

# Africana Phenomenology: Its Philosophical Implications

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Given some of the exclusive claims on reason that the West has made, it has been difficult to see clearly the rationality of non-Western peoples. This eclipsing of the rationality of non-Western peoples, particularly people of African descent, has made problematic the status of theory in fields such as Africana Studies. Quite often, it is assumed that developments in this field will take the form of case studies that will help to confirm or disconfirm theories and methodologies produced by the West. In other words, nothing new of theoretical importance is expected to emerge from the growth of Africana Studies. Indeed even some Africana scholars have associated theory and rational linear thought with white males. This is certainly not how I see Africana Studies. My disagreement with this view is confirmed with every new development in the growing field of Africana philosophy. Here the theoretical side of Africana Studies becomes particularly evident, given the nature of philosophical practices. In this paper, I examine the case of Africana phenomenology, an emerging subfield within the larger discursive terrain of Africana philosophy. Like the larger terrain of which it is a part, Africana phenomenology is not very well known because it too has been forced to exist in the non-rational and a-theoretical shadow cast over it by Western philosophy in general, and Western phenomenology in particular. Thus our aim in this paper is twofold: the first is to bring the field of Africana phenomenology clearly into view by outlining its contours, problems and theorists. In particular, I will focus on the contributions of WEB Dubois, Frantz Fanon and Lewis Gordon. Second, I will explore the philosophical implications of the emergence of Africana phenomenology as a subfield of Africana philosophy. These I will argue point to a metaphysical distinctness that can only be adequately engaged by a more comparative approach to philosophy.

## Culture and Phenomenology

By phenomenology, I mean the discursive practice through which self-reflective descriptions of the constituting activities of consciousness are produced after the “natural attitude” of everyday life has been bracketed by some ego-displacing technique. An Africana phenomenology would thus be the self-reflective descriptions of the constituting activities of the consciousness of Africana peoples, after the natural attitudes of Africana egos have been displaced by de-centering techniques practiced in these cultures. This thematizing of the specificity of Africana phenomenology raises two important theoretical questions: the relationship of phenomenology to specific cultures and disciplines. In relation to the first of these, the notion of a distinct Africana phenomenology very explicitly suggests a cultural dimension to this enterprise. This cultural approach to phenomenology is an unusual one as it culturally conditions the certainty of self-reflective knowledge and raises very explicitly the need to do phenomenology from a comparative cultural perspective. This I shall argue is one of the important theoretical consequences that have accompanied the emergence of Africana phenomenology from its history of invisibility.

With regard to our second theoretical question, the self-reflective core of phenomenology suggests that as an epistemic practice it is not peculiar to philosophy as a discipline. Rather, it is an activity that can be initiated from inside any knowledge-producing human discipline. It is also important to note that all human disciplines, including the logical and empirical practices of philosophy, produce knowledge in the natural attitude. Like philosophy, the other disciplines can all interrupt their everyday practices and engage the transcendental or knowledge-constitutive ground

that supports their more routine practices. However, the distance to this ground varies between disciplines and is determined largely by qualitative differences in creative and knowledge-producing codes. But in spite of these differences, it is the existence of this shared ground that explains why phenomenological philosophy has been able to reach the transcendental spaces of other discourses, and in the West has been enriched by Edmund Husserl's reflections on the foundations of mathematics. In the case of Africana phenomenology, it is the reflections of creative writers and race theorists that have been particularly enriching.

This problem of culture and phenomenology has in part been concealed by the ways in which reason and culture have been brought together in the identity of European phenomenology. In its classic formulations by Descartes, Kant, Hegel and Husserl, European phenomenology was seen as the self-reflective practice that disclosed the latent movements of a universal reason, which was also the prime constituting force operating within the core of the European subject. Consequently, it was the phenomenology of this subject that would for the first time make manifest these latent activities of universal reason. The crucial significance of this reason as a constituting force was the perceived universality of its categories, positings, claims, - in short, its self- and knowledge-producing capabilities. In its fully realized state, Husserl saw reason as "the form of a universal philosophy which grows through consistent apodictic insight and supplies its own norms through an apodictic method" (1970:16).

However, this possibility of a universal reason was, quite paradoxically, limited to a very specific cultural particularity: the cultural particularity of Europe. This particularization of universal reason was at the same time the universalizing of the European subject as its science and phenomenology would give reason a fully realized vision of itself. In this peculiar configuration, Europe acquired a monopoly that made it co-extensive with the geography of reason. This geography is well known to us from the works of Hegel, Kant, Husserl, and Weber. For Husserl, the development of European phenomenology was tied to the question of whether or not "European humanity bears within itself an absolute idea, rather than being merely an empirical anthropological type like 'China' or 'India'" (1970:16).

To grasp the reality and presence of Africana phenomenology, this imperial geography and its exclusive relationship between reason and European culture has to be pulled apart. Without such a clearing, it will be impossible to perceive or even imagine the reality of an Africana phenomenology. In preparing the ground for such new phenomenological possibilities, a number of additional factors will also have to be reconsidered. Here I will briefly mention three: (1) the occasion for self-reflection; (2) the path into the practice of self-reflection; and (3) the role played by knowledge produced in the natural attitude in our constructions and reconstructions of the transcendental domain.

In the history of Western philosophy, the occasion for phenomenological reflection has consistently been the problem of rationality and the consequences of rational/scientific knowledge production. Thus the dialectical logic of Hegel's phenomenology was an attempt to keep the creative and explanatory agency of Spirit as an integral part of the changing discursive spaces produced by the rise of the natural sciences (1967:86-105). In Husserl, the occasion for self-reflection was the crisis produced by the positivistically reduced notions of rationality and humanity that accompanied the rise of mathematics and the natural sciences (1971:3-16). Habermas has formulated this reduction as the colonization of the Western life-world by its systems of technical and instrumental rationality (1987:322). It is only in its existential and grammatical variants that these problems of the rational cogito have been replaced by those of the desiring and the signifying subjects. In Sartre, the occasion for self-reflection is the bad faith that the European subject has consistently brought to the knowing situation and the capacity that bad faith has given it to mobilize reason in the service of unreason and untruth (1956:47-67). In Derrida, the occasion for self-reflection has been Western

philosophy's practice (including its phenomenology) of restricting the nature and scope of writing, in relation to speaking and thinking, to a fraction of what it really is (1976:6-26). Derrida's grammatology has as its goal the rescuing of writing from a metaphysically imposed obscurity, that is similar to Husserlian phenomenology's goal rescuing a more fully realized concept of reason from its positivistically imposed obscurity.

These variations within the overall telos of rationality that has governed the self-image of European phenomenology are important for raising the question of other occasions for self-reflection that are outside of this rational horizon. These possibilities are important for us as I will argue that the governing telos Africana phenomenology has been racial liberation and the problems of racial domination from which it springs. In our examinations of DuBois, Fanon and Gordon, we will see how variations on the problem of racial liberation displace the problem of rationality as the source of occasions for self-reflection.

The second and closely related set of variations necessary for a clear seeing of Africana phenomenology are those variations that have occurred in the paths to self-reflection. In Descartes, it was the method of radical doubting (1960:7-22). In Hegel, it was the practice of spiritual and theological meditation (1971). In Husserl, self-reflection was practiced through the phenomenological reduction (1975:5-20). In Sartre, it was through existential analysis (1956:557-75), and in Derrida it took the form of reflection of the creativity of the systems of writing in which the subject was embedded (1976:75-93). What do these variations in methods of producing self-reflective knowledge mean for some of the universal claims made by European phenomenology? Are these the only methods of producing self-reflective knowledge? I will argue that these variations problematize these universal claims, and that Africana phenomenology further complicates the situation by adding yet another method: that of poetics.

The third and final point that I want to make in preparing the ground for an Africana phenomenology is the relations between the everyday ethical/practical projects of phenomenologies (rescuing reason, writing, or racial equality) and our constructions and ongoing reconstructions of the transcendental domain. These constructions and reconstructions seem to be profoundly influenced by the nature of these world-oriented projects. Thus Kant's logical reconstruction of this domain was clearly shaped by his interest in clarifying the foundations of the natural sciences. Hegel's spiritual reading was inseparable from his interests in clarifying the foundations and validity of the spiritual and theological discourses. Husserl's goal of making the transcendental domain the pre-suppositionless and rigorously formulated foundation of all discourses was clearly related to his interest in clarifying the status of the processes of idealization that constitute the foundations of mathematics. Finally, Derrida's semiotic vision of the transcendental domain is also inseparable from his project of clarifying the foundations of writing. These examples point to a circle of mutual influencing between the world-oriented projects of phenomenologies and their corresponding views of what is foundational or transcendental for knowledge production. But such a pattern of influence points to a historicizing of the transcendental domain that would limit any absolute claims for Spirit, logic, pre-suppositionless idealization, or arche-writing. In all of these accounts of the transcendental domain there has been a clear tendency to extend their foundational reach beyond what this circle of mutual influence would suggest. In Africana phenomenology, this tendency has been distinctly weaker and could be related to the differences in the telos and nature of its ethical/practical project.

