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W.E.B. DuBois as Educational Philosopher: Will the Real DuBois Please Stand Up?

Don Hufford

The "who" of W.E.B. DuBois (1868-1963) is in "the eye of the beholder." He has been interpreted as being an historian, sociologist, journalist, editor, novelist, poet, and scholar. He has been credited with- and blamed for- being a politically agitating gadfly who grandfathered the Civil Rights Movement. He has also been denigrated by those who do not consider him to be radical enough as a traitor to this same "cause." He has been recognized as a passionate, articulate defender of the ideals and principles of a democratic society, yet condemned for articulating socialist ideals and for joining the Communist Party in his 95th year. He was a pragmatic patriot who could write: "Our country is at war . . . this is OUR war.

We must fight it with every ounce of blood and treasure;"¹ but who later renounced his U.S. citizenship to become a citizen of Ghana. He was a champion of the powerless masses, but was criticized for his failure to interact and to personally "connect" with the common man. He was a prophet- in the Biblical sense- but without appropriate honor in his own land.²

The list of differing understandings of DuBois the "individual" goes on. To interpret DuBois as an educational philosopher- as this paper does- is to open the door to divergent hermeneutical possibilities, and to definitional challenges from both philosophers and educators. A thesis may, however, be offered- and derided- that there is an implicit philosophy of education woven into the fabric of the writings of W.E.B. DuBois. This philosophy is found imbedded in his works of creative fiction as well as in his non-fiction, autobiographical, and academic writings. It is possible to extract from his writings- and life experiences- an educational philosophy which may be used to better understand the contentious educational battles of the 1990s- battles which in his words are "as old as the world and as young as the babe born tonight."³

DuBois had an early flirtation with academic philosophy, and he once defined the core of his "self" by proclaiming, "I am a teacher!"⁴ And, of course, he was. He spent much of his 95 years as an educator. Many years were spent in front of a classroom, and many with pen in hand producing the words that would sting the conscience of a nation. But in defining DuBois as an "educator" it is important to recognize an expanded definition of the word. DuBois was an educator not just because of his classroom experiences- not because he taught young children in a one-room schoolhouse in a culturally and economically impoverished rural area of Tennessee⁵- not because he taught classic languages, and German and English, and history, and economics at the university level- not because he was a qualitative and quantitative researcher⁶- not because he was a

prolific and well-published scholar- not because he was a "critical pedagogue" and "liberatory educator" (in the Paulo Freire mold) before these terms were invented.

DuBois was an "educator" in the broadly defined sense of one who communicates; who stimulates, challenges, critiques, stirs-up, arouses . . . who questions. A classroom is one arena for this education to take place. But we must move beyond the classroom to pursue a meaningful definition of W.E.B. DuBois as "educator," or to interpret an understanding of his educational philosophy.

DuBois educated as a social critic, as a social activist, as a challenger of the political and economic status-quo. He educated as a voice for the powerless; as a foe of injustice, racism, discrimination, capitalist exploitation, and imperialism. He educated as a champion of the oppressed, of women's rights, of the disenfranchised, of the miseducated. He educated through the pages of *The Crisis* and other periodicals. He educated through his novels, his poetry, his research and scholarly writing, his newspaper columns. He educated through journal articles, and lectures. He educated through his extensive correspondence with both the powerbrokers and the powerless of the world.

A caveat may be necessary at this point. The attempt to distill an educational philosophy from the prolific literary productivity and long-life experiences of a man such as W.E.B. DuBois is by its very nature an interpretive process. And... it must be remembered that such an interpretation is always circumscribed by the existentially defined "self" of the interpreter. We often find what we are looking for, and may create an hermeneutical "self-fulfilling prophecy."

The process of defining a DuBois "educational philosophy" involves not just an intellectual analysis and evaluation, but also an emotional - even spiritually tinged - assessment of a man who was complex, not always consistent, sometimes ambiguous in word and deed. DuBois was not a perfect man. He made mistakes. His life was a mirror reflecting both human strength and frailty. He could be a paradox of controlled rage and reconciliation. He was a man whose life bridged two centuries who possessed the genetic strains of divergent biological and cultural inheritances, who merged classical learning with practical educational expediency, and who was continually forced to seek reconciliation of opposite tendencies in both his own personality and the world in which he lived.

