

W. E. B. Du Bois
on Race and Culture

Philosophy, Politics,
and Poetics

Edited by
Bernard W. Bell,
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and James B. Stewart

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“Conserve” Races?

1

In Defense of W. E. B. Du Bois¹

Lucius Outlaw

There is, of course, nothing more fascinating than the question of the various types of mankind and their intermixture.

W. E. B. Du Bois²

PROBLEMS INVOLVING “THE COLOR LINE”

Race and ethnicity continue to be among the most vexing problems in American life. At present there is no widely shared consensus in answer to the questions of whether, and if so how (and if not, why not), consideration should be given to the race and/or ethnicity of a person, or to a racial/ethnic group, when deciding questions having to do with the preservation, creation, or distribution of important resources, awards, and sanctions. Nor is there a settled consensus among persons in the various natural and social sciences in answer to questions of whether, and if so how (and if not, why not), it is possible to characterize and classify racial and ethnic groups, and thereby identify individuals with precision as members of a particular racial or ethnic group, on the basis of real, objective, shared features, in rigorous accordance to the most settled norms governing the production and validation of empirical knowledge. Without a consensus secured by knowledge of this kind, it seems, adjudicating the vexing questions of race and ethnicity in political, social, and economic life cannot be accomplished with the guidance of secure, general principles based on such knowledge that insure a just and democratic liberal nation-state in which the play of invidious notions of race and ethnicity are curtailed as much as is possible.

Still, persons and groups continue to be identified, and to identify themselves, as particular races and/or ethnic (ethnic groups). As a nation-state deliberately composed of diverse peoples, the United States of America has a long and continuing history of being deeply troubled by practices and orientations involving value-laden, often invidious conceptualizations of race and ethnicity. As W. E. B. Du Bois predicted, what he characterized as "the problem of the color line"—problematic relations involving persons distinguished, initially, by skin-color as constituting or belonging to distinct races—has been a major problem throughout the twentieth century. And though there is a clear record of substantial achievements in recent decades in addressing and resolving some of the difficulties involving race and ethnicity in the realms of social, judicial, political, and economic life, challenging problems remain that prevent the realization of more complete social peace and harmony with justice. We are experiencing yet another period of heightened tensions and social conflict in which claims for justice are framed in terms that valorize race or ethnicity in various ways. We desperately need, then, settled and widely shared knowledge regarding the empirically and socially appropriate identification of persons and groups, knowledge that will assist us in devising and institutionalizing norms to help in fashioning, maintaining, and legitimating well-ordered, stable, and just political communities within which individual and shared lives can be nurtured.

Why has this knowledge been so difficult to achieve and legitimate? In significant part it is because the term "race" has been employed to cover a combination of distinctively different, yet supposedly linked, factors thought to constitute raciality: on the other hand, inherited biological characteristics, and on the other, a particular history of origin—generally associated with a specific geographic setting—and of continuity via cultural traditions (e.g., language, arts and literatures, religion, forms of life in general). Similarly, "ethnicity" has often been employed to conceptualize and thereby distinguish groups of persons primarily in terms of shared cultural factors (practices, traditions, histories, sites of origin and occupancy). In both cases, the collections of factors are thought to combine so as to determine a distinctive racial or ethnic identity, objectively and subjectively, of a group of people, and to be key to the meaningfulness, authenticity, and legitimacy of their lives, individually and as a group. Moreover, many of the particular groups thought to be a race involve many persons who very often do not live their lives in intimate relations with all those who are members of the race, but in smaller, local populations of sub-race ethnicities that continue to develop and evolve in their own right, in some cases in spaces and times quite different from the site of origin and "home" of the parent-race. In this case, as well as for racial groups generally, the factors thought to define the race are subject to variation.

Thus, the efforts to characterize a group of people by a combination of complexes of varying biological and cultural factors, and to refer to this combination in a coherent and precise way using a single, stable term ("race," "ethnic"), are especially difficult—particularly if, as noted, these efforts are to satisfy various scientific norms for objective and valid empirical reference. (The difficulties are increased when the terms "race" and "ethnic group" are used interchangeably, as they often are.) Hence, it becomes difficult to understand and deal in a settled way with all of the nuances and complexities of challenging situations in which race and ethnicity are contested issues, and difficult to do so in ways that will facilitate the achievement of the consensual understandings needed to achieve stable, lasting social peace and harmony on the basis of principles of democratic justice, especially when it is proposed that justice be achieved by taking race and/or ethnicity into account in positive ways.

Many persons argue that valorizations of race and/or ethnicity are morally and politically inappropriate, and that taking these matters into account when making evaluative judgments may well have the further consequence of either promoting or sanctioning the return of disruptive, anachronistic sentiments and conceptions concerning *groups*, conceptions that had been delegitimized and replaced by universalist (as opposed to group-relative, particularist), "self-evident" conceptions of and principles concerning *individuals*. Such conceptions and principles, as in "All Men are created equal," are foundational to the political organization of the United States as a distinctively modern, democratic, and Liberal nation. For these persons, neither race nor ethnicity should have any constitutive role in the formulation of ideals and principles for justice and social order, nor in conceptions of "human being" even though, anthropologically, it might be appropriate to acknowledge that there are different races and ethnicities.

For other persons, however, racial and ethnic differences are fundamentally constitutive of human beings, and each member of a particular race and/or ethnic shares the group's defining characteristics, more or less, and is substantially identified (and identifiable) by these characteristics. Therefore, race and ethnicity, in important instances, must be taken into account when formulating basic principles by which to order social life. And for many people who continue to suffer invidious discrimination leading to diminished life-chances and quality of life because of practices rationalized by reference to their race and/or ethnicity, embracing notions of race and/or ethnicity in struggles against these conditions are an important aspect of their efforts to achieve freedom and justice with dignity. Such struggles have been made necessary by a long history of failure on the part of empowered persons of socially dominant ethnicities of the white race who supposedly have been applying principles to all persons "without regard for race, creed, color, sex, or

national origin." From the outset, however, America was structured, with the assistance of complex doctrines of white racial supremacy, into a racialized, hierarchic nation-state (further complicated by other relations like class and gender hierarchies among others). For some persons, then, at the heart of racism, invidious ethnocentrism, and sexism are serious inadequacies in the notion of the human being at the core of modern, Liberal political principles: abstract "Man" is insufficient for conceptualizing and referring to the full range of important factors that characterize persons, individually and socially. And, in an ethnically and racially diverse nation-state with continuing legacies of invidious ethnocentrism and racism, justice, it is argued by some, can be neither properly conceived nor practically achieved without consideration to race and ethnicity.

