

## W.E.B. DUBOIS

"DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS" (A seminal term in Black Radical theory... developed in later years by Paul Gilroy, Frantz Fanon, Kwame Ture...)

1. The separation of two worlds: a Black world and a White world, with all opportunity sequestered in the latter. DuBois characterizes these worlds as divided by a "veil" or a "shadow," or alternately he talks about the Black world being "veiled" or "shadowed".
2. Externally-Imposed Identity. The phenomenon of always seeing yourself as others insist you are, as well as having a more primordial experience of being just... yourself. Thus the "double" of the consciousness: Being, plus "Being-Negro," where "Negro" is defined by the White world. Thus one's identity is *alienated*—separated. You have to be someone you don't choose to be, and wouldn't want to be given the systematically pejorative predicates appended to the identity (lazy, stupid, backwards, primitive, etc). DuBois thinks there are several undesirable consequences: "tasteless sycophancy, silent hatred, mocking distrust, bitterness."
3. "2 Warring Ideals": Having two identities which don't match: a general identity—American, like everybody else... Negro... NOT like everybody else. "Negroes" are Americans, but not quite. They're something else instead, or there's some alleged essence here which gets in the way of achieving full "American-ness."
4. Double/Split Aims: Having two opposing sets of desires/obligations: what must be done in the wider, White world, as an "American," vs. what must be done in the Black world, as a "Negro." Broadly one wishes to escape contempt, to prove oneself to the Whites, and to broad things like obtain knowledge. But locally much more basic things need doing, and the "knowledge" or "book learning" one can get eg at college sounds like total gibberish back in the neighborhood. As a result one's focus is divided and achievement is super-reduced.

### GOALS:

"Attaining self-conscious manhood"

Merging the double self into a better/truer self

Development of (personal) powers

The awakening of a common (Black) consciousness: thinking thoughts together...

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. DuBois charts a series of objectives for Black people, historically, none of which seemed quite to deliver: physical freedom (achieved 1863), political power (1870 with the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment), "book learning." What about this last one? Is education truly empowering? What kind of education?
2. Then there's the "attaining self-consciousness" goal above. What do you think about that?
3. And the "common consciousness" goal?
4. \*Do you think this analysis is correct? It must apply to other racialized identities too, right? "Mexican"? "Oriental"? Gender too? "Woman"?
5. "What need of education, since we must always cook and serve?" Be content to be servants... This is a problem with Black thinking DuBois observes ~1903... \*Might it now be a problem of the American population as a whole?