DuBois left an intellectual and moral legacy for scholars to interpret and for social activists to apply. To study the educational thought of this man is to find oneself replenished in mind and spirit- but strangely discontented. There is much in such an intellectual/spiritual exposure that is paradoxical, conflicted, inconsistent, and disturbing. There is also much that is steady, uplifting, intellectually stimulating, and spiritually healing. To experience with DuBois an educational search for Truth, Goodness, and Beauty is to experience a parallel search for Social Justice and Human Dignity for all. It is to be reminded of how mankind has trivialized the great questions about life's meaning, falsified the answers, and sullied the search. But to engage in the search is to experience the hope that it represents a continuous process of renewal of both self and society. It is to restate basic questions, the answers to which must be lived in the present moment.

In evaluating DuBois as an educational theorist and practitioner, Herbert Aptheker affirmed that in his lifetime "no one in the United States was more expert in the area of the nature, theory, and the purposes of education."⁷ This may be an arguable conclusion when considered in light of Aptheker's personal affinity for DuBois and the

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ideas he articulated. The life and writings of DuBois do, however, provide philosophical and historical insights into educational ideas, ideals, and practical applications— into the nature, theory, and purposes of education.

DuBois' educational philosophy involved a metaphysical understanding of Truth— an epistemological search for how Truth is known, and an axiological application of Truth in the world of people and events. It is significant in interpreting DuBois as an "educator" to recognize that he was able to hold the absolutes of capital letter "Truth" in a creative, dynamic tension with small letter "truths" that are created by human beings in the fluid, changing world of historical progression. He was able to intellectually choreograph the tension coming from the merging of opposite poles of thought, and to direct the energy produced into creative endeavor.

In terms of education DuBois understood— and applied— the reality that "human education (is) that ever necessary combination of the permanent and the contingent - of the ideal and the practical in workable equilibrium (which) has been, as it must be in every age and place, a matter of infinite experiment and frequent mistakes."⁸ In today's educational arena— as the politically charged reform battles rage on— it is the "workable equilibrium" that seems to be neglected in favor of "infinite experiments and frequent mistakes." Those who take up implacable positions regarding educational purposes and methods might well take heed of DuBois' admonition that "to no one type of mind is it given (the ability) to discern the totality of truth."⁹ It may be inferred from DuBois' writings that— in educational philosophy— it is best to be flexible and open rather than rigid and dogmatic. It is best to make connections between the poetic and the scientific, the intuitive and the empirical, the contemplative and the active; the worldview of the Idealist and the Realist, of the Pragmatist and the Existentialist; the methods of the behavioristic and the humanistic teacher.

DuBois' educational philosophy was certainly not systematic in form, or consistent in presentation. In words used to describe an alter-ego character in one of his novels, "he had a mind too keen to be consistent."¹⁰ David L. Lewis, a DuBois biographer, has noted that "he struck up so many positions so articulately and so perceptively and contradictorily."¹¹ It may have been a lack of systematic "consistency" in relating to contentious issues— which emerged and reemerged over nine decades of life— that has led to the seemingly "contradictory" in DuBois. It may, however, be posited that it was not so much inconsistency in thought that caused DuBois to reevaluate positions as it was an understanding of the existential reality of divergent worldviews.

Arnold Rampersad has noted that DuBois was a man "with the soul of a poet and the intellect of a scientist; he lived at least a double life, continually compelled to respond to the challenge of reconciling opposites."¹² But DuBois could open his mind to "opposites" only when such a situational reconciliation did not compromise a moral absolute. Sydney Harris has written of this kind of emotional/intellectual strength as residing in the person who understands that "no principle, no concept, and no system is valuable or long viable unless it learns to tolerate, to absorb, or to maintain an equilibrium with the other. Not with its 'opposites'— truth cannot temporize with falsehood— but with its Yin and Yang sustaining and complementing each other."¹³

DuBois refused to compromise with falsehood. The True, the Good, and the Beautiful— the Right and the Just— must be served. But he had an open, inquiring, questioning mind which allowed him to maximize

the power of creative tension generated between the poles of divergent viewpoints.¹⁴ It is here suggested that this man of self-described "double consciousness"¹⁵ was able to hold a "double educational philosophy" in a positive, creative tension. One was based on the absolutes of philosophical Idealism/Realism, resulting in an "elitist" educational model. The other was based on a philosophical Existentialist Humanism, resulting in a critical pedagogy model much akin to the liberatory education espoused by Paulo Freire.

