, Alexander Crummell, one of the first African American academic philosophers and founder of the American Negro Academy, went to England and studied with the Cambridge Platonist William Whewell. Crummell graduated from Cambridge University in 1853 and became professor of mental and moral philosophy in Monrovia, Liberia.⁵

Two years after the founding of the American Philosophical Association (APA), we find only a total of four African Americans had earned the doctorate in fields that were (at that time) considered appropriately suited for teaching philosophy in a post-secondary setting.⁶ Before the full-scale professionalization of philosophy—as a discipline—a number of people in both classics and theology taught philosophy courses on college campuses. This is because the degree of Ph.D. in philosophy, at that juncture, was not considered a mandatory academic certification. Philosophy faculty without doctorate degrees in philosophy was quite prevalent, particularly at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) where scholars holding doctorates were less available. So, in 1903, African American philosophers who held doctorates in philosophy, or had the Ph.D. in some field and taught philosophy, were limited to Patrick Francis Healy, Thomas Nelson Baker, John Wesley Edward Bowen, and Lewis Baxter Moore.

Unfortunately, African American academic excellence at the highest institutional level still could not override the entrenchment of racism. While Thomas Nelson Baker did not pursue an academic career, John Wesley Edward Bowen and Lewis Baxter Moore were restricted to teaching at HBCUs. Bowen taught Hebrew at Howard University. While Moore taught Latin, pedagogy, psychology and education, he was primarily responsible for the establishment of the philosophy department at Howard University.⁷

In the nineteenth century, there were only two African American philosophers, namely, Patrick Francis Healy and Richard T. Greener, who taught at white institutions. Moreover, Healy and Greener were among a handful of African American scholars that during the nineteenth century were able to teach at predominantly white or all-white institutions. However, the presence of both men on white campuses was less a matter of crossing and breaking through the “Color-Line” than the anomaly of subverting it. Healy passed as a white man and Greener taught at the University of South Carolina, which had an African American majority, due to white flight from the campus during Reconstruction.⁸

As we move further into the twentieth century, one indicator of the status of African American scholars is that by 1936 there were only three Black Ph.D.s serving on the faculties of white colleges.⁹ Resistance to Black philosophers (and Black scholars more generally) as teachers of white students has a rather long history. One obvious example of the “cancer of racism” that African American philosophers confronted in terms of teaching at predominantly white universities is the tragedy of Albert M. Dunham. After

having previously studied at Harvard with Alfred North Whitehead and at Chicago with John Dewey and George Herbert Mead, Dunham received his doctorate from the University of Chicago in 1933. Among his published works is the co-edited book, *George Herbert Mead: The Philosophy of the Act*. Dunham was considered to be one of the most promising among African American philosophers to rise in the profession.¹⁰

In due course he was even assigned to teach a summer class in the philosophy department of his alma mater. The appointment was to be a gateway to becoming a full-fledged member of the philosophy faculty. However, over half of the students dropped the class when they discovered that their professor was a Black person. Although the administration managed to gather enough students to continue the class, the idea of Dunham joining the Chicago faculty, in light of student response, was quickly abandoned. Later, Alain Locke recruited Dunham to teach at Howard University. Those that knew him, including his sister Katherine (the renowned dancer), believed that the racial restrictions, which were imposed on him as a Black philosopher, especially with regard to the possibility of teaching at white institutions, caused Dunham's long-term affliction with depression. Sadly, after many years of mental illness, Dunham died in 1949 in a psychiatric institution.¹¹

As we look forward, we ascertain that there were just seven African American philosophers who had the opportunity to teach at white universities or colleges either before or by the year 1949. Cornelius Golightly led the way among those holding regular appointments when he was hired at Olivet College in 1945. After Golightly's hiring, the following philosophers gained teaching positions with white colleges or universities: Forrest Oran Wiggins at Minnesota in 1946, Francis M. Hammond at Seton Hall in 1946, and William T. Fontaine at the University of Pennsylvania in 1947. There were also three others, Alain Locke of Howard (starting teaching at white schools in 1944), George D. Kelsey of Morehouse (in 1944), and Eugene C. Holmes of Howard (in 1945); however, they merely held visiting positions, rather than regular appointments, at various white institutions.¹²

The walls of racial segregation of public universities began to crumble beginning in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1947, for example, the distinguished anthropologist and social psychologist W. Allison Davis of the University of Chicago became the first African American to be hired at a major predominantly white university. A few years later in 1950, more than three hundred years after the founding of Harvard, the political scientist Ralph Bunche became the first African American named to the faculty of Arts and Sciences. However, the accomplishments of Davis and Bunche, to name only a few, should not overlook the crucibles of racism and sexism that continued to block the opportunities available for African Americans. Thus, it is no accident that after Thomas Nelson Baker earned his doctorate in 1903 there would not be another Ph.D. (formerly granted) in philosophy from Yale to an African American until George Kelsey received his degree in 1946. It would be nearly twenty more years before another philosophy Ph.D. was granted to an African American when

Joyce Mitchell Cook earned her degree in 1965. Thereby, Cook also became the very first African American woman to earn the Ph.D. in philosophy.¹³

Before the 1970s, segregation in education was a fact of life in the United States. It was so pervasive that most African American philosophers could only teach and work in HBCUs like North Carolina A & T or Howard University.¹⁴ Administrative duties and teaching became the priority of most African American philosophers, rather than extensive philosophical research and writing. Among those serving as presidents of institutions were Joseph C. Price at Livingston College (North Carolina), John Wesley Edward Bowen and Willis Jefferson King at Gammon Theological Seminary (Georgia), John H. Burrus at Alcorn A & M (Mississippi), Richard I. McKinney at Storer College (West Virginia), Marquis L. Harris at Philander Smith (Arkansas), Benjamin Mays at Morehouse College (Georgia), and Gilbert Haven Jones and Charles Leander Hill at Wilberforce University (Ohio). Among those in the capacity of chairs of philosophy departments, along with the aforementioned McKinney and Thomas, included Louis Baxter Moore, Alain Locke, Eugene C. Holmes, Winston K. McAllister, and William A. Banner at Howard University, James L. Farmer at Wiley College, William T. Fontaine at Morgan State University, Thomas Freeman at Texas Southern University, and Samuel W. Williams at Morehouse College.¹⁵

Despite the critical mass of professional African American philosophers at HBCUs, the greatest tragedy is that there are no departments in the United States offering a doctorate in philosophy. Nor is there a department at any HBCU in which African American philosophy is a central or prominent concern. We could argue that a Jewish student interested in Jewish philosophy could study at Brandeis. Or a Roman Catholic student can enroll in a Notre Dame or a Fordham to examine the tradition of Catholic philosophy. But an African American student with a comparable interest has nowhere to turn.¹⁶

THE EVOLUTION OF A BLACK PHILOSOPHER AND THEOLOGIAN

The Reverend Dr. Wayman Bernard McLaughlin, Sr., the fourth child of Agnes and Baptist minister Reverend Eddie Lee McLaughlin, was born in Danville, Virginia, on March 22, 1927. (Danville, Virginia was also the home of Wendell Scott, the African American race car driver.¹⁷) Nearly three months after retiring from teaching, he died on November 27, 2003, following a battle with cancer. Although he was a relatively unknown philosopher in Black intellectual history, his story is a significant chapter in the history of African American philosophy.

While the lack of documentary evidence regarding McLaughlin's life makes tracing his intellectual development difficult, we do know that McLaughlin's parents were strong advocates of education. In fact, at an early age, McLaughlin was a voracious reader. Reportedly, McLaughlin's reading of Voltaire's *Candide* was pivotal in the development of his interest in philosophical speculation. Under the spiritual guidance of his father, he was baptized at an early age and began preaching the gospel of Christ to other children.

He was so effective in preaching the word of God that his sister remembers him influencing one fellow playmate to become baptized the following Sunday.¹⁸

After graduating from John M. Langston High School (Danville, Virginia) in 1941, McLaughlin became the first in his family to go to college and eventually earned a B.A. degree cum laude in history with a minor in Latin from Virginia Union University (Richmond, Virginia) in 1948.¹⁹ (We should note that the African American philosopher Richard McKinney taught at Virginia Union from 1935 until 1944. McKinney was the director of religious activities and an assistant professor who taught philosophy and religion. He earned his Ph.D. in 1942 from Yale's School of Divinity. He left Virginia Union in 1944 to become the first African American president of Storer College in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. In 1951, McKinney went to Morgan State University as a professor and chair of the department of philosophy and the division of humanities. McKinney remained at Morgan State until 1978, rising to the position of acting dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.) While at Virginia Union, McLaughlin took several philosophy courses, including Philosophy 302 Ethics, in which he earned only a C, in addition to Philosophy 412 History of Philosophy, and Philosophy 413 History of Modern Philosophy in which he received Bs.²⁰ After receiving a scholarship to attend the historic Andover Newton Theological Seminary in Newton Centre, Massachusetts, McLaughlin graduated four years later, in 1952, with a Bachelors of Divinity focusing on the Psychology of Religion.²¹

Prior to McLaughlin's admission to Andover in 1949, two African American philosophers, George Kelsey (BD 1938) and Richard I. McKinney (BD 1934, STM 1937), earned degrees from Andover. McKinney submitted his Bachelor of Divinity thesis on *The Problem of Evil and Its Relation to the Ministry to an Under-privileged Minority* in 1934, and he completed his Masters of Sacred Theology in the philosophy of religion in 1937. The title of his thesis was *The Cosmology of Alfred North Whitehead and Its Bearing on Religion and Theology*. Kelsey graduated from Andover with a Bachelor of Divinity degree, and as valedictorian, in 1938. Kelsey later went on to teach at Morehouse College, where he served as a pivotal influence on Martin Luther King, Jr., as a student in his classes on the Bible. Kelsey served as a model of a minister who was intellectual and rejected the emotionalism of Black religious practices.

After leaving Andover, McLaughlin decided to pursue a doctorate in philosophy at Boston University. According to a former classmate of McLaughlin and graduate student in the School of Theology Cornish Rogers, Boston University was "considered by the black world . . . to be the only school that admitted blacks for graduate degrees, that is, theology and Ph.D. degrees. Since most of the persons who taught in black schools in the area of religion were educated in the thirties at Boston University, they usually recommended people to go to Boston [University]."²² While there was a strong religious influence on McLaughlin, we are left without a clue as to why he decided to enroll in the philosophy department rather than the School of Theology.

Although he received a scholarship, the pursuit of a graduate degree came as a result of great financial hardship. McLaughlin moved in a tireless circuit among classes, the library, his apartment, and various jobs he held. According to historian Taylor Branch, McLaughlin worked as a skycap in the evenings at Logan Airport. Most nights McLaughlin studied late by the light inside his closet, so as not to wake his roommates. He told one former student that sometimes he would soak his feet in cold water just to stay awake when he burned the midnight oil. The only insight we have of McLaughlin while he was at Boston comes from a letter written by William Talbot Handy, Jr., in 1952. Handy asks, "Has [Mac] decided to relieve himself of his many responsibilities? Does he still jump up in the air and kick his heels together? I certainly hope he does something before he has a nervous breakdown."²³ It is a testament to his diligence and hard work that he became the first African American to earn a doctorate from the philosophy department at Boston University. (John Wesley Edward Bowen became the first African American to receive the Ph.D. from Boston when he earned his degree in systematic theology in 1887.)

According to his graduate transcripts, McLaughlin took courses in metaphysics, personalism, systematic theology, and various courses in the history of philosophy focusing on ancient philosophy, Plato's *Republic*, and Hegel. While at Boston, he came under the influence of the African American theologian Howard Thurman who became dean of Boston University's Marsh Chapel and professor of spiritual resources and disciplines in 1953. Thurman was the first Black full-time professor ever hired by the school. Similar to Martin Luther King, Jr., McLaughlin was also influenced by Boston personalists such as Edgar Brightman, Harold DeWolf, Walter Muelder, Paul Bertocci, and Richard Millard. His main area of research interest was metaphysics (or, more specifically, systematic theology) and the history of philosophy.

KING, MCLAUGHLIN, AND THE DIALECTICAL SOCIETY

While at Boston University, McLaughlin was a classmate and good friend of Martin Luther King, Jr. The historian Taylor Branch describes McLaughlin as "the Negro student of systematic theology considered closest to King in scholarship ability."²⁴ (Some indication of this can be seen from the following letter, written by Major J. Jones to King in June 1955: "[McLaughlin] really would have liked to had his degree with you. It rather hurt him that he did not get it with you."²⁵

During their tenure at Boston University, King and McLaughlin, in conjunction with other African American graduate students, organized a philosophical club called the Dialectical Society, "a group that was mainly interested in certain philosophical and theological ideas and applied them to the black situation in the country."²⁶ Between ten and thirteen graduate students would gather once a week at King's apartment to discuss God, Hegel, Kierkegaard, and a variety of other topics. While the Dialectical Society was primarily composed of African American male graduate students, it occasionally involved participation from non-

Blacks such as Dr. Harold DeWolf and women such as Coretta Scott and female friends of other members. Members of the Dialectical Society included Cornish Rogers, who served as vice-president, Percy A. Carter, Jr., who served as secretary, Major J. Jones, and Jack Clark, among others. According to historian Taylor Branch,

Graduate students interested in philosophy or religion gathered one evening a week to share a potluck supper and a rarefied discussion about God or knowledge. One student read a formal paper, and the others then jumped in to criticize or support it. The club lasted throughout King's student life in Boston, becoming so popular that white students dropped in occasionally and Professor DeWolf once delivered the paper for discussion. A rather stiff decorum prevailed early in the evening, as pipe smoke and abstract jargon mingled in the air, but the hard core of participants usually settled into a bull session late at night.²⁷

According to Branch, there was relatively little discussion about racism and other political matters. Branch further claims,

At the Dialectical Society, discussions of politics were largely confined to the issue of whether it was wise for them to choose "race-related" topics for papers, theses, and doctoral dissertations. King concurred with the general consensus that to do so might cheapen their work in the eyes of influential Negroes as well as whites.²⁸

In 1958, under the direction of Millard and Bertocci, McLaughlin finished his dissertation—*The Relation between Hegel and Kierkegaard*—at Boston University. McLaughlin establishes in a concrete and detailed manner a positive influence of Hegel on Kierkegaard. Thus, there are points of comparison and similarity between Hegel and Kierkegaard. But this is only a part of the claim McLaughlin wishes to defend. McLaughlin is clear that there are absolute differences between Hegel's objective idealism and Kierkegaard's subjective idealism.