But *proper* consideration is imperative if society is to achieve and maintain social order and justice rather than descending into chauvinism and fratricide. And this requires a shared widespread commitment to the proposition that in important contexts, and for important purposes, all persons must be regarded as having a shared *essential* identity as human beings, race or ethnicity notwithstanding, that is, each citizen must have access to fair and equal opportunities to acquire resources critical to the realization of well-formulated plans for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and must enjoy equality before the law as well as all of the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of free citizens. Of course, working out and realizing practically, in a coherent and socially viable way, multiple commitments to diverse and seemingly divergent principles that favor individuality without regard to race and/or ethnicity and also favor regard for ethnicity and race (or gender, or sexual orientation) is a most demanding task which, unfinished, adds to the potential explosiveness of the complexities and tensions of contemporary American social life.

We continue to be challenged, then, to reconsider and possibly transform the ways in which many of us have come to think of ourselves and of this nation. Political movements which seek identity and recognition, and thereby respect and empowerment, for racial and ethnic groups, as well as political movements that are grounded in affirmations of the common humanity of all peoples, and thereby regard all persons as in essence "the same" and to race and/or ethnicity as inappropriate, confront us with two agendas that are so difficult to reconcile that they threaten social and political unity. This threat is enhanced as demographic changes in the country confirm a continuing increase in the numbers of "peoples of color" in the population.³ A cover story in *Time* magazine a few years ago explored in a poignant way several of the critical issues involved in this historic demographic shift: "Someday soon, surely much sooner than most people who filled out their Census forms . . . realize, white Americans will become a minority group. Long before that day arrives, the presumption that

the 'typical' U.S. citizen is someone who traces his or her descent in a direct line to Europe will be part of the past."⁴

This increasing "coloring" of Americans is prompting major changes in the nation and posing serious challenges to social ordering and the administration of justice. In virtually every area of social, political, economic, and private life, empowered persons and groups—and others hoping to become empowered—continue their organized efforts to secure, maintain, and then rationalize what has been gained (or threatened with loss) for persons in their racial and/or ethnic groups. Herein lies the potential for much social conflict, a great deal of it already realized.

Can the tensions and conflicts involving race and ethnicity, and the subsequent threats to social order and political unity, be avoided or resolved, or at least substantially reduced—if not completely eliminated—while allowing for the recognition, celebration, and even nurturing of racial and ethnic differences? Only if appropriate principles and related practices can be achieved, and widespread, institutionalized consensus in support of them secured, as a framework that will structure social life overall. This will require, of course, *substantial* alterations to the fundamental conceptions, values, and practices that constitute the ideologically and politically dominant consensus regarding notions of the person and of appropriate forms of political life and that have helped to define and shape modern American life. Foremost among these is the principle that race and ethnicity not be taken into account in determining or recognizing the fundamental being and worth of a person or group of persons, nor in deciding who is or can be a citizen, or what rights a citizen enjoys. Substituting for this a principle with explicit commitments to raciality and ethnicity in achieving social justice, and in understanding the historical and social being and worthiness of a person, while preserving past achievements won with the assistance of modern, individualist principles, is a major challenge. Doing so will require re-conceptualizations of race and ethnicity that are compatible with revised principles of justice intended to aid in the realization of a well-ordered and stable, racially and ethnically diverse, society.

RETHINKING "RACE"

What might be expected from the anticipated rethinking of "race"?⁵ Hopefully, at the very least, a contribution to critical thought might be expected in terms of understandings that assist in guiding the way to the resolution of difficulties and, thereby, to the promotion and practical realization of "progressive" or "emancipatory" social evolution. In other words, we expect the development of forms of shared understanding and forms of social practice free of epistemologically untenable conceptualizations and of morally inappropriate valorizations of race. The persistence of struggles involving race

present those of us who are committed to critical thought and emancipatory practice with several problems to which we must attend. First off, there is the need to engage in a critical review of our informing traditions of thought and practice, to investigate the extent to which these traditions have failed to accommodate race appropriately in failing to provide compelling understandings of ourselves, individually and collectively, and of social reality generally. Such understandings are needed in efforts to mobilize persons and groups to undertake the social renovations required to achieve the emancipatory possibilities latent in situations in which race is problematic.

Second, there are the difficulties, noted earlier, to be met in requiring stability and precision in *race* as a concept that can combine, in a coherent and stable way, biological and cultural factors definitive of a race (if there are such), while both sets of factors are subject to variation across time and space. A review of efforts by natural philosophers of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, as well as by subsequent natural and social scientists, to identify various races leads one to conclude, first, that racial characteristics are only partially a function of biological systems and processes, and second, that what relations there are between biological and cultural factors are not of a mechanical, deterministic sort. Rather, in complex interplay with complex systems of environmental, cultural, and social factors, biological factors provide not yet fully understood boundary conditions and possibilities that affect the development of the relatively distinctive gene pools of various geographically and/or socially relatively isolated, self-reproducing, relatively distinct cultural groups. These pools of genes, conditioned by social and cultural factors (normed practices), help to determine (the process of) "raciation": that is, processes by which members of a group come to share, more or less (that is, with relative frequencies of occurrence), "statistically covarying" biologically-determined properties along with shared cultural repertoires. Hence, the development of "geographical races."⁶

"Race," then, would best be understood as a *cluster* concept which draws together under a single word references to biological, cultural, and geographical factors thought characteristic of a population. Accordingly the characterization of particular races should be done as "indefinitely long disjunctive definitions" in which definitely racial features are not to be understood as being "severally necessary and the entire set of necessary properties . . . jointly sufficient."⁷ An example of defining a race by combining characteristics disjunctively would be as follows: "The African race is made up of persons who are descended from at least one African parent; who have dark, *or* brown *or* light-colored skin; tightly curly *or* straight-hair; a broad, flat *or* narrow nose; other physical characteristics that are such-and-such; *or* was born and socialized into a social, cultural world characteristic of African *or* African

descended peoples; *or* . . ." Further any definition of "race" is, to a great extent, a function of the interplay of prevailing norms and strategies: on one level, those drawn from everyday life in which ideas, attitudes, and valuations of "race" are elements of common sense, and on another, those constituted by the discursive rules of communities of "experts" (that is, "sciences"). In both cases the elements and strategies of the definition are always subject to challenge and change. "Racial" categories and valorizations, then, though they refer, in part, to biological characteristics, are socially determined rather than simple descriptions of "natural kinds" or populations of individuals who are what they are necessarily by virtue of definitive intrinsic properties which are "severally necessary and jointly sufficient" to constitute their racial essence.⁸ Hence, "race" refers to heterogeneous complexes of socially normed biological and cultural characteristics. And the biological features referred to when making racial distinctions are always *conscripted* into projects of cultural, political, and social construction. They are never simply given.