DuBois did not refer in his writings to a "liberatory" or "critical pedagogy" educational model, but the implications were there. When he wrote of "Two Sorts of Schooling" he distinguished between two educational purposes that may be defined somewhat loosely as "to make a living" and "to make a life." His thinking on this issue has significant meaning for the 1990s:

Consciously or unconsciously every system of education has two aims which can never in this imperfect world be brought into complete agreement. The one, the higher and broader aim, is the full development of the individual soul to its largest capacity; the other is the training of the individual to earn a living... Here lies the real problem of education, a problem as old as the world and as young as the babe born tonight. How shall we educate our children so that they may be cultured men and women and yet able to earn a living... it is a nice question and one on which many a nation has blundered.¹⁶

It was DuBois' educational focus on "cultured men and women" that has led many to view him as a practicing member of the scholarly intelligentsia, and to believe that he was an educational elitist who based his teaching and educational theory on philosophical Idealism. And this view recognizes a partial truth. Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, referred to the educational "elitist" in DuBois when he noted in 1996: "We had DuBois who saw that we should be educated in the arts and science. We should be scholars."¹⁷ Mr. Farrakhan here relates to a memory of the early DuBois and his conflict with Booker T. Washington. The two men engaged in a continuing debate, with philosophical and political undertones, over "how"— and more importantly, "why"— to educate African Americans, who were effectively excluded from taking full advantage of educational opportunities. DuBois, writing of education in the late nineteenth century, noted that "what was wrong was that people like me and thousands of others who might have my ability and aspirations were refused permission to be part of this world."¹⁸ Both DuBois and Washington sought ways to ameliorate the situation: DuBois was unyielding in his fight for the "best" education for the "best" African American minds, while Washington was willing to make what he saw as necessary compromises with the white power structure. The DuBois/ Washington on-going debate had, perhaps, as much to do with social/political power in the African American community as it did with educational opportunities.¹⁹ It did, however, help to establish DuBois' reputation as an educational elitist and philosophical Idealist.

DuBois' concept of the "talented tenth"— although later significantly modified in recognition of social realities - also helped to establish a confusing image of the "real" DuBois in the minds of many. David G. DuBois has written of how this image remains alive and well today:

... little more is passed on to our youth today of W.E.B DuBois than the elitist concept of black leadership, the Talented Tenth.

Last year (I was) introduced to a young African American... At mention that I was a stepson of W.E.B. DuBois, the young man responded in recognition: "Oh the Talented Tenth!" This incident confirmed for me once again how great the need is today to make the work, the enormous contribution, and the truth of W.E.B. DuBois known...²⁹

To better understand "the truth of W.E. B. DuBois" in terms of his contributions to educational thought I found it important to consider his educational "double consciousness." He was able to seek out unchanging, absolute "Truth which (he) spelled with a capital,"²¹ and to hold it in a dynamic, creative tension with the small-letter truths of an existentially defined, and changing, social reality. In terms of educational purpose and method he expressed an Aristotelian understanding when he stated, with conviction, that "the truth lies ever between extremes."²² The Platonist in DuBois believed that education should lead to "a life lit by some large vision of beauty and goodness and truth."²³ As a liberatory educator he also understood the political reality that "education among all kinds of men always has had, and always will have, an element of danger, dissatisfaction, and revolt. You cannot both educate people and hold them down."²⁴

DuBois recognized the importance of a Perennialist educational philosophy when he wrote, "I sit with Shakespeare... move arm and arm with Balzac and Dumas... I summon Aristotle and Aurelius... So wed with Truth I dwell above the veil."²⁵ He did, however, connect this educational view with the social activism of a liberatory Reconstructionist educational philosophy, and declared that "to be silent when injustices call out for redress, to fail to speak out when poverty and ignorance keep some in social bondage, to muffle the sounds of indignation and righteous anger is to fail the teacher's calling."²⁶ It was the essence of a DuBois eclectic educational philosophy that he should "wish not only to make Truth known, but to present it in such shape as to encourage and help social reform."²⁷ When he wrote that education should be a "search for answers to fundamental problems"²⁸ he expressed a "double message:" the recognition that the search should connect the great enduring metaphysical questions of existence to the search for answers to questions regarding current social, economic, and political injustices.

DuBois' educational thinking was influenced by a concept of humanity based on a natural rights philosophy. He believed that there is an inherent learning drive in each individual that seeks correspondence with a social/political right to learn. DuBois understood that the individual— whatever his/her racial, cultural, ethnic group— inherently wants to learn, needs to learn, has a right to learn. One goal of a democratic society should be to help each individual achieve "that exercise and unbinding of the human spirit which (enables) mankind to reach its highest and best manifestations" leading to "the fullest and roundest development of the powers of the human being."²⁹

The search for knowledge - and even more for critical understanding- is an emotional, psychological- even spiritual- drive inherent in the self. This search is an expression of a common humanity. DuBois warned that any imposed barrier- racism, economic inequities and exploitation, political or social discrimination, etc.- which thwarts this expression is a negation of what it means to be human and of the right to achieve full humanity. The demand for equal distribution of knowledge, and for equitable access to help in understanding that knowledge, are social responses to a natural right. This right establishes a bond that helps unite diverse individuals into a common

humanity. DuBois understood that educators should be "led by the knowledge that no man should be poor, nor sick, nor ignorant: but that the humblest worker as well as the sons of emperors shall be fed and taught and healed- and that there emerge on earth a single unified people, free, well and educated."³⁰