The philosophical and theological issue that arguably forms the subtext of McLaughlin's dissertation is the relationship between reason and faith. Kierkegaard's chief philosophical campaign was directed against the objective idealism of Hegel. Kierkegaard (as a precursor of existentialism) held that genuine philosophy could only be existential. Since, according to Kierkegaard, the divine world and the human world are incommensurable, the adoption of faith implies the rejection of logical reflection and introduces one into the sphere of the absurd.

Perhaps McLaughlin was influenced by King and other members of the Dialectical Society to write on the relationship of Hegel and Kierkegaard. We know that King declared (in an interview with the *Montgomery Advertiser*) that Hegel was his favorite philosopher. And, in his classic work *Stride Toward Freedom*, King noted, his study of Hegel's dialectic "helped me to see that growth comes through struggle."²⁹ However, King also states, "[f]here

were points in Hegel's philosophy that I strongly disagreed with. For instance, his absolute idealism was rationally unsound to me because it tended to swallow up the many in the one."³⁰

MCLAUGHLIN QUA PHILOSOPHER, 1958–2003

McLaughlin became an ordained pastor in 1951. After King left Boston for Dexter Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, McLaughlin served as pastor of the People's Baptist Church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, until he finished his doctoral dissertation in 1958. Later, he would serve as pastor of Mt. Sinai Baptist Church (Eden, North Carolina) and New Mt. Zion Baptist Church (Roxboro, North Carolina).

Despite having academic credentials from Boston University, McLaughlin faced limited employment opportunities because predominantly white institutions assumed—with rare exception—that African Americans should not be considered for any academic appointment. For example, Broadus N. Butler, after receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1952, applied for a teaching position at a predominantly white university. Broadus later learned that his adviser's accompanying letter stated, "a good philosopher, but of course a Negro," followed by the one-line response, "Why don't you go where you will be among your own kind."³¹

The reality of segregation meant that McLaughlin's academic career—similar to other African American scholars and intellectuals—was limited to HBCUs. As such, he found himself overburdened with administrative duties, a heavy teaching load, intellectual isolation, and, most importantly, little time for philosophical research or writing.

Segregation presented a paradox for HBCUs. On the one hand, segregation forced a critical mass of African American intellectuals and scholars to form at Black colleges and universities. In effect, segregation insulated HBCUs from competing with the better-endowed Ivy League universities for the nation's top African American intellectual and scholars. During the 1930s, Howard University, for example, was able to assemble the greatest collection of Black intellectuals the nation had ever seen and probably will ever see, such as Alain Locke, Ralph Bunche, Eugene Holmes, E. Franklin Frazier, Rayford Logan, John Hope Franklin, Ernest Just, Charles R. Drew, Charles Hamilton Houston, and Abram Harris, just to name a few. On the other hand, once the nation's premier research institutions began to actively recruit African American scholars to their faculties, the historically Black institutions were put at a great disadvantage from which they will never recover. Historically Black colleges and universities not only cannot pay the same high salaries as the predominantly white universities, but most importantly, they do not have the research funds, facilities, laboratories, equipment, libraries, and other resources that scholars require to conduct their teaching and research. In this respect, desegregation dealt a deathblow to HBCUs.

McLaughlin spent his academic career at four HBCUs. His first stop was at his alma mater, Virginia Union, where he taught courses in philosophy and psychology from 1958

until 1959. From 1959 until 1962, he worked at Grambling State University as the coordinator of the humanities program. He also taught philosophy and humanities courses while at Grambling.

In 1962, he moved to North Carolina to work at Winston-Salem State Teaching College (later Winston-Salem State University). During the early 1960s, North Carolina was already a hotbed for Civil Rights activism and would become pivotal to the Black Power movement in the southeastern United States. During the 1970s, Greensboro would be a focal point for the Malcolm X Liberation University and Black leftist formations like Students Organized for Black Unity (SOBU, later to become Youth Organized for Black Unity, YOBU) and the Greensboro Association of Poor People (GAPP) formed by Nelson Johnson. "Ever since the historic 1960 lunch counter sit-ins," the political scientist Cedric Johnson observes, "the Greensboro area had been a locus of militant black political activity and was, therefore, home to dense local network of organizations and activists."³²

So, from 1962 until 1967, he worked in the department of social sciences at Winston-Salem State developing and teaching philosophy and humanities courses. As a testament to his outstanding teaching abilities, in his final year at Winston Salem State, he was selected as teacher of the year. And finally—beginning in 1967—McLaughlin taught at North Carolina A & T State University (NCAT) as a philosophy and humanities professor. For thirty-five years, McLaughlin was the only philosopher at the university. (In fact, I am the second African American philosopher to teach at NCAT. Currently, there are four Euro-American philosophers teaching at NCAT.) While at NCAT, he developed and taught several courses such as culture and values, introduction to philosophy, logic, and introduction to humanities. He would remain at North Carolina A & T until he was forced to retire in 2003.

During the early 1970s, McLaughlin was one of only two faculty members who vocally supported the students' call for the formation of Black Studies at NCAT. He was tireless in his efforts to act as a gadfly with a mission to excite and perplex the young minds entrusted to him such as Jesse Jackson, Jr. He was such a dynamic and insightful lecturer that it was not uncommon for students to come listen to his class lectures even though they were not enrolled in his classes. His office hours were often an extension of his classes, with students constantly waiting to speak with him about a particular point covered in class.

In addition, we should note that he was no armchair intellectual; philosophy was not seen as the idle prattle of learned men. In this vein, McLaughlin refused to see philosophy as an arid abstraction with no connection to the struggles of oppressed people in their fight against racism. Philosophy was an intellectual weapon implying a social purpose. He was involved with the Greensboro chapter of the NAACP and advisor to the history club, a coterie of student activist on A & T's campus. His classes were instrumental for students (such as community activist Ervin Brisbon) to become informed about and involved with the material and intellectual history of the civil rights movement and the liberal democratic philosophical principles, that

guided this movement. McLaughlin worked with Reverend John Mendez and other members of the Citizens United for Justice to organize an event, "Festival of Truth: Celebration of Survival," to protest the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's voyage to the Americas in 1992.

For McLaughlin, the civil rights agenda, in its political and practical import, was the best strategy for the Black liberation movement. As a liberal democrat, McLaughlin was vehemently opposed to racism as an instance of white supremacy. Racism, from the view of liberal democratic principles, can be eradicated if all racial barriers to full African American participation in bourgeois democracy are eliminated. The destruction of racism is a matter of affording the equal opportunity and rights without regard to race. Thus, racial exclusion, segregation, and racial discrimination both in civil society and the state (so-called second class citizenship) are the immediate objects of confrontation. Civil rights aptly define the aims of the African American struggle for liberal (bourgeois) democracy.

MCLAUGHLIN'S INTERPRETATION OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN SPIRITUALS: A PERSONALIST PERSPECTIVE?

Let's examine personalism (or personal idealism) as a school of thought in African American philosophy. Personalism is the philosophical and theological view that emphasizes the ontological reality of personality and gives special attention to the personal character of God. As Ira Zepp notes, "the Supreme Being is personal in nature and all reality participates to some extent in that personness, with man having a special dignity and worth among other things."³³ Personality, as the supreme philosophical principle, implies that the ultimate cause and reason of all reality are found in some process of personal experience. For personalism, therefore, the universe is a society of persons with equal human dignity, and the central, most creative person is God. Therefore, personalism as an idealist philosophical perspective represents a particular approach to justifying theism.

Now we should point out individuals who either were students of Borden Parker Bowne (1847–1910), the founder of the Boston school of personalism, or studied with Bowne's students. Bowne made personalism a conscious philosophical method and gathered around him a significant coterie of quality students who carried the school to a second generation. The most important, for our purposes, among this generation were Edgar S. Brightman (1884–1953), Albert C. Knudson (1873–1953), Harold DeWolf, Paul Bertocci (1910–1989), and Richard Millard (1949–ca. 1966).

When we look at African American philosophers and theologians who were either influenced by personalism or study with prominent personalists, we find J. W. E. Bowen, Willis Jefferson King, James Farmer, Sr., Martin Luther King, Jr., Gilbert Haven Jones, and Wayman McLaughlin. With the exception of Jones, all of these men were graduates of Boston University.³⁴

Let's briefly examine this tradition in African American philosophy. John Wesley Edward Bowen's doctorate degree

was in historical theology, which has a close relationship with certain aspects of the philosophy of religion, from Boston University in 1887. Bowen studied with Bowne. Bowen's dissertation topic was *The Historic Manifestations and Apprehensions of Religion as an Evolutionary and Psychological Process*. Bowen earned his B.A. from the University of New Orleans in 1878, and his B.D. from Boston University in 1885. Bowen's academic career included teaching at Central Tennessee College, Morgan State College, Howard University, and Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta. And we should note that he was the first African American to be given a professorship at Gammon Theological Seminary.

James L. Farmer, Sr., the son of slaves, earned his Ph.D. in 1918. Farmer, the father of the civil rights activist of the same name, wrote his dissertation on *The Origin and Development of the Messianic Home in Israel with Special References to Analogous Beliefs among Other Peoples*. He taught philosophy and religion in addition to serving in administrative capacities at Wiley College in Marshall, Texas (1919–1920, 1936–1939), Rust College in Holly Springs, Mississippi (1920–1925), Samuel Huston College in Austin, Texas (now Huston-Tillotson) (1925–1931, 1946–1956), Gammon Theological Seminary (1931–1933), and Howard University's School of Theology (1939–1946).

Willis Jefferson King (1886–1976), who earned his Ph.D. from Boston University in Old Testament, studied under Albert C. Knudson in 1921. King was a professor of Old Testament Literature at Gammon Theological Seminary from 1918 to 1930 and served as the second Black president of Gammon from 1932 until 1944. King was also an author of *Personalism in Theology, Christian Bases of World Order, and The Negro in American Life*.

The most widely known African American personalist happened to have the last name of King as well: Martin Luther King, Jr. While at Boston University studying for his Ph.D. in systematic theology, King took a total of fifteen courses—ten of them in biblical and systematic theology and five dealing with the philosophy of religion with Edgar S. Brightman, Peter Bertocci, and L. Harold DeWolf. Brightman and DeWolf had a profound impact, both personally and intellectually, upon King's thought. King states in "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence,"

I studied philosophy and theology at Boston University under Edgar S. Brightman and L. Harold DeWolf. Both men greatly stimulated my thinking. It was mainly under these teachers that I studied personalistic philosophy—the theory that the clue to the meaning of ultimate reality is found in personality. This personal idealism remains today my basic philosophical position. Personalism's insistence that only personality—finite and infinite—is ultimately real strengthened me in two convictions: it gave me metaphysical and philosophical grounding for the idea of a personal God, and it gave me a metaphysical basis for the dignity and worth of all human personality.³⁵

King further notes,

This personal idealism remains today my basic philosophical position. Personalism's insistence that only personality—finite and infinite—is ultimately real strengthened me in two convictions: it gave me metaphysical and philosophical grounding for the idea of a personal God, and it gave me a metaphysical basis for the dignity and worth of all human personality.³⁶

Personalism provided King with a philosophical framework to support his belief in a personal God, the idea of the absolute dignity of persons, and the belief in the existence of an objective moral order and moral laws.

Given the fact that McLaughlin attended Boston University, we could argue that he was influenced by, if not an advocate of, personalism. As we have noted, McLaughlin did his dissertation under the direction of two prominent personalists, Richard Millard and Paul Bertocci. Although this author has not found any articles or manuscripts McLaughlin wrote which explicitly have personalism as their subject-matter, we can see the influence of personalism in one of his articles dealing with the philosophy of the Black experience, in particular the African American spirituals.

Following in the wake of the empirical research by historian Miles Mark Fisher, McLaughlin, in some respects, offers a philosophical interpretation of the spirituals.³⁷ Fisher's classic work *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (1953) argues that the spirituals were more than simply musical songs. They were the "oral historical document" of a people, documenting the "souls of Black folks." In "Symbolism and Mysticism in the Spirituals," we find McLaughlin examining the double meaning of the spirituals, that is, the symbolic language used in and mystical meaning behind the spirituals. The spirituals are the religious folk songs created and first sung by African Americans in slavery. "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho," "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child," "Go Down, Moses," "Steal Away to Jesus," "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel?," and "Wade in the Water" are some of the best known survivors of the hundreds of remarkable folk songs that were created by enslaved African Americans. W. E. B. Du Bois, in his classic work *Souls of Black Folk*, described the spirituals as "the greatest gift of the Negro people."³⁸ Beginning in 1871, the choir from Fisk University, the black institution in Nashville, Tennessee, brought the African American spirituals to audiences in the United States and Europe. And the great revolutionary artist Paul Robeson became the first soloist to devote an entire program to the spirituals. On Sunday, April 19, 1925, Paul Robeson performed a show entirely of African American spirituals with his accompanist and musical adviser, Lawrence Brown, at the theater of the Provincetown Players. As Robeson was fond of saying, the spirituals as folk songs are "a poetic expression of a people's innermost nature, of the distinctive and multifaceted conditions of its life and culture, of the sublime wisdom that reflects that people's great historical journey and experience."³⁹ While these songs were dismissed as unwanted relics of slavery, Roland Hayes and Marian Anderson, among others, would carry on the tradition of singing what Du Bois called the "Sorrow Songs."