Michael Omi and Howard Winant, in their *Racial Formation in the United States*,⁹ provide an insightful and revealing review of some of the history of changes in the meaning and political deployment of "race" in America. They analyze race as a "formation," rather than as either, in their words, a "fixed, concrete and objective" "essence" or a "mere illusion" to be eliminated in an ideal social order. The meaning of "race," they argue, is socially determined and changes as a result of social struggle, and hence is irreducibly political and must be understood as "*an unstable and 'decentered' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle. . .*"¹⁰ The strength of this view of "race" is that it makes it possible to understand the investments of often contested interests involved in notions of race, and to join this understanding to an account of social evolution that takes account of learning.¹¹ Social learning regarding race, assisted by critical social thought, might well provide resources by which to move beyond racism to a socially productive pluralist democracy without an unnecessary abstract, reductionist individualism that promotes an amorphous universalism.

Still to be explored are the meanings of race in terms of the lived-experiences of persons who are identified, and who identify themselves, as members of a racial group, particularly persons who have experienced invidious discrimination and subordination in America's racialized social hierarchy. Though biological and other sciences have shown that the complexes of characteristics thought to determine raciality do not constitute an unvarying *essence* that is determinable and constitutive of "natural kinds," this does *not* mean that, thereby, there is no real referent for the term "race," nor that the term is without positive social significance, even though it has been employed in rationalizations of injustices against racial "others." What must be explored is the

possibility of appreciating the integrity of those who see themselves through the prism of "race," without taking racial characteristics to be a heritable essence shared equally by all members of a given race. We need not commit the error of concluding that, as a way of achieving enlightened thought which will guide us to fuller social emancipation for peoples oppressed because of their race, all regard for race must be eliminated.

Such elimination, I think, is both unlikely and unnecessary. By all means, the invidious, socially unnecessary forms and consequences of thought and practice associated with race ought to be eliminated to whatever extent possible if, in the U.S. in particular, we are to be successful in achieving further democratization in a multi-ethnic and multi-racial society in which public discourse that valorizes racial and ethnic cultural groups is once again an important aspect of intellectual, social, cultural, economic, and political life. Understandings of race and ethnicity that contribute to the learning and social evolution vital to democratic justice and to stability and order in racially and ethnically diverse societies could be of major significance and are much needed by many of us as we struggle to find ways through the maze of "the politics of identity difference."¹² What is a major concern for many, myself included, is the formulation of a cogent and viable concept of race that will be of service to the non-invidious conservation of racial and ethnic groups—a formulation, and the politics it facilitates, that also avoids the quagmire of chauvinism. W. E. B. Du Bois's 1897 essay "The Conservation of Races" is an important example of how one might work at such an understanding of race and for a long time has been, for me, a rich resource in this regard.¹³ However, in making the case for drawing on Du Bois as a resource I feel compelled, first, to defend him against strong criticisms advanced by Kwame Anthony Appiah.¹⁴

IN DEFENSE OF DU BOIS

My dissatisfaction with Appiah's analysis of Du Bois's theory of "race" in "Conservation. . ." (and in another essay by Du Bois published in the August 1911 issue of *Crisis* magazine) moved me to return to it for yet another close reading and serious consideration. According to Appiah, Du Bois's argument-strategy in "The Conservation of Races" is the antithesis of the "classic dialectic of reaction to prejudice," the thesis of which is a denial of difference. Du Bois's strategy involves "the acceptance of difference, along with a claim that each group has its part to play; that the white race and its racial Other are related not as superior to inferior but as complementaries; that the Negro message is, with the white one, part of the message of humankind."¹⁵ Importantly, Du Bois's strategy rests on the understanding that race is not determined by biological factors alone:

Although the wonderful developments of human history teach that the grosser physical differences of color, hair and bone go but a short way toward explaining the different roles which groups of men have played in Human Progress, yet there are differences—subtle, delicate and elusive, though they may be—which have silently but definitely separated men into groups. While these subtle forces have generally followed the natural cleavage of common blood, descent and physical peculiarities, they have at other times swept across and ignored these. At all times, however, they have divided human beings into races, which, while they perhaps transcend scientific definition, nevertheless, are clearly defined to the eye of the Historian and Sociologist.

*What, then, is a race? It is a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life.*¹⁶

Appiah, however, reads Du Bois as attempting—but not succeeding—to transcend a nineteenth-century biological essentialism typical of scientific and popular conceptions of race of the period, and as relying on this conception while engaging in "a reevaluation of the Negro race in the face of the sciences of racial inferiority." What evidence does Appiah have for this interpretation? Du Bois's reference to "common blood": "for this, dressed up with fancy craniometry, a dose of melanin, and some measure for hair-curl, is what the scientific notion amounts to. If he has fully transcended the scientific notion, what is the role of this talk about 'blood'? . . . If Du Bois's notion is purely socio-historical, then the issue is common history and traditions; otherwise, the issue is, at least in part, a common biology."¹⁷ However, Du Bois has not offered a definition that is intended as "purely socio-historical." Rather, as I read him, he seeks to articulate a concept of *race* that includes both socio-historical or cultural factors (language, history, traditions, "impulses," ideals of life) and biological factors (a *family* of "common blood"). It is crucial to determine just how Du Bois's characterization of race is to be understood, and this requires an understanding of the strategizing, as well as of the socio-historical goal and objective that it serves, that is part of the overall structuring project in which Du Bois's defining effort should be situated.

