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THE GERMAN INFLUENCE ON THE LIFE AND THOUGHT
OF W. E. B. DU BOIS

A Thesis Presented

by

MICHAELA C. ORIZU

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
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Political Science

THE GERMAN INFLUENCE ON THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF W. E. B. DU BOIS

A Master's Thesis Presented

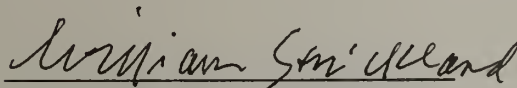
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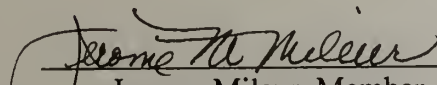
Approved as to style and content by:



Dean Robinson, Chair



William Strickland, Member



Jerome Mileur, Member
Head, Department of Political Science

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW

Introduction

The goal of this thesis is to determine and analyze the German influence on the life and work of W. E. B. Du Bois. From 1892-1894 Du Bois studied at the renowned University of Berlin and traveled extensively throughout Germany and Europe. I will try to show that the years of study and living in Germany had a significant impact on Du Bois, on an academic as well as on a personal or social level.

In the first part of this paper I will focus on Du Bois' education prior to 1892, especially with respect to Germany, on the academic influence on Du Bois, mainly exerted by his teachers, the political economists Gustav von Schmoller and Adolph Wagner, and the historian Heinrich von Treitschke. Schmoller and Wagner's influence on Du Bois' early sociological work manifests itself in particular in *The Philadelphia Negro*¹ and the *Atlanta University Publications*.² Schmoller especially impressed upon Du Bois the principles of the then new school of German historiography. I will demonstrate the connection between this school of thought, and the methods adopted by Du Bois in his attempt to solve the "Negro problem" in the United States.

When Du Bois graduated from Fisk University in 1888, he chose Bismarck as the topic for his commencement speech. The late 19th century German Chancellor and clever negotiator seems to have served as a role model for the young Du Bois for his part in uniting Germany from a mass of small states into one *Reich*. The history professor

¹ Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*, (New York: Benjamin Bloom Inc, 1967), reprinted from 1899 edition.

² Du Bois (ed.), *Atlanta University Publications*, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1969), reprinted from the collection of the New York Public Library.

Heinrich von Treitschke, who has often been described as “Herald of the Reich,” was one of the most vocal supporters of Bismarck and his policies, and in particular an advocate of German unity. In his (in)famous lectures on *Politik*, given at the University of Berlin, Treitschke had established himself as a leading nationalist and fighter for the “pan-German” idea. This thesis will show that despite his conservative agenda and racist ideas, Du Bois was attracted to some of Treitschke’s teachings, which seem to have shaped Du Bois’ own understanding of race as well as his strategies for solving “The Negro Problem”. This unlikely fascination with Treitschke and German nationalism, I suggest, could have influenced some of Du Bois’ more controversial writings, such as “The Conservation of the Races” (1897) and “The Talented Tenth” (1903)³

On a personal or social level, the German influence on Du Bois manifests itself in a number of ways as well. While in Germany, Du Bois was exposed to German and European culture, art, literature and music, which made a strong impression on him. Looking back at his studies in Germany, Du Bois wrote in 1954: “whatever I know of good manners and higher culture, I learned first in Germany.”⁴ Du Bois remained an admirer of (German and European) music and art throughout his life. Quotes of Goethe, Schiller and other German poets and thinkers, both in German and English, are frequently found in his work, and so are references to music, art or the beauty of nature. The second part of this thesis will therefore focus on Du Bois’ personal experience in Germany, which changed his outlook on the “race problem” and related to this, the role and importance of culture in relationship to human or racial development.

³ Du Bois, “The Conservation of the Races”, reprinted in Lewis, David (ed.), *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Reader*, (New York: Holt and Company, 1995), pp. 20-27. Du Bois, “The Talented Tenth”, reprinted in *Writings by W. E. B. Du Bois in Non-Periodical Literature Edited by Others*, Herbert Aptheker (ed.), (Nillwood: Kraus-Thomson, 1982).

⁴W. E. B Du Bois, “Germany” in *The Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois*, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, R 81 F924 , 1954.

While the impact of Schmoller's teachings manifests itself mainly in the period up to 1910, other aspects of his exposure to late 19th century German society and thought have had a more lasting impact.

The Education of Du Bois in Respect to Germany

Du Bois attended high school in Great Barrington, Massachusetts together with the other local children, only a few of whom were black. He did extremely well, usually standing at the top of his class. His high school principal, Frank Hosmer, believed that Du Bois was capable of attending College, and so encouraged him to take the preparatory course, which included classes in Greek and Latin. Although he always had aspired to go to Harvard, a lack of financial resources made this goal impossible, at least for the time being. Instead Du Bois entered Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee at the sophomore level, with financial support provided by his home community of Great Barrington.⁵

Du Bois attended Fisk from 1885-1888 and graduated with an A.B. During his time there, he took 190 hours of instruction in German as well as in French, and also continued taking classes in Greek and Latin. Anticipating his later major, political science, at Harvard, Du Bois besides the required general education classes, leaned towards philosophy and politics. At this stage a familiarity with contemporary Germany, its politics and history becomes apparent in his choosing of “Bismarck” as the topic for his commencement speech.⁶ The speech demonstrates that Du Bois not only had a basic knowledge of the German language but was also familiar with the political situation of Europe and Germany in particular. Du Bois admired Bismarck for he had “made a nation out of a mass of bickering people”⁷ and Du Bois seems to have anticipated a similar task for himself.

⁵Du Bois' New England high school education was regarded as above average at Fisk, so that he was able to skip the freshmen year.

⁶W. E. B. Du Bois, “Bismarck”, in *The Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois*, U. of Massachusetts Amherst, R 80, F 8, 1888.

⁷W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, p. 32.

Presumably for one of his German classes, Du Bois wrote a paper entitled “*Das Neue Vaterland*”⁸ (The New Fatherland). Although at times difficult to understand, due to language errors, Du Bois’ command of the German language is still impressive. His description of the Rhine and the statue of Germania reveals admiration for the country’s natural beauty. The essay is a rather polemical appeal for racial equality and acceptance of blacks directed at German immigrants to America.

Supported by a scholarship, Du Bois was able to enter Harvard in 1888, although his undergraduate degree from Fisk was not fully recognized. He was classified as a junior, and mainly studied the social sciences with a special interest in philosophy. He graduated with an AB in 1890 and began graduate work in political science first for an MA, which he received in 1891. Then within the Ph.D. program. Du Bois took classes with many of the renowned professors then teaching at Harvard, e.g. George Palmer, William James, Albert Bushnell Hart, Francis G. Peabody, Josiah Royce, George Santayana and Frank Taussig. In retrospect Du Bois expresses great admiration for the “galaxy of great men and fine teachers”⁹ he found at Harvard. He seems to have been most strongly drawn to the faculty of the philosophy department, in particular William James as well as to historian Albert Bushnell Hart, whose academic influence is the most obvious.¹⁰ Nevertheless, he was also critical of some of the courses and faculty, especially after his return from Europe in 1894.