The social roots of the spirituals are to be found in the utter despair of the slave experiences. As Robeson elaborates,

And yet this enslaved people, oppressed by the double yoke of cruel exploitation and racial discrimination, gave birth to splendid, inspired, life-affirmed songs. These songs reflected a spiritual force, a people's faith in itself and a faith in its great calling; they reflected the wrath and protest against the enslavers and the aspiration to freedom and happiness. These songs are striking in the noble beauty of their melodies, in the startling variety in their rhythms, in the sonority of their harmonies, and in the unusual distinctiveness and poetical nature of their forms.⁴⁰

Some were protest songs; others, songs of accommodation. All sought to help the slave transcend the inhuman condition of slavery. The spirituals, as McLaughlin notes, were "born out of the aches, pains, and joys of existence." However, in contrast to Robeson, McLaughlin's idealist approach places emphasis on the spirituals as an expression of an intuitive personal experience that African American slaves had with God. When we unveil the mystical meaning of the spirituals, McLaughlin argues we can see the spirituals as expressing the "direct communion of the soul with God."⁴¹

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LEGACY OF MCLAUGHLIN

How do we measure the legacy of Dr. Wayman McLaughlin? When it comes to investigating the history of African American philosophers, there is often a stark paucity of information on their academic career and philosophical research. Part of what makes writing the history of African American philosophy arduous is the fact that there are more questions than answers. This can clearly be seen in the case of McLaughlin. In investigating McLaughlin, I found very little information in the University archives at North Carolina A & T. I have collected and donated most of the current materials (including his dissertation) in the university archives. In the course of tracking down an article McLaughlin wrote in the spring of 1967 entitled "Plato's Theory of Education: A Reevaluation" for the *Winston-Salem State College Quarterly*, I tragically discovered that Winston-Salem State University's archives were not formally put together until the 1990s. So, most information prior to that period is not available.

Based on this author's research and interviews, we find that little exists in terms of McLaughlin's philosophical and theological writings. For instance, there is no record of his manuscript *Psychic Gifts of the Spirit: A Study in Philosophy and Parapsychology* listed on his curriculum vitae in 1980. One could assume that he never had the opportunity to do a considerable amount of philosophical writing or research. Currently, I have only been able to lay my hands on three of his articles and his doctoral dissertation, *The Relation between Hegel and Kierkegaard*. Several questions come to mind for the historian of African American philosophy when investigating the legacy of McLaughlin. What sources do we turn to in order to find his mature philosophical thought? Can his dissertation serve as representative of his

mature philosophical thought even though it was written almost fifty years prior to his death? Outside of being a philosophical idealist, what was McLaughlin's philosophical orientation? Did McLaughlin critique materialism from the standpoint of objective or subjective idealism? What did McLaughlin mean when he characterized himself as a metaphysician? What did McLaughlin have to say about Marx's dialectical materialist critique of religion? Did he share King's enthusiasm about Hegel and dialectics? Was McLaughlin a Hegelian? Did McLaughlin belong to the tradition of dialectical idealism? How does McLaughlin compare to other African American philosophers who graduated from Boston University, such as John Wesley Edward Bowen, James Farmer, and Willis King Jefferson? Was McLaughlin a personalist? Did McLaughlin adopt the philosophy of nonviolence? Did he ever see the limits of liberal democratic principles and/or the civil rights agenda with respect to the dialectic of capitalist exploitation and racism? Did he read the works of contemporary African American/African philosophers such as William R. Jones, Cornel West, Roy Morrison, or Anthony Appiah? This sample of questions could be increased ad infinitum. There are a number of problems involved with interpreting the history of African American philosophy, which we should examine.

CONCLUSION

How will we measure the legacy of Dr. Wayman McLaughlin? The sad reality is that many of the details concerning his life are murky, lost in the mist of history's past. Many of his philosophical papers and theological sermons are forever lost in the dustbin of history; his family threw away all of his papers after his death. Yet, his legacy looms large over the landscape of the history of African American philosophy. As a teacher, he was affectionately referred to as "Dr. Mac" and known as a professor that challenged his students intellectually. It is not surprising that Dr. McLaughlin was such an integral part of the intellectual and political life on campus. The tragedy is that the field of philosophy on campus of North Carolina A & T was reduced to an ugly orphan without a home. In the thirty plus years McLaughlin taught there, the university never made a commitment to develop a philosophy/religion department.

In the future, I hope to dedicate more a more extensive discussion of McLaughlin's philosophical legacy. While McLaughlin represents the best of the rich tradition at HBCUs, we should not lose sight of the fact that McLaughlin's tenure at NCAT was one of great changes for HBCUs. Desegregation produced a situation in which the leading HBCUs of the "segregation era" have become enfeebled. In many instances, HBCUs have become universities in name with only the feeble resources of teacher colleges. The Hampton-Tuskegee philosophy of education continues to haunt Black colleges and universities. Historically Black colleges and universities have become advance polytechnical institutions that tread very lightly when it comes to the humanities. Moreover, similar to all American (bourgeois) educational institutions, they are imprisoned by a philosophy of education that promotes only careerism, and the end product is a docile and handy labor force from which additional surplus value (profits) will be wrung. Their curriculum is only an interdisciplinary expression of ideology, an ideology that supports the

status quo—bourgeois social relations. Most HBCUs have a curriculum designed to prepare students for business and professional leadership, but they are provided few resources for understanding political leadership, political organization, and revolutionary change. As Ralph Bunche argued so many years ago, “[Students] know how to work when they can find jobs, but they are given no basis for understanding why jobs are difficult to find, or how to bargain with employers for them[selves] and to protect workers’ interests in general.”⁴²

WORKS BY WAYMAN B. MCLAUGHLIN

The Relation Between Hegel and Kierkegaard. Boston University, 1958.

“Symbolism and Mysticism in the Spirituals,” *Phylon* 24, no. 1 (Spring 1963): 69–77. (Later republished as “Human Riches of Slave Religion,” in *The Age of Civil War and Reconstruction, 1830–1900: A Book of Interpretative Essays*, edited by Charles Crowe [Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1975], 139–44).

“Plato’s Theory of Education: A Reevaluation.” *Winston-Salem State College Faculty Journal* (Spring 1967).

“Some Aspects of the Church’s Responsibility to Society.” In *Human Issues and Human Values*, edited by Randolph Tobias (Raleigh, North Carolina: Davis and Foy Publishers, 1978), 49–51.

“History and the Specious Moment.” *North Carolina A & T State University History Magazine* 1 (Spring 1979).

“Is History a Good Training for the Mind?” *North Carolina A & T State University History Magazine* 3 (1982).

Psychic Gifts of the Spirit: A Study in Philosophy and Parapsychology (Manuscript in Progress, ca. 1980).

NOTES

1. Michael Winston, “Through the Back Door: Academic Racism and the Negro Scholar in Historical Perspective,” *DÆDALUS* (Summer 1971): 683.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, 686.
4. *Ibid.*
5. On the issue of fifteen Black students at white colleges before 1840, see John E. Fleming, *The Lengthening Shadow of Slavery* (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974), 30. Also consult “The Earliest Black Graduates of the Nation’s Highest-Ranked Liberal Arts Colleges,” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 38. (Winter 2002–2003); Wilson J. Moses, *Alexander Crummell: A Study of Civilization and Discontent* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).
6. On the circumstances surrounding the formation of the American Philosophical Association, see H. N. Gardiner, “The First Twenty-Five Years of the American Philosophical Association,” *The Philosophical Review* 35, no. 2 (March 1926): 145–58.
7. For insight into the professionalization of philosophy and academic certification, read chapters three and four, “Graduate Schools and Professionalization” and “The Personnel of American Philosophy,” in C. Wright Mills, *Sociology and Pragmatism: The Higher Learning in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966). For information on Patrick Healy, read James O’Toole, *Passing for White: Race, Religion, and the Healy Family, 1820–1920* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002). On Baker, read George Yancy, “On the Power of Black Aesthetic Ideals: Thomas Nelson Baker as Teacher and Philosopher,” *A.M.E. Church Review* (October–December 2001). For information on Bowen, see Rufus Burrow, Jr., “The Personalism of John Wesley Edward Bowen,” *The Journal of Negro History* 82, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 244–56. For Lewis Baxter Moore, see the biographical account on the University Archives and Records Center/University of Pennsylvania website, “Lewis Baxter Moore (1866–1928),” <http://www.archives.upenn.edu/people/1800s/moorelb.html>.
8. Among African Americans teaching at predominantly white higher educational institutions in the nineteenth century, the historical record indicates that Charles L. Reason was the first to do so.

- When New York Central College opened in 1849, we see that it not only admitted Black students and women but Reason was hired to serve on the faculty. Moreover, in the next year (1850), two other Black men—George B. Vashon and William Allen—joined Reason on the faculty at Central College. Even before Central College’s open admission of Black students, Oberlin College had previously admitted African Americans and, in fact, Vashon was Oberlin’s first Black graduate. However, unlike Central’s policy on faculty, Oberlin did not have Black faculty for over 100 years after its founding. See James Oliver Horton, “Black Education at Oberlin College: A Controversial Commitment,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 54, no. 4 (Autumn 1985): 483.
9. Michael R. Winston, “Through the Back Door: Academic Racism and the American Negro in Historical Perspective” *DÆDALUS* (Summer 1971): 695.
 10. W. Morris, John M. Brewster, Albert M. Dunham, and David Miller, eds., *The Philosophy of the Act* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1938).
 11. On Dunham’s racist treatment at the University of Chicago, see chapter two of Joyce Aschenbrenner, *Katherine Dunham: Dancing a Life* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2002). On Locke’s hiring Dunham, consult Eugene C. Holmes, “Alain Leroy Locke: A Sketch,” *The Phylon Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1st Quarter 1959): 83.
 12. For Golightly at Olivet, see A. Gilbert Belles, “The College Faculty, the Negro Scholar and the Julius Rosenwald Fund,” *The Journal of Negro History* 54, no. 4. (October 1969): 387, and Richard B. Angell, “Cornelius L. Golightly 1917–1976,” *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 49 (1975–1976): 158–59. For African American philosophers on white campuses, read R. B. Atwood, H. S. Smith, and Catherine O. Vaughan, “Negro Teachers in Northern Colleges and Universities in the United States,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 18, no. 4 (Autumn 1949): 566. While Atwood et al. identify seven people as philosophers, they incorrectly include John Lovell, from Howard University, for the academic year of 1948–1949 at Pascadena City College as a philosopher. Lovell, however, earned his doctorate in English. They in turn placed the philosopher George D. Kelsey under religion since he taught in a visiting position at Andover Newton Theological Seminary in 1944. Yet, Kelsey earned his Ph.D. in philosophy from Yale (1946) and was professor of religion and philosophy at Morehouse at the time of his visiting appointment. See “Biography of George D. Kelsey” in the George D. Kelsey Papers 1932–1996, Finding Aid, Drew University Archives.
 13. While was not formally granted a Ph.D. in philosophy, Richard I. McKinney became a professional philosopher. He received his doctorate degree in 1942 from Yale in religious education. See John H. McClendon III, “Dr. Richard Ishmael McKinney: Historical Summation on the Life of a Pioneering African American Philosopher,” *American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience* (Spring 2006): 1–4. Kelsey taught at Morehouse and was mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr. For biographical information on Kelsey consult, “Biography of George D. Kelsey,” in the George D. Kelsey Papers 1932–1996, Finding Aid, Drew University Archives. On Cook, consult chapter thirteen, “Joyce Mitchell Cook,” in *African American Philosophers*, ed. George Yancy (New York: Routledge, 1998).
 14. For a comprehensive treatment of the racist nature of the white academy and its professional ancillary groups, read Michael R. Winston, “Through the Back Door: Academic Racism and the American Negro in Historical Perspective,” *DÆDALUS* (Summer 1971): 678–719. The African American philosopher Cornelius Golightly examines some of the problems faced by Black higher educational institutions due to racism in Cornelius Golightly, “Negro Higher Education and Democratic Negro Morale,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 11, no. 3 (July 1942): 322–28. Wiggins deals with the challenging question of the integration of white students into African American institutions. See Forest Oran Wiggins, “Why Integrate White Students into the Negro College?” *The Allen University Bulletin* 20, no. 1 (February 1956).
 15. Thomas Freeman finished his doctoral dissertation, *A Study in the Criteria of Effective Preaching through an Analysis of the Preaching of Phillips Brooks* at the University of Chicago in 1948.
 16. In a 1973 report to the American Philosophical Association, African American philosopher William R. Jones outlined the legacy of racism and its impact on the status of African Americans in the philosophy profession. The “cancer of racism” Jones argues has had a lasting impact on the presence of

Africans Americans within American professional philosophy. Jones collected data during the early 1970s, for the committee on blacks in philosophy, which indicated that there were only thirty-five Blacks (that is, African American, Africans, and West Indians) with the terminal degree in philosophy; of these, only twenty-three were African American. Jones estimated that of the approximately 10,000 members in the APA at the time, Blacks comprised less than 1/100th of the personnel in philosophy. In the late 1990s, Leonard Harris subsequently pointed out that about one hundred—or about 1 percent of—philosophers in North America were Black. The history of institutional racism and sexism in professional philosophy weighs heavily as to why these numbers have not changed significantly. See William R. Jones, "Crisis in Philosophy: The Black Presence," Report of the Subcommittee on the Participation of Blacks in Philosophy, *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 47 (1973–74): 119.