Appiah takes pains to analyze and evaluate *individually* each of the elements in Du Bois's definition, a strategy that is central to what I think results in Appiah's serious misreading of Du Bois. For example: Du Bois includes in his conception of race the idea that members of a racial group "generally" share a common language, but Appiah excludes this as "plainly inessential."¹⁸ Du Bois speaks of a race as a "vast family," but Appiah sees this as clear evidence that Du Bois failed to move beyond a nineteenth-century

scientific notion “which presupposes common features in virtue of a common biology derived from a common descent. . . .” Instead, Appiah counters, “A family can . . . have adopted children, kin by social rather than biological law. By analogy . . . a vast human family might contain people joined not by biology but by an act of choice. But it is plain that Du Bois cannot have been contemplating this possibility: like all of his contemporaries, he would have taken for granted that race is a matter of birth.”¹⁹ This is an odd claim, indeed, for three paragraphs later Appiah notes that Du Bois was a descendant of Dutch (as well as of African) ancestors. Yet Du Bois *identified* himself as a member of the Negro race. Was there no choice involved in his doing so? I do not find it “plain” that there was not. Rather, Du Bois, as I read him, was following particular social conventions in appropriating in his own way, with definite deliberation, an otherwise socially defined and often imposed racial identity linked to a particular line of his complex ancestry.

As for whether a common history “can be a criterion that distinguishes one group of human beings—extended in time—from another . . . ,” Appiah claims “[t]he answer is no”:

[I]n order to recognize two events at different times as part of the history of a single individual, we have to have a criterion for identity of the individual at each of those times, independent of his or her participation in the two events . . . sharing a common group history cannot be a criterion for being members of the same group, for we would have to be able to identify the group in order to identify *its* history. Someone in the fourteenth century could share a common history with me through our membership in a historically extended race only if something accounts both for his or her membership in the race in the fourteenth century and for mine in the twentieth. That something cannot, on pain of circularity, be the history of the race. Whatever holds Du Bois's races together conceptually cannot be a common history; it is only because they are bound together that members of a race at different times can share a history at all.²⁰

Appiah concludes that common history and traditions, and language, “on pain of circularity,” “must go too” as criteria for defining race. But here, I think, Appiah is simply wrong: Du Bois's strategy would be circular (and viciously so) only if common history were the *only* criterion. As one criterion among others taken severally, however, its use is not circular, and need not be ruled out.

Without common history and traditions (and language), Appiah has Du Bois left with common descent, impulses, and strivings as the remaining factors to provide a socio-historical definition of race. Since common descent is tied to biology, and since Du Bois, according to Appiah, was after a “purely

socio-historical” definition, common descent cannot be used as a criterion. Common impulses and strivings are all that is left. However, Appiah claims that these cannot be criteria by which to place a person into a racial group but, if detected, can only be what he terms “a posteriori properties”:

If, without evidence about his or her impulses, we can say who is a Negro, then it cannot be part of what it is to be a Negro that he or she has them; rather, it must be an a posteriori claim that people of a common race, defined by descent and biology, have impulses, for whatever reason, in common. Of course, the common impulses of a biologically defined group may be historically caused by common experiences, common history. But Du Bois's claim can only be that biologically defined races happen to share, for whatever reason, common impulses. The common impulses cannot be a criterion of group membership. And if that is so, we are left with the scientific conception.²¹

On the basis of this critical, eliminative analysis of the elements of Du Bois's definition of race, each considered individually, Appiah concludes that what remains of Du Bois's criteria is inadequate to support his effort to define race in a purely socio-historical way. Further, he claims that the notion of a common group history conceals a “superadded geographical criterion”: “group history is, in part, the history of people who have lived in the same place.”²² The conclusion to be drawn, then, is that Du Bois's criterion “actually . . . amounts to this: people are members of the same race if they share features in virtue of being descended largely from people of the same region. Those features may be physical . . . or cultural.” Du Bois's definition of race supposedly founders on a tension which “reflects the fact that, for the purposes of European historiography . . . it was the latter [cultural features] that mattered; but for the purposes of American social and political life, it was the former [shared physical features of a geographical population].”²³

Appiah is right: Du Bois's effort to give an account of race does harbor a tension. However, he is wrong in thinking that the tension resulted from conflicts between two different agendas: one involving European historiography, the other the demands of American racialized social and political life. What Appiah has failed to note is that there were not two *different* agendas. With regard to race and Africans, Europe (Britain, France, Belgium . . .) and America shared an agenda: the enslavement and exploitation of Africans and the African continent. The histories of two-continent, transatlantic Europe-to-America racism make abundantly clear that invidious notions of African peoples *as a race* covered both physical features and culture-making and involved putative causal linkages between biology and culture; that is, the cultural achievements of African and African-descended peoples were deemed

unequal to those of peoples of the white race *because* of the biologically determined, “natural” limitations of the African race. The tension in Du Bois’s conception, in my reading of his essay, is a function of his attempt to capture in the same term reference both to changeable cultural factors (hence, Du Bois’s focus on the historical and sociological) and to physical features, themselves varying as a consequence of race-mixing and of descent with modification, or evolution, as explained by Charles Darwin. What is especially significant, I think, something overlooked by Appiah, is that Du Bois’s effort to give an account of race in “Conservation” is one of many arresting examples of his courageous intellectual independence and brilliant creativity during an era when it was not yet been widely accepted that the long-standing notions of the specific, biologically determined, fixed “nature” or “character” of each race had been falsified.

Appiah also examines the approach to race in Du Bois’s 1911 *Crisis* essay and 1940 *Dusk of Dawn* and concludes that Du Bois was involved in an “impossible project,” one in which he “took race for granted” and attempted to “revalue one pole of the opposition of white to black” in the “vertical hierarchy” of the received concept of race by “rotating the axis” through a “‘horizontal’ reading” of race. For Appiah, such a project confines one within the “space of values” inscribed by the notion of race. The way out? “Challenge the assumption that there can be an axis, however oriented in the space of values, and the project fails for loss of presuppositions.”²⁴ For Appiah, this is where Du Bois should have ended up since the logic of Du Bois’s argument

leads naturally to the final repudiation of race as a term of difference and to speaking instead “of civilizations where we now speak of races.” The logic is the same logic that has brought us to speak of genders where we spoke of sexes, and a rational assessment of the evidence requires that we should endorse not only the logic but the premises of each argument. . . . One barrier facing those of us in the humanities has been methodological. Under Saussurian hegemony, we have too easily become accustomed to thinking of meaning as constituted by systems of differences purely internal to our endlessly structured *langues*. . . . Race, we all assume, is, like all other concepts, constructed by metaphor and metonymy; it stands in, metonymically, for the Other; it bears the weight, metaphorically, of other kinds of difference.