With these three points in place, our conception of phenomenology should now be a more open and flexible one. This flexibility extends to its relations with cultures, historical processes, disciplines, ethical/practical projects, occasions for self-reflection and methods of self-reflection. On the horizon of such a comparative conception of this subfield of philosophies around the world, the reality and possibility of an Africana phenomenology can be clearly seen.

### **Africana Phenomenology**

In the tradition of Africana phenomenology, the occasion for self-reflection has not been the positivistic reduction of rationality and the mechanized caricature of the European subject that it threatens to produce. Rather, the occasion for reflection has been the racist negating of the humanity of Africans and the caricature of “the negro” that it has produced. Unlike European phenomenology, these Africana reflections have been interested in clarifying the systemic error producing foundations of the European humanities and social sciences that have had to legitimate and make appear as correct this racist reduction of African humanity. The positivistic reduction European humanity and the racist reduction of African humanity are opposite sides of the coin of modern Western capitalism. The mechanical caricature is a part of the upper and rational side of itself that Western capitalism likes to affirm. The racist caricature of “the Negro” is a creation of the “underside” of this mechanized capitalism, a part of its irrational shadow that it cannot affirm but must project onto others that it perceives as its opposite. The sociological setting for the production of the caricature of “the negro” was not the Habermasian internal colonization of a life-world by its own systems of technical and instrumental reason. Rather this setting was the external colonization of one life-world (the African) by another (the European). This process of imperial domination by a society of a different race and a different culture shattered the traditional socio-cultural worlds of pre-colonial Africa. It racialized identities that were predominantly spiritual, physically captured, enslaved and exported millions of Africans for economic exploitation on plantations in the Western hemisphere. In short, it was in this context of colonial conquest that Africans became part of “the underside of modernity” (Dussel:1996) or what Husserl earlier referred to as “the Europeanization of all other civilizations” (1970:-16).

The implosive impact of this Europeanization on the life-worlds of African societies can be quickly indicated by some of its classic representations in literature. In continental Africa, Chinua Achebe’s novel, *Things Fall Apart*, has become one of the classic metaphors for the shattering impact of European colonization. In the Caribbean, a novel that holds a corresponding symbolic status is George Lamming’s, *In the Castle of My Skin*. Here the impact of racialization or what Fanon will call negrification is much greater than in Achebe’s novel. The African has ceased to be a Yoruba or Akan and has become a “black”, a “negro” or a “nigger”. In Afro-America, Richard Wright’s, *Black Boy*, or Ralf Ellison’s, *Invisible Man*, would be corresponding works. In both of these novels, the process of racialization (niggerization) is even more extreme than in the case of Lamming. Thus the terrain of self-reflection in the Africana world has been a rather burnt out, exploded and blackened one, very different from the technological dystopia of Aldous Huxley’s, *Brave New World*, or George Orwell’s, *1984*.

In spite of this broken and blackened nature of the terrain of Africana self-reflection, it is still very much a human world with hope and genius. This hope has been one of its classic expressions by another Afro-Caribbean writer, Derek Walcott. He writes: “break a vase and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than the love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. The glue that fits the pieces is the sealing of its original shape. It is such a love that reassembles our African and Asiatic fragments, the cracked heirlooms whose restoration shows its white scars” (1993: 9). This blackened imploding of the pre-colonial African consciousness and its loving reconstruction are two important poles defining the world of Africana phenomenology.

### **Dubois and Africana Phenomenology**

Although the roots of Africana self-reflection are to be found in Africa, the pattern of development of the field is such that it is best to start with the reflections of the period of enslavement and its

aftermath. These periods produced the writings of eighteenth and nineteenth century ex-slaves such as Olaudah Equiano, Ottobah Cugoana, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, Mary Prince, and David Walker. In the twentieth century, self-reflective Africana writing continued in the works of Edward Blyden, Antenor Firmin, Marcus Garvey, Ida B. Wells, WEB DuBois, Alain Locke, Frantz Fanon, Wilson Harris, Sylvia Wynter, Lewis Gordon and many others. Of these writers, the first to outline a comprehensive phenomenology of Africana self-consciousness was DuBois, whose life and work spanned the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century.

In his work, *The Autobiography*, DuBois tells us that he entered Harvard with the goal of pursuing a career in philosophy. The courses he took exposed him to the thought of the American pragmatists, particularly William James and Josiah Royce, and the engagements of the school with Hegel's philosophy (Zamir, 1995: 113-33). This was the context in which the young DuBois encountered Hegel's phenomenology. When we consider the latter's impact on CLR James, Rene Menil (founding member of Legitimate defense), Frantz Fanon and Wilson Harris, it is probably the European phenomenology that has had the most influence on Africana phenomenology. Hegel's phenomenology is a classic example of what Habermas calls a general interpretation as opposed to a general theory (1971:246-73). The former is a generalized narrative of self-development that is directed at a subject and must therefore have an "addressee". General theories are aimed at objects rather than subjects. The application of a general interpretation thus becomes a process of self-application – one must literally try on the theory and respond to the experienced sense of fit. In other words, general interpretations require the explicit thematizing of the responses of specific subjects to its discursive offerings. In the case of general theories, application takes the form of an externally imposed subsumption that requires experimental evaluation rather than confirmation from an addressee. As a general interpretation, the application of Hegel's phenomenology to the self-consciousness of the Africana subject can only be judge appropriate by the sense of fit this subject reports. The changes that DuBois made in Hegel's phenomenology derived from the experience of an imperfect fit.

For the young DuBois, the Africana subject was a culturally distinct, and hence non-European, site of original meanings, discourses and experiences. Consequently, to make himself the addressee of Hegel's phenomenology, DuBois' engagements with it had to be different from those of European or Euro-American philosophers. As Hegel's primary addressees, the latter could very easily test it by putting themselves in the role of the self-consciousness that had reached the stage of the master. Further, they could identify with the earlier stages in this process of self-development as they were drawn directly from European history. Because the self-consciousness of Africana subject is not the primary addressee of Hegel's phenomenology, self-application cannot produce the same results. Further, DuBois cannot identify with either the earlier or later stages in Hegel's general interpretation as they are not drawn from the history of the Africana subject. Thus what DuBois will take from Hegel is how to view the racialized African subject and its possibilities for recovery from the standpoint of the self- and world-constituting activities of its consciousness. In short, it is the general phenomenological approach of grasping self and world from the perspective of a constituting consciousness that DuBois takes from Hegel. However, unlike Hegel, DuBois will not make an absolute onto-epistemic commitment to this perspective.

For Hegel, the self development of the European subject was not a smooth, unitary process of growth. Rather it was an upward movement that was marked by splits, doublings, and self/other binaries that resulted in premature exclusions and negations that would have to be overcome in subsequent stages. Thus in the paragraphs that open the section on "Lordship and Bondage" in *The Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel writes extensively about the doubling or duplication that arises from the fact that self-consciousness exists not only for itself, but also for another self-consciousness. In other words, it is the fact that self-consciousness must be both for itself and for another that

produces its “double meanings” (1967:229). Here too we find another significant influence that Hegel had on DuBois’ phenomenology.

The first attempt of the young DuBois to bring the Africana subject into an engagement with Hegel’s phenomenology was his 1890 Harvard commencement address: “Jefferson Davis as Representative of Civilization”. There, clearly in the role of the slave, DuBois presents the Africana subject as “the Submissive Man” who is “at once the check and complement of the Teutonic Strong Man” (Levering-Lewis, 1995:19). With this different metaphor of Africana selfhood, the young DuBois is here making a significant departure from Hegel on the basis of the different phenomenological history of the Africana subject. The “Submissive Man” is both check and complement to the European subject because not even to the latter’s mind is it given to recognize the whole truth of human ontogenesis (Levering-Lewis, 1995:19). Such a vision of the totality can only emerge from conversations in which the contributions of all civilizations are acknowledged and their complementarity recognized. With this concept of a global complementarity between cultures, DuBois breaks with the conflating of Europe and the universal that was such an integral part of Hegel’s phenomenology. This break in turn sets the stage for the positions that DuBois will take in his important essay, “The Conservation of Races”, and for the way in which he will engage Hegel in *The Souls of Black Folks*.