17. The American operatic soprano Camilla Ella Williams (October 18, 1919–January 29, 2012) was also a native of Danville. In 1945, she was the first African American to sing with the New York Opera when she performed the title role in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. In 1946, she became the first African American to receive a regular contract with a major American opera company, the New York City Opera.
18. McLaughlin had two sisters and two brothers. His brothers were James and Ernest McLaughlin. His sisters were Odessa Watkins and Jerene Hyatt. Jerene Hyatt is still living in Danville, Virginia. In the spring of 2007, I interviewed his sister Jerene Hyatt on the telephone.
19. In 1899, the Richmond Theological Institute (formerly Colver Institute) joined with Wayland Seminary of Washington to form Virginia Union University at Richmond.
20. Transcripts in author's possession.
21. The first Black graduate of Andover was George Washington Williams, a Civil War veteran, lawyer, journalist, preacher, first Black member of the Ohio legislature, and first modern (empirically based) historian of African-American life. Due to his lack of formal education, Williams was initially denied admission to Andover. Undaunted, he enrolled in general English courses and worked hard to develop his academic skills. Williams's persistence paid off. He was eventually admitted and received his Doctor of Divinity degree in 1874. See J. H. Franklin, *George Washington Williams* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).
22. D. A. R. Thelen, "Conversations between Cornish Rogers and David Thelen," *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 1 (1991): 41–62.
23. M. L. King and C. Carson, *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, vol. 2 (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2005), 161.
24. Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–1963* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 93.
25. M. L. King and C. Carson, *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, vol. 2 (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2005), 564.
26. Thelen, "Conversations between Cornish Rogers and David Thelen," 41–62.
27. Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 93.
28. Ibid.
29. King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 101.
30. Ibid., 100–101.
31. Quoted in Leonard Harris, *Philosophy Born of Struggle: Anthology of Afro-American Philosophy from 1917* (Dubuque: Kendall Hunt, 1983), ix.
32. C. Johnson, *Revolutionaries to Race Leaders: Black Power and the Making of African American Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 294.
33. J. Ira G. Zepp, *The Social Vision of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1989), 230.
34. For more information on Gilbert Haven Jones, see Robert Munro, *The Dynamic Character of the Early African American*

Philosopher: An Intellectual Biography of Gilbert Haven Jones (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 2012); George Yancy, "Gilbert Haven Jones As an Early Black Philosopher and Educator," *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience* 2, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 42–48.

35. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958), 100.
36. Ibid., 100.
37. Interestingly, Miles Mark Fisher taught church history at Shaw University (Raleigh, North Carolina). He retired from Shaw in 1965.
38. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 155.
39. Paul Robeson, "Songs of My People," in *Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings, Speeches and Interviews, 1918–1974*, ed. P. S. Foner (New York: Citadel Press Book, 1978), 211.
40. Ibid., 212.
41. Wayman B. McLaughlin, "Symbolism and Mysticism in the Spirituals," *Phylon* 24, no. 1 (1963): 69–77. Because of space constraints, I am unable to dedicate more discussion to McLaughlin's argument and the influence of personalism. However, I would note that McLaughlin's philosophical interpretation of the spirituals anticipates the works of Black philosopher Robert C. Williams and Black theologian James Cone. See Robert C. Williams, "Ritual, Drama and God in Black Religion: Theological and Anthropological Views," *Theology Today* 41 (1985): 431–43; and James H. Cone, *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation*. New York: Seabury Press, 1972.
42. Ralph Bunche, "Education in Black and White," *Journal of Negro Education* 5, no. 3 (July 1936): 351–58.

Philosophy by Emotional Ambush: Dr. George Yancy and the Phenomenology of Race

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In his paper presentation, which is entitled "How Can You Teach Me If You Don't Even Know Me? Embedded Racism and White Opacity," Dr. George Yancy provides us with an invitation.¹ It is a request for both one's presence and participation whether one likes it or not. Through an intensely emotional article, which is written through various contextual encounters with everyday racism, Dr. Yancy requires some requisite heavy lifting from the reader. In a way, Dr. Yancy is subtly going about holding us hostage and, at the same time, compelling us to be a part of his philosophical project. His approach left me thinking, "How the heck is this philosophy?" After all, what I read on the pages of Dr. Yancy's article is much more different than what I have been accustomed to associating with the "philosophical cannon" of Western societies. Allow me to put these initial comments in context and take a foray into my own autobiography before I delve into what makes Dr. Yancy's work so challenging and prescient. Normally, I would feel skeptical in committing to such a personal move in an academic arena for fear of being judged not "objective" enough. Yet, I feel I can take this short detour as a result of the work of Dr. Yancy and others who write by critically engaging phenomenological experiences that impact our subjectivities.²

I must admit that I am reading the work of Dr. Yancy from the perspective of a budding educational social theorist and not a philosopher. As a scholar of Punjabi-Sikh dissent educated in Canada, I have always come to think of philosophy as something pretty much exclusive or certainly closely related to Western civilization. My earliest exposure to the intellectual movements within Western civilization was through social studies units in high school, which dealt with the mighty Roman Empire, French revolutionaries, and political reformers in Germany and Britain. Later, in my senior year of high school, I took a course succinctly titled *Western Civilization*, where we began with the ideas of the “holy trinity” of Greek masters: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

Despite my less than average grades, I was fascinated by philosophical thought in general. Hence, I enrolled in an *Introduction to Philosophy* course in my first year at university. It consisted of more of the same thinkers and their contemporaries in a more in-depth iteration. My intrigue at philosophical thought and argumentation were belied by the grades that I was receiving in the course. I just could not put it all together, or write and think like a philosopher. The course assignments that I was required to hand in were deemed too opinionated, too narrative-like, and not based on a grasp of “real objective knowledge.” This was not a confidence-building experience, and I barely managed to get a mercy pass from my professor. At the time, I was fine with this. I had decided to become a high school teacher and hence I focused more on my other interests in history and the social sciences in order to enter a bachelor of education program.

Blissfully unaware, I did not notice that everyone associated with philosophy (in textbooks and on campus) was white and male. I also did not notice that the majority of the Canadian Parliament, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, my teachers in public school, all of my instructors at university, and every principal that I ever came across were also white. White privilege was a concept that was completely foreign to me and I was a late bloomer to my own racialization. I just knew that certain rules governed living in Canada where certain bodies were held in esteem in specific contexts, and other bodies were entrenched elsewhere. For example, my mother was a chambermaid at a motel. She was lauded by her white bosses and was entrenched as an accomplished cleaner of filthy rooms in a local motor inn. On the other hand, one of my favorite instructors at university was a white male philosopher, and he was held in high esteem on campus. In short, the order of the world felt to me as if it was established, and my subjectivity was cultivated (though not as critically as I now see) and life went on.

Since then, I have been interested in philosophy, but my lack of success in philosophy course work left me slightly intimidated by the whole discipline. It was not until my education as a doctoral student (late bloomer again) that I was introduced to bodies of color that some instructors were referring to as philosophers. This was actually quite fascinating, and I began to once again feel the excitement of my early interest emerge with a new and refreshed sense of immediacy. Scholars of color such as Frantz Fanon,

W. E. B. Du Bois, Gloria Anzaldua, Patricia Hill Collins, and Gayatri Spivak were now shaking the foundations of what I thought philosophical thought was and could be. They were writing from lived experiences that were responsible for re-focusing my interests in the field. This moment was also short lived as I was chastised in my graduate program by some of my peers who furrowed their brows at the aforementioned names being considered “philosophers.” This was my first exposure to the various hegemonies, competing definitions, and internal debates among and within branches of philosophy about what constitutes a philosopher.³ It was from within this context that I read Dr. Yancy’s paper presentation.

As an accomplished philosopher with depth and breadth of knowledge in the field, Dr. Yancy is providing us with a triple invitation through his paper. The first is to consider the Black scholar, who, by all accounts, is incredibly underrepresented in the field of philosophy. He makes it abundantly clear that race does matter in the context of conducting philosophical inquiry. It matters in the projects deliberated upon, the hegemonic sites that are challenged, and the task of re-writing of the canon. Readers of this work are compelled to deal with the fact that this African American scholar’s work is a challenge to “myopic exclusionary practices that shape and inform contemporary philosophy as practiced in North America.”⁴ The second invitation is to consider the phenomenological presence in his work as a legitimate form of philosophical inquiry into white privilege and racism. Claudia Ruitenberg describes this as “rooted in an attentiveness to lived experience, with all its thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations” (Ruitenberg, 2012, p. xii).⁵ Dr. Yancy purposefully places us into multiple contexts: the street, a job interview, in an elevator, and, at each turn, is by no means reticent about conveying his reflexivity in regards to his racialization by white bodies. It is at times raw, un-nerving, passionate, and expedient, yet is always rooted in a tremendously personal place in deconstructing the stubborn steadfastness of white privilege. Finally, readers of this particular work are forced into a face-to-face confrontation with one’s own privilege regardless of its manifestation, and compelled to consider spaces where we also wield the white gaze of authority and power. He is asking whites in particular, and by proxy all of us, to “tarry” with our most cherished identities by putting them in crisis. This is a way of forcing us to wrestle with what Pitt and Britzman refer to as the “lovely knowledge” we have secured for ourselves about our progressivism.⁶ Instead, we need to linger longer in our own privileged blind spots.

BODIES OF COLOR AND PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY

As an African American philosopher, Dr. Yancy makes clear that bodies of color are unquestionably philosophers and that many of them have chosen to put race at the cross hairs of their inquiries. Not only does he break down the repressive myths of Black intellectuals being so-called second-hand scholars, but he also places issues of white privilege alongside the classical questions concerning philosophy such as the meaning of living a good life. In

fact, the question of what constitutes a “good life” is itself linked to the question of white privilege. This is what Dr. Yancy wants us to see. Specifically, he speaks out against white bodies’ deployment of white EUREKA MOMENTS. He sees them as possible sites of narcissism. It is that EUREKA MOMENT when white bodies become aware of performing their white privilege and can so proudly declare, “Oh my word, I just caught myself being racist.”

You might be reading this and thinking that I am being too hard on whites in this situation because in this scenario they are actually doing what they have been criticized for *not* doing—that is, reflecting on their race privilege. I do not take issue with this part of the equation. It’s just that scholars of color are used to the sound of the other shoe dropping because too often this self-discovery becomes, “Woow . . . Coool . . . , I just caught myself being racist.” The re-centering of the affirmative white subject who discovers the shores of his or her self-knowledge would place him/her in direct conflict with Dr. Yancy’s project. His project is thinking beyond one’s white, immaculate self-discovery. Instead, he advises tarrying with the possibility that the psychic configuration of white racist opacity has a structural “permanence” that has no exit.⁷ The onus is placed on white individuals to avoid superficial and self-indulging celebration in the process of catching themselves being racist. Dr. Yancy wants those events to shake the foundations of white peoples’ epistemic conjuring of bodies of color across society. This can never be done in haste in searching for some grand epiphany about racism. Rather, it is a concentrated effort to listen fearlessly, to tarry with one’s white privilege and racism, and to ponder the possibility that one may never completely be able to relinquish these facets of one’s white reality.

PHILOSOPHY OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

When I first read the article, one of the things that became immediately apparent was the aesthetics of the writing. That an article written from such a race conscious place, complete with the use of taboo words, onomatopoeia, passion, and emotion, would grace the pages of *Philosophy of Education* was surprising to me. The important point is that none of these techniques is used in a gratuitous way. The literary devices Dr. Yancy deploys throughout his paper are integral to the way he constructs himself as a philosopher, drawing us in, and constructing his phenomenology. The lived experiences of African American males in contemporary North America is brought to life through these devices in a way that challenges our preconceived notions of who can write philosophy and how readers can engage this type of praxis.

The racialization of space is also central to Dr. Yancy’s article. He places us all in his elevator example and compels us to feel the thickness of the situation as a white woman clutches her purse when a Black body enters. We are allowed to sit in the job interview where Dr. Yancy is forced to sit through listening to the “good deeds” of the white man who was interviewing him. We are allowed to watch the street scene where doors *CLICK* into the lock position as the Black male walks by. In a way, one might say that his writing and the elevator example, and so many more examples, are a pure set-up. It is a “sting operation”

conducted by Dr. Yancy vis-à-vis his lived experience, or what I call philosophy by emotional ambush. Maybe it is the emotions of anger at Dr. Yancy himself for thinking he knows exactly what this “innocent” white woman’s intentions are, maybe it is frustration at the white man conducting the job interview for his self-congratulatory actions, or maybe it is the shaking of our heads which stems from us “knowing” this type of literary contribution is fine, but it should not be in the pages of *Philosophy of Education*.

What we are forced to think about through his writing, however, is our visceral reaction and the constituted nature of that reaction.⁸ We are allowed to simply be the proverbial fly on the wall nestled in the top of the elevator, in the interview, or buzzing through the streets where white folks lock their car doors in the presence of a racial “other.” In a way, we are held hostage. We can’t just pick up the phone, call Dr. Yancy, and demand an explanation; we cannot jump in the elevator and force our opinions on the white woman or the Black man. We are forced to do that thing which is so hard for academics to do, to take the risk of not speaking, writing, defending, or denying, but simply listening and lingering with our own emotions—our emotions that have been cultivated about race over time and have become embedded in our consciousness.