Yet, in our social lives away from the text-world of the academy, we take reference for granted too easily. Even if the concept of race *is* a structure of oppositions . . . it is a structure whose realization is, at best, problematic and, at worst, impossible. If we can now hope to understand the concept embodied in this system of oppositions, we are nowhere near finding referents for it. The truth is that there are no races: there is nothing in the world that can do all we ask “race” to do for

us. The evil that is done is done by the concept and by easy—yet impossible—assumptions as to its application. What we miss through our obsession with the structure of relations of concepts is, simply, reality.²⁵

And what is the “reality” that is missed by the notion of race? According to Appiah, it is culture: “Talk of ‘race’ is particularly distressing for those of us who take culture seriously. . . . What exists ‘out there’ in the world—communities of meaning, shading variously into each other in the rich structure of the social world—is the province not of biology but of hermeneutic understanding.”²⁶ I agree that hermeneutic understanding is of major significance to the ordering of social life. And adherence to the most rigorous prevailing standards for confirming or falsifying empirical hypotheses leads to the conclusion that there are no fixed and invariant biological connections to the production of cultural worlds that would support a definition of race in which biological factors are seen as the ultimate determinants of culture-production.

But none of this was lost on Du Bois *even in the nineteenth century*. As I read Du Bois, he was *deeply* committed to “taking culture seriously.” Indeed, he was concerned to “rotate the axis” defining the “scale of values” in the concept of race from vertical and hierarchic to horizontal and egalitarian, thereby making it more appropriate to a pluralist democracy of diverse races and ethnic groups each of which had a “message” to offer to civilization. The “messages,” for Du Bois, are manifested in cultural achievements, the forms and meanings of which are relative to life-worlds that are “generally” populated by persons who, historically and sociologically, tend to share, more or less, certain physical characteristics that become valorized, and come to function socially and historically, as partially constitutive of the race. His was an effort to make room in the “space of values” for a positive valorization and appreciation of the cultural achievements of peoples of African descent, and of other groups: “Manifestly some of the great races of today, particularly the Negro race, have not as yet given to civilization the full spiritual message which they are capable of giving.”²⁷

Du Bois, however, in setting out what he thought to be the defining characteristics of a “race,” did not think that biological characteristics causally determined cultural and moral (historical and sociological) characteristics. In a very important sense, as I read him, Du Bois took care not to characterize a race by regarding the defining features (physical characteristics, geography, cultural practices and traditions) as essential and invariant and, when taken together, as severally necessary, connected conjunctively, and, collectively, jointly sufficient.²⁸ Appiah seems to interpret Du Bois as having considered races as natural kinds, each constituted and distinguished by an invariant

“heritable racial essence”²⁹ that was to be kept “pure” by limiting interracial breeding.

Certainly, there were notable proponents of supposed scientific accounts of race advanced during the nineteenth century who did think of races in this way. But it was not the point of Du Bois’s effort. To read Du Bois in this way would be to overlook—or to disregard—the possibility that his notion of race is best read as a *cluster* concept: that is, as referring to a group of persons who share, and are thereby distinguished by, several properties taken *disjunctively*: that is, “each property is severally sufficient and the possession of at least one of the properties is necessary.”³⁰ How else to make sense of Du Bois’s *explicit* concern to have his account of race be conditioned by attention to history and sociology and, as well, to the work of Charles Darwin? For, he argues,

so far as purely physical characteristics are concerned, the differences between men do not explain all the differences of their history. It declares, as Darwin himself said, that great as is the physical unlikeness of the various races of men their likenesses are greater, and upon this rests the whole scientific doctrine of Human Brotherhood.³¹

What is particularly disturbing about Appiah’s analysis and his subsequent conclusions is that he fails to take up Du Bois’s effort to “rotate the axis” of the “space of values” within which groups of persons are defined as comprising supposedly opposed races except to say that by challenging its presuppositions, Du Bois’s project is exposed as “impossible.” But this is to seriously misconstrue Du Bois’s project. It is *not* simply—or even primarily—an effort devoted to definition and taxonomy. Rather, it is a decidedly *political* project, as Winant and Omi argue definitions of race tend to be, which is very much concerned with altering the negative valorizations of the Negro race. To this end Du Bois’s project involves prescribing norms for the social reconstruction of personal and social identities and for self-appropriation by a people suffering racialized subordination, which norms were to aid in mobilizing and guiding members of the race in their efforts to realize emancipatory social transformation leading, ultimately, to a flourishing humanism. According to Du Bois, “the history of the world is the history, not of individuals, but of groups, not of nations, but of races.” Of especial importance to Du Bois was how peoples of the African race would develop and contribute their message to world history along with the messages of other races. The answer to this question, he said, “is plain: By the development of these race groups, not as individuals, but as races. . . . For the development of Negro genius, of Negro literature and art, of Negro spirit, only Negroes bound and

welded together, Negroes inspired by one vast ideal, can work out in its fullness the great message we have for humanity.”³²

I take this to be one of the motivating assumptions, part of the very grounding, of “The Conservation of Races,” which was prepared and read by Du Bois as the second of the Occasional Papers of the newly formed American Negro Academy (devoted to promoting intellectual activity among black folk in defense against racist attacks).³³ Though the purposes of a definitional project do not guarantee its adequacy, having a sense of Du Bois’s overall project is nonetheless crucial to understanding what is involved in his effort to characterize a race. In this case, then, it is not accurate to say, as Appiah does, that Du Bois simply “took race for granted,” since he goes to such lengths to try and characterize a race. Appiah is right, however, in noting that Du Bois’s effort to define “race” does involve a tension. But I disagree with his judgment as to its source: it emerges from Du Bois’s effort to have “the unit of classification . . . be the unit of identification.”³⁴

Du Bois seeks to mobilize and galvanize black folk (certainly the “talented tenth” among them) into a scientifically informed, politically astute and effective force to combat oppressions that were rationalized with pernicious valorizations that had been inscribed in the notion of race. Crucial to this endeavor would be a sense of shared identity growing out of the recognition and appropriation of commonalities of a geographic race (history, language, culture more generally). Of particular importance, it was Du Bois’s judgment that American Negroes were accepting much too quickly American ideals of brotherhood while forgetting what he thought to be “the hard limits of natural law,” evident to those who study history appropriately, that govern human associations: it is groups, not individuals acting on their own, that make history:

Turning to real history, there can be no doubt, first, as to the widespread, nay, universal, prevalence of the race idea, the race spirit, the race ideal, and as to its efficiency as the vastest and most ingenious invention for human progress. We, who have been reared and trained under the individualistic philosophy of the Declaration of Independence and the *laissez-faire* [sic] philosophy of Adam Smith, are loath to see and loath to acknowledge this patent fact of human history. . . . We are apt to think in our American impatience, that while it may have been true in the past that closed race groups made history, that here in conglomerate America *nous avons changer* [sic] *tout cela*—we have changed all that, and have no need of this ancient instrument of progress. This assumption of which the Negro people are especially fond, can not be established by a careful consideration of history.³⁵

Still, in turning to “real history” Du Bois was mindful of the troubling tensions involved in the effort to forge a racial identity in the context of a nation-state that required of its citizens a defining identity as “American”:

Here, then, is the dilemma, and it is a puzzling one, I admit. No Negro who has given earnest thought to the situation of his people in America has failed, at some time in life, to find himself at these cross-roads; has failed to ask himself at some time: What, after all, am I? Am I an American or am I a Negro? Can I be both? Or is it my duty to cease to be a Negro as soon as possible and be an American? If I strive as a Negro, am I not perpetuating the very cleft that threatens and separates Black and White America? Is not my only possible practical aim the subduction of all that is Negro in me to the American? Does my black blood place upon me any more obligation to assert my nationality than German, or Irish or Italian blood would?³⁶

This dilemma, Du Bois went on to say, gave rise to “incessant self-questioning” on the part of persons of African descent that produced vacillation and contradictions which, in turn, contributed to stifled coordinated action, shirked responsibilities, inattention to various enterprises of the race, and, of particular importance to Du Bois, to a situation in which “the best blood, the best talent, the best energy of the Negro people cannot be marshaled to do the bidding of the race.” Du Bois felt compelled to ask whether the situation was right, rational, or good policy, whether black folks in America have a different and distinct *mission* as a race or whether “self-obliteration [is] the highest end to which Negro blood dare aspire?”³⁷

In a society structured by white racial supremacy and the subordination of black folk, such questions were, and are, of major import. And the appropriateness of answers given cannot be determined simply by assessing their adequacy according to norms of logical rigor. Rather, it is the end-in-view, the overall project as well as the means chosen for completing it, that is at issue. For Du Bois, the project involved the historical development and well-being of a relatively distinct group of people who suffered oppression at the hands of persons of various ethnies of a particular race. And for him both that development and the well-being required a strategically crucial form of self-understanding that resolved the dilemma, solved the existential “riddle,” which he characterized elsewhere as a form of “double consciousness”:

Here, it seems to me, is the reading of the riddle that puzzles so many of us. We are Americans, not only by birth and by citizenship, but by our political ideals, our language, our religion. Farther than that, our Americanism does not go. At that point, we are Negroes, members of a vast historic race that from the very dawn of

creation has slept, but half awakening in the dark forests of its African fatherland.³⁸

The riddle resolved, it would then be possible to achieve the needed concerted and coordinated efforts, *on the part of black people themselves*, by which the race might advance in its own behalf, but which would also help bring about the realization of interracial humanism:

as a race we must strive by race organization, by race solidarity, by race unity to the realization of that broader humanity which freely recognizes differences in men, but sternly deprecates inequality in their opportunities of development.

For the accomplishment of these ends we need race organizations. . . . Let us not deceive ourselves at our situation in this country . . . our one haven of refuge is ourselves, and but one means of advance, our own belief in our great destiny, our own implicit trust in our ability and worth.³⁹

For Du Bois, in order to understand human history and be thus informed in attempting to structure the making of the future through organized effort, the focus of such understanding must be the racial group, the “vast family” of related individuals. While individuals are, of course, necessary components of social groups, and must never be lost sight of when analyzing and assessing human ventures, they are neither sufficient for accounting for social groups, nor self-sufficing and thus able to account for their own existence and well-being. Du Bois’s critical insight is a significant one: namely, that the commitment to *laissez-faire* individualism in certain traditions of modern Liberal political philosophy is important but not adequate for providing a full and appropriate understanding of human beings. Survival of individuals is tied inextricably to the well-being of the individual’s natal group; and the well-being of this group requires the concerted action of its individual members, action, to a significant degree, predicated on and guided by shared, self-valorizing identities defined, to some extent, in terms of the group’s identifying bio-social and cultural racial (or ethnic) characteristics. These are both constituted by and are constitutive of the group’s cultural life-world. It is the racial/ethnic life-world that generally provides the resources and nurturing required for the development of an individual’s talents and accomplishments. And it is these that Du Bois sees as the distinctive contributions particular persons can make and offer up to be shared by human civilization more generally. Thus, he argues, must the African race, through its ethnies and, by extension of his argument, all races and ethnies, be “conserved.”

Appiah, then, is right when he argues that what is at the heart of the matter, “What exists ‘out there’ in the world—communities of meaning, shading

variously into each other in the rich structure of the social world—is the province not of biology but of hermeneutic understanding.”⁴⁰ The appreciation of the cultural creations of whatever person or racial/ethnic group is an endeavor of hermeneutical understanding. But who are the persons, individually and collectively, that make up the socio-historical, anthropological bases of “communities of meaning” that are to be understood in terms of various systems and traditions of meaning-configurations (literature, music, dance, art, etc.)? How do such communities cohere and persist in and across times and spaces as self-reproducing populations? If there are no relevant occasions when we can use appropriately “race” and/or “ethnicity” as holding-notions by which to capture complexes of characteristics in terms of which to identify the persons constituting such a community, particularly when the members of a given community *do* share physical as well as historical and cultural characteristics, how ought we to describe them and their socio-historical, cultural life-world? Since there are various geographically situated groups that are composed of persons who are collectively more or less similar physiologically and culturally so as to be relatively distinct from other groupings of persons, groups that seem appropriate candidates for being designated races and ethnies, how are they to be identified?

There is an important footnote in Appiah’s “The Uncompleted Argument” in which he argues against a claim set forth in an essay by Masatoshi Nei and Arun K. Roychoudhury,⁴¹ that “their work shows the existence of a biological basis for the classification of human races; what it shows is that human populations differ in their distributions of genes. That *is* a biological fact. The objection to using this fact as a basis of a system of classification is that far too many people don’t fit into just one category that can be so defined.”⁴² Appiah’s objection is central, I think, to understanding why he is so determined to eliminate “race” as a notion for classifying, certainly for characterizing, persons into or in terms of biologically constituted racial groupings: that is, “too many people” don’t fit into just one racial category. But, if this claim is true, and I am convinced that it is, how can this show that all racial classification is thereby inappropriate? I think it cannot. It might well just mean that an additional racial or sub-racial category may be needed for such persons.