DuBois has been denigrated by some social activists for not being enough of a radical revolutionary, even though he spent most of his life challenging oppression and injustice. It may well be that he believed his most productive role was that of an intellectual agitator, the gadfly who would sting the conscience of a nation. He warned: "Here comes the agitator. He is the herald. He is the prophet. He is the man who says to the world, 'There are evils which you do not know, but which I know and you must listen.'"³¹ As an educator DuBois reminded those who were "called" to teach that "teachers cannot be pedants or dilettantes; they cannot be mere technicians and higher artisans; they have got to be social statesmen and statesmen of high order."³²

Some people have recognized this aspect of DuBois' educational persona. In discussing DuBois as an academic and a champion of the oppressed, Eugene Holmes has written:

Literally and historically there had not been any philosophers of freedom up until DuBois, who made it the basic theme in his belles lettres, in his sociology, and in his history... DuBois always regarded his methodology as embracing the equal rights of human beings to strive to live.³³

DuBois agreed with the Idealist, Plato, (and the Realist, Aristotle) that the good life for the individual is inextricably bound to that of the just society. His enduring search was for that society which would encourage and permit the "fullest realization of the individual human spirit." He sought for each and all "an education that encourages aspiration... sets the loftiest of ideals and seeks as an end culture and character rather than (just) bread-winning."³⁴ DuBois recognized that "culture," "character," and "bread-winning" are equally jeopardized when an individual's search for self-realization is restricted by exterior forces. He understood that "to educate" and "to liberate" are branches of the same philosophical root system. He expressed this idea when he wrote metaphorically in one of his novels: "When you're educated you won't want to live in the swamp."³⁵ He was well aware that "to stimulate... untrained minds is to play with mighty fires."³⁶ To "know" provides the stimulus to "act."

DuBois believed in the liberatory potential inherent in the educationally supported process of growing and expanding toward individual possibility, because "what (people) are depends on the way they have been educated... the way in which their possibilities have been developed and drawn out."³⁷ He believed that formal education should help develop one's ability to creatively harness- and make practical use of- the tension developed between the desire for self-realization (an individual dynamic) and the call for sacrificial service to others (a social dynamic).

DuBois stood for the right of every individual "to be," but he stressed the importance that "to do" - to act for the good of the larger society- is a complimentary and necessary obligation. He modeled the liberatory educational theory that education is for both self and society. He issued a challenge in the form of a question: "Are we going to use our education for enjoyment or for service?"³⁸ The answer(s) has/ have both individual and group implications. Without a social dynamic the educational process is narrowed by an egotistic,

"me-oriented" inwardness that fails to consider the "other." But education, without the individual dynamic, lacks a "centered" purpose and motivational vitality.

Implicit in the educational thought of DuBois is the belief that the potentially oppositional demands of self-affirmation and social responsibility may exist in a creative, productive tension. Positive, productive action occurs when the individual allows him/herself to be creatively involved in larger, "self/other," interdependent actions. DuBois believed in the importance of a positive self-concept ("of decisive importance in the education of our youth is the implanting of pride"), but understood that self-concept as an individual reality is directly related to the communal "quality" of social, economic, political, and educational justice in any given society. He promoted the importance of individual self-fulfillment within the educational search for human possibility, but he placed the concept of individuality (not individualism) within the larger context of social purpose and common humanity.³⁹ Even as one might seek within the self the "soul-beauty of infinite possibility and endless development"⁴⁰ there still exists the possibility of the self-chosen responsibility to "dedicate our lives to lessening other's sorrow, the uprooting of poverty, and to the broadening of life and living for human souls."⁴¹

DuBois believed that the pedagogical process should stimulate an intellectual search for capital-letter Truth and an empathic awareness of social issues. Education should provide not just the skill but also the motivation for one to engage in constructive social action based on critical evaluation of the issues involved. Writing of one of his fictional protagonists DuBois described this motivational force: "He wanted to get his hands into the tangles of this world. He wanted to understand... it was a longing for action, breath, helpfulness, great constructive deeds."⁴² DuBois was a dreamer of great dreams, and he believed education should develop "dreamers toward a better world;" but he was constrained by a philosophically pragmatic understanding that "there is no dream but deed."⁴³ It was this kind of pedagogical praxis—a reflection/action iteration—which made it possible for DuBois to combine dream and deed into his personal brand of social activism. In a DuBois philosophy, education is the search for Truth, Goodness, and Beauty leading to the practice of liberty, justice, and equality.