⁸ W. E. B. Du Bois, “Das Neue Vaterland”, in *The Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois*, U of Massachusetts, Amherst, R 87, F 147, ca. 1887.

⁹ W. E. B. Du Bois, “A Negro Student at Harvard at the End of the 19th Century”, in *Blacks at Harvard*, Werner Sollors et. al. (eds.), (New York: NYU Press, 1993), p.72.

¹⁰ Du Bois called James his friend and was invited to his home on several occasions. Santayana and Du Bois read Kant’s Critique together privately. See for example: Du Bois, “A Negro at Harvard at the End of the 19th Century”, p. 81.

At Harvard Du Bois' knowledge of Germany was deepened. He studied German philosophy from Kant to Hegel under Santayana, and also completed a "Report on the German Railway System".¹¹ Most important in this respect, was the guidance of his history professor, Albert Bushnell Hart, who strongly influenced Du Bois' academic decisions. The topic for Du Bois' dissertation on the African slave trade was suggested by Hart, and could have been the subject of a mid-term paper Hart would require for his course on the constitutional and political history of the United States (known as History 13). Hart would assign paper topics that were "biographical subject[s], which would give [the student] a personal identification with American history."¹² Du Bois also claims that he had worked on a bibliography of Nat Turner before turning to the slave trade topic so perhaps Du Bois had worked on Turner for the mid-term paper and only later turned to the slave trade.

Hart himself, like many other members of the faculty had studied at a German university.¹³ From 1881 to 1883 Hart went overseas to study briefly at the University of Berlin, then moved on to the University of Freiburg. There he studied under the renowned historian Hermann von Holst.¹⁴ Von Holst was regarded as the leading historian with respect to the United States, for he was the only one "since Hildreth [who] had attempted to write a comprehensive history of the United States".¹⁵ In 1882 Hart received his Ph.D. from Freiburg, completing his dissertation "The Coercive Powers of Government of the United States of America". Although, according to Morison in a

¹¹David Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, (New York: Holt & Company, 1993), 90.

¹²Samuel Morison, "A Memoir and Estimate of Albert Bushnell Hart", *Massachusetts Historical Society: Proceedings*, Vol. 77-78, 1965, p.39.

¹³These include Josiah Royce, Herbert Baxter Adams and William James. For more information on Harvard faculty in social science who studied in Germany see Paul Buck (ed.), *Social Science at Harvard 1860-1920*, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1965).

¹⁴see Carol Baird, "Albert Bushnell Hart: The Rise of the Professional Historian" in Buck (ed.), pp. 129-174.

memoir on Albert Bushnell Hart, Hart had encouraged students to study in France rather than Germany,¹⁶ the similarities to Du Bois' plan to study in Germany are striking. When Du Bois left for Germany in 1892 he spent the summer with a minister's family in Eisenach in order to improve his language skills. It is possible that Hart had helped arrange this stay, since he too spent a few months in Eisenach prior to his studies at Berlin,¹⁷ and Du Bois claims that Hart got him "started on [his] work in Germany."¹⁸ Du Bois would have also liked to "round" out his experience abroad by studying in Paris for one semester, just like Hart, but was unable to do so for lack of funds.¹⁹ Also like Hart, Du Bois wished to receive a Ph.D. from a German university, probably the most highly regarded degree at the time. However, he did not succeed in doing so because the University of Berlin would require at least five semesters of residence at the school, and Du Bois was not able to renew his scholarship from the Slater Fund.

Hart's teachings were based on what he himself had experienced as a student in Europe. One indicator of this was his concern with teaching methods. For example, Hart introduced the "research seminar" form of classes to Harvard, in which a group of advanced students would work on different research projects, discussing and critiquing each other's work under the guidance of the instructor.²⁰ Unlike his predecessors in the department, Hart's view of history was strongly influenced by the German School of

¹⁵Samuel Morison, "A Memoir and Estimate of Albert Bushnell Hart", *Massachusetts Historical Society: Proceedings*, Vol. 77-78, 1965, p.32.

¹⁶Morison, p. 46. he does not offer any explanation or source for the statement that Hart advised studying in France rather than in Germany.

¹⁷see Baird, p. 131.

¹⁸see Du Bois, "A Negro at Harvard at the End of the 19th Century", p. 81.

¹⁹Hart had attended classes at the *Ecole des Sciences Politiques* after receiving his Ph.D. in Freiburg, see Morison, p. 32. Du Bois expressed the wish to study in Paris, possible at School of Economics in a letter to the Slater Fund, see Herbert Aptheker, *The Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois*, (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1973), p. 22, (letter to the Trustees of the Slater Fund, March 1893).

²⁰see Francis Broderick, "The Academic Training of W. E. B. Du Bois", in *Journal for Negro Education*, 27 (Winter 1958), p.14.

Historiography. His approach to history was to focus principally on institutions and their development over time. Baird describes the teachings of Hart and other historians who were influenced by the German example as follows:

The historian could only do so [study the development of institutions] if he were trained as a scientist was trained, to be expert in the use of those techniques peculiar to his discipline. In the case of the European historians this means paleography and language and philology: the process of studying documents led them to formulate the goal of finding out what really happened, of telling about things 'as they really were.'²¹

Du Bois learned from Hart how to make extensive use of original source material, especially as he worked on his paper on the African slave trade. Another aspect that was new to history as it was taught at Harvard before Hart's arrival was his incorporation of politics and economics into the discipline. Hart believed that these factors could influence the history of institutions, so he began to introduce them, even if only sparingly, into his courses.²²

At the time when Du Bois entered Harvard's graduate school, most social sciences had only recently been established in their own right, with many departments still struggling for full-time faculty. There was also ample discussion as to the methods and forms to be taught in each department.²³ It seems that before Du Bois left for Germany in 1892 only a few members of the faculty in the social sciences had introduced the newer German or European methods and developments to their courses at Harvard. In some departments there were fierce disputes as to what method or ideology should be taught to the students. Professors of the economics department were separated by their views on the appropriate scientific method in economics, as were economists in Europe. With the arrival of William J. Ashley in 1892, who strongly believed in the German

²¹Baird, p. 138.

²²see *ibid.*, p. 153. BAIRD

method of induction, there arose a conflict with the older faculty, namely Frank Taussig and Charles Dunbar, both followers of the Classical School of Economics and adherents of deduction (vs. induction) as the correct method for studying economics.²⁴ Du Bois in later writings repeatedly criticized the teachings of Taussig, who did not present the students with all aspects of contemporary economics and barely touched on subjects like Marxism or criticism of the Classical School.²⁵ It seems that Du Bois “misses” most of the changes towards the newer European trends in social sciences at Harvard, since these changes took place after he left for Europe.²⁶ Nevertheless, Du Bois seemed to have had a basic introduction to the newer German trends within social sciences, through teachers like Hart and James. This knowledge may have included some familiarity with the professors then teaching at the leading German universities, as reflected in his choice of classes when he arrived at the University of Berlin.

²³For detailed information on the establishment and development of Departments of History, Sociology and Psychology see Buck et al. (eds.), *Social Sciences at Harvard 1860-1920*.