However, I think the problems that Appiah is concerned with here are not simply those of racial taxonomy and philosophical ontology. It is, instead, the vexing issue of *the politics of identity*: with which race does a person identify when their parents are persons of *different* races? Are the social conventions appropriate which require such persons to identify in terms of the race or ethnicity of one of their parents? Would the situation be better if the person involved were allowed to choose? Would it be better if such issues were regarded as irrelevant, if not morally inappropriate? For Appiah, and for

“many people,” as it is even for those of us who have parents thought to be of the same race, this is more than an issue of philosophical semantics in racially hierarchic societies which continue to engage in efforts to promote and sustain forms of racial supremacy. In this context, racial categories take on the various valorizations of the hierarchy and affect the formation and appropriation of identities as well as affect, in significant ways, a person’s life-chances.

That this was the case for Du Bois and motivated much of his life’s work is well known. Still, it is important to note the way in which Du Bois endeavored to *choose* and *fashion* his racial identity, at least consciously to embrace, re-interpret, and re-valorize an identity that was partly proscribed for him by prevailing conventions for applying a racial category/characterization to any person one of whose ancestors, of whatever generations, was thought to be of the Negro race. Many people of mixed racial parentage have done as Du Bois without, at the same time, under-representing their ancestry by disregarding the raciality of their non-Negro ancestors: that is, they have chosen an identities defined in terms of one line of parental ancestry while acknowledging the other line as a constitutive aspect of the complexly constituted persons they are. Depending on the person and circumstances, such a choice may be more or less difficult. However, often such choices are made unnecessarily difficult by the efforts of racists and chauvinists to proscribe an identity and identification on the basis of their commitments to an erroneous notion that the character, personality, and capacities of individuals are determined by a heritable, fixed, racial essence shared in the same way by all members of the race, which essence also determines the culture-making of the race. To the contrary, personal and social identities, in being formed and appropriated, *always* involve socially conditioned personal choices as well as meaning-configurations that are socially articulated and made available to the individual, sometimes socially imposed on the individual. Our identities, then, are never a result of simply acknowledging some identity-determining heritable raciality. Rather, identities are ongoing projects of configurations of often contested meanings and values relative to which our bodies, in racialized societies especially, are often made the sites at which the meanings and values cohere phenomenologically, and skin color, for example, is made both a supposed self-evident sign and symbol of these socially constituted meanings and values.

Again, Appiah is certainly right in noting, “Few candidates for laws of nature can be stated by reference to the colors, tastes, smells, or touches of objects. It is hard for us to accept that the colors of objects, which play so important a role in our visual experience and our recognition of everyday objects, turn out neither to play an important part in the behavior of matter nor to be correlated with properties that do.”⁴³ However, it seems to me that in advancing this important metaphysical insight Appiah then fails to appreciate

another crucial fact, in large part, I think, because he harbors a commitment to an unarticulated, unreviewed, and thus uncritically held metaphysical realism: that the colors of objects are very important *to us* and to our valuation and utilization of things in everyday life, to the routine, meaningful organization of everyday life. Aesthetic traditions provide the norms through which color appreciation is developed and exercised. Likewise, the "laws of nature" cannot themselves settle questions regarding what import and value, if any, phenotype and morphology ought to have for human beings. It is utterly crucial that "race," as a way of referring to biologically *and* socio-culturally and historically constituted, varying groupings of persons, be uncoupled from any presumptions of such groupings having been constituted by an unchanging, heritable, race-defining biological essence. Nonetheless, we must, I think, still be mindful of how group-based phenotypes (and, in important instances, genotypes as well, as when two persons who are considering sexual sharings leading to biological reproductions might need to be mindful of the potential for problematic genetic consequences in offspring) do figure in the normed aesthetics and somatic imaging of social life. But let us, as well, be committed to continuing to work to revise the forms of politics that are assisted by ontologies and aesthetics of invidious, essentialist, biologized notions of race.

There are many more people, myself included, for whom a racial identity is not a particularly complicated matter, nor a matter whose importance is settled by the rigor of a definition made possible by clear lines of biological descent, the evidence for which is a compelling set of physical criteria. It is, rather, in significant part, the important and still pressing business of getting on in stable, just, harmonious ways within and among racially and ethnically complex societies of many "communities of meaning." And for many of us the continued existence of discernible racial/ethnic communities of meaning is highly desirable, *even if, in the very next instant, racism and invidious ethnocentrism in every form and manifestation were to disappear forever*. However desirable such a situation may be, I am certain this is not about to become a reality, though I still hope for and work toward its realization as much as this may be practically possible.

Like Du Bois, I am convinced that *both* the struggle against racism and invidious ethnocentrism, as well as the struggles on the part of persons of various races and ethnies to create, preserve, refine, and, of particular importance, to share their "messages" or cultural productions with other humans, require that we understand how the constantly evolving groups we refer to as "races" can be "conserved" in democratic political communities which value and promote cultural pluralism constrained by Liberal principles. As many persons in America continue to struggle to consolidate the realization of justice with harmony in areas of our collective life in which raciality and ethnicity are at

issue in important and appropriate ways, I remain unconvinced that we must give up on the notion of race, the difficulties of definition and ugly legacies of racism notwithstanding. The challenge is to find ways to conserve a revised understanding of race that is both socially useful and consistent with a revised notion of democratic justice that is appropriately balanced between recognizing and valuing racial and ethnic cultural groupings and preserving the best achievements of modern Enlightenments and the political revolution of Liberalism.

Du Bois, in my judgment, was one of the foremost thinkers in modern history to see into these complex issues with near full clarity, and to have had the disciplined courage, fortitude, and near genius to wrestle, in promising ways, with the seemingly intractable and *always* potentially divisive and destructive "problem of the color line." What he has offered, I think, is particularly worthy of, and rewards, close and careful reading and consideration. His efforts are an invaluable aid to the pursuit of understandings that might help to guide social praxis that will, it is to be hoped, get us through the difficulties involving race and ethnicity. The need is compelling. For even as I write, "problems of the color line" are being played out in projects of genocide and mass destruction in the former nation-state of Yugoslavia and in Rwanda—just two examples from among far too many others that are ready-to-hand.