The philosophical Idealist in DuBois created an intellectual wanderer dedicated to the search for metaphysical Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. But the philosophical Pragmatist whispered that the search is merely a dream-like exercise in academic speculation until—and unless—it is made real by the axiological implications of work, service, and sacrifice.⁴⁴ DuBois understood that education reveals only the shadow-like possibilities of the small-letter truths of liberty, justice, and equality on the cave walls of the world. The discovery of capital-letter Truth—as predicated by an Idealist educational philosophy—requires an intellectual search. But the search is only a sterile mental exercise unless knowledge gained is wedded to a critical understanding of real world realities and transformed into active service to humanity.

DuBois is a significant historical example of the possibility of using divergent educational philosophies to create a "positive" tension resulting in creative, productive results. Educational controversy—when it involves the open expression of, and dialogue about, differing philosophical viewpoints regarding educational purpose and method—can have a positive effect on final decisions, locally and nationally,

regarding the direction of public education in America. A remark made during a 1957 TV interview with DuBois—although not specifically related to educational philosophies—is pertinent to this reality.

Whatever else may be said about William DuBois philosophies, it is only when his views cannot be aired, only when they are denied utterance because they are unpopular views, only when there is silence and solemn agreement, does this country then stand in danger.⁴⁵

"Silence and solemn agreement" in today's educational arena would be an indicator that one ideology is all-powerful, and opposing voices are stilled. In the history of American education, fortunately, there have always been philosophically defined dissenters. Today one philosophical worldview dominates educational decision making, but opposing views continue to offer challenges to the educational power structure. The predominant educational language spoken today is one of technical competency influenced by corporate-world definitional standards of "excellence." The focus is on a lexicon of empiricism—of standardized tests, exit tests, aligned curriculum tests, state and national performance assessments, bottom-line efficiency, and teacher accountability measured by student "scores" based on a "free market" competitive philosophy.

This Realist/Empiricist educational philosophy sees public education as a Goals 2000, technocratic, free-market-inspired processing of raw materials (students) into a pre-planned product ("world class" workers). There are, however, other educational philosophies and methodologies being promoted (Idealist, Humanist/Existentialist) that make possible a continuing educational discourse, and keep the dominant "corporate model" from being an "absolute". One such educational alternative may be stated in DuBoisian counterpoint terms. He saw "education as (preparing) individuals for the broader life; not (for) production of goods," but "to develop to our full potential . . . every capacity God has given us."⁴⁶ This means that our public schools must promote "the growth of initiative, the spirit of independent thought... expanding consciousness,"⁴⁷ while resisting "the tendency to... regard human beings as among the material resources of the land to be trained with an eye single to future dividends."⁴⁸

DuBois, of course, understood the importance of Realist epistemology and Empiricist methodology. His work as a social scientist necessitated that he develop the skills to utilize the observable, the measurable, the quantifiable. He recognized, however, that cold, hard facts translated to statistical evidence are only part of the educational equation. He vowed that he would not be "the truth seeker... devoid of human sympathy and careless of human ideals,"⁴⁹ and he stressed that he had "sympathy for the ideal of cold, impartial (knowledge), but that must not be allowed to degenerate as it has so often into insensitivity to human suffering and injustice... (He) could not be a calm, cool, detached scientist while Negroes were lynched, murdered, and starved."⁵⁰

DuBois would agree—in part—with one of today's educational critics, E.D. Hirsch, Jr., that: "literate culture is the most democratic culture in our land: it excludes nobody; it cuts across generations and social groups and classes; it is not usually one's first culture, but it should be everyone's second, existing as it does beyond the narrow spheres of family, neighborhood, and region."⁵¹ DuBois, however, would strongly challenge the phrase, "it excludes nobody," and declare that "work, culture, liberty - all these we need, not singly, but together."⁵²

Cultural knowledge, the fruits of a literate education, is empty of meaning unless interpenetrated with liberty, justice, equality, and equitable opportunities for dignified work.