In thinking through my own classroom experiences as an instructor in an education department, I am reminded that our classrooms are equally as polarizing. As a scholar of color I am constantly aware of my racialization, even when that may not be the most discerning aspect about me in the eyes of those who behold me. It is just that I have been on the other end too many times. I have had myself handed back to me so many times by individuals, through textbooks, through teachers, and through media accounts since I was a child that such experiences induce a type of schizophrenia. This schizophrenia manifests in my panic that I have too many or too little readings on race in my course outlines. I judge other instructors who only include one or two readings on race in their outlines. I purposely don’t want to be too race-heavy at the beginning of a course lest students associate me as the big brown guy who always thinks everything is about race. Other days I just want to confront race privilege openly with the force of a jack hammer. All of my actions have consequences, but race is embedded in each experience for me.

All of this thinking about race is stimulated because the *CLICKS* Dr. Yancy hears from car doors on the street have come in the form of eyes rolling at me when I discuss race in class. I have had white students literally turn to each other, whisper into each others’ ears, and then shake their heads and smirk condescendingly at me when I speak about white privilege. They have already constructed me and consumed me and the smirks put me in my place. This is by no means the majority of students, but it is a very impactful minority. I would also like to point out that these performances are not just the purview of white students. I have had my battles with students of color who have openly expressed to me that we live in a “post-racial” world and that I should not dwell in the past. This is a stark reminder that discourses of post-raciality do not simply pass over contemporary bodies of color in neoliberal times, but all

bodies are variously impacted by theoretical hegemonies which ebb and flow in society.⁹

Many people have confronted me with the statement, "It can't always be about race." I hear that a lot. I accept the premise that there are many spaces and places where race might not be the only factor. But negative racialization, over time, has a lasting impact. In Bruce Springsteen's *Born in the USA*, there is a line that says, "You end up like a dog that's been beat too much, till you spend half your life just covering up."¹⁰ Racialized bodies become analogous to the dog in this quote, which is smacked, let's say, a miniscule three times a month by its owner. At other times the dog is loved, allowed to sleep on the bed, celebrated as a "good doggie." Yet, every time there is a slight movement by the owner, perhaps just getting off the couch or reaching for the remote control, the dog is compelled to flinch. The smacks are memories that become embedded over time because they are so impactful to one's consciousness. The smacks become the roots of the dog's epistemology, and it is because of the white gaze that one becomes "hyper-vigilant of one's (my) own embodied spatiality."¹¹

CONFRONTATIONS WITH PRIVILEGE

While reading Dr. Yancy's work, I also became aware that I, too, have been partially constituted by discursive authority through citational practices to wield the gaze in all its multiplicities.¹² This is what is both uncomfortable and emotional about his work, and also the most stimulating for me. While I am a by-product of what feels to be race filters on Instagram, I am also privileged as a male in this society that consumes the "female other."¹³ As I read, I began to think about what I never have to think about as a result of my privilege. I never worry about being sexually assaulted as I walk the streets late at night. I do not worry that members of my ethnic community and gender will disappear at alarming rates from the downtown Eastside. I have not had to fight for waterways on my land to avoid them being sold to multinational corporations. I do not think I will be attacked because someone identifies me as a queer. I do not mean to diminish the significance of race; I mean to express that reading Dr. Yancy's work solicits many contradictory and competing impulses in the reader, and one of those is a journey into one's own privilege. It is often a dirty journey where exposure to difficult knowledge about one's self compels us to pay heed to the demons that we most often see in others. In my opinion, this is when philosophy is at its best. This is the equivalent of the sound of gritty blues music in an era of digital voice manipulation.

Obviously, we scholars in North America tend to view white privilege from our own perspectives and contexts. As Nayak points out, this type of work into white privilege can be extended around the globe and "open up researchers to a global interpretation and postcolonial understanding of such race markers."¹⁴ In an era of drone strikes on lands where brown bodies live such as Yemen, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, whiteness has taken flight, literally. The mechanization of whiteness, and its global reach, has shrunk time and space in order to target bodies of color in geographical locations that are considered to be "wild," "promiscuous," and in need of "taming."¹⁵ It is the use of

new technologies that cite previous racializing practices with deadly consequences for bodies of color. My only point in bringing this context up is that as the contours of white privilege shift, we as educators must also be on point in our interrogation of new forms of domination that might impact bodies of color we are not familiar with around the globe. These are simply new contexts from which we can challenge white supremacy.

CONCLUSION

The mighty Sisyphus was condemned to haul a heavy boulder up a hill as punishment for transgressions against the gods. The cumbersome burden was doubly accentuated at the moment he reached the pinnacle of the hill in a sense of glorious accomplishment. It is here where all the heavy lifting and toil is for naught as the boulder perpetually falls down the hill again and Sisyphus has to start the never ending task once again. There is no escape from this difficult work, but might we consider the task at hand to be important in and of itself?

Considering that there might not be an escape from racial privilege for white bodies is exactly what needs to happen if we are to emphasize what Dr. Yancy means by tarrying with putting whiteness in crisis. For white bodies to consider this boulder as race privilege and attempt to struggle with it up the proverbial hill may never result in the glorious emancipation so many white liberals seek. White people may be doomed to pick that rock up again and again, and never get to congratulate themselves as if they have reached the finish line of white privilege. This puts certain questions in play that might be previously unconsidered. What if, despite your numerous articles on anti-racism, there may never be an *exit* to race privilege? What if it is embedded and cited too often to ever undo and white bodies are forced to confront this? What if that boulder keeps being toiled with, and keeps sliding down the mountain? Yet, what if this becomes the most inspiring and hopeful thing people of color see in you, hear from your lips, or read on the pages of your journal submissions?

To know that you are wrestling with this discomfort and doing the heavy lifting with what it means to be the racially privileged, every minute of every day (like so many people of color do in regards to their racialization), might be the inspiration for exceptional new work in whiteness studies and beyond. A place to start might be to consider that when a scholar of color chooses not to cite the giants in the pantheon of white philosophy such as Kant, Hegel, Locke, Foucault, Deleuze, or Bourdieu it is not because of a lack of depth or understanding. It may be the result of the fact that there are other philosophers resonating and echoing in the soul. You do not need to ask us, "Where are the giants?" We might have our own giants. And believe me, they are right there on the page you just read. As Dr. Yancy points out, just take the risk, be fearless, and listen.

NOTES

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"Dwelling Near" Difficult Conversations: Fostering Engagements with White Privilege and Race In a Not So Color-Blind Society

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Firstly, I would like to thank Dr. George Yancy for engaging us in such an important talk. Such an engagement is necessary, particularly within the university and among budding new scholars—an engagement that *unsettles and disrupts* notions of "diversity," race, and *whiteness* in particular. Dr. Yancy's talk is especially relevant in the Canadian educational context where the popular discourse of "happy multiculturalism" trumps any serious or productive discussions about what a more robust conception of diversity could look like. Dr. Yancy invites us, and perhaps even dares us, to have these difficult conversations in a time when racism is deemed a thing of the past, and where the notion of *whiteness* is not even on the radar of most people. In Canada, and in Canadian schools in particular, the belief that true diversity can be attained simply by adopting more "tolerant" and "color-blind" approaches is often superficially translated into the curriculum, in which many young people of color

continue to be under and misrepresented, or even worse, simply erased.

The lack of curricular relevance, and systemic student underachievement of young people of color in Euro-centric schools in Canada, has led to the creation of two Africentric schools in Toronto despite strong resistance and critique of these schools by mainstream society. For instance, much of the public discourse around these schools implies that they are a form of segregation and "Black racism," and should be, for lack of better word, "abolished." In response to the Africentric high schools, which opened their doors to students just last fall, City Councillor Josh Matlow (a white man) suggested that instead of accommodating "individual groups, the whole system needs to change."¹ What this systemic change involves was not specified by Mr. Matlow, but I am certain that it does not involve a critique of whiteness.

For Dr. Yancy, however, the problem for genuine diversity to take place is the "problem of whiteness."² To emphasize Dr. Yancy's point, without *naming*, exposing, and interrogating whiteness and white privilege, genuine diversity is nothing more than a fallacy that simply benefits white people and makes them feel good about themselves. I will take a bit of a risk for a moment and expose my own vulnerability by saying that as a white woman, I was unsettled by this idea. Given Dr. Yancy's emphasis on *parrhesia* (or courageous speech), I think that this was indeed his intention.

Throughout my academic life, I have been exposed to important scholars in the field of critical multiculturalism and critical race theory, and have in turn also encountered the "good," white, anti-racist scholars like Peggy Macintosh and Tim Wise, who I'm sure many of you are familiar with. These scholars expose and critique not only their own white privilege but also the more systemic nature of white privilege and power in society. I was taught that by deeply engaging with and contemplating my own white privilege and white gaze, and how they contribute to a form of epistemic violence towards Black bodies, and other bodies of color, I would become a "good" white person. As long as I was *conscious* of my privilege and power in particular contexts, I could feel satisfied with myself, for I would no longer be considered a "racist" white person.

However, Dr. Yancy proposes a somewhat "sticky" view of whiteness that is not easy to escape. On the one hand, he argues that whiteness is the problem for genuine diversity to take place. Yet, he also suggests that it is problematic to place the issue of whiteness on a pedestal, for this would, as he argues, reinforce the "centrality of that problem."³ Furthermore, Dr. Yancy suggests that perhaps there is no "exit" to whiteness and white privilege, that there is no "pure" innocent anti-racist core of any white person. He suggests that the mere desire to be free from one's white power and privilege is "a function of that very white power, privilege and narcissism."⁴ This leaves me with many questions. For one, is the notion of a white anti-racist even possible, given how complex and even subconscious our racist thoughts and actions can be? I am also left wondering what this means for well-intentioned white educators who truly want to create inclusive and safe spaces for their

students. Should they stop trying? Or should they not even begin? Are so-called segregated schools the answer, then?

No doubt, it would be problematic to suggest that Dr. Yancy, or any person of color, has *the* answer to ending white racism. Indeed, it is a *white* problem. But what are white people to do, knowing that for as long as they have their white bodies, they will never be absolved of their white privilege and power? And, secondly, how are they to understand and critique their own white privilege without simply immersing themselves in personal stories of white guilt and narcissism? Perhaps the elevator example, one that Dr. Yancy is known for theorizing, can help us to think through these questions further. Dr. Yancy suggests, "Perhaps we need more experiences where the spaces that we inhabit break down—like the elevator, spaces where we get to 'dwell near.'"⁵

Aside from the elevator example, though, I am interested in spaces that can invoke the kind of uncomfortable and disruptive (yet potentially productive) opportunities in which white people can become aware of their whiteness, and even feel the shame that could potentially work toward the self-discovery that Dr. Yancy speaks of. I wonder if one possible (yet still temporary) "space" for this disruption of whiteness could be in the realm of comedy. For example, the work of the white American comedian Louis C.K. comes to mind, specifically his skit on "being white," where he considers what it would be like to enter into a time machine. As Louis C.K. jokes, unlike for a Black person, entering a time machine as a white person would be "awesome" because they would be welcomed in any historical era. Louis C.K. suggests (to some light and perhaps uncomfortable laughter in the audience) "that is exclusively a white privilege."⁶ This "space" could offer, if even for a brief moment, a glimpse into our own white power and privilege that would have otherwise gone unchecked.

In the more "traditional" educational spaces, the gaining of critical media literacy skills could also be one way in which whiteness, power, and privilege are interrogated. As we become increasingly engaged in media representations, critical media literacy education encourages us to question the kinds of media messages we see (or don't see), and to critique the systems of domination that produce often problematic representations of non-white bodies for mere profit. Of course, successful incorporation of media literacy requires dedicated and well-trained teachers, as well as creating a space in the curriculum for this type of training. However, in Canadian as well as American schools, it is more often the case that "teaching to the test" takes over any meaningful and in-depth discussions of such issues.

Finally, perhaps the space that we are in at this very moment is also a space in which we get to "dwell near," an expression that Dr. Yancy derives from the etymology of the term "neighbor." Together, we are comprised of scholars and educators who are (I am assuming) interested in unpacking some pretty "risky" material. This material will mean different things to each and every one of us, depending on our own unique social locations. But the importance in taking a *risk*, just as Dr. Yancy did in his talk

here about diversity, is essential precisely because of its potential to create a rupture in our own understanding of whiteness. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, his talk challenges us (white folks in particular) to *listen* carefully to stories that make us feel uncomfortable, and even shameful. Diversity is *not* supposed to make white people feel good. However, the act of listening and allowing ourselves to be moved by what we hear is an important step to any kind of anti-oppressive work we may currently be a part of. Furthermore, it is an important step for white scholars to undertake, particularly as we are involved in producing knowledge (whether unknowingly or not) about people who may have very different stories to tell.

NOTES

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BOOK REVIEWS

Knowing Otherwise: Race, Gender, and Implicit Understanding

Alexis Shotwell (The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011). 208 pages. ISBN 978-0-271-03763-9.

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For various reasons, analytical epistemologists have focused the majority of their efforts on knowledge that is explicit—that is, it can be represented as a set of explicit pro-attitudes toward propositions. There is, however, a growing contingent of philosophers who acknowledge that the implicit plays a significant role in our epistemic lives and should command more philosophical attention. Alexis Shotwell's *Knowing Otherwise: Race, Gender, and Implicit Understanding* follows this trend. In *Knowing Otherwise*, Shotwell urges us to recognize the value of an approach to epistemology that countenances a background of implicit understanding underlying and upholding our explicit attitudes. According to Shotwell, such an approach allows us to draw important insights into the possibility of the personal, political, and social transformation that is the goal of liberatory philosophy.