### **Double Consciousness and Duboisian Phenomenology**

In the opening essay of *Souls*, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings”, DuBois outlines his theory of double consciousness which constitutes the core of his phenomenology. The double consciousness of which he speaks in this essay is not just the result of the Africana subject having also to exist before another self-consciousness. Its life in Africa made existing for another self-consciousness an already familiar reality for this subject, and quite possibly the Hegelian form of double consciousness. DuBoisian double consciousness results from the Africana subject having to exist for a self-consciousness that racialized itself as white. In the dialectic of racial recognition that takes place between the two, it is not the humanity but the blackness of the Africana subject that confirms the whiteness of the Teutonic “Strong Man”. As a result, the racialization of the African as black produced a very different form of doubling than in the case of Hegel’s non-racialized master or slave.

For DuBois, this racialization of identities and supporting institutional orders were not leftovers from the traditional past but integral parts of the modern world order of European capitalism. It was as integral as the processes of commodification, colonization, rationalization, and secularization that Marx, Weber and Durkheim thought were so central to the rise Western capitalism. The growth of processes of racialization throughout the formative and mature periods of Western capitalism is evident in its expanding discourses on the hierarchies of races and the increasingly global reach of its institutions of white supremacy.

In DuBois’ view, the impact of these processes of racialization on both the psyche and the transcendental consciousness of the Africana subject was the creating of new divisions within them – divisions that were different from Hegelian forms of doubling. With regard to the psyche, the new division was created by the shattering and contesting of the “We” or the collective identity of the Africana subject. It was shattered by the caricature image of “the negro” as the polar opposite of “the white” that existed and continues to exist in the mind of the European and the Euro-American. This stereotyped image of the African in the white mind was given some of its clearest expressions in the “blackface” that whites would put on when they played “negroes” on the vaudeville stage. It was the institutionalizing of this absolute racial distance between whites and blacks that shattered and contested the pre-colonial collective identities of the Akan, Hausa, Yoruba, Fon and other

African ethnic groups. DuBoisian double consciousness is a phenomenological account of the self-consciousness of these African subjects whose “We” had been shattered and challenged by this process of negritude.

DuBois represented the double life-world created by racialization through the metaphor of the veil. Thus he spoke of life within and outside of the veil. This concept/metaphor is another important descriptive term in DuBois’s phenomenology. In *Darkwater*, DuBois gave us a hint as to how he had adjusted to life behind the veil. He retreated into a “tower above the loud complaining of the human sea” (1999:17), from where he would attempt to grasp and engage the world intellectually. This is one possible existential response to the involuntary presence of this racial veil. This response reminds us of George Lamming’s retreat into “The Castle of My Skin”, taking with him only the tools of the creative writer. Tower and castle are here important symbols of the response of African subjects to the double life-world created by the veil. In *Souls*, DuBois mentions the responses of other African subjects that were not so “fiercely sunny: their youth shrunk into tasteless sycophancy, or into silent hatred of the pale world about them and mocking distrust of everything white, or wasted itself in a bitter cry, why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in my own house” (1969:16). It is these less sunny psyches that will be the focus of Fanon’s phenomenology. Thus along with the images of tower and castle, sycophancy, waste, stranger, and outcast are also important descriptive terms of African self-consciousness before the veil of the racial other.

The specifics of this dilemma of the racial veil are such that it really has no counterpart in any of the stages of Hegel’s phenomenology of European self-consciousness. Zamir’s suggestion that African double consciousness can be seen as a case of Hegel’s “unhappy consciousness” does not really work. The divided Hegelian subject moves between a desire for an “I” that is autonomous and self-constituting, and the need for confirmation and recognition from the other. These are some of the existential dilemmas that the African subject would have experienced before its racialization. In the phase of the former’s development that Hegel referred to as “the unhappy consciousness”, this divided subject has moved beyond the terms of the master-slave relationship to explore stoic and skeptical responses to its inner divisions. What Hegel calls the “double-consciousness” (1967:251) of this unhappy subject stems from an awareness of itself as “changeable” at the same time that it is also “consciousness of unchangeableness” (1967:252). As the latter, it must seek to liberate itself from its changeable existence but is unable to reach the life of the unchangeable. This is the particular “dualizing of self-consciousness” that constitutes the dilemmas of the unhappy consciousness.

As a racialized subject, the African individual remains very much within the terms of the master-slave relationship. Consequently, the above dualizing is not the source of the two poles between which the African subject oscillates. This subject moves not between a changeable “I” and an unchangeable “Other” but between two “We’s”. Behind this particular experience of “twoness” is the earlier noted phenomenon of the external colonization of one life-world by another and the contempt and pity it produced. The self-reflections of the DuBoisian subject cannot avoid engagements with this specific type of twoness. He/she must encounter questions such as, “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 to be an American?” (Levering-Lewis, 1995:24). One feels here the clashing of two racialized and hence irreconcilable collective identities. This is not the dilemma of Hegel’s unhappy consciousness.

In addition to the splitting of the African psyche, DuBoisian double consciousness also refers to a similar splitting of the transcendental consciousness of this racialized subject. The internalizing of the caricature of “the negro” also produced significant changes in the categorical structure of the transcendental domain of the African subject. This complex set of categoric

changes DuBois summed up under the label of “second sight” (1969:16), which is a new or second way of seeing self and world. Second sight is the ability of the racialized Africana subject to see him/herself as a “negro”, that is, through the eyes of the white other. It is new in the sense that it was not a capability that pre-colonial Africans had. This new half of the double vision of the Africana subject suggests that first sight is the ability to see one’s self through one’s own eyes. The categoric changes in the organization of the transcendental domain that are associated with double consciousness derive from the complex and changing dynamics that developed between first and second sight.

To the extent that second sight, the ability to see one’s self as a “negro” replaced first sight, it constituted a major obstacle to any genuine Africana self-consciousness. Tied to the European or Euro-American life-worlds, second sight yielded the Africana subject “no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world” (1969:16). In other words, this exclusive form of second sight is in reality a categoric form of self-blindness, a deformation, a detour rather than a positive phase in the development of Africana self-consciousness. This “negro” detour will only take the Africana subject down a blind alley. It is a classic case of false consciousness that will only take this subject away from its self. This struggle to see through the darkness of second sight is the categoric dilemma of Africana self-consciousness as disclosed by DuBois’s phenomenology. This dilemma of second sight affected Africana knowledge production as profoundly as those of the tower, the outcast, or the stranger affected self production.

### **The Ethical/Practical Project of Dubois’ Phenomenology**

As in the case of Hegel or Husserl, Dubois’s phenomenology was intricately linked to an ethical/practical project. This was a project of racial equality that included the deniggerization of Africana identities, the full recognition of the humanity of Africana peoples, and also of their cultural contributions to the shared problems of human ontogenesis. We saw glimpses of this project in the Jefferson Davis address. We will now develop it more fully by drawing primarily from *Souls*, *The History of the Suppression of the Slave Trade*, and *The Philadelphia Negro*. This ethical dimension of DuBois’s phenomenology is quite distinct and constitutes another area of a clear break with Hegel. DuBois’s project of racial equality displaces the Hegelian one of keeping the vision of Spirit a part of the rational world of the European subject. I will develop this distinctness of the DuBoisian project around three crucial points: (1) DuBois’s potentiated second sight; (2) his poeticist style of self-reflection; and (3) his commitment to racial and cultural equality.

The categoric transformation represented by second sight was very much a double-edged sword. On one side it guards against the achieving of true self-consciousness by Africana subjects, and on the other it can give the latter very special access and insight into the dehumanizing “will to power” of the European imperial subject. This peculiar insight, which I am calling potentiated second sight, is a crucial link between the transcendental and the ethical dimensions of DuBois’s phenomenology. The potentiating of second sight is always a latent possibility in the racialized and divided self-consciousness of the Africana subject. This possibility can be activated in two basic ways: first through the recovery of a significant measure of first sight, that is, the ability to see one’s self as an African as opposed to “the negro” that the white mind was constantly producing and projecting. This ability to see one’s self as an African will depend upon one’s ability to creatively uproot the “blackface” stereotype, and to reconstruct self and world within the creative codes of African discourses and symbols. To the extent that an individual or group is able to do this, they will have an alternative space from which to see through and critique the imposed “negro” stereotype. The Rastafarians are a good example of this first way of potentiating second sight.