²⁴see Richard Church, “The Economists Study Society”, in Buck et al. (eds.), p. 18-90.

²⁵see i.e. for criticism of Taussig: Du Bois, “A Negro at Harvard at the End of the 19th Century”, p. 72 or 79.

²⁶i.e. Harvard’s department of psychology in 1892 under the lead of William James appointed the young German psychologist Hugo Münsterberg as a professor of psychology.

CHAPTER 2

THE ACADEMIC INFLUENCE ON DU BOIS

Introduction

Like approximately 9 000 other young Americans between 1820 and 1920,²⁷ Du Bois sought to complete his education by studying at a German university. Since the reform of the university system initiated by Wilhelm von Humboldt, German universities were recognized as the most modern and advanced in the world, enjoying relative independence from government authorities. The combination of research and teaching, a rather novel idea then, attracted many students from abroad.

Du Bois matriculated at the Friedrich-Wilhelms University at Berlin²⁸ on October 15th, 1892 together with 200 other Americans. The University of Berlin, founded by von Humboldt in 1809 had quickly established itself as one of the leading universities in Germany and Europe, in particular in the area of social sciences.

The office of “Rector Magnificus” was then held by Rudolf Virchow (doctor of medicine, philosophy and law), who—much like other members of the faculty—had fought for social reforms and improvements in the living conditions of the working class.²⁹

²⁷J. Herbst, *The German Historical School in American Scholarship: A Study in the Transfer of Culture*, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1965), p. 18, qtd. in Nicholas Balabkins, *Not by Theory alone...*, (Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 1988), p.65.

²⁸Today the university, located in the former East of Berlin, is called Humboldt University.

²⁹see W. D. Kindermann, “Preußische Lehrjahre eines schwarzamerikanischen Autors: W. E. B. Du Bois”, in Jörg Helbig (ed.), *Welcome to Berlin: Das Image Berlins in der englischsprachigen Welt von 1700 bis heute*, 1987, p.64.

Du Bois signed up for six classes in his first semester, which amounted to about twenty hours of class time.³⁰ The courses he registered for were mainly in the areas of politics and history similar to what he had studied at Harvard. He took *Politics* with Heinrich von Treitschke, *Political Economy* with Adolph Wagner and *Prussian Constitutional History* with Gustav von Schmoller. Du Bois was also able to enter the *Seminar on Political Economy* taught by Schmoller, which required an extensive research paper. Furthermore he took *Beginnings of Modern States* taught by Paul Scheffer-Boichorst, *Prussian Reforms* with Rudolf von Gneist and *The Labor question in England and Germany* with Max Sering.³¹ For Schmoller's research seminar, the most time-consuming of his classes, Du Bois wrote a paper on "The Large- and Small-Scale Management of Agriculture in the Southern United States (1840-1890)".³² He intended to use this research paper as the basis for a possible dissertation at the University of Berlin.

In his reports to the John F. Slater Fund, his scholarship organization, Du Bois seems especially interested in the courses taught by von Schmoller and Wagner, and he also mentions favorably the lectures by von Treitschke. In his 2nd and 3rd semester Du Bois also took classes in political economy with Schmoller and Wagner and seminars in history with Max Lenz and philosophy with Wilhelm Dilthey. Although not mentioned in his letters to the Slater Fund, Du Bois also heard lectures by the young Max Weber, who was then a visiting professor at the university.

³⁰see Herbert Aptheker (ed.), *The Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois*, (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1973), p. 21, (letter to DC. Gilman of the Slater Fund, Oct. 28th, 1892).

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 21.

³²The original German title is "Der Groß- und Kleinbetrieb des Ackerbaus in den Südstaaten der Vereinigten Staaten 1840-90".

The Teachings of Gustav von Schmoller

Gustav von Schmoller (1838-1917), whose work and writings are unknown to most social scientists today, was widely read and very well known during his life time as one of the important representatives of the German Historical School of Economics. In 1897 he even took over the office of “Rector Magnificus” of the University of Berlin, a position only highly recognized academics would obtain.

Schmoller’s view of economics was sharply opposed to that of the Manchester school with its *laissez-faire* principle and its belief in “invisible hand’s ” regulating powers. Before Schmoller, other German economists mainly Karl Knies (1821-1898), Bruno Hildebrand (1812-1886) and Wilhelm Roscher (1817-1894) had voiced doubts concerning the theories of Adam Smith, Ricardo and other British economists of the Classical School.³³ Schmoller believed in the necessity of the state regulating the economy. With mass industrialization and growing social miseries for the working class, he and other critics of *laissez-faire* felt that the state needed to intervene on behalf of the poor. While teaching at the University of Halle, Schmoller helped to found the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* (Union for Social Politics) in 1872, most likely the first economic policy organization ever.³⁴ The *Verein* was designed to remedy social problems related to the economy through research studies that would eventually lead to new legislation. ³⁵ Already as a student, Schmoller had started writing monographs on a number of economic issues with an extensive analysis of the statistical data available. The government’s economic policy could then be designed based on the results of these studies.

³³Nicholas Balabkins, *Not by Theory alone...*, (Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 1988), p. 25.

³⁴see Balabkins, p. 31.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 31.

Schmoller's unique approach combined economics with history. He believed that the analysis of historical events, facts and data should be the basis for any evaluation of current economic issues. Early on Schmoller had found that living conditions of the industrial proletariat were inhumane and that the distribution of wealth was unjust. He also saw that pure capitalism would not force the upper classes to recognize the needs of the working masses and address them. As Nickolas Balabkins puts it in his book on Schmoller: "He was greatly concerned, not to say upset, about the fast-growing inequality of income and property distribution."³⁶ On the other hand, Schmoller was strictly opposed to socialism with its demand for revolution initiated by the proletariat. He firmly believed in monarchy³⁷ and capitalism, but also saw a strong role of the state as essential. Balabkins regards Schmoller as "one of the early fathers of the modern welfare state."³⁸ Since part of Schmoller's work was the drafting of legislative proposals, some of which actually came into law during Otto von Bismarck's tenure as Chancellor. Laws passed with Bismarck's guidance include the *Sickness Insurance Law* (1883), the *Accident Insurance Law* (1884) and the *Old Age and Disability Insurance Law* (1889).³⁹

In 1899 Schmoller became a member of the Prussian Upper House⁴⁰ and had a chance to directly work on legislation that would address social problems. Schmoller's standpoint was harshly criticized by the Marxists on the one side, and supporters of the Classical School of Economics (often themselves large-scale property owners) on the

³⁶Ibid., p. 20.

³⁷see Athanasios Giouras, *Arbeitsteilung und Normativität*, (Frankfurt a.M.: Haag & Herchen Verlag, 1994), p. 125.

³⁸Balabkins, p 33.

³⁹Balabkins, p. 49.

⁴⁰M. Epstein, "Obituary: Gustave Schmoller", in *Economic Journal*, Vol. 27, 1917, p.435.

other. For the latter Schmoller and other members of the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* were simply arm chair socialists, while the Marxists denounced him as a bourgeois, trying to appease the proletariat by making small but inconsequential concessions.