In chapter one and parts of the prologue, Shotwell explains implicit understanding and details its components. As Shotwell describes it, implicit understanding represents "our background, taken-for-granted understanding of

being in the world: The implicit is what provides the conditions for things to make sense to us. The implicit provides the framework through which it is possible to form propositions and also to evaluate them as true or false." There are, on Shotwell's view, four kinds of implicit understanding, including "foundationally" non-propositional know-how, "socially situated embodiment," "unspoken" understandings that are not currently in words but are potentially propositional, and affect. On her account, these four kinds are not clearly defined, but are significantly "interrelated" and "co-constituted."

Know-how represents skill-based understanding. In her account of know-how, Shotwell emphasizes the role of skill as a tacit background that informs and shapes our explicit understandings. She also emphasizes the "implicit ontologies" presupposed by skills that one acquires through participation in a community with shared practices. "Socially situated embodiment" represents implicit understandings that are acquired through the internalization of norms by participation in and reproduction of culture through the body. "Unspoken" understandings are the assumptions operating "as a background condition for understanding." In order to perform this function, unspoken understandings must remain unqueried, though they could potentially be articulated and evaluated. Affect represents the feelings that "texture and tone our experience." Shotwell emphasizes the fact that our "expressive resources" for articulating and understanding our affective reactions to the objects of experience are limited. Some affect does not fit easily within the conventional categories of emotion and must be treated as what Sue Campbell calls "free-style" emotions.

Shotwell sees her purpose in the book to be to extend an important but undertheorized claim in Susan Babbitt's book *Impossible Dreams* about the necessary transformations in implicit understanding that one must undergo in order to imagine a world other than that which one occupies. Shotwell furthers Babbitt's point by exploring the individual contribution of the various aspects of implicit understanding to a subject's epistemic life, especially with respect to the ability to envision a better and less oppressive society free of the obstacles to flourishing that are imposed on us by our current oppressive social and political situations.

Shotwell's methodology in chapter one is not one that is designed to produce a straightforward account of the various kinds of implicit understanding. Instead, she brings together a variety of philosophical work on various facets of implicit understanding and layers their accounts, one on top of another. She explains her methodology in this chapter in the prologue with a "palimpsest" analogy. She uses the existing philosophical work on facets of implicit understanding as a set of "maps" that layer on top of one another to create a more encompassing account. The resulting palimpsest produces occasional blurring of lines due to the fact that the different maps were created for differing purposes.

Although the product of this chapter is, to extend Shotwell's metaphor, a bit of a blurred sketch of implicit understanding rather than a precise account of each component, it is a very useful introduction to matters of implicit understanding

for the uninitiated. Shotwell introduces readers to an array of literature, pointing out their distinct and overlapping parts, and laying the groundwork for a nuanced account of implicit understanding on which the four kinds are intertwined rather than distinct.

Readers should note that Shotwell does not directly address matters pertaining to the nature of belief, knowledge, and understanding. For some readers, the book may raise questions about the relationships the individual forms of implicit understanding that she discusses have to these epistemic categories. For instance, readers may wonder whether knowledge or understanding must be propositional, leaving nonpropositional varieties of "implicit understandings" in an epistemic category of their own. One might also wonder whether affect or any other component of implicit understanding is a constituent part of belief. Shotwell sets aside these questions and instead makes the more modest proposal to demonstrate that traditional JTB theories of knowledge are impoverished by their failure to acknowledge the "implicit framework" in which "the judgment of truth and justifiability" is made. This allows her to focus on the pragmatic role of implicit understandings in self and social transformation rather than their proper categorizations within the domain of epistemic attitudes.

In the remaining chapters of the book, the account of implicit understanding produced in the initial chapters is applied to a variety of issues surrounding race, gender, sex, and ability. Shotwell explores the possibilities for social and personal transformation away from the implicit understandings that we absorb from our society and which uphold oppression. Her work in these chapters builds on a number of important themes. Rather than give a chapter by chapter summary of Shotwell's arguments, I will organize my comments around these themes, many of which unfold over the course of multiple chapters.

In chapter two, Shotwell produces an interesting and informative discussion of the promulgation of implicit understandings that uphold oppressive social relations and the possibility of transforming problematic implicit understandings. In the course of this discussion, Shotwell hits on an important point that becomes a recurring theme of the book. She suggests that philosophers have been too quick to assume that problematic implicit understandings must be improved by means of explicit articulation and assessment. She compares this suggestion to arguments made by Cynthia Townley and Dawn Rae Davis about the importance of recognizing the limits of our capacity to achieve knowledge and the importance of epistemic dependence. Shotwell extends their reasoning about the epistemic benefits we gain from recognizing that there are limits to our capacity to achieve knowledge individually to show that we also benefit from recognizing that there are limits to our capacity to achieve fully explicit knowledge. There is always an implicit background underlying our explicit understanding. Thus, attempting to render problematic implicit understanding explicit is not always, according to Shotwell, an adequate strategy for producing the desired change. According to Shotwell, our explicit attitudes are sustained by an implicit basis and this implicit basis sets the terms on which explicit considerations are

evaluated. Consequently, we cannot expect to produce meaningful changes in understanding by working on the explicit surface of understanding alone. A more successful strategy would be a holistic one; it would target both explicit understanding and its implicit basis.

This point is aptly illustrated in chapter five, in which Shotwell argues that Eduardo Bonilla-Silva neglects the role of implicit understanding in his argument that the basis of anti-racist action should be “understanding and acceptance.” On his view, what is understood and accepted is propositional knowledge about “the material and ideological effects of racialization,” which he believes will create in the knower a sense of responsibility for contributing to change. Shotwell argues that the emergence of this sense of responsibility requires a shift in both explicit and implicit understandings.

Connected to this argument is another important theme of Shotwell’s book. In chapters four and five, Shotwell explores the basis for solidarity against oppression. Solidarity, she argues, should not be conceived of as something that involves erasing difference and embracing similarity. Instead, she advocates a solidarity that is built on acknowledgement of difference and interdependence. On Shotwell’s view, there is an important role for the implicit—especially affect—in creating this kind of solidarity. In her argument about the inadequacy of propositional knowledge alone to produce a sense of responsibility in the knower, Shotwell argues that sympathy plays an important role in producing the necessary sense of responsibility for oppression and solidarity with the oppressed.

In addition to sympathy, Shotwell makes the case that shame has a significant role to play in the creation of solidarity. First, solidarity that does not attempt to erase difference will likely produce negative affect for those who benefit from positions of social privilege who stand in solidarity with those who lack privileged identities. Shame and other forms of negative affect come as a result of recognizing one’s privileged social and historical position in a society that does not treat its members equally. And second, due to the fact that one cannot completely change one’s implicit understandings in a single act of will, shame will be a byproduct of transitional phases of self-transformation. In these transitional phases, one feels ashamed of one’s continued adherence to problematic implicit understandings and the resultant patterns of behavior that one desires to correct.

Another important theme of Shotwell’s book is that sensuous knowledge is important for social and political transformation. Sensuous knowledge is an important concept for Shotwell because it allows her to demonstrate the difference between understanding that is purely theoretical and understanding that is rooted in physical, social, and emotional experience. Sensuous knowledge arises at the point at which the senses, which are situated in a particular social and political and ecological environment, combine with cognition and the conceptual overlay that we bring to our experience of the world through senses. According to Shotwell, the sensuous provides the possibility of a “rupture” in one’s experience between one’s given reality and the possibility of a better

world represented in art or imagination. It also provides the “impetus, sustenance, and imaginative motor for individual and collective change” without which, she argues, social movements would be “anemic and thin.”

In chapter six, Shotwell extends and illustrates the role of the sensuous in social movements in a discussion of trans activist work. She makes a compelling argument that sensuous knowledge provides the necessary insight into what needs to occur to ensure that life is livable for trans individuals and that there is the possibility for trans individuals to flourish. According to Shotwell, this flourishing requires transformation of both the self and one’s social environment because flourishing in one’s body is dependent on one’s socially situated embodiment.

Overall, the book is an insightful work about the epistemological basis of freedom dreaming and the obstacles that we face in creating and sustaining solidarity in movements to enact those dreams. Shotwell’s epistemological points have the potential to be of great use to epistemologists interested in differences that occur in epistemic access along the lines of race, gender, and other marginalized identities. In chapter two, she acknowledges the affinities between her work and that of epistemologists who study the production and maintenance of patterns of ignorance. Her work may also have much to lend to standpoint epistemologists interested in theorizing the possibility that members of marginalized or oppressed groups have easier epistemic access into certain truths that are obscured to others because of their particular embodied experiences as socially situated persons. Also, Shotwell’s general point that epistemologists should pay more attention to the implicit aspects of knowledge and understanding is a very compelling and important one that deserves serious consideration by philosophers who work on mainstream epistemological projects pertaining to the nature of knowledge, understanding, belief, and justification.

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Race and Citizenship in Falguni Sheth’s Toward a Political Philosophy of Race

Falguni Sheth (SUNY Press, 2009). 270 pages. ISBN: 978-0791493984.

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In *Toward a Political Philosophy of Race*, Falguni rejects the belief that races mark natural divisions that have emerged during the evolution of the human species. Instead, she

adopts the view that racial categories are conceptual instruments by which human differences are created and maintained. Race is no longer descriptive but causal. It does not merely describe the way things are, but it causes things to be the way they are (22).

The state, she argues, uses race to distribute privileges to different groups within the population, and it enforces this distribution by its dominance of the means of violence. This is true of both authoritarian as well as liberal states. Falguni writes, "Liberalism's emphasis on procedure, calculation, and abiding by the rule of law distracts us from patterns that deviate from this emphasis"(46). The real question is who is favored and who is not. Who gets the privileges of the liberal state and who does not."

For Falguni, the liberal state has integrated African Americans into the core of its citizenry by rejecting race as a relevant criterion and by making the African American experience the paradigm for other groups seeking citizenship. Thus, any group that can compare its current treatment to the kind of treatment experienced by African Americans in the past establishes that treatment as a legitimate moral concern. In this way, African Americans have become "moral gauges," and any treatment that is similar to what was done to African Americans is considered morally illegitimate.

She traces the racialization and out casting of Muslims in the United States to the response to 9/11. Muslims have been identified with terrorism and the desire to destroy Western institutions. As such, they have become an "evil race" considered to be incapable of assimilation into the liberal state (112).

In order to protect citizens from Muslim immigrants, African Americans have been mobilized as border guards, refusing citizenship to all who do not fit the African American paradigm of moral worthiness. The border population insulates the core citizen from all others who wish to become citizens. They determine who is a true and who is a false citizen. Falguni concludes that the desire of African Americans to divert attention away from themselves and towards new immigrants has made them potent border guards.

The road to citizenship taken by African Americans from slavery to freedom has become the paradigm for obtaining citizenship. Falguni wishes to provide a different model of the road to citizenship, using the saga of South Asians. She traces the East Asian quest for citizenship to the period between 1900 and 1920, when some 6,000–7,000 South Asians filtered down from Vancouver, Canada, and arrived in California. They were used to undercut labor prices from already established immigrant groups. But the threat posed by East Asians to white working class people was a threat to white supremacy only if East Asians were not white.

The 1870 Naturalization Act allowed only persons of European or African ancestry to be U.S. citizens. In 1923, Bhagat Singh Thind argued that, as a Brahmin, he descended from Aryan ancestors, and should thus be considered white. The court rejected this argument on the

grounds that even if there was common ancestry between South Asian Brahmins and European Anglo-Saxons, the current status of the two people was distinctly different. And it is to the current situation that the law must speak. The route to citizenship by claiming European ancestry for South Asians was thus blocked.

This account raises the following questions:

1. Falguni focuses on Islam as the paradigm of fundamentalist reasoning, but I am puzzled as to why she fails to examine Jewish, Christian, and Hindu fundamentalism. It is well recognized that Christian and Hindu fundamentalists viewed Muslims as demonic long before 9/11.

2. Falguni portrays African Americans as border guards empowered to keep unruly Muslim immigrants from gaining U.S. citizenship. But she makes no mention of the widespread embrace of Islam by African Americans prior to 9/11. Yet, Muslim influences from the mid-east, East Asia, and the Caribbean have been an important source of the growth of African American radicalism.

Many African Americans adopted Islam as a way of rejecting the liberal values of modern Christianity. Some African American Muslim women continue to wear the hijab and the veil, and remain conspicuous in American communities in terms of their dress and comportment. The characterization of African Americans as border guards implies a hostility to Islam that has little support in historical fact.

3. Falguni's desire to use East Asians as an alternative route to U.S. citizenship is laudable. But I wonder why she limited her perspective to those who came from Canada. What about the route taken by the many East Asians that have immigrated to the United States from the Caribbean? I would also like to hear more about the implications of being considered non-white for high caste East Indian immigrants to the United States.

I support Falguni's view of racial concepts as prescriptive rather than descriptive and her emphasis on how racialization makes certain populations more vulnerable. I hope she will address some of the other issues I have raised in her sequels to this provocative book.

Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique

Sally Haslanger (Oxford University Press, 2012). 512 pages. ISBN 978-0199892624.

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Divided into three parts—"Social Constructivism," "Gender and Race," and "Language and Knowledge"—*Resisting Reality* is a collection of thirteen essays in which Sally Haslanger argues that gender and race are socially constructed and that they are real.