The second is clearly the finding of an independent point of self-elevation such as DuBois's tower or George Lamming's castle. From such a point, there must be the cultivating of an informed and critical "I" that is capable of distancing itself from the caricature of "the negro" so that it is able to see clearly the latter's formation, its white psychosocial significance, and also its dissolution. The cultivation of such an "I" would then become either a new form of first sight or some form of third sight. Whichever it is, in conjunction with the ability to see one's self as an African, two very potent bases outside of the psychic terrain of "the negro" identity will have been established. Together they are not only able to see through and implode the imposed stereotype, but also to provide great insight into the psyche of the creators and perpetrators of this tragic farce. In the wide distances between the capabilities of the recovered African/tower identity and those of the "blackface" stereotype, the Africana subject had a living and reflectively accessible measure of the inhumanity of the Western imperial self. Lewis Gordon captures well the ironic dimensions of potentiated second sight when he notes that it emerges in the subject who has become aware of the lived contradiction of this deception, and who like Fanon is therefore able to announce "the absence of his interiority from the point of view of his interiority" (1995a:33). It is from the reflective immediacy of the decaying carcass of "the negro" that the critiques of potentiated second sight derive their ethical/moral power, pinpoint accuracy, and razor sharp quality.

In DuBois, our first glimpses of such critiques are to be found in his early short story, "A Vacation Unique". In this story, DuBois's hero, Cuffy, invites his Harvard classmate to disguise himself as a "negro" and to come and see the world from this point of view. Cuffy says to his classmate: "outside of mind you may study mind, and outside of matter by reason of the fourth dimension of color you may have a striking view of the intestines of the fourth great civilization" (Zamir, 223). In other words, what the classmate will get is an intestinal view of American civilization, of the hunger that drives it to dominate and racialize. This intestinal view of the white imperial self is repeated in *Darkwater*, in another of DuBois's classic statements of what I have called potentiated second sight. In the chapter, "The Souls of White Folks", he writes: "of them I am singularly clairvoyant. I see in and through them. I view them from unusual points of vantage. Not as foreigner do I come, for I am native, not foreign, bone of their thought and flesh of their language...Rather I see these souls undressed and from the back and side. I see the workings of their entrails. I know their thoughts and they know that I know" (1999:17). How did DuBois know? By shining the light of his potentiated second sight on the creators of the "blackface" caricature that he has killed. To confirm that DuBois is not the only Africana subject in possession of this special faculty of second sight, we need only think of Cugoana, Douglass, Garvey, Fanon, Malcolm X, or Angela Davis. But it was DuBois who first gave it a systematic formulation, and as such it constitutes one of the distinguishing features of the ethical/ practical project of his phenomenology.

The second distinctive feature of this project is DuBois's poeticist style of self-reflection. As noted earlier, all phenomenologies employ some technique of bracketing the natural attitude in order to reach the constituting movements of consciousness through what Husserl called "the self-evidence of original activity" (Derrida, 1989:163). The immediately evident self- and world-constituting activities of the Africana self were grasped by DuBois poetically, and explored more fully through the writing of novels and short stories. Thus in his approaches to consciousness DuBois used what we can call a poeticist reduction in contrast to the spirituo-theological and phenomenological reductions of Hegel and Husserl. Further, in *Souls*, DuBois also made use of music to supplement his poeticist techniques of bracketing the everyday world. However, here again, DuBois made no absolute onto-epistemic commitment to his poetics in spite of its vital role in gaining him access to the original or founding activity of the Africana self. He always used it in conjunction with other discourses, particularly history and sociology as both supplement and check.

DuBois's bracketing of the natural attitude and the everyday world was specific to his poetics. In his historical and sociological writings he returns quite easily to the everyday world. The dominance of intentional approaches that mark his poetics is reversed in these writings, where it takes second place to what we can call "extentional" approaches. As we will see, this shifting back and forth between intentional and extentional approaches is one important difference between the phenomenologies of DuBois and Gordon. Thus the knowing subject in DuBois changed identity and discipline as it wrote its many works. Earlier we noted that for DuBois it was not given to any one culture to see the whole truth. Similarly, it was not given to any one discipline or mode of the knowing subject to see the whole truth. The partiality of vision that DuBois saw as basic to all human cultures, he extended *a fortiori* to the disciplines and to the various modes that the knowing subject can adopt, including the poetic mode. Just as the "Submissive Man" must check and complement the "Strong Man", so must poetics check and complement sociology and history, as well as being itself checked and complemented by them. Although DuBois never explicitly thematized the principles by which he was able to bring these different disciplines and modes of the subject together to produce that powerful discursive synthesis that I have called his socio-historical poetics, they are the primary keys to the metaphysical foundations of his thought. We will return to these foundations later. Here it must suffice to note that the poeticist element in this synthesis gave DuBois his distinctive path to the process of self-reflection and thus access to the original activity of the Africana consciousness.

The third and final factor in this account of the ethical/practical dimension of DuBois' phenomenology is its clear commitment to projects of cultural and racial equality. In this commitment we see the love that reassembles the broken fragments of the vase of which Derek Walcott spoke. The racial hierarchies, the class inequalities and the caricaturing of identities produced by the coming into being of Western capitalism have given rise to human tragedies of major proportions. In both social and political terms, DuBois responded very thoughtfully and passionately to the devastating circumstances that these tragic outcomes created for Africana peoples. However, over the course of his long life these responses change a lot. In *The Philadelphia Negro*, DuBois outlined a program of limited assimilation, led by a black elite, to deal specifically with the problem of racial as opposed to class inequality. In *Black Reconstruction*, DuBois discovers and explores the potential of the self-organizing capabilities of the African American masses as a key part of the solution to the problem of racial inequality. In *Dusk of Dawn*, DuBois explores an ethnic enclave strategy that calls for a period of separate economic and political organizing before integrating into the larger social mainstream. With his departure for Ghana towards the end of his life, it is possible to argue that DuBois had given up on changing the racial order of America. But in spite of these changes in his sociopolitical responses the racializing processes of Western capitalism, his ethical responses to the human crises that it produced never wavered.

This unwavering ethical stance is most elegantly stated in the "final word" that closes *The Philadelphia Negro*. There DuBois links the problem of racial inequality directly to: that question of questions: "after all who are men? Is every featherless biped to be counted a man and brother? Are all races and types to be joint heirs of the new earth that men have striven to raise in thirty centuries or more?" (1996:385-6). DuBois tells us that Western civilization has answered these questions in the negative on the basis of a widening but still very limited and exclusionary conception of humanity. After speaking about the conditional admittance of groups like the Celts and the Asians, DuBois turns to the case of the Africans. He writes: but with the Negroes of Africa we come to a full stop, and in its heart the civilized world with one accord denies that these come within the pale of nineteenth century humanity. This feeling, widespread and deep-seated, is, in America, the vastest of the Negro problems" (1996:387). Here is DuBois, the poet, closing with potentiated second sight a major sociological work.

This in brief outline is DuBois's phenomenology of Africana self-consciousness. The Submissive Man, the tower, the veil, double consciousness, second sight, the love that puts the Submissive Man back together again are some of its distinguishing features. The double consciousness of which DuBois speaks cannot be adequately view as one of the stages of Hegel's phenomenology. Rather it is the theorizing of a period of imperial/racial domination in the self-consciousness of the Africana subject that is absent from the life of Hegel's European subject. Thus, when Shamoan Zamir asks: "How is it then that DuBois can read Hegel quite so critically, before he has begun to read Marx, without (as far as is known) a knowledge of Kierkegaard, well before Alexandre Kojeve and Sartre's commentaries on the Phenomenology, and very much against the grain of the readings of Hegel common in nineteenth century America?" (1995:117). I think that in addition to DuBois' genius, the answer is to be found in the uniqueness of this period of black racialization that DuBois' phenomenology had to theorize. Although by no means complete within itself, this phenomenology revealed in its inner structure the paradigmatic form that other Africana phenomenologies, such as those of Fanon and Gordon would take. They all share with DuBois this distinguishing notion of double consciousness, different aspects of which they will thematize and develop.

### **Fanon and Africana Phenomenology**

If DuBois contributed the first important chapter to an explicitly thematized phenomenology of Africana self-consciousness, then the second was clearly written by the Martinican psychoanalyst and revolutionary, Frantz Fanon. His major contribution to this particular subfield of Africana philosophy is the more detailed and incisive psycho-existential analysis of this historical phase of double consciousness identified by DuBois. In this effort, Fanon's achievements in *Black Skin, White Masks*, remain unsurpassed. There is no finer or more detailed account of the state of racial double consciousness.