As a scholar DuBois had much in common with the educational thinking of such men as Robert M. Hutchins, Mortimer Adler, and Allan Bloom. He, too, was a defender of the liberal arts tradition, and of the educational importance of the great enduring ideas of the past. As a philosophical Idealist DuBois believed that schools should "educate children in the broadest, highest way... (because) wisdom is the principal thing."⁵³ But, as a social activist, he also embraced elements of John Dewey's Pragmatism. He believed that "with this general and theoretical (knowledge) must go a definite and detailed object suited to the present age, this present group, the present set of problems."⁵⁴ His educational philosophy allowed space for the foundational wisdom of the past and the new educational theories—that were slowly helping to forge a better future for "the children of all." He prayed for a liberatory education that would be a process of "...criticism and searching... the insistent questioning of old ways and old deeds, ever mindful of the solemnness of world-old things (while) welcoming the things that are good and true and the eternal beauty of both old and new."⁵⁵

Today's contentious educational battles have philosophical roots; political right vs. political left, Christian fundamentalists vs. secular humanists, progressives vs. behaviorists, public school defenders vs. "for profit" entrepreneurs, back-to-basics traditionalists vs. the proponents of curricular diversity — Idealist/Realist vs Pragmatist/Existentialist. We need to listen to W.E.B. DuBois: "We find it necessary to guard carefully least undue insistence on one of these methods... may spoil the balance between the (others)."⁵⁶

An understanding of DuBois' educational thought— as interpreted from his writings— does not encourage us to compromise personal philosophical ideals or strongly held beliefs; he would say, "fight on!!" But he would remind us that a precarious balance is not only possible but may represent the strength of a democratic society, and provide an antidote to a "silent and solemn agreement." If, as DuBois believed, "education is the foundation stone of our democracy,"⁵⁷ then it is important that there be intellectual rebels willing and able to challenge any educational philosophy that becomes all-powerful. By "daring to be honest rather than orthodox"⁵⁸ these challengers of the educational status-quo provide the motivation and the will to maintain the precarious balance.

And we serve first for the sake of serving— to develop our own powers, gain the mastery of this human machine, come to the broadest, deepest self-realization. And then we serve for the real end of service, to make life no narrow, selfish thing, but let it sweep as sweeps the morning— broad and full and free for all men and all time, that you and I and all may earn a living and earn, too, much more than that— a life worth living.⁵⁹

Endnotes and Sources

1. W.E.B. DuBois, *Writings in Periodicals* edited by W.E.B. DuBois: *Selections from The Crisis*, vol. 1, ed., Herbert Aptheker (Millwood, New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1983), 160.

This quote from an August, 1918 article in *The Crisis* was preceded by his controversial article, "Close Ranks," in the July, 1918 issue, in which he wrote: "We make no ordinary sacrifice, but we make it gladly and willingly with our eyes lifted to the hills." *Ibid.*, 159.

2. Herbert Aptheker has described DuBois as "a kind of biblical prophet calling the nation to the path of rectitude, warning of the realities of retribution; (who) writes as one filled with a kind of national consciousness in his own people and simultaneously as one who is profoundly in love with the United States of the Declaration of Independence and who is seeking to make of this land... one fully in accord with that immortal manifesto." *The Literary Legacy of W.E.B. DuBois* (White Plains, New York: Kraus International Publishers, 1989), 51.

In Biblical terms the prophet was a person with extraordinary spiritual and moral insight who called the people's attention to injustices and the realities of existence. DuBois was also a prophet as defined as one who is "an effective or leading spokesman for a cause, doctrine, or group." *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, tenth edition, 1993.

3. W.E.B. DuBois, *Writings in Periodicals Edited by Others*, vol. 1, ed. Herbert Aptheker (Millwood, New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1982), 83.

4. DuBois, *The Education of Black People: Ten Critiques, 1906-1960*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1973), 6.

DuBois' early interest in philosophy was a basic reason for his interest in a Harvard education: "I was in Harvard... to enlarge my grasp of the meaning of the universe... above all I wanted to study philosophy! I wanted to get hold of the basis of knowledge and explore foundations and beginnings." DuBois, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. DuBois*, tenth printing (New York: International Publishers Company, 1988), 132-133.

But it was as a teacher that DuBois hoped to be remembered. At age 89, during a 1957 TV interview with Channel 5, New York City, he answered a question: "Well, the thing that I would want to be remembered for would be my writing and teaching. I have liked teaching... I have tried to teach." *The Seventh Son: The Thought and Writings of W.E.B. DuBois*, ed. Julius Lester (New York: Random House, 1971), 708. (It is interesting to speculate on the fact that DuBois used the singular "thing" in referring to "writing and teaching." He viewed his writing as synonymous with teaching.)

5. DuBois' experiences in a run-down, ill-equipped, one-room schoolhouse in the rural, segregated south did not negate his faith in education. He wrote: "I loved my school, and the fine faith the children had in the wisdom of their teacher was truly marvellous. We read and spelled together, wrote a little, picked flowers, sang, and listened to stories of the world beyond the hill." *Ibid.*, 117-118.