The title of Nickolas Balabkins' book best describes Schmoller's approach to economics: *Not by Theory alone...* Schmoller did not believe in abstract theories and laws, his concept of economics was that of a normative science, designed to explain and solve real-life problems and not a "natural law-based"⁴¹ science for classroom discussions.

Schmoller strictly adhered to the inductive method⁴², believing that detailed research that would take into account all different factors (historical, political, institutional, knowledge of customs and mores, law etc.) of a society was the only legitimate way for an economic science.⁴³ His advice to students was:

Get your feet wet and hands dirty. Collect all the statistics you can about the economic and social phenomena of a particular period. Describe all the material you find and only then begin to generalize. Be patient.⁴⁴

Ethics also played a significant part in Schmoller's understanding of economics. He was critical of the obliviousness towards ethics and social responsibility that he saw in the Classical School's approach. In English and French economics he observed a "(...) carelessness towards the scientific terms and the scientific systems of morality and ethics."⁴⁵ A quote from Schmoller that Du Bois wrote down in his notebook illustrates

⁴¹Ibid., p. 53.

⁴²The battle over methods (*Methodenstreit*) was one of two big academic controversies Schmoller was involved. He and the Austrian economist Karl Menger disagreed over the use of induction versus deduction as the appropriate method.

⁴³see Gustav von Schmoller, *Wechselnde Theorien und feststehende Wahrheiten im Gebiete der Staats- und Sozialwissenschaften und die heutige deutsche Volkswirtschaftslehre*, (Berlin: Buxenstein, 1897, p. 32 ff., qtd. in Balabkins, p. 47.

⁴⁴Balabkins, p. 20. There is no source given for this quote, perhaps Balabkins is paraphrasing.

⁴⁵Gustav Schmoller, "Johann Gottlieb Fichte", in *Zur Literaturgeschichte der Staats- und Sozialwissenschaften*, (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), p. 30, translation mine.

this point: “My school tries as far as possible to leave the *Sollen* [what should be] for a later stage and study the *Geschehen* [what actually is] as other sciences have done.”⁴⁶ At first glance this statement is somewhat misleading, because it seems that Schmoller was only concerned with the gathering of facts and statistical data. He was, however, only cautioning his students not to commit what he regarded as a grave mistake, to have the results of a study “polluted” by prejudices and expectations of what the actual outcome *should be*.

Although Du Bois had received an introduction to the German method of historiography in the classes of Albert Bushnell Hart at Harvard, his studies in Germany, especially those with Schmoller, had a profound impact on his outlook on history and economics. It is likely that Du Bois was familiar with Schmoller and his reputation as a leading economist of the time. This is suggested by a letter to the Slater Fund where he reports that he had “*succeeded* in entering”⁴⁷ Schmoller’s research seminar, which would only be open to a limited number of students.

In his correspondence with the Slater Fund, Du Bois emphasizes that the main reason for his interest in studying abroad was to receive the best possible education, so that upon his return he would be fit and trained to work on the “Negro Problem”.⁴⁸ The training he received at the University of Berlin, especially under Gustav von Schmoller proved to help Du Bois to develop a method of taking on this great task.

In Schmoller’s classes, Du Bois not only learned the method of induction and the study of sources (to which he had already been introduced by Hart at Harvard), he also began to understand the importance of economics, its relation to history and politics, and

⁴⁶Francis Broderick, “German Influence on the Scholarship of W. E. B. Du Bois”, in *Phylon*, vol. 19, no. 4, (winter 1958), p. 369, (originally probably in “Wagner and Schmoller Notebook”, *Du Bois Papers*).

⁴⁷Aptheker, p. 21. (letter to D.C. Gillman of the Slater Fund from Oct. 28th, 1892).

⁴⁸see i.e. Herbert Aptheker (ed.), *The Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois*, p. 22, (letter to the Trustees of the Slater Fund, March 1893).

their impact on society. He turned away from a history that would look only at the development of institutions. Schmoller's example seems also to have convinced Du Bois to seek a career in academia and scholarship. He hoped that, like Schmoller and Wagner, he would be able to solve social problems through research, lecturing, teaching and by advising/influencing the government on policy issues. This goal becomes apparent in his report to the Slater Fund in March of 1893. Du Bois describes his tentative plans after returning to the States as seeking a teaching position (in the social sciences) at a university, and "[...] to study scientifically the Negro question past and present with a view to its best solution."⁴⁹

⁴⁹Aptheker, p. 25 (letter to the trustees of the Slater Fund, March 10th, 1893).

The Teachings of Adolph Wagner

Although there are many similarities between the teachings of Schmoller and Wagner, their academic disagreements were also widely known. As Du Bois noted: “there is no intellectual love lost between Wagner and Schmoller”.⁵⁰ It seems that Du Bois was more drawn to Schmoller than to Wagner, Schmoller is referred to more frequently in Du Bois’ writings and he was the advisor for Du Bois’ proposed dissertation.

Adolph Wagner (1835-1917) was the other leading national economist at the University of Berlin. He and Schmoller alternated in teaching the “research seminar” on political economy (which Du Bois took with Schmoller) each semester. Wagner was also a founding member of the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* and agreed with Schmoller on the basic points of its program. Like Schmoller, Wagner opposed the Classical School and demanded intervention of the State to ensure social justice.

Martin Heilmann also refers to the intellectual differences and disputes Du Bois mentioned in his analysis of Wagner.⁵¹ On the occasion of Wagner’s 70th birthday celebrations at the University in 1905, Schmoller’s “laudation,” while being in a rather conciliatory tone, reveals some of the “decades-long reservedness between these two eminent authorities of political economy”⁵² Schmoller’s speech clearly notes the differences in approach and methodology that characterize the two “types” of scholars.

⁵⁰W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois*, (n.p.: International Publishers, 1968), p. 166.

⁵¹*Adolph Wagner: Ein Deutscher Nationalökonom im Urteil seiner Zeit*, (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1980). (Adolph Wagner: A German Political Economist in Contemporary Criticism). Translation mine.

⁵²Heilmann , p. 92, (translation mine).

There is the empiricist, who analyses the facts with a sense for the historical context (Schmoller), and the theorist using induction, who thinks in a conceptually abstract way guided by scientific principles.⁵³ (Wagner)

Schmoller recognizes Wagner as one of the founders of “state socialism” (one of the main areas of German political economy of the time), noting that Wagner has taken a more radical stance than he himself in trying to bring about social welfare for the masses. Therein lay another major difference between the two scholars. Wagner believed in state socialism while Schmoller took a much more “conservative’ approach to achieve an “uplifting” of the working masses.

Contemporary socialists and most prominently Karl Marx himself, did not appreciate Wagner’s “endorsement” of and identification with socialism, finding him not radical enough, and regarding him as just one more armchair socialist.⁵⁴

Interestingly, Du Bois, despite his later support for socialism and communism, was drawn more closely to the teachings of Schmoller than of Wagner, in particular his belief in empirical study with a historiographic outlook. In “The Present Condition of German Politics”, Du Bois—while sympathetic to the reasons—showed himself rather critical of German state socialism and too much interference by the state.

⁵³The description of the “types of scholars” is my free translation of Heilmann who seems to be paraphrasing Schmoller’s speech. See Heilmann,, p. 92.