As self-consciousness, the human being was for Fanon "motion toward the world and toward his like. A movement of aggression, which leads to enslavement or to conquest; a movement of love, a gift of the self, the ultimate stage of what by common accord is called ethical orientation" (1967:41). It is Fanon's view that every human consciousness has the capacity for these two kinds of movements. Further, it is the job of the phenomenologist and the psychologist to grasp in their originality and immediacy the specific meanings and the guiding telos of these two sets of creative movements that are inherent in human consciousness. This self-creative telos of individual human consciousness, Fanon comprehends as its "ontogeny" (1967:13). Thus the primary goal of his phenomenology is an account of the crisis confronting the ontogenesis of the Africana subject as a result of the historical phase of double consciousness that it is going through. In short, like DuBois, this crisis constitutes Fanon's occasion for self-reflection, the contradictory condition that motivates his journey inward.

However, again like DuBois, Fanon makes no absolute epistemic commitments to this ontogenic approach as a whole or to its specific philosophical and psychoanalytic dimensions. Indeed, given the socio-historical origins of this phase of double consciousness, Fanon insisted that "ontology cannot explain the being of the black man" (1967:110). Consequently, ontogeny must be supplemented by sociogeny. In other words, the self-constituting powers of the Africana consciousness must be dialectically supplemented and checked by the formative powers of socio-cultural orders.

Within this onto-/socio-genic approach, Fanon further refines his path to the practice of self-reflection by rising the ontogenic question of how should "the psychic modality" of human consciousness be studied? Fanon identifies two distinct approaches to self-reflective knowledge

within the overall framework of his ontogenic project. The first, which is on the “philosophical level” (1967:23), aims at the immediate grasping of the human subject through intuitive accounts of its basic needs and its movements toward the world. These intuitive accounts will always be incomplete and provisional, but at the same time very necessary. Hence, this philosophical approach requires that one should “strive unremittingly for a concrete and ever new understanding of man” (1967:22). In developing these intuitive accounts Fanon made use of both a poetic and a Sartrean inflected phenomenological reduction. As in the case of DuBois much of the power of Fanon’s writing comes from his ability to incorporate poetic insights into his socio-historical and psychological writings. Indeed Fanon’s text is unimaginable without the self-reflective knowledge produced within the frameworks of these two epistemic reductions. Thus an important part of making Fanon’s phenomenology more visible would be to make more explicit the ways in which he combined the use of these poetic and phenomenological reductions.

The second approach to self-reflection that Fanon identified was psychoanalytic. In contrast to the concrete orientation of the first or philosophical one, this approach first constructs what Habermas would call a general interpretation of the development of the human subject, and then attempts to grasp the concrete individual in terms of its deviations from this model. The use of this psychoanalytic model led to Fanon’s engagements with Freud, Jung, Adler and Lacan. In other words, Fanon will supplement and check his more concrete and philosophical approach to self-reflection with this more abstract and psychoanalytic one. As in the case above with poetry and phenomenology, the links that Fanon establishes between the psychoanalytic and the philosophical are themselves original, creative movements of Fanon’s consciousness toward the world that he did not explicitly thematize, but they hold the keys to the distinct metaphysical foundations upon which his thought rests. It is this complex and synthetic methodology that informs Fanon’s phenomenology. Its psychoanalytic dimensions separate it from DuBois’s. However, both are interested in the “psychopathological and philosophical explanation of the state of being a Negro” (1967:15).

### **Double Consciousness and Fanonian Phenomenology**

What is the state of being a “negro”? It is a state of enforced negrification in which colonized African peoples lost their earlier cultural identities and became identified by the color of their skin. The outer form of this state is the substituting of an epidermal identity in the place of a cultural one. The inner content of this outer transformation is the socio-historical reality of being forced to live as the unconscious, liminal shadow, the repressed and undesirable side of the imperial European subject that had racialized its identity as white. The caricature of “the negro” is first and foremost for Fanon a dark projection that is basic to the cathartic and scapegoating mechanisms of the European psyche. This projective mechanism Fanon describes as follows: “in the degree to which I find in myself something unheard-of, something reprehensible, only one solution remains for me: to get rid of it, to ascribe its origins to someone else” (1967:190). The stereotype of “the negro” is a discursive crystallization of the contents of an “inordinately black hollow” in the European psyche that it must externalize and experience as belonging to someone else. Thus for Fanon, in the West, “the Negro has one function: that of symbolizing the lower emotions, the baser inclinations, the dark side of the soul” (1967:190). This is the meaning of negrification, the state of being a “negro”.

Because the African is not a “negro”, negrification as a form of racialization produced what Fanon called a psycho-existential deviation, an aberration of affect in the psyche of African peoples. Such a deviation arises in the psyche of a people when “an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality” (1967:18). In the case of African peoples, this deviation is the opening up of that racial fissure in their sense of a “We” that DuBois

described as double consciousness. Fanon writes: “the black man has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man” (1967:17). However, these two sets of relations are not always of equal weight. As negritude takes hold, the second set begins to transform the first. In its being for another African self-consciousness, the negrituded African will be profoundly influenced by the relationship with the white other. Self-evaluation will take the form: I am better of or worse than another “negro” depending on whether I am whiter or more Europeanized. This detouring of all intersubjective relations through white norms and evaluations is a major disturbance in the interactive relations of the African subject that follows from its “two dimensions”.

For Fanon, this “self-division” and its consequences are the keys to the state of being a “negro”. His approach to this internal division is to examine carefully its distorting impact on the relations of “the negro” with others, both black and white. Fanon begins his analysis of the disruptive impact of this double consciousness with an examination of “the negro’s” attitude toward his own and the colonizer’s languages. Here Fanon shows that the distorting impact of double consciousness is the negrituded subject’s desire to present him/herself as a master of the languages of Europe. Before the white other, this display of linguistic mastery is a bid for recognition and a demonstration of the degree to which he/she has rejected the African past. Before the black other, the same display may be an attempt to gain recognition for how far that individual has succeeded in Europeanizing his/her existence. The underlying disturbance in self-other relations that these attitudes to language reveal is the following: that the racialized African “will be proportionately whiter – that is, he will come closer to being a real human being – in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language” (1967:18). In the midst of this disturbance we can hear the DuBoisian questions: “What, after all, am I?” Am I a French person or am I a “Negro”? Can I be both? Fanon could have made the same point using religion, music, philosophy, dance, or literature as the sociogenic reality behind these psycho-existential deviations.

However, this general account of the double consciousness of the negrituded African subject was not the primary goal of Fanon’s phenomenology. Rather, it was the exploration of two specific possibilities within this broader disturbance in African self-other relations. The first was the tragic possibility of “the negro” who deals with his/her negritude by attempting to conceal it behind “white masks”. Fanon develops this possibility through examinations of cases of blacks who must have white lovers. In such cases, Fanon recognizes a self-negating desire in the black to be white, which for him represents the extreme point of self-alienation in “the state of being a Negro”. Fanon also makes it clear that not all racialized African subjects are in such extreme states of alienation. But nonetheless, he wants to point out their existence and examine them in detail.

The second possibility within the broader disturbance in African self-other relations that Fanon takes up is indeed quite different. It is the agonizing possibility of an African subject working his/her way out of “the state of being a Negro”. It is here that the awakening of potentiated second sight makes its appearance in Fanon. What is the lived experience of the racialized African subject who is awakening from the nightmare and false consciousness of his/her negritude? This is the question to which Fanon brought the combined powers of his distinct phenomenological methodology. It is here that we can see the breathtaking moments in which the poetic and phenomenological reductions are brought together produce self-reflective knowledge of the most profound nature.

The early awakenings of the negrituded African subject are marked by the experience of not being able to affirm a self of one’s own choosing in the presence the institutionally empowered stereotype of “the negro” that the white psyche must externalize and project onto another. Thus it is the experience of walking a tightrope located between the opposing but unequal egocentric pulls of these two sources of African selfhood. This is what Fanon meant when he said that “the black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man” (1967:110). Normatively empowered by

institutionalization, the image of the black in the white mind overpowers the self-image of the awakening Africana subject. This is the source of the power and weight of ordinary second sight. It is against this weight, and in spite of its ontological power that the awakening Africana subject must fight to regain first sight, potentiated second sight, explode the caricature of “the negro, and affirm an identity of his/her own choosing. Adding to the pain and terror of this struggle is the fact that below the tightrope on which the Africana subject is walking is “the zone of non-being”. To fail is to experience a collapse of one's ego and a fall into nothingness. It is the stumbling and falling of this awakening subject on the edge of non-being, the experiences of going out of and coming back into ego-being that Fanon's phenomenology describes so powerfully.