6. Many are not aware that "DuBois embarked on a career as a sociologist prior to the turn of the century... through a careful, scientific, sociological analysis of black Americans. From 1896 to 1910 DuBois was an extremely productive sociologist." Preface to *W.E.B. DuBois: On Sociology and the Black Community*, ed. Dan Green and Edwin Driver (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), vii.

Elijah Anderson has declared that "W.E.B. DuBois is a founding father of American sociology." DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, ed. Elijah Anderson (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), ix.

7. Aptheker, ed., *The Education of Black People*, x.

8. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Donald B. Gibson (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 77.

9. *Ibid.*

10. DuBois wrote in a *Crisis* article (April 1934): "I am not worried about being consistent. What worries me is the Truth," and in his book, *In Battle for Peace*, he noted that "contradictions and paradox poured over paradox and contradictions."

Willie Drake found the apparent inconsistencies appearing during DuBois' several decades of writing on controversial issues to be a natural result of an inquiring mind. "A seemingly enduring strain in this man was honesty, and honesty and expanding intelligence would call upon DuBois to alter a number of previous viewpoints." Willie Drake, "From Reform to Communism: The Intellectual Development of W.E.B. DuBois." (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1985), 96.

11. Quoted in "DuBois: Scholarly Activist," Claude Lewis, Op-Ed page, *The Wichita Eagle*, November 10, 1993. A commentary on David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. DuBois: Biography of a Race - 1868-1919* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993).

12. Arnold Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. DuBois* (New York: Schocken Books, 1990; reprint, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), vii.

13. Sydney Harris, *The Authentic Person* (Niles, Illinois: Argus Communications, 1972), 95.

14. Some researchers who have analyzed the tensions generated by DuBois' wrestling with oppositional ideas and ideals have defined his thought in terms of a dialectical process. For example see Keith Byerman, "Two Warring Ideals: The Dialectical Thought of W.E.B. DuBois," (Ph.D. dissertation, Purdue University, 1978).

15. DuBois wrote of his "double consciousness" on numerous occasions, including in *Souls*, 45. "It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness... One ever feels his twoness— an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals." The "twoness" of his educational philosophy might have been stated in similar terms, though with less personal emotion attached to the words.

16. DuBois, *Writings by W.E.B. DuBois in Periodicals Edited By Others vol. 1*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (Millwood, New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1982), 83

17. Louis Farrakhan, quoted in an interview by John Kennedy, Jr., in *George*, October, 1996.

18. DuBois, *Dusk of Dawn*, in Nathan Huggins, *W.E.B. DuBois: Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1986), 574.

19. Both DuBois and Washington believed in the importance of educating African Americans for the opportunities and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society. Their differences were related to an issue that has deep historical and philosophical roots, and which continues to generate heated controversy regarding public school purposes. In simplified terms the issue is one of "tracking," with some students encouraged toward a "liberal," college-bound education, and others "destined" for a world-of-work curriculum. Washington was willing to settle for a vocational/practical education — a terminal process. DuBois demanded the right to a liberal/humanistic education— a continuing process making opportunities for higher education available to African Americans. Washington was willing to compromise educational, political, and civil rights for work-place opportunities. DuBois would not compromise. He believed that "necessary as it is to earn a living, it is more important to earn a life ... living is not for earning, but earning is for living. The education that trains men simply for earning a living is not education." *The Education of Black People*, 14 and 115.

20. David D. DuBois, "Understanding the Legacy of W.E.B. DuBois," *Emerge*, October, 1993, 63.

In a 1910 speech to a "white, rich, and well-born" audience in Brookline, Massachusetts DuBois said that "the first step toward lifting the submerged mass of black people in the South is through the higher training of the talented few." Later he wrote: "My faith hitherto had been in what I once denominated as the talented tenth. I now realize that... out of the mass of the working classes, who know life in its bitter struggle, will continually rise the real, unselfish and clear sighted leadership." This was written after he came to believe the educated "talented tenth" had failed in an obligation to help lift the "mass of the working classes."

For a contemporary interpretation of a "generation X" version of the talented tenth see the 1997 film, *Swingers*. "They cross dramatic racial barriers. They show the universality of the American dream and the American experience once the stereotypes are put away." Bob Curtright, film review, *Wichita Eagle*, March 19, 1997.

21. DuBois, *The Correspondence of W.E.B. DuBois*, vol. 3, ed. Herbert Aptheker (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1978), 395.

Even though DuBois entered Harvard "to discover Truth," he later "gave up the search for 'Absolute' Truth; not from doubt of (its) existence... but because I believe that our limited knowledge and clumsy methods of research made it impossible now to completely apprehend Truth... I assumed the existence of Truth (and)... that Truth was only partially known." *Ibid*.