⁵⁴see Karl Marx, “Notes on Adolph Wagner”, in Terrell Carver (ed.), *Marx: Later Political Writings*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), pp. 227-257.

The Influence of these Teachings on Du Bois

The German experience also turned Du Bois even more away from religious beliefs and strict theories of human behavior. He claims to have been very much interested in the “hard” sciences and subscribed to the attempt of contemporary scholars to detect scientific laws in human behavior and bring scientific method into the social sciences. “In Germany I turned still further from religious dogma and began to grasp the idea of a world of human beings whose actions, like those of the physical world, were subject to law.⁵⁵

He rejected aloof and vague scientific theories of society as laid out by Herbert Spencer. Influenced by Schmoller, he believed that the accumulation of facts and data would eventually reveal laws and theories of human behavior. Rejecting those “vast generalizations” put forth by Spencer and others, he wanted to

[...] put science into sociology through a study of the condition and problems of [his] own group. [T]o study the facts, any and all facts, concerning the American Negro and his plight, and by measurement and comparison and research, work up to any valid generalization which [he] could.⁵⁶

Through membership in the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*, possibly encouraged by Schmoller, Du Bois was exposed to ideas of social democracy and Marxism. Criticisms of Ricardo and the Classical school, as well as support for the demands of organized labor were rather new to Du Bois. Socialism and Marxism were almost completely disregarded at Harvard, as theories that had long been proven wrong. He maintains that had it not been

⁵⁵W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, (Millwood: Kraus-Thomson Org. Ltd, 1975), p.50.

⁵⁶Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, p. 51.

for his awareness of the race problem he would have "probably been an unquestioning worshipper at the shrine of the established social order and of the economic development into which [he] was born."⁵⁷

The influence of Schmoller's (and to some extent Wagner's) teachings is apparent in Du Bois' sociological studies *The Philadelphia Negro* (published 1899) and the *Atlanta University Publications* (1897-1916). His Ph.D. thesis *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America (1638-1870)*, which was published as the first volume of the *Harvard Historical Studies* series⁵⁸, also shows some of this new influence, since he completed it after his return from Europe in 1894.

Francis Broderick and others have argued that upon his return from Europe Du Bois' view of his dissertation had somewhat changed, due to the new direction he got in Germany. In *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade*, Du Bois followed Hart's approach and collected a large amount of data in the form of laws and statutes passed by state and federal legislatures to prevent slave trading in the United States, as well as their attempts at enforcement. In this monograph, he focuses mainly on the development of slavery as an institution, following Hart's instructions, and does not put much emphasis on other aspects, such as the effects of slavery on its victims, or the cruelty and brutality on board the slave ships.

Although his language in *Suppression* is "calm and undecorated, his prose compared to many of his later works, simple and unpassionate,"⁵⁹ he makes clear that slavery was a great moral wrong in American history. Du Bois, the historian and narrator, takes a moral stance, criticizing legislators and even the Founding Fathers for not putting a stop to the moral wrong of slavery.

⁵⁷Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 155.

⁵⁸published 1896

⁵⁹Jack Moore, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), p. 28.

Originally, he had attributed the failure to curtail the slave trade as much to economic incentives as to the low “moral standards” of the American people, who were not willing to impose and enforce effective legislation. Du Bois’ moralizing tone throughout the monograph shows that he is not only concerned with the scientific facts. His use of categories like “moral fibre” to classify white Americans show that he is very much occupied with slavery as a moral wrong, that could have been abolished if Americans had had higher moral standards.

In retrospect, Du Bois (as have other scholars) noted the lack of analysis on the economic aspects of the slave trade in his dissertation.⁶⁰ In the “Conclusion” (written after his return from Germany), Du Bois identifies the “economic collapse” of the system of slavery as the main reason for its abolition. A thesis that, as Broderick puts it, “received little support in the text”⁶¹

In 1891 Albert Bushnell Hart had arranged for Du Bois to present his work in progress as a paper at a meeting of the American Historical Association. This speech was later published as “The Enforcement of the Slave-Trade Laws” in the Association’s *Annual Reports*.⁶² In this paper Du Bois holds that “an enlightened public policy, the common moral sense of a great people enforcing its sovereign will by majorities for Lincoln and by the point of the bayonet”⁶³ had caused the abolition of slavery.

As Broderick points out, this analysis seems a more appropriate conclusion to what he had actually written than the economic argument he uses in the conclusion of the final version. Du Bois’ work in economics with Schmoller and Wagner made him more

⁶⁰see “Apologia” to the 1954 edition of the book.

⁶¹Francis Broderick, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1959), p. 35-36.

⁶²W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Enforcement of the Slave-Trade Laws”, *Annual Report of the American Historical Association 1891*, (Washington, D.C., 1892), pp. 163-174.

⁶³*ibid*, qtd. in Broderick, p. 36.

aware of the importance of economic factors on human behavior in general and in the slave trade in particular. Du Bois himself noted this discrepancy between his text and the conclusion, and “apologizes” for it in the introduction.

Suppression is also the only one of Du Bois’ works on an aspect of black history, in which he writes from *one* (undivided) American perspective. In his later works he would write from outside the American (white) framework. In *Suppression* he still seems to believe in a common background and history, for he uses phrases like “we” and “our” when describing one American past.⁶⁴ After living in Germany and traveling in Europe, this outlook changed, Du Bois no longer felt as if he was “within” the mainstream American structure.⁶⁵

Du Bois returned to the United States in summer 1894 after spending most of his money travelling in Germany and Europe. As anticipated in his letters to the Slater Fund, he almost immediately began looking for a teaching position, preferably in the social sciences at a black college.

After two rather unfulfilling years of teaching at Wilberforce University in Ohio, Du Bois was invited by the University of Pennsylvania in 1896 to study “Negro life” in the city of Philadelphia’s Seventh Ward, a predominantly black district with many social problems. Du Bois was aware that the motivation behind his appointment to conduct a study of the Seventh Ward was most likely not aimed at improving the living conditions of its black inhabitants. Nevertheless, he felt that he was presented with an opportunity to do work in sociology as he had studied it in Germany. He would be able to demonstrate to white America what black life was truly like, and thereby change the false perceptions and prejudices against his race. Du Bois at that time believed that racism was mostly a

⁶⁴see Moore, p. 30, i.e. “our ancestors”.

⁶⁵for a detailed discussion of this, see chapter on personal experience in Germany.

matter of misinformation, and that by showing the “true” picture of blacks in America, racism could be overcome. His strong sense of mission and a strong belief in the importance of sociological study led him to write:

The sole aim of any society is to settle its problems in accordance with its highest ideals, and the only rational method of accomplishing this is to study those problems in the light of the best scientific research.⁶⁶

In “The Study of the Negro Problems” (1896) and a few other speeches/papers Du Bois presented during that time, his strong belief in the necessity of sociological study of social phenomena, above all of course, the “Negro Problem” becomes manifest.