Haslanger's methodology for addressing the social construction and reality of gender and race reflects, in part, her commitment to social justice. While attentive to the fact that meanings of gender and race differ across cultures and within each social class, Haslanger argues for a general view according to which women have been constructed as subordinate with respect to men. Focusing on the relation between black and white people, Haslanger argues that black people have been constructed as subordinate with respect to white people. Across cultures and social classes, differences in power and privilege based on actual or imagined differences amongst people of different sexes (people who differ in primary and secondary sex traits) or amongst people of different ancestral groups are what determine the existence of hierarchical sex groups and hierarchical racial groups respectively.

Thus, on Haslanger's view, while non-hierarchical (sex) groups distinguished by anatomical differences are possible—because they allow for the possibility of genders distinguished by nature rather than by hierarchy—gender as we know it is necessarily hierarchical, for it is constituted by relations of subordination and domination. Although non-hierarchical ancestral groups are possible, races are necessarily hierarchical. Racial groupings will exhibit relations of domination and subordination, reflecting the established hierarchy or hierarchies that constitute them. Though far from being an eliminativist about gender or race, Haslanger argues that if we are to achieve social justice we must eliminate gender, as we know it, and race, *tout court*. Elimination of these very real social classes is part and parcel of resisting the necessarily hierarchical realities that gave rise to them and that sustain them.

Haslanger's arguments regarding the social construction of gender and race can be said to do double duty. For, while arguing for the elimination of gender, Haslanger argues against anti-realist accounts of gender and race. Though not natural, gender, like race, is as real an objective type as any other objective type, in spite of its existence being dependent on relational features, such as being viewed and treated as inferior in a hierarchical system. Similarly, though race is not a natural kind, its non-biological properties—real or imagined—play a causal role in the structure of the world. They may be used to organize people into members of a unified racial group—that is, into an objective type, making it real.

Nevertheless, the realism Haslanger argues for is a *minimal* realism. Thus, though the following are true on her account—(1) gender and race are projectable into law-like generalizations, (2) gender and race have measurable effects in the world, (3) gender and race enter to into true or false statements about people, and (4) being a woman or being black (or white, for that matter) are mind-independent properties—people do not possess Aristotelian gender or racial essences. That being said, on Haslanger's view, the biological facts of sex (i.e., anatomical, reproductive, and chromosomal differences) do amount to a *natural* difference between males and females, from which hierarchical or non-hierarchical groups may be constructed.

Haslanger's methodology also reflects her commitment to semantic externalism, namely, the view that the meanings and truth conditions of our sentences and the contents of our intentional mental states depend on the external, causal environment we are in. Thus, just as experts in the physical sciences can correct lay people about what they think or say gold is, a philosopher-expert might correct ordinary people about what they say or think about race. Where the objects of the physical sciences are in question, the tenets of semantic externalism may be and are disputed. Where the objects of investigation are people and their identities, the conclusions of semantic externalism may be downright dangerous. This, in and of itself, should not count, in philosophy, as a mark against semantic externalism. However, one would like to be as certain as possible that the semantic externalist who is playing with this kind of fire is walking with care through this high-stakes territory.

Let me be explicit about the dangers of the high-stakes game being played here. I will focus on the case of race. Suppose that anything possessing the property of being atomic number 79 were to disappear from the world. An announcement in the newspapers might read, "Our favorite metal kisses the dust. Gold no longer exists!" Suppose that then I, the non-chemist, come along, beside myself with excitement, with something golden in hand, thinking I'd found one last sample of a disappearing natural kind. "Here is some gold," I say, handing over the nugget, but not for keeps. The chemists check it out and discover that it does not possess atomic number 79. "It's nothing but fool's gold—a metal that will fool you into thinking that it is gold by its appearance."

According to semantic externalism, the meaning of "gold" depends on what the world tells us gold is, not what we think gold is. The chemist is the expert who can read the chemical properties of the world. Hence, on the semantic externalist's view, I would be wrong, and the chemists would be right. My sentence, "Here's some gold," would be false. And unless I'm interested in fool's gold, I would let the chemists hang on to it, if only they would take it.

Similarly, if hierarchies among races disappeared and no ancestral group was subordinate to any other, then an expert (e.g. Haslanger) might not only tell some non-expert who believes that black people still exist (this non-expert may actually believe that *she* is one of these black people) that she is wrong that black people are still around. Given that Haslanger's claim is coming from within that special place in *the division of labor* that claims expertise, hers would be the epistemically legitimate claim—an expert's claim that is poised to tell us the truth of social realities, based on what social justice requires. But, really, based on what the expert's presuppositions about social justice require.

"Externalism," Haslanger writes, "is an option whenever there are relatively objective types."¹ But objectivity, Haslanger argues, extends beyond the natural world: "a set of objects is more an objective type by virtue of the degree of unity among its members beyond a random or gerrymandered set."² This formulation, provided in "What Good Are Our Intuitions?," appears to be different from

that given in "Myth and Reality," in the same volume. In the latter, Haslanger considers the generation of a set of balls by the New York State Lottery. The set of hypothesized balls do not differ from any other set of balls, other than the fact that they were selected by a Lotto machine. Haslanger maintains, however, that "the set of balls is . . . an objective type (with minimal unity, admittedly)."³ But the Lotto-machine selected balls are not *beyond* a random or gerrymandered set. They are a random set.

Repetition of ideas and arguments in different essays throughout this volume was sometimes useful, as it allowed for different framings of content, thereby providing various perspectives from which to enter, view, and think about the problems posed. But instances, such as the above-mentioned one, created a distraction, which fed a nagging idea that one must continually be on the look-out for discrepancies, differences, or changes, which may not be marked. That being said, which formulation Haslanger really intended in this case may not make a great difference to the discussion of gender and race, as the selection of both is arguably anything but random. The more important concern in *this instance* has to do with the determination of who the experts are when it comes to gender and race, which is far from being clear cut, or even being clear. Further, but related, Haslanger's expert's stance that our social justice goals should include eliminating gender, as we know it, and eliminating race *tout court* indicates that she believes that, at the very least, race has *no* legitimate place in a world in which social justice and equality for all obtains.

In "Africana Philosophy," Lucius Outlaw tells us that African and African-descended people have been compelled to engage philosophical questions. Outlaw wrote:

the survival and endurance of conditions of racialized and gendered colonization, enslavement, and oppression—not conditions of leisured freedom—*compelled* more than a few African and African-descended persons to philosophize. Almost daily, even on what seemed the most mundane of occasions, oppressed Black people were *compelled* to consider the most fundamental existential questions: . . . Die at one's own initiation? Or, capitulate to dehumanization? Or, struggle to find and sustain faith and hope for a better life, on earth as well as in the afterlife, through creativity and beauty in speech, dance, and song while at work and rest; in thought and artistry; in finding and making truth and right; in seeking and doing justice; in forging and sustaining relations of family and community when such relations were largely prohibited . . . ?⁴

I don't have to take Outlaw at his word. I am part of a community of African Americans, what George Yancy calls, in *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, an I-We community. In this text, Yancy discusses, among other things, the racist responses of white women to black men in elevators. The speaker—the "I" who is explaining this phenomenon is Yancy—who speaks about his own experience as well as that of other African American men. Yancy is very clear

that his epistemic authority on this matter is not grounded simply in his own experience of such situations. It is not even grounded merely in his experience *plus* that of other African American men. Yancy and the community of African American men (and women) of which he is part also know about the laws and taboos governing the relation between black men and white women. These laws and taboos affect how white women behave towards black men; they are common knowledge. Yancy writes:

My judgment [that the white woman's responses are racist] is fundamentally a social epistemological one, one that is rendered reasonable within the context of a shared history of Black people noting, critically discussing, suffering, and sharing with each other the traumatic experiential content and repeated acts of white racism. Within this context, one might say that Black people constitute a kind of "epistemological community" (a community of knowers). What justifiably allows me to maintain that a particular action is racist, what allows me to develop a coherent narrative of the event that took place within the elevator, one that cements a powerful level of coherence in my knowledge base, are the background histories of oppression that Blacks have experienced vis-à-vis whites.

My justifiable belief about the white woman's gesture is interdependent, the evidence for her having enacted a racist gesture is a form of commonsense knowledge among Black people. In other words, my claim is warranted in its compatibility with other "we-experiences" whose warrantability is determinable through intersubjectively shared experiences. Not only I but also others in my epistemological community have seen white woman pull their purses close to them when in our presence. I, and others in my epistemological community, later came to learn that many of those tugs turned out to be based upon racist prejudices.⁵

My point is the following. Or, rather, my question is this. Am I to understand Haslanger's view as being expansive enough to include many—though not necessarily all—of the non-social scientist, non-Ph.D.-holding, non-self-proclaimed social constructivist philosophers that are part of my I-We community as experts on race? Such expansiveness may be compatible with her view. I am, however, dubious that that's what she had in mind. Lorraine Code asked, "Who are the knowers?" If Haslanger's view is to be understood not only as compatible with the expansiveness of which I speak but supportive of it, then it behooves her to take the question, "Who are the *experts* when it comes to race and gender?" and engage it as a *philosophical problem*: one that she should grapple with in her essays, *given her semantic externalism with respect to gender and race*.

Haslanger frames many of the topics she addresses with personal stories. Following her example, I will recount one of my own, which may allow a reader to glimpse a couple of black people (who, *prima facie*, would probably not be considered as experts by a certain class of experts)

theorizing their lived experience of race. Such theorizing should give us pause. It raises the question, “Do we even have an idea of who the possible experts on race are or what criteria there could be for determining who they might be?”

In Dominica, an island in the Caribbean, I went hiking to Boiling Lake with a guide. Fascinated by flora and fauna, my guide spoke to me about flowers and ferns and trees for above forty-five minutes before suddenly asking, “Is there something you would like to know?” I had been fairly happy going along with his observations, which helped me find the courage to follow him up the difficult trail. I took a moment to think about it. Why, yes! I wanted to know whether the Kalinago—Indians whom the Spanish chased into the mountains or killed off—had previously lived in the mountains we were climbing. “No,” my guide informed me. The Kalinago remained on the east side of the island. “The trails we are walking now were cut by escaped slaves.” “Escaped slaves?” I replied. “Yes, they were called Neg Ma Won.”

I was silent and still. He continued speaking, but as though replying to something I had said. His tone was defiant, as though I had just denied something he had uttered. “I am Neg Ma Won,” my guide declared. “And am I Neg Ma Won?” I asked. You see, I assumed that *he* might know, given his familiarity with the term and a certain limited understanding we had of each other at that point. But my guide was not an arrogant knower. He assumed that he did not know. He assumed that he would have to know more about me before he could try to determine whether I was Neg Ma Won or not.

He said, “I don’t know. I don’t want to offend you.” I knew, he knew—we knew together, our eyes fixed on each other’s—that he was talking about skin color, and I am not a light-skinned, black woman. But he is a dark-skinned black man. He continued: “Neg Ma Won means runaway Black or runaway slave or runaway nigger or runaway negro.” Perhaps I imagined this, but he seemed to be saying, “Now, are you Neg Ma Won?” I was. I am. “Yes,” I told him. “I am Neg Ma Won.” Or, it is who I would wish to be; that is, brave and dignified enough to be Neg Ma Won.

Now, certainly, Neg Ma Won, under any translation, was a group whose existence and living conditions were embedded in a social reality constituted by a hierarchy built on extreme subordination and domination. When my guide—the non-expert?—proudly and defiantly claims his birthright to be Neg Ma Won, when he claims his Neg Ma Won status *because* of his understanding of what it meant and takes to be Neg Ma Won, and takes me up steep mountains I can barely walk, which Neg Ma Won cut while *running*, showing me the berries Neg Ma Won must have picked and eaten to survive, do I really want to assume that he does not know that Neg Ma Won had their existential beginnings and maintenance in systems of extreme domination and subordination? Do I want to assume that he did not *really* understand the significance of what he was laying claim to, and that he would need an expert from a U.S. academy, a specialist on gender and race, to make things clear to him: to make it clear that once social justice

obtains, we shouldn’t want there to be anymore Neg Ma Won in the world.

Let’s suppose that I had tried to convince my guide that he needed an expert in race and gender to lead him along the way to understanding what kinds of things can exist in a world where social justice obtains. So I make up a story, which introduces him to the views of Haslanger*, someone who holds many of the views of Haslanger. Haslanger* is not only very well meaning; not only is she genuinely committed to social justice. Haslanger* is an expert on gender and race. I imagine my guide—who was not a man to believe anything you may be inclined to tell him—looking at me skeptically from the getgo. “What makes her an expert on race?” I start out honestly enough. “I don’t know.” He would agree with that. But then he insists. “Okay, give me an example of her expertise.”

“Well,” I say, “she draws distinctions and constructs arguments that allow us to see things we may not ordinarily see. That’s what often distinguishes the expert from the non-expert in philosophy.”

“Give me an example,” he insists. Although this conversation did not occur between my guide and me, the account I am giving is faithful to the way he would have gone about such a discussion. No education beyond high school, he embarked on a discussion of social contract theory with me. He didn’t call it that, but that’s what he was talking about. He took Pateman’s view over Mills’s—and didn’t know anything of the existence of either. He didn’t want to know anything more about ideal, non-applicable theories, given what he had seen and lived! This comment may appear to be an aside. Actually, it is not, for it demonstrates the way this man theorized his experience of being black, in-between discussions of flora and fauna. Such discussions seemed to be part of his ordinary life.

I couldn’t imaginatively come up with what Haslanger* would say. So I borrowed an argument from Haslanger’s “On Being Objective and Being Objectified.” In this essay, Haslanger argues that we should not assume that the value of a norm can be judged simply in light of its contribution to excellence in a given social role. Her specific concern is to show that the norm of rationality is separable from gender roles and has value independent of them, and, therefore, should not be judged in light of its contribution to the excellence of masculine domination. Haslanger, in her argument, asks us to consider the roles of master and slave. I presented the argument to my guide (in my story) as coming from Haslanger*.