This description begins with an archeological view of some of the organizing schemas that structure the consciousness of the Africana subject. At the most basic level we find an intentional schema that consists of the motions of this subject toward the world that Fanon earlier described as being basic to human beings. He then goes on to describe a corporeal or bodily schema that is also an integral part of the Africana self-image. On the third layer, Fanon identifies an epidermal or historico-racial schema that is yet another important part of the identity of the Africana subject. These are the key frameworks that ground and shape the identity of our awakening man or woman. In the mind of this subject, joy and recognition should accompany his/her motions toward the other and the world. His/her bodily schema is the basis of a “physiological self” that balances one in space, localizes sensations, and makes one physically attractive to the other. His/her historico-racial schema was either African, African American, Afro-Caribbean or Afro-Latin American.

Fanon gives us several examples of the implosive ego collapse that the awakening Africana self has experienced before the institutionalized power of the white gaze. Echoing the youthful DuBois's experience of racial stigmatization by a white playmate, Fanon uses the case of a young child to illustrate the power and content of the white gaze: “Mama, see the Negro! I am frightened”. Behind this fright was a very different set of intentional, bodily, and historico-racial schemas that challenges those of the Africana subject in the early phases of denegrification. The resulting clash between these negrifying and denegrifying perspectives Fanon describes as follows: “Assailed at various points, the corporeal scheme crumbled, its place taken by the epidermal schema. In the train it was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person” (1967:112). In other words, this encounter with the white other was experienced as “an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage” (1967:112).

If this awakening subject is to achieve denegrification and potentiated second sight, such amputations and falls into the zone of non-being must be endured and overcome. In the zone of non-being, “an authentic upheaval can be born”, that is, new images of self, new projects for bringing one's self back into ego-being can be undertaken. This push for rebirth is strong, defiant, almost compulsive. Through this agency Fanon's awakening subject takes the broken pieces of his/her selfhood and refashions them into a new project of being in the world. One new project explored by Fanon is the possibility of asserting one's self “as a BLACK MAN” (emphasis in the original). However, like the earlier project, this one could also go down in defeat. In the event of such an outcome, one must return to the zone of non-being with faith in its self-creating powers. Out of it will come other possibilities such as asserting one's self as a rational or scholarly person, as in the case of DuBois, or as an irrational seer, the very embodiment of unreason. These new projects of selfhood Fanon sees as dialectical possibilities that are open to the awakening black subject if he/she is “able to accomplish this descent into a real hell” (1967:10). In short, phenomenologically speaking, the zone of non-being is a valuable resource for the subject who is working his/her way out negrification and the double consciousness that it produces.

## The Ethical/Practical Dimensions

Important as the above inner struggles against negrification are, they cannot by themselves overthrow the institutionalized power of white racism. As we've seen, this racism was for Fanon both onto- and socio-genic in nature. It was not the truth of negrification that defeated this struggling subject but the social power that came with its institutionalization. This sociological dimension had to be defeated through revolutionary struggles of the type that Fanon described so powerfully in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Thus as in the case of DuBois, Fanon's phenomenology is intricately linked to an ethical/practical project. This project has several distinguishing features such as its ethic of love or its commitment to national independence. For reasons of space, I will discuss only the ethic of love.

The ethical dimensions of Fanon's phenomenology have been given their most systematic treatment by Nelson Maldonado-Torres. The originality of his treatment is the elucidating of the place of love in Fanon's ethics. Maldonado-Torres's key to locating the site of Fanonian love is a masterful "phenomenology of the cry" (forthcoming) in Fanon's work. He shows that when examined in this way, the cry leads us to the loving responses of which Fanon's awakening subject is sometimes capable. These responses echo very loudly the love that reassembles broken vases of which Walcott spoke.

For Maldonado-Torres, the cry is "a revelation of someone who has been forgotten or wronged" (forthcoming). It is the audible sigh that sometimes follows a train of defeated attempts at self-affirmation. But as Maldonado-Torres shows, the cry in Fanon is much more than this plea for self-preservation. It is also "a call for the Other" (forthcoming). It is this sociality in the cry of Fanon's awakening Africana subject that is the source of its moving ethical power. In other words, even though this subject will often find him/herself on the edge of non-being, it is still possible to rise above pure self-interest to cry for and reach out to others who are in similar or worse states of negrification. Thus it is no surprise that Fanon begins and ends *Black Skin, White Masks* with such strong affirmations of his belief in the possibilities of love. This in brief is Fanon contribution to Africana phenomenology.

## Lewis Gordon and Africana Phenomology

If the first two chapters in an explicit Africana phenomenology were written by DuBois and Fanon, then the third has been written by Lewis Gordon. His chapter makes several important contributions to this sub-field of Africana philosophy that both engage and carry forward the work of DuBois and Fanon. The way in which Gordon engages Fanon can be clearly seen in his *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man*, and his engagements with DuBois in his *Existential Africana*. These engagements make it unmistakably clear that Gordon's occasion for self-reflection is also the racialization of Africana self-consciousness within the projective and exploitative structures of modern European capitalism. Here, for reasons of space, I will take up only two of the important contributions that Gordon has made to the sub-field of Africana phenomenology. The first of these is the greater systematization that he has brought to this area of Africana thought. The second is his phenomenological analysis of "the state of being a Negro" in the postcolonial/post-segregation era. In other words, an era in which the institutional power of white projects of negrification have been significantly weakened as a result of the anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles of the 1960s. Let us begin with the first of these two important contributions.

Gordon makes clear very early the nature of his method of study. He refers to it as "descriptive ontology or what is sometimes called existential phenomenology" (1995a:5). This is the methodology by which Gordon brackets the everyday world and enters on his own path to the

practice of self-reflection. Gordon's path inward to the study of consciousness has been shaped by strong influences from Sartre and Husserl, as well as his own practice of creative writing. Gordon brings these three reflective streams together to forge a path to the study of consciousness that is original and distinct, and thus different from the paths used by DuBois or Fanon. Gordon's distinctness stems from the stronger Husserlian influences on this area of his thought than is the case with DuBois or Fanon. These influences account for the clear presence of reflections that are done within what Husserl called the phenomenological reduction, and the absence of the psychoanalytic strategies that are so strong in Fanon. Further distinguishing Gordon's self-reflective path is the fact that the influences of his poetics are not as strong as they are in the cases of DuBois and Fanon. However, Gordon and Fanon share strong Sartrean influences on their strategies of self-reflection. In short, to understand how Gordon sees the world when puts on his phenomenological glasses, we need to understand these factors shaping the curve of their lenses.

Although Gordon and Fanon share strong Sartrean influences, they manifest themselves very differently in their reflective approaches to the study of Africana self-consciousness. Like Sartre, Gordon makes a sharper distinction between ego and consciousness than either Fanon or DuBois. It is consciousness rather than the ego that is the primary focus of Gordon's analysis. This is an important difference with Fanon, who, as psychoanalyst, focused more on the ego. This accounts for the more philosophical as opposed to the psychological orientation of Gordon's work. It also accounts for why Gordon's contributions include the greater systematizing of the philosophical foundations of Africana phenomenology.

With his focus on consciousness, Gordon's definition of the human reality to be studied is different from Fanon's. Rather than motion towards the world, which would reflect the desires of the ego, as consciousness Gordon defines the core of human reality as freedom. As freedom, we are not determined by any law or necessity from within or without. We are free to choose our existence with nothing to legitimate or guarantee it other than our choice. Consequently, we are primarily responsible for who we are and what we will become.

However, according to Sartre and Gordon, phenomenological reflection reveals that the experiencing of ourselves as freedom produces disturbing feelings of anguish, of being nothing and hence an intense desire to be something definite. Thus we often evade this anguished freedom by fleeing into the facticity and determinateness of a closed ego. This ego could be structured around being a doctor, a lawyer, a philosopher or a parent. As any of these forms of ego-being, I now experience myself as something that is definite enough to negate the nothingness and anguish of my freedom. This "effort to hide from responsibility for ourselves as freedom" (1995a:8) is what both Sartre and Gordon meant by bad faith. In bad faith, "I flee a displeasing truth for a pleasing falsehood. I must convince myself that a falsehood is in fact true" (1995a:8). In short, to be in bad faith is to lie to ourselves and believe the lie.

As Fanon's ego produced a shadow, so too does Gordon's. However, although the projecting of these shadows are crucial to their accounts of "the state of being a Negro", it is important to note the significant differences in the origins of these shadows. Fanon's is psychological and engages the Freudian concept of an unconscious, while Gordon's is philosophical and has its roots in the dialectic between being and nothingness as it affects the formation human consciousness and freedom. It is the discursive use of the notion of bad faith to thematize this dialectic that enables Gordon to systematize the philosophical as opposed to the psychological foundations of Africana phenomenology.