After completing the *Philadelphia Negro*⁶⁷, Du Bois accepted an offer from the Atlanta University to teach economics, history and sociology. He remained there for thirteen years, from 1897 to 1910, conducting empirical research studies known as *The Atlanta University Publications*,⁶⁸ and organizing annual conferences on the race question. Du Bois’ work at Atlanta University is the almost perfect realization of Schmoller’s ideals: The studies were planned in ten-year cycles, annually analyzing one aspect of black life and experience to be re-examined after a decade. Methodologically, Du Bois adhered to Schmoller’s principles, by collecting and compiling empirical data on each topic. The division between the accumulation of facts and the search for remedies also marked Du Bois’ work at Atlanta. While the actual studies were done in accordance with the “objectivity criterion” of the researcher, the conferences as well as speeches given and articles written by Du Bois during that time, used the findings of the studies to advocate social and political changes.

⁶⁶W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Study of the Negro Problems” (1896), reprinted in Dan Green and Edwin Driver (eds.), *W. E. B. Du Bois on Sociology and the Black Community*, (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978), p.75.

⁶⁷ Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*, (New York: Benjamin Bloom Inc, 1967), reprinted from 1899 edition.

⁶⁸ Du Bois (ed.), *Atlanta University Publications*, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1969), reprinted from the collection of the New York Public Library.

Du Bois later described this period of his life as the ‘ivory tower’ of academia. Still, he did more than “only” empirical research and teaching. While at the University of Pennsylvania, he became a member of the American Negro Academy (ANA), whose program for the improvement of race relations he outlined in “The Conservation of the Races”. The ANA could have been an attempt at establishing an organization similar to the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* (Union for Social Politics) that his Berlin professors Schmoller and Wagner had helped create. The *Verein* (of which Du Bois had become a member while in Germany) had been a forum for scholars to actively discuss and influence the direction of social policy. Similarly, the ANA allowed Du Bois to take a more activist role, beyond empirical research.

The Teachings of Heinrich von Treitschke

Introduction

Unlike the influence Gustav Schmoller and Adolph Wagner have had on Du Bois' work and development as a scholar, researchers mostly have neglected the impact of the (political) historian Heinrich von Treitschke.⁶⁹ Treitschke, the Pan-Germanist and fanatic nationalist and racist, at first glance seems a very unlikely connection to Du Bois' intellectual development.

Nevertheless, there are several indicators that warrant an analysis of Treitschke's influence on Du Bois. One of them is the significance Du Bois gives to Treitschke by referring to him frequently when reminiscing about his student years in Germany. This becomes evident when he writes about the University of Berlin that "to me *by far* the most interesting of the professors is the well-known von Treitschke, the German Machiavelli."⁷⁰ Despite the fact that Treitschke was known for his racism and militarism, Du Bois seems to be fascinated by him. A lot of attention has been given Du Bois' essays "The Conservation of the Races" and "The Talented Tenth," which are somewhat different from the majority of Du Bois (later) work and his liberal positions. Du Bois has been accused of being elitist and using racialist theories in these works. A careful analysis of these pieces, in the light of Treitschke's doctrines may provide some insights into their origin and meaning. The effect of German nationalism and belief in *Volksgeist* on Du Bois' thinking will also be examined.

This section will give a brief overview of Treitschke's life and the development of his work with its historical background. It will mainly focus on the content,

⁶⁹ An exception is Arnold Rampersad, *The Art and Imagination of W. E. B. Du Bois*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1990), reprint from 1976, esp. pp. 44-45.

⁷⁰ Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 164. Italics mine.

presentation and impact of his lectures on *Politics* given at the University of Berlin, and look at their effect on Du Bois' personal and scholarly development with special focus on traces in Du Bois' writing from this period.

Treitschke's Life: A Brief Overview

Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896) was born in Dresden, Saxony. His father was an army general, loyal to the ruling house of Saxony. Early on Treitschke showed opposition to his father's political and religious views, as he supported the unification of Germany from its numerous smaller and large monarchies to one *Reich* under the leadership of Prussia.

Treitschke studied at a number of different German universities including Bonn and Leipzig⁷¹ He preferred the liberal University of Bonn, where he mainly worked under Friedrich Christoph Dahlmann (1785-1860), whom he greatly admired. Dahlmann was among the early outspoken proponents of a unified German state led by Prussia, and had been propagating a strong role for Germany as a world power. In his early years, Dahlmann had been a political activist fighting for German unity and liberal constitutional monarchy, and had suffered personal loss for his conviction. Because of pressure from his family, Treitschke returned to Leipzig where he worked mainly under the political economist Wilhelm Roscher. In 1857 (at age 23) Treitschke completed his Ph.D. at Leipzig, in 1858 he finished his habilitation⁷² and was offered a lecturing position in history at the university.

Because of his advocacy for German unification and his eloquent and open support for Prussia, he experienced difficulties with Saxony's authorities. In his essay

⁷¹ Many students in the second part of the 19th century would move from one school to another in order to work with professors they admired or trying to work in the best university libraries and archives.

⁷² The highest academic title in Germany is that of a *Professor*, in order to obtain it, a *habilitation* has to be completed (similar to a dissertation for a Ph.D.). It is open only to those who already hold a Ph.D. (the title of Professor therefore does not automatically come with a teaching position at a university)

“*Bundesstaat und Einheitsstaat*,”⁷³ written in 1864, he called on Prussia to take over some of the smaller German monarchies by force, and strongly criticized the current Confederation (*Staatenbund*) of the various German small states.

In 1858 Treitschke began contributing to the influential political magazine *Preußische Jahrbücher* (Prussian Yearbooks). The *Jahrbücher* became Treitschke’s main venue for publication and he took over the position of publisher in 1866.⁷⁴ In Leipzig he became known as the “Apostle of Prussia”, which eventually led to increasing tensions with his family, so he decided to leave Leipzig and accept a teaching position in political science and finance at the University of Freiburg in the grand duchy of Baden. Treitschke’s vehement *Pan-Germanism* with his support for Prussia made him rather controversial in the small Southern German monarchies. Nevertheless, he was very successful and popular as a professor.

Although Treitschke favored German unity under Prussia’s leadership, he initially remained critical of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck (1818-1898). He believed that Prussia was the only German State capable of leading a united German *Reich* and that only Prussia had the strength and power to actually force some of the smaller states to join this union. Prussia with its parliament, bureaucracy and strong military came closest to Treitschke’s ideal of what a German state should be like. Treitschke favored a constitutional monarchy (not a republic) and criticized among other things, Bismarck’s policy of media censorship and his disrespect of the Prussian parliament, whose decisions he repeatedly ignored and overrode with his policies.

⁷³This title seems to be commonly translated as “Federalism and Centralization”, but as it refers to the State it could be translated as “Federal State and Centralized State.”

⁷⁴ He resigns from his position as publisher of the *Jahrbücher* in 1889, after controversies with the editor.

During the war between Prussia and Austria over the Holstein region in 1866,⁷⁵ however, Treitschke became a supporter of Bismarck and the war. In his articles and speeches he advocated a new German nationalism and encouraged all Germans to support Prussia.