22. DuBois, *Darkwater: Voices From Within the Veil* (Millwood, New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1988. Reprint, New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1921), 204.

23. DuBois, *Worlds of Color*, book 3, *The Black Flame: A Trilogy* (Millwood, New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1976), 166.

24. DuBois, *The Crisis*, January, 1912, in Huggins, 1139.

25. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, with introductions by Nathan Hare and Alvin Poussaint (New York: New American Library, 1982), 139.

Perennialism, as an educational philosophy, is based on an understanding that human nature is innate, and everywhere the same, despite differing environmental conditions. This belief is coupled with the belief that there are basic, fundamental, enduring ideas and "truths," that have been revealed over time through the great works of literature, history, philosophy, religion and science. Therefore, there is a "basic" education that should be the same for all students.

26. DuBois, *The Crisis*, May, 1914, in Huggins, 1157.

27. DuBois, *Dusk of Dawn*.

28. DuBois, *Correspondence*, vol. 3, 394.

29. DuBois, ed. Aptheker, *Education of Black folk*, 10.

30. "We are one world... let us realize our responsibilities," DuBois, *Prayers*, 26.

31. DuBois, found in Rampersad, *Art and Imagination*, 12.

32. DuBois, ed. Aptheker, *Education of Black folk*, 78.

33. Eugene Holmes, *Black Titan: W.E.B. DuBois*, ed. John Clarke, et. al. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 78.

34. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Donald B. Gibson (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 34.

35. DuBois, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*, with an introduction by Herbert Aptheker (Millwood, New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1974. Reprint, Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co., 1911), 50.

36. DuBois, *Souls*, ed. Hare and Poussaint, 132.

37. DuBois. *Against Racism: Unpublished Essays, Papers, Addresses, 1887-1961*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 252.
38. DuBois. *Negro Digest*, April, 1947, 235-236.
39. DuBois interpreted the negative aspect of "individualism" as promoted in a Darwinian, capitalist economic philosophy: "Its foundation is the idea of the strong man- Individualism coupled with the rule of might... the advance of one part of the world at the expense of the whole; the overwhelming sense of the I, and the consequent forgetting of the Thou." *Autobiography*, 146.
40. DuBois. *Periodicals Edited By Others*, vol. 1, 219.
41. DuBois. *Prayers for Dark People*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 59.
42. DuBois. *Dark Princess: A Romance* (Millwood, New York: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1974. Reprint, New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1928), 42.
43. DuBois. *Autobiography*, 281 and 423.
44. DuBois frequently referred to the triple responsibilities of work, service, and sacrifice. In one example he exhorted the 1898 Fisk University graduates to "gladly work, and sacrifice, and serve." found in Huggins. *DuBois Writings*, 839.
- For a scholarly treatment of DuBois as a philosophical Pragmatist see Cornel West. *The American Evasion of Philosophy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).
45. Al Morgan. in an interview of DuBois on Channel 5, New York City, July 4, 1957. Found in *Seventh Son*, ed. Lester, 708.
46. DuBois. *Manual Builds a School*, 319, and *Education of Black Folk*, 13.
47. DuBois. *Outlook*, October 17, 1903.
48. DuBois. *Souls*, ed. Hare and Poussaint, 126.
49. DuBois. *Autobiography*, 202.
50. DuBois. *Correspondence*, vol. 2, 174.
51. E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1987), 21.
52. DuBois. *Souls*, ed. Gibson, 11.
53. DuBois. *Darkwater*, 210. This quote was preceded by the meaningful statement that "we must seek not to make men carpenters, but to make carpenters men," and followed by the question, "Is not the problem of their (African American) education simply an intensification of the problem of educating all children?"
54. We might use Jeff Zorn's term, "a tough minded pluralism" to help define DuBois' educational philosophy. Zorn speaks of DuBois' educational ideas as "complex... incorporating a high regard for 'uniquely Black' matters, a grounding in traditional studies... and a quite stringent character training." In a letter to the "Afterwords" column in *Educational Theory*, fall, 1993, 483.
55. DuBois. *Prayers*, 65.
56. DuBois. *Periodicals Edited by Others*, vol 1, 85.
- DuBois once admonished teachers to "teach the truth as they see it even if it means they lose their jobs... to give up teaching and go to digging ditches before bowing to slavery of thought." *Education of Black People*, 157-158.
57. DuBois. *Annals of the American Academy of Science*, November, 1928, 9.
- DuBois wrote that "the public school should be a great democracy where all elements of the population come to realize the essential humanity of each." *Correspondence*, vol. 1, 453.
58. DuBois. *DuBois Writings*, ed. Huggins, 831
59. DuBois, *Ibid.*, 832.