Those horrible living lessons are not, however, the inevitable fate of our striving to conserve races and ethnic groups. There are other examples of successful multi-racial, multi-ethnic unity-in-diversity throughout this nation and others—in local communities, institutions, and organizations of various kinds—that validate my hope. Learning from these examples, I think, will provide resources that can assist us as we continue the struggles to rescue ourselves from a distorted fate made much too probable by our own doings which, unless corrected, might well be 'the fire next time' that will be our undoing.

NOTES

1. A much earlier version of this essay was prepared for and presented as On W. E. B. Du Bois's "The Conservation of Races" during the Symposium on Racism and Sexism: Differences and Connections, hosted by the Department of Philosophy of Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, on May 3–4, 1991. Revised versions have been the basis of subsequent lectures at numerous colleges and universities, and one was presented during the Pennsylvania State University conference on "The Thought of W. E. B. Du Bois" on March 21, 1992, and subsequently circulated in the *SAPINA Newsletter* (Bulletin of the Society for African Philosophy in North America) 4, no. 1 (January–July 1992): 13–28. This essay is a revision, several times over, the last being rather extensive, of that read at the Pennsylvania State University conference. Special thanks to Bernard Bell, Emily Grosholz, and James Stewart for their careful reading

- of an earlier draft and for their especially helpful comments and suggested improvements.
2. W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Concept of Race, in *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*" (New York: Schocken Books; 1968 [1940]), 103.
 3. For provocative discussions of some of the challenges see Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), and Charles Taylor and Amy Gutman, *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition,"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
 4. William A. Henry III, "Beyond the Melting Pot," *Time* 135, 15 (April 9, 1990): 28.
 5. While from here on I shall refer almost wholly to race—much though by no means all—of what I shall say applies to ethnicity as well. For I consider ethnic groups as being, for the most part, subsets of racial groups, and the constitution and characterization of ethnic groups mostly a function of cultural characteristics.
 6. When we refer to races we have in mind their geographically defined categories, which are sometimes called geographical races, to indicate that while they have some distinctive biological characteristics they are not pure types. Michael Banton and Jonathan Harwood, *The Race Concept* (Praeger: New York, 1975), 62.
 7. David L. Hull, "The Effect of Essentialism on Taxonomy Two Thousand Years of Stasis (I)," *British Journal for Philosophy of Science* 15 (1965): 322–23.
 8. See T. E. Wilkerson, "Natural Kinds," *Philosophy* 63 (1988): 29–42; John Dupré "Wilkerson on Natural Kinds," *Philosophy* 64 (1989): 248–51; Leroy N. Meyer, "Science, Reduction and Natural Kinds," *Philosophy* 64 (1989): 535–46; and John Dupré, "Natural Kinds and Biological Taxa," *The Philosophical Review* 90, no. 1 (January 1981): 66–90.
 9. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, (New York and London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986). Other especially helpful texts are Michael Banton, *The Idea of Race* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977) and Michael Banton's and Jonathan Harwood, *The Race Concept* (New York: Praeger, 1975).
 10. Omi and Winant, 68–69.
 11. For an example of such a notion of social evolution see Jürgen Habermas, "Historical Materialism and the Development of Normative Structures" and "Toward a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism," in *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans., Thomas McCarthy, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 95–177.
 12. For a provocative discussion of the politics of difference and identity-recognition, see Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutman (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994).
 13. The Du Bois text used for this discussion is reprinted in Howard Brotz, ed., *African American Social and Political Thought, 1850–1920* (New Jersey: Transaction, 1992), 483–92.
 14. Anthony Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race," in *Race, Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 21–37. Appiah revised and extended his argument against Du Bois as "Illusions of Race" in *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 28–46.
 15. Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument . . .," 25.
 16. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races," in Brotz, 485, emphasis added.
 17. Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument . . .," 25–26.
 18. Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument . . .," 26.
 19. Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument . . .," 26.

20. Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument . . .," 27.
21. Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument . . .," 28.
22. Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument . . .," 29.
23. Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument . . .," 29.
24. Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument . . .," 36.
25. Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument . . .," 35–36.
26. Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument . . .," 36.
27. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races, in Brotz," 487.
28. David L. Hull, "The Effect of Essentialism on Taxonomy . . .," 318.
29. See Appiah, "In My Father's House," 39.
30. David L. Hull, "The Effect of Essentialism on Taxonomy," 323. For example, given several groups of features A (heritable physical features), B (shared cultural practices), C (linked if not quite common histories and traditions, which have their beginnings in), D (a common site of origin which accounts, in significant part, for the shared physical features), which are shared by members of a group in a limited number of patterned combinations, necessarily one feature, any one, (say B) plus several others (C or A or . . . D) would be sufficient to identify a person as a member of a particular race.
31. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races," in Brotz, 484–85.
32. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races," in Brotz, 487.
33. On March 5, 1897, the one-hundred-twenty-seventh anniversary of the Boston Massacre where Crispus Attucks, who was believed to have been a mulatto, was the first to die, eighteen black men assembled in the District of Columbia's Lincoln Memorial Church to formally inaugurate the American Negro Academy. This date was chosen because it recalled an event especially sacred to the Negro. To the men who planned the meeting, Attucks death in 1770 was a symbol of the patriotic and heroic role black Americans played in the creation of the United States. Consequently, they felt it appropriate that a black society formed to encourage intellectual activity among blacks, and to defend them from vicious assaults should begin its public life on this day. Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *The American Negro Academy: Voice of the Talented Tenth* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 35. Du Bois was one of the eighteen founding members of the Academy.
34. David L. Hull, "The Effect of Essentialism on Taxonomy," 322.
35. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races," in Brotz, 485.
36. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races," in Brotz, 488. However, one might, as did Du Bois, have to take up the socially enforced choice of defining one's racial identity, in part, by *either* matrilineal or patrilineal descent, though for Appiah doing so requires that one drastically underrepresent the biological range of one's ancestry (Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument," 26.)
37. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races," in Brotz, 488.
38. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races," in Brotz, 488–489.
39. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races," in Brotz, 489.
40. Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument . . .," 36.
41. "Genetic Relationship and Evolution of Human Races," *Evolutionary Biology* 14 (1983).
42. Appiah, "The Uncompleted Argument," 37, note 10.
43. Appiah, *In My Father's House*, 39.