In Gordon's case, it is the ontogenic tensions produced by the lie that separates the ego from its anguished shadow that produces the need for mechanisms of projective catharsis rather than the ego's need to repress its "lower emotions". But in both cases, self-reflection has produced portraits of the human subject as a site of agency that has to project a shadow while at the same time denying

that it is doing so. And in both, this is directly linked to the production and persistence of what Gordon calls anti-black racism. This racism is for Gordon a bad faith attempt “to deny the blackness within” (anguished freedom) by projecting it onto the black skins of Africana peoples while asserting an ego that is structured around whiteness. This is the manner in which Gordon has more clearly systematized the links between phenomenological philosophy and the racialization of Africana self-consciousness.

In addition to thematizing and systematizing the dynamics of bad faith that remained implicit in Fanon, Gordon has also taken up the challenge of making more phenomenologically consistent the linking of ontogenic dynamics such as those of bad faith, with the sociogenic ones (e.g., institutions) that come together to produce oppressive social realities like anti-black racism. Consequently, like Alfred Schutz, Gordon needs a phenomenology of the social world in addition to that of individual self-consciousness. But the ethical/practical project of transformation to which Gordon’s phenomenology is linked is not the one of rescuing rationality from its positivistic capture that Schutz shared with Husserl. Rather, with DuBois and Fanon, Gordon’s ethical/practical project is one of denegrification and racial equality. Consequently, he needs both a theory and a praxis that will allow him to link the strategic demands of dismantling racist social structures to the intentional activity of the transcendental domain as disclosed by phenomenology.

In effecting this synthesis, Gordon achieves greater phenomenological consistency than DuBois or Fanon. The distinctness of Gordon’s synthesis is that it grasps institutions in terms of bad faith rather than their historical materiality as established social structures. From the perspective of bad faith, Gordon sees institutions as social practices that limit freedom or encourage the evading of freedom. These limits are conceptualized by Gordon as a continuum of relations that range from choices to options. “Actional” choices that are institutionally recognized or supported are instances of the social affirmation of one’s freedom. At the other end of the continuum are options. Options are “calcified” situations in which institutions are not only separated from the intentional streams of meaning out of which they arose, but at the same time severely restrict the set of choices they make available to individuals (forthcoming). Thus it is in terms of options and choices that Gordon thematizes the problems of class and racial inequality. Three responses of individuals and groups to these differences in options and choices are of particular interest to Gordon. These are theodicean justifications by elites with actional choices, implosivity by groups who are without them, and revolution. The first two are for Gordon bad faith responses and are important for his intentional reading of institutions. Thus it is through the use of the notion of bad faith on both the ontogenic and sociogenic levels that Gordon is able to achieve a greater degree of phenomenological consistency.

As noted earlier, Gordon’s second important contribution to Africana phenomenology is his analysis of the persistence of anti-black racism in the post-colonial/ post-segregation era. In our examination of Fanon, we saw that negrification and anti-black racism, though having their roots in psycho-existential shadow of the white ego, derived a lot of their power and persistence from social processes of institutionalization. One of the primary marks of the post-colonial/post-segregation era has been the removal of many of the institutional supports that reinforced the stereotype of “the Negro”. Indeed it is possible to argue that in the present era, there remain three crucial areas of American society that continue to provide institutional support for anti-black racism: the practice of residential segregation, law enforcement, and the entertainment value of anti-black stereotype in mass media. This is a very different world from that of Fanon’s or DuBois’s. Can anti-black racism persist within such a weakened institutional order? The significant contribution of Gordon’s important book, *Bad Faith and Anti-black Racism*, is its detailed answer to this question.

Gordon’s answer is a definite yes. This answer in the affirmative is based primarily on the persistence of strong projective needs arising from the bad faith practices of white subjects that are

still externalized onto black bodies. In other words, unless whites find new scapegoats or more good faith ways of facing the anguish of their freedom, they will continue to see Africana peoples through the eyes of that unacceptable anguish. This distorted seeing will persist in spite of the removal of its institutional props. This persistence means that Africana peoples are still being racialized and its accompanying processes of double consciousness still being reproduced. For Gordon the strongest indicator of this is the phenomenon of “black anti-blackness” which he analyzes as a manifestation of double consciousness. His analysis of black anti-blackness is a brilliant updating of CLR James’s classic summary statement of this peculiar phenomenon in, *The Black Jacobins*: “why do you ill-treat your mule in that?” asked a colonist of a carter. ‘But when I do not work, I am beaten, when he does not work, I beat him – he is my Negro’” (1989:15).

### **Other Contributions**

In addition to DuBois, Fanon and Gordon, other important contributions to an Africana phenomenology have been made by Sylvia Wynter, Wilson Harris, Rene Menil, Charles Long, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, James Bryant, and myself which I can only mention briefly. My own contribution has been to open up the chapter on African existential thought before the start of colonization, slavery, negrification, and Europeanization (2000:144-66). Bryant’s contribution has been a careful phenomenological analysis of the transformation of pre-colonial African religious identities to Afro-Christian ones as a response to negrification. Long’s contribution has been a phenomenology of the rituals and ceremonies of African American religious life. As we’ve already seen, Maldonado-Torres’s contribution has been in the area of phenomenology and ethics. Harris’s contribution is a detailed exploration of the creative potential of zone of non-being or what he calls “the void”. Rene Menil’s contribution has been a Hegelian inflected phenomenological account of the internalizing of the stereotype of “the Negro”. Finally, Wynter’s contribution has been a historicizing and semioticizing of the transcendental domain that can be usefully compared to the work of the German philosopher, Karl-Otto Apel. Wynter introduces these changes through her important concepts of knowledge-constitutive goals and liminal categories. These contributions together with those of DuBois, Fanon, and Gordon give us fairly comprehensive picture of the phenomenological dimensions of Africana thought.

### **Philosophical Implications of Africana Phenomenology**

We began our analysis of Africana phenomenology with a clearing of the cultural terrain needed to make this philosophy visible. In particular, this clearing was directed at some of the exclusive claims that had been established between rationality and European phenomenology, as well as the establishing of flexible variations in three crucial areas of phenomenological philosophy: the occasion for self-reflection, the path to self reflection, and the ethical/practical projects of phenomenologies. Now that we have outlined Africana phenomenology in the space of this clearing it should be evident that it is a discourse that has been conditioned by and draws on a specific set of lived experiences and the cultural traditions of Africa and Europe. In this sense it is quite different from Western phenomenology.

What are we to make of the differences between these two philosophical discourses? Are they of a similar nature to the differences within each of them? Are the rational and allegedly universal structures of Western phenomenology such that they can incorporate Africana philosophy as a particular case without significant philosophical remainders? From the nature of the variations in cultural contexts, occasions for self-reflection, paths to reflection and ethical/ practical projects, I think it should be clear that neither of these phenomenologies could absorb the other as a case

without significant theoretical loss. The variations just referred to are not quantitative but qualitative in nature. Thus in spite of important areas of overlap and convergence, these qualitative differences have created significant degrees of incommensurability between the creative and discursive codes of these two phenomenologies. The resulting divergences are such that they limit the universal claims of both, creating epistemic breaks that can only be engaged/resolved through conversation and comparative analysis.

From the philosophical standpoint, these incommensurate or unassimilable differences are primarily the result of metaphysical differences in the a priori foundations pre-supposed by the knowledge producing practices of these two phenomenologies. I am aware that Western philosophy is currently going through what Habermas and others have called a “post-metaphysical” phase. Does this mean that Africana philosophy is also going through a similar phase? I don’t think so. The metaphysical foundations of Africana philosophy have never included the absolute claims for reason that have been at the center of the transcendental foundations of Western philosophy. In the Africana tradition, reason has always had to share the metaphysical stage with poetics and historical action. Indeed, in its post-metaphysical phase – a phase in which it is scaling down its claims for reason – Western philosophy may move closer to some of the fundamental metaphysical positions of Africana philosophy.