Plausibly, “good” masters are those who (among other things) are kind and compassionate toward their slaves. Such kindness on the part of good masters may help sustain the social institution of slavery by encouraging slaves’ loyalty and hard work. But the fact that kindness contributes to success in the role of master shouldn’t lead us to reject the value of kindness in general; nor should we even conclude that it is wrong for those who are masters to be kind and compassionate toward their slaves, suggesting, perhaps, that they should be cruel and

heartless instead. We can continue to value the kindness . . . of masters, while acknowledging that it is a norm appropriate to an oppressive social role.⁶

It's my guide's turn to be silent and stand still (the calm before the storm!). He bursts out laughing.

"You're joking, aren't you?"

"About what?"

"This is your *expert*?" he asks. "What has she allowed me to see? A fiction about kind masters and their slaves? Damn straight, I don't ordinarily see that. She has retold the institution of slavery so that the idea of *kind* slave masters makes sense. Brilliance at its best! I noticed that you waved your fingers to indicate scare-quotes when you referred to 'good' masters. But your hands remained at your sides when you spoke of *kind* slave masters. Doesn't your expert even know that a system of buying and selling people precludes kindness, even if you let them sleep on the floor next to your bed? She needs to make up another word for 'kindness' to discuss the behaviors of those masters who, for various reasons, did not reduce their slaves to scars and blood. Maybe they were doing something that we should call fool's kindness—you know, the kind of behavior that fools you into thinking it's an act of kindness."

Oh, just about now I can hear my colleague Sybol Cook-Anderson's words ringing in my ears. "[Janine, but don't you know that] a slaveholder can *only* be thought kind and compassionate toward slaves when we conceptually *normalize* the enslavement of Africans, writing of it strictly as a historical Fact without *thoroughly* embedding its un-ethicality into its facticity?"⁷

I'm then whisked away into a philosophical fantasy, which takes me away from my guide's smug mirth. The fantasy turns to nightmare. Haslanger* responds to a call for papers on feminist essays on reason and objectivity. It's to be a second volume devoted to this topic. She submits an essay, which includes the kind of argument that I just conveyed to my guide. But she changes the specifics of the argument, thinking no one will notice that it's not Haslanger's. You see, she's trying to cover up her attempt to plagiarize. She needn't have bothered. No one takes *her* argument to be anything like Haslanger's.

Haslanger*'s argument reads as follows:

Plausibly, "good" abductor-rapists are those who (amongst other things) are kind and compassionate toward the girls and women they abduct, rape, and send out as sexual workers. They're nothing like Ariel Castro, in other words! Their kindness may help sustain the social institution of kidnapping and sexual enslavement by encouraging the abductees to remain, work hard, and turn over all their earnings. In fact, we might classify such an abductor-rapist as the perfect pimp. He never has to lay a hand on a girl or a woman to get them to do his bidding. His kindness does the work for him. But the fact that kindness contributes to

success in the role of abductor-rapist-perfect pimp shouldn't lead us to reject the value of kindness in general; nor should we even conclude that it is wrong for those who are abductor-rapist-perfect pimps to be kind and compassionate toward their abductees, suggesting, perhaps, that they should be cruel and heartless instead, like Ariel Castro. We can continue to value kindness . . . of abductor-rapist-perfect pimps, while acknowledging that it is a norm appropriate to an oppressive social role.

My philosophical-fantasy-nightmare takes a left turn at this point. Some feminist philosophers reading the submission raise their fists in protest, "How dare you!" Others reply calmly, "Oh really?," in the manner of the late Philippa Foot, who could strike a tone formidable enough to challenge anyone in the room who, at some given moment, might have the idea that their "rational" arguments were the appropriate response.

"I see, you have a conception of abduction-sexual slavery and rape consistent with some abstract idea you have of kindness, which account, by the way, you have not offered. Perhaps you had better think about kindness some more, and this time as an *embodied* concept. Perhaps then you will come to other conclusions about where kindness can be instantiated in the real world and where it cannot. Perhaps you will then extrapolate from your findings to some ideal concept of kindness, which may, for all of its empirical underpinnings, nevertheless fail to exhibit anything resembling universal applicability. In any case, we cannot accept your article. And do not tell us about your accounts of girls and women in narratives who talk about how their abductor-pimps were the kindest men they ever met. That may well be! In any case, we are here to reveal the truth of these matters, not to repeat the statements of ordinary girls and women, who may know no better."

Poor Haslanger*. Haslanger's essay seems to have been safe from this type of critique. I can only wonder whether there were feminists who questioned the idea of kind slave masters at all—I just don't know. In the case of kind slave masters, perhaps some people are impressed with accounts given by so-called ordinary people in slave narratives, who may have described their slave masters as kind. Perhaps, *here*, for some reason, the ordinary person becomes the authority, if not the expert, on what the terms of "our" language mean.

At this point, Haslanger*'s and Haslanger's arguments are beginning to merge in my mind, creating a story about a slave-owning, rapist, kidnapping master. I mean, shouldn't these stories merge? When thinking, for two seconds, or less!, about the lives of many black slave girls and women—when problematizing gender by theorizing it through the lens of race—how does one then not see that the girl or woman in Haslanger*'s argument is a *quasi*-counterpart of the numerous black girls and women kidnapped, sold into slavery, and raped kindly and daily by their kind masters? (Similarities remain even if we unconsciously imagine the girls and women in Haslanger*'s argument as white.) There are major differences, of course. But the similarities—the incontrovertibly unethical nature of both chattel slavery and

the sex-slave industry; the lived experience of being under the thumb of someone who can do what he or she will with you when and where he or she wants, to name two—are glaring. And yet, Haslanger’s argument “works” in a context of doing feminist philosophy, which is not something *she*, as an individual, is responsible for. Haslanger*’s probably wouldn’t. It doesn’t in my imaginative story. I don’t know what to tell her.

I read this passage about kind slave owners over and over, trying to find something to say to Haslanger*. You see, Haslanger* demands to know the difference that makes a real difference between her piece and Haslanger’s. Why the acceptance in the one case, and the hateful rejection in the other?

Now I’m reading passages from *Ebony and Ivy*, a book about the marriage of slavery and institutions of higher education—e.g., Yale, Harvard—where experts on race and gender received their expertise. (I don’t think I’ll tell my guide about this, in the story.) Perhaps it will give me some insight into the concept of a kind slave master. I’m only at the beginning, however. But it is promising! One Henry Watson, a Connecticut Yankee, claimed to hate slavery—that is, until he truly understood the personal benefit he might receive from this fundamentally American institution. Leaving Yale for Greensboro, Alabama, “he set up a law practice, and became a slave owner—‘a sin,’ he confessed, but one that promised great benefits.”⁸ But there was more than wealth to be had. “He referred to his enslaved black people as his children and discovered the ‘charm’ of mastery.”⁹ My bets are on: this charming master, Henry Watson, was an instantiation of what Haslanger called a kind master. But now I’m more confused than ever. And Haslanger* says the whole thing reeks of unprincipled discrimination. My guide, on the other hand, let me know (in the story) that if Haslanger’s argument represented best practices of experts in the areas of race and gender, then it would be in his best interest to search for pots of gold on his own. (And I hadn’t even told him about the gold example!)

Arguably, my guide who proclaimed himself a Neg Ma Won understood very well the identity he was claiming. Arguably, he understood the significance of seeing himself in an identity born of struggle, which transcended a social meaning that some would claim not only rooted that identity, but buried it in the ground, far beneath the heavens. But when you are walking mountains every day cut by escaped slaves, and carving out paths through byzantine colonial configurations that keep you just above being poor (there ain’t no post- here!), and you stand on top of those mountains, breathing—and so still alive—you may have good reason for saying that you know it is possible to be Neg Ma Won or black while standing *on the mountain top*. I am convinced that if you were to tell my guide that when the racism is all over and done with, he will no longer be Neg Ma Won or even a black person, he would not only beg to disagree, he would fight you to keep what he takes to be an identity he *admires*. His identity is located in history, a part of history Haslanger seems to want to strip away. The result is that the relevant social meanings of race may just go beyond those Haslanger thinks circumscribe

them. This points to a crucial piece missing in Haslanger’s numerous discussion of race.

I’m not referring to some piece that would tell us that she is wrong about the incompatibility of social justice and the existence of races, and that my guide would be right. I’m referring to the absence of the kind of discussion that would have signaled to me that Haslanger walked through these complex issues with fear and trembling, not merely with a certain type of care she exhibits in offering distinctions and clarifications.

One thing that would have indicated (for me) that Haslanger was truly aware (again, I don’t mean knowledgeable in terms of propositions advanced and assented to) that she was walking along a precipice, and perpetually in harm’s way, would have been to see her take the hand of a good guide, the way I did in Dominica in order to make it to Boiling Lake. There are good reasons why even very experienced hikers (which I am not) may not want to hike to Boiling Lake unguided. They will want someone who *knows the territory*, not simply someone who is a better hiker. My guide and I saw one strong-looking hiker turning back, an Irishman. Why, he’d hiked all over Ireland and Great Britain. He made it three-quarters of the way. I made it all the way, and, yet, small hills are a climb for me. “It was really a shame,” as my guide kept saying over and over, dismayed by the hiker’s going so far only not to get where he was going. “All he needed was a guide,” he repeated again and again, as though it were his own personal loss.

He didn’t even need an expert! He may have been an expert on hiking, *in general*. He was not an expert on hiking in Dominica.

So where, I ask, is the discussion with what could have been *un guide extraordinaire* for Haslanger, namely, W.E. B. Du Bois? Du Bois’s worries can be felt in his writings as concerns coming from the soul: coming from that place that says, “I want to live! I want *us* to live and live on!” In a collection adding up to 477 pages, index excluded, and where repetition abounds to the point that it sometimes confounds, Haslanger mentions Du Bois on page 306, according to her index.

Haslanger and Du Bois could have had such a good discussion about the future of race in a world in which social justice obtains. They could have had a meeting of the minds on these issues. How could it not be so when Haslanger states, “If we simply extend masculine norms to everyone and take the masculine conception of self and world to apply generally, we would seem to be committed to the view that everyone should occupy the social role (and so take up the perspective on social life) that was once granted only to men?”¹⁰ Du Bois might have seen her and raised her one. He might have asked, and what if we construct our brave new world of equality in such a way that *we do not even* see that we’ve taken certain norms and values previously *constituting* whiteness—indeed, humanity—and applied them to everyone, while other norms and values—those deemed not universal but particular—are left to die out or are simulated in new kinds of tourist venues created for the sole purpose of simulating memories of past peoples.

Of course, amidst all of this invisibility, Du Bois might point out that white people still exist. So, in fact, race exists." Haslanger might reply, "Well then you have not described a situation in which social justice has obtained." Du Bois might reply, a twinkle in his eye, "But, of course, you might not think I have described a situation in which race exists. One race does not a hierarchy make. Or, might we have missed something critical about the meaning of races and the conditions under which race, a race, might exist? I know this is at antipodes to your way of thinking, but might it not be fruitful to consider the possibility that one of the ways for testing whether or not social justice has obtained, and to what degree, is to look around and see which races still exist and which do not?"

The discussion would have been instructive. It would have been fascinating! For, indeed, to imagine a future in which there is social justice, we are not to simply imagine that new world *being*. We must imagine it coming into being. What does all of this becoming look like? By what means does a certain becoming come into being? Partly through the elimination of this. Partly through the elimination of that. Which this? Which that? What stays and what goes, or goes elsewhere, as a *matter* of trying to obtain social justice? Which *goings* reveal the lie that social justice has been attained?

Chike Jeffers in his recent piece in *Ethics*, "The Cultural Theory of Race: Yet Another Look at Du Bois's 'The Conservation of Races,'" engages Du Bois.¹¹ He does so precisely to reflect on the problems I'm raising here and which appear to be of interest to Haslanger. It did not escape Jeffers that in "Whither, Now and Why," Du Bois asks poignantly, urgently, straightforwardly, "what we must now ask ourselves is when we become equal American citizens what will be our aims and ideals and what will we have to do with selecting these aims and ideals. Are we to assume that we will simply adopt the ideals of Americans and become what they are or want to be and that we will have in this process no ideals of our own?"¹²

If, over the many years she devoted to this topic, Haslanger was not able to recognize the importance of bringing Du Bois's thought and concerns to bear on this discussion, then I cannot be sanguine about the idea that she acknowledges and recognizes that so many *ordinary* black people, who theorize their lived experience,¹³ are experts on race, consistency with her officially stated view notwithstanding. On her view, tacitly, such black people are either non-experts, in which case her semantic externalism must be thoroughly re-examined, or they may indeed be experts, in which case her semantic externalism would do well to make this view explicit.

NOTES

1. Sally Haslanger, *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 397.
2. *Ibid.*, 397.
3. *Ibid.*, 208.
4. Lucius Outlaw, "Africana Philosophy," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/africana/>.

5. George Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 7.
6. Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 51.
7. Sybol Cook-Anderson, email communication.
8. Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013). Kindle Edition, 8.
9. *Ibid.*, 8.
10. Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 48–49.
11. Chike Jeffers, "The Cultural Theory of Race: Yet Another Look at Du Bois's 'The Conservation of Races,'" *Ethics* 123 (April 2013): 1–24.
12. W. E. B. Du Bois. "Whither, Now and Why," *The Education of Black People: Ten Critiques, 1906–1960* (Monthly Review Press, 2001), 149.
13. In fact, many people from different racial and ethnic groups raced into subordinate racial groups and engage in such theorizing.

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