Bismarck became aware of Treitschke's pro-Prussian attitude and personally tried to convince the well-known publicist to lend his services as a writer and teacher to the Prussian cause. Despite his support for Bismarck's position and the war, Treitschke still held a strong distrust for the German Chancellor and even turned down the offer of a teaching position at the renowned University of Berlin. The offer became even more tempting when Treitschke widely known for his pro-Prussian attitude, was forced to leave Freiburg when Baden (like the other Southern German states) joined Austria in the war against Prussia.

After teaching in Kiel and Heidelberg, Treitschke finally accepted a call to the University of Berlin in 1873 (where he stayed until his death). Pleased by the founding of the *Reich* and the crowning of Prussian King William as Emperor William I at Versailles in 1871, Treitschke had switched camps. However, he never ceased to be critical of the constitution and political foundations of the *Reich*. Besides his professorship at the university, Treitschke also continued to be a member of the *Reichstag*, to which he had been elected in 1871.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ The rule over the small Northern German duchies of Schleswig and Holstein (part of them now make up the most Northern German state of Schleswig-Holstein) was the reasons for a number of dispute between Prussia, Austria and Denmark. In 1864 Prussia and Austria fought against Denmark and won control over the area. In 1865 Prussia annexes Holstein and a dispute with Austria over dominance of the German Reich ensues. This causes a war between the two largest German states with the smaller monarchies joining in on either side. The war ends after about six weeks with a Prussian victory.

⁷⁶ With the support of friends, who helped him in finding an appropriate district, Treitschke got elected in the district of Kreuznach-Simmern. He remained a Member of Parliament until 1884, first as a member of the Liberal Party, later as an independent candidate.

Treitschke began teaching in 1874 with lectures on politics. These lectures, which he offered annually until his death in 1896, were later published in two volumes as *Die Politik*⁷⁷ (Politics).

The Lectures on Politics

Treitschke himself had not intended to publish his lectures and had only maintained basic and abbreviated notes to which he made minor changes over the years. Due to this lack of an original source, the lectures were reconstructed based on a compilation of notes and papers by Treitschke's students. This method obviously holds a number of drawbacks and inaccuracies. The content of the lectures had evolved over the years and the notes were taken at different times, thus reflecting various stages of Treitschke's thinking. Some of the students' notes contradicted each other and a lot of Treitschke's original wording and use of language is lost. Still the two volumes of *Die Politik* are judged by most historians as relatively accurate in reflecting and preserving the content of the (in)famous lectures. Treitschke's family had been very reluctant to agree to the publishing of *Politik*, and only gave their permission after the students' notes had been evaluated and corrected by several colleagues and friends of Treitschke.⁷⁸ In his lectures, Treitschke often made use of material from his previous work, which allows one to trace some of the ideas laid out in *Politik* back to their original source.

Treitschke, especially since 1871, had seen the necessity to create a national identity and unified spirit for the newly established German *Reich*. He also wanted to instill in Germany's youth a real idealism and saw the need to create goals and a mission aside from material achievements in the new *Reich*. His vision and promise to his

⁷⁷ Heinrich von Treitschke, *Politik: Vorlesungen von Heinrich von Treitschke*, Max Corniceliues (ed.), 2 Vols. (Leipzig: 1897-1998). This was the first edition, published after Treitschke's death.

listeners was that of future greatness and superiority of the Germans and their *Reich*, when they would arrive at their “Place in the Sun.” He had often lamented what he perceived as the lack of patriotism and idealism in his fellow countrymen. So by evoking pride and a sense of a common bond through German culture, history and politics, he hoped to remedy this “shortcoming”. But instead of simply emphasizing Germany’s strengths and positive characteristics of its people, Treitschke preached hatred for most things non-German. He constantly criticized and denounced all foreign countries, and strongly disliked Jews and the “non-Aryan races”. He relentlessly preached this “gospel” of German superiority in his lectures and publications. As Dorpalen puts it in his biography of Treitschke:

This exaltation of everything German was not the accidental result of an excessive enthusiasm. Treitschke [...] was determined to infuse at least into the younger generation that spirit of self-confidence which he had vainly urged on his contemporaries, and his ‘Politics’ course served as the platform in this campaign. Thus the Germans emerge from his lectures as one of the most idealist nations in the world, [...] Above all, the Germans are an ‘aristocratic’ nation, infinitely superior [to other nations]⁷⁹

As a member of the *Reichstag* and a number of politically conservative (academic) organizations, Treitschke tried to influence day-to day politics of the *Reich*. His conservative agenda also included propagation of war, and vehement opposition to women’s rights and welfare legislation.

The role of war as a function of the state also became an integral part of his teachings. Treitschke felt that war was a blessing not a disaster. He saw it as a way to morally “rejuvenate” the people and unite them, as they forgot their personal gain and rally around the common, national cause. He believed that war is forever inevitable and a necessity to the nations of the world. He takes the fatalistic position that war “...will

⁷⁸ See Ulrich Langer, *Heinrich von Treitschke: Politische Biographie eines deutschen Nationalisten*, (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1998), p. 341-342.

⁷⁹ Dorpalen, *Treitschke*, p. 237. Includes quotes from *Politics*, Vol. 1.

endure to the end of history, as long as there is multiplicity of States. The laws of human thought and of human nature forbid any alternative, *neither is one to be wished for.*"⁸⁰ According to Dorpalen, Treitschke's credo found a very receptive audience. Dorpalen believes that an insecurity of the young German upper and middle classes made the idea of war acceptable as a solution to the lack of idealism and unity. They often found Treitschke's lectures inspiring in providing them with direction and guidance for Germany's future.

Treitschke's outrageous racism and defamation of other countries and peoples always dominated the tone of his lectures. His belief in the superiority of Western culture is hardly unusual in the late 19th century, but Treitschke's racism went a lot further than that. He claimed that:

[t]he yellow race has never achieved political liberty, for their States have always been despotic and unfree. [...] The black races have always been servants, and looked down upon by all the others, nor has a negro State ever raised itself to a level of real civilization. Physical strength and endurance are such marked characteristics in the negro that he is employed inevitably to serve the ends of a will and intelligence higher than his own.⁸¹

Ulrich Langer in his biography of Treitschke, finds that in the lectures on politics, Treitschke gathers all "patterns of thought, stereotypes and clichés" that he used in his other works.⁸² His opinions are prejudiced and uninformed. Statements such as "The Latin has no feeling for the beauty of a forest; when he takes his repose in it he lies upon his stomach, while we rest upon our backs,"⁸³ speak for themselves in this respect.

⁸⁰ Treitschke, *Politics*, Vol. 1 p. 65. Italics mine.

⁸¹ Treitschke, *Politics*, Vol. 1 p.275-276.

⁸² Langer, p.348. Translation mine.

⁸³ Treitschke, *Politics*, Vol. 1, p. 206.