What is most striking about Habermas’s post-metaphysical arguments is that, like Derrida’s attempts to deconstruct Western metaphysics, they are profoundly metaphysical. Habermas uses the term metaphysical to designate the thinking of philosophical idealism from Plato through Plotinus to Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. On the other hand, he sees late medieval nominalism, modern empiricism, neo-pragmatism, and post-structuralism as anti-metaphysical philosophies (1992:29). What I see both of these groups sharing is the necessity of going beyond “physics” the moment that they step out of specific exercises of knowledge production to assess the onto-epistemic significance of those exercises. Thus empiricists cannot on the basis of empirical practices rule out or establish their priority over intuitive or other non-empirical modes of knowing. To establish such a claim, the empiricist must move beyond his/her specific knowledge producing practice and by means of logic, rhetoric, future projections of knowledge accumulation, etc., make the argument for priority, or foundational status. It is these questions of discourse-constitutive priorities regarding explanatory factors (Spirit, matter, class, race), disciplines, methodologies, conceptions of the human being, and ethical/ practical projects that constitute the ineliminable metaphysical elements in all discourses. They are shared by Habermas’s metaphysical and anti-metaphysical groups of philosophers. These pre-theoretical or discourse-constitutive choices are inescapable, and their justification or non-justification takes us into the realm of metaphysics.

When we direct our focus at the discourse-constitutive foundations of DuBois’s thought, we can observe the presence of a familiar set of competing explanatory factors, disciplines, methodologies, conceptions of the human being as we find in Hegel or Husserl. What we do not find is a similar prioritizing or systematizing of these discourse-constitutive fundamentals in relation to reason or Spirit. DuBois appears to enclose these fundamentals within a very different set of epistemic norms although he never really took the time to specify them. Consequently, there has been a lot of debate about this particular dimension of DuBois’s thought. Cornel West interprets this refusal to specify as a pragmatist evasion of epistemology (1989:138-40). Robert Gooding Williams objects strongly to this reading of DuBois’s refusal (1991-92:517-42).

Within this unspecified Duboisian framework, reason and Spirit are two of the fundamentals rather than the supreme principle of prioritizing and systematizing. Earlier, we noted that DuBois did not make as strong an onto-epistemic commitment to the paradigm of consciousness as either Hegel or Husserl. The same was true of his attitude toward the method of poetics as well as those of history and sociology. In his important essay, “Sociology Hesitant”, DuBois argues for the

possibilities of doing sociology from the perspectives of both a free and an externally determined subject. At the same time he makes no arguments for continuity between the two positions or for a fixed, pre-theoretical hierarchical arrangement between them. One leaves this essay with the feeling that he is equally happy with both. I think that DuBois's attitude to all of these discourse-constitutive fundamentals that he organizes and uses can be best compared to the attitude of a jazz musician to his/her improvisations. They are all real epistemic offerings, they possess creative potential, but they are partial and limited formations that could not only be done differently, but also need to be checked and complemented. Thus most, if not all, of DuBois pre-theoretical orderings of selected fundamentals are provisional, variable, in need of complements, and therefore change significantly in his different texts. This is the metaphysical position that we confront in DuBois's works. Thus, there appears to be an improvisational aesthetic norm guiding the metaphysical orderings that make DuBoisian knowledge production possible.

In the case of Fanon, we can observe a similarly relaxed and improvisational attitude toward the problems of prioritizing and systematizing discourse-constitutive fundamentals. This attitude is evident in his often quoted remark: "I leave methods to the botanists and the mathematicians" (1967:12). Without clear specification, Fanon employs poetics, existential philosophy and psychoanalysis to define his path to consciousness. In this strategy, we saw that Fanon embraced the concrete intuitive method of existential philosophy as well as the more abstract method of a general interpretation used by psychoanalysis. Further, we saw that this multi-layered ontogenic discourse was implicitly linked to a sociogenic base.

Methodologically speaking, this sociogenic base comes more fully into view in *The Wretched of the Earth*, where the focus of Fanon's phenomenological analyses is not so much individual as it is national consciousness. Thematized in primarily Marxist terms, the relationships between the sociogenic and the phenomenological factors constituting the national consciousness of the colonized in revolt are configured differently. These and other breaks in the composition and ordering of discourse-constitutive fundamentals between this work and *Black Skin White Masks*, remind us of similar breaks between major works by DuBois. The great metaphysical secret of *The Wretched of the Earth* is its almost seamless synthesis of existential phenomenology, transcendental phenomenology, psychoanalysis, Afro-Caribbean poetics, Marxist political economy, and Africana colonial history. How these different discourses were brought together, whence the "tidalectical" flows between them, or the occasions for shifting from one to the other? Of these creative and synthetic strategies Fanon does not really speak. He leaves us completely on our own, and at the mercy of our own creative and synthetic capabilities.

Although not quite as improvisational as DuBois, none of these priorities in factors of explanation, methods, and disciplines were made explicit, or the creative strategies by which they were synthesized carefully outlined. Thus the internal structure of Fanon's psychosocial poetics remains as much a mystery as DuBois's socio-historical poetics. However, in spite of these outward signs of disorder, Fanon's discourses display remarkable coherence and unmatched explanatory power. To account for this, I suggest a set of improvisational metaphysical principles that are quite similar to those of DuBois.

In the case of Gordon, where we find the greatest concern with the pre-theoretical systematization of discourse-constitutive fundamentals, the presence of this improvisational metaphysics is clearly evident. Indeed in Gordon's case the connection to jazz is direct as it appears in his work and through the fact that he is a jazz drummer. As we've seen, Gordon has established a clear priority of consciousness over the ego, the intentional over the extentional, and the free over the externally determined subject. However, at the same time, there is no absolute commitment to the paradigm of consciousness that matches Husserl's or even the early Sartre. Rather what we find is a similar improvisational attitude toward this particular piece of discursive systematization. The

difference between Gordon and DuBois or Fanon is not to be found in their attitudes toward specific systematic orderings, but in the fact that DuBois and Fanon had more of these improvised orderings going at the same time. Gordon has fewer, has worked out the philosophical ones more systematically, but his attitude toward them is not final but improvisational. This distinct metaphysical position that we can observe in Gordon, Fanon and Dubois was not evident in either the African or Afro-Christian phases of Africana philosophy. Rather, it emerged in the period that elsewhere I have called poet/critic/historicist. This double designation was a way of representing the compound and synthetic nature of this phase of Africana thought. However, I did not really develop the provisional and improvisational nature of the creative codes that guided the formation of these compound syntheses.

If indeed this still to be thematized set of improvisational codes are the keys to the metaphysical foundations of this specific phase of Africana phenomenology, then it should be clear why it cannot be incorporated into Western phenomenology without significant philosophical loss. When more fully thematized, it is very likely to be an original metaphysics that reflects the experiences of Africana peoples and the distinct knowledge producing practices that were developed under the world shattering conditions of racialization and colonization. Its spirit is very different from that of Euro-American pragmatism or of mainstream of European philosophy. If I had to give this metaphysics a more conventional name it would be creative realism, as what it assumes to be ultimately real is the creative act in its spontaneous movements rather than any of its specific creations. This is the creative code, the compositional principle of Africana metaphysics that makes it impossible for its phenomenology to be absorbed by the rationalism of Western phenomenology. Within the context of this improvisational metaphysics, the process of de-centering reason that Western metaphysics is presently going through could hardly be viewed as a post-metaphysical event. Rather it would very likely be seen as just one of many contrapuntal movements or complementary reversals that must take place among discursive formations. Such movements must take place as the capacity to disclose the whole truth is not given to any single discursive formation.

## Conclusion

In the foregoing analyses, I have emphasized the differences between Africana and Western phenomenologies. These differences were both thematic, such as the issue of racialization, and metaphysical as indicated by the different rules guiding the prioritizing and systematizing of discourse-constitutive fundamentals. However, the broader comparative framework employed gave some indication of a number of areas of similarity.

The question that now arises from this clearer outlining of Africana phenomenology is the following: in what from the Africana perspective is a post-imperial as opposed to a post-metaphysical age, how are these two phenomenologies to relate to each other. Clearly the next phases in these phenomenologies are not going to be identical. The cultural and racial differences will in all probability continue to be important sources of difference. What will the post-“negro” phase of Africana phenomenology be like? What will it bring to the philosophical table in the place of double consciousness, second sight, white masks and an improvisational metaphysics? What will follow the “post-metaphysical” phase of Western phenomenology? What will it bring to the philosophical table in the place of its earlier claims for a universal reason? Is there a systematic relation between the post-imperial and the “post-metaphysical” phases of these two phenomenologies?

These important questions can only be adequately answered by developing new and more innovative modes of comparative philosophical analysis that do not attempt to subsume culturally distinct philosophies under the categories of another. Rather, these new modes of comparative

analysis should seek to create bridges, partial points or areas of complementary convergence, meta-philosophical discourses and communicative groups between these culturally distinct philosophies. The need for such modes of comparative analysis is one of the important consequences that follow from this clearer recognition of Africana phenomenology.

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