Du Bois remembered one lecture where Treitschke made a derogative comment about Mulattos: “Die Mulattin (sic) sind niedrig! Sie fühlen sich niedrig.”⁸⁴ (Mulattos are inferior! They feel inferior). Although Du Bois is quick to point out that neither Treitschke, nor the other listeners seemed to make any connection to him, he notes that for Treitschke “...my [Du Bois’] presence or absence would have made no difference...”⁸⁵

In the lectures, Treitschke also repeatedly stressed his belief that women were inferior to men and should confine themselves to the sphere of the home and the rearing of children. He also strongly opposed socialism as well as most forms of social welfare legislation as supported by the new school of political economy represented by his colleagues Schmoller and Wagner. Believing in a hierarchical class system, he held that: “[...] the masses must for ever remain the masses. [...] Millions must plough and forge and dig in order that a few thousands may write and paint and study.”⁸⁶

The Impact of the Lectures on Politics

Treitschke began delivering the lectures in the winter semester of 1874/75. Like his classes in Leipzig and Heidelberg, his course on politics soon became the most popular at the university, and eventually was regarded as an “institution”. Not only “...students from all departments [but also] listeners from many walks of life—among them officers, professional and businessmen, writers and editors (...).”⁸⁷ came to hear Treitschke speak. But by the time he started teaching in Berlin, Treitschke had become

⁸⁴ Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 165. Although I could not find the exact quote in *Politics*, I came across a similar statement: “The Mulatto is a nigger in all but his paler skin; that he is aware of it is shown by his consorting with other blacks.” Vol. 1, p. 276.

⁸⁵ Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 165.

⁸⁶ Treitschke, *Politics*, Vol. 1, p. 42.

completely deaf,⁸⁸ which made his speech rather difficult to understand, especially for non-native speakers. . Du Bois, who heard Treitschke's lecture in the winter semester of 1892-93, gave a vivid description of the teacher and the by then almost "ritualistic" lectures in his autobiography.⁸⁹ Despite his handicap, Treitschke, who had been a great orator in his student years, was still able to captivate his audience. Du Bois' description of Treitschke is similar to those of other students and reflects the same admiration and/or fascination for the conservative scholar. Dorpalen in his biography of Treitschke, describes the lecture and its success as follows:

The auditorium would be filled long before the appointed hour (...) Every few moments wild bursts of clapping and stamping (...) would punctuate [Treitschke's] oration. His success was the more impressive as his voice had now deteriorated into a monotonous roar, and his articulation had become quite indistinct.⁹⁰

From today's perspective, it is difficult to believe that these lectures were so popular and appealed so strongly to such a variety of listeners. But students' recollections and accounts, quoted in Dorpalen's book, illustrate and explain some of the deep impact Treitschke and his lectures have made on the audience:

(...) once they understood him, few listeners remained immune to the effect of his powerful eloquence. [...] 'He would pour out (...) an inexhaustible vocabulary, a continuous stream of language, every sentence as perfect (...) as though read from one of his books. He never faltered, unless overcome by feeling, for his passions were vehement (...)'. Even those few who found much to object to in what he said found themselves spellbound by the stirring pathos of his rhetoric.⁹¹

⁸⁷Peter Winzen, "Treitschke's Influence on the Rise of Imperialist and Anti-British Nationalism in Germany", in *Nationalist and Racialist Movements in Britain and Germany before 1914*, (Paul Kennedy et al. Eds.), p. 162.

⁸⁸Due to a childhood illness that grew considerably worse over the years, Treitschke had been hearing impaired since his student days. This "affliction" grew considerably worse and he eventually became completely deaf.

⁸⁹ Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 120-121.

⁹⁰ Andreas Dorpalen, *Heinrich von Treitschke*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 1957), p. 227.

⁹¹ Dorpalen, p. 227-228 (quotation included quotes of students who attended lectures).

Not only students, but also many intellectuals were drawn in by Treitschke's forceful rhetoric. The appeal of his teachings seems not to have depended only on the content, but also on the way it was presented and a fascination with the presenter himself. At the time, relatively little criticism of the lectures was heard, even from those whose political convictions ran counter to Treitschke's, were drawn in by his passion and eloquence. In retrospect, the German historian Johannes Haller, who attended the lectures wrote:

You had to listen hard, to follow what he was saying and you had the feeling that you were deciphering an old handwriting (script). The more deep was the impression of what you heard, you were as if hypnotized. On my way home, when I reflected on what was so unusual, moving about what he had said, I did not find an answer: You were under the spell of an exceptional personality.⁹²

Another aspect of Treitschke's lectures that impressed his audience, including Du Bois, was his ardent directness. He openly criticized anyone with whose position he did not agree (and there were many), including high government officials, famous writers and other teachers and intellectuals.

His criticisms were often harsh and uttered with irony, sarcasm and sometimes strong language. For example referred to the monarchs of the small German states as "our petty princes"⁹³ and defamed the supporters of the referendum about the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine in 1871 as "philanthropic pacifist pigs."⁹⁴ Du Bois himself, in his autobiography, remembered an instance in which Treitschke used the words "*Verrückte Dummkopf*" (crazy fool) to ridicule a public official.⁹⁵ The use of such strong language, however, is mostly omitted from the publication of *Politics*. Treitschke's presentations were always very passionate, sometimes resulting in spontaneous tearful outbursts.

⁹² Johannes Haller, *Lebenserinnerungen*. (Stuttgart, np., 1960), p.95ff, quoted in Langer, p. 352-353. (translation mine).

⁹³ Treitschke, *Politics*, Vol. 1, p. 201.

⁹⁴ Treitschke, *Politics*, Vol. 1 p. 203.

⁹⁵ Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 165.

Although Treitschke is mostly unknown today, even in Germany, he was famous and influential in his lifetime. His publications, especially those in periodicals (such as the *Preußische Jahrbücher*), were widely read, he was an elected official, a member of the *Reichstag*, his classes at the university were the most popular and he was a sought-after scholar.

During and after World War I, many historians thought Treitschke's influence on German society and the "German mind" to be rather significant. It was felt that Treitschke was partially responsible for the brand of German nationalism and political thought that eventually led to World War One and the excesses of the Nazi era. Arthur James Balfour in his introduction to the English edition of *Politik*⁹⁶ finds that the "full significance of the political theories to which the [...] lectures are devoted [...] has only recently been made plain."⁹⁷ Like others, Balfour finds that Treitschke's theories are based on fervent "patriotic passions,"⁹⁸ with the objective of supporting and justifying Bismarck's Realpolitik, such as Prussia's dominant position within the *Reich*, the Hohenzollern monarchy, militarism and Germany's colonial expansion. William H. Dawson, who had written introductions to the English edition of Treitschke's main opus *Deutsche Geschichte im 19. Jahrhundert*⁹⁹. (History of Germany in the 19th Century) noted in 1919:

Perhaps more than any other man, Treitschke is responsible for the excessive egoism, the self-glorification, boastfulness, and inflated estimate of itself which have been the bane of the German nation since 1871. [Treitschke's ideas] perverted the national mind in the service of a

⁹⁶ Heinrich von Treitschke, *Politics*, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1916), Vol. I, Arthur J. Balfour introduction).

⁹⁷ Balfour, introduction to Treitschke's, *Politics*, p. vii.

⁹⁸ Balfour in Treitschke's *Politics*, p. xii

⁹⁹ Treitschke completed seven volumes of his *History*, covering the period until 1848.

narrow, false, ungenerous patriotism [with] aims and ambitions which were destined to lead [Germany] out of the right course and in the end to overwhelm it with disaster¹⁰⁰

Such opinions were warranted when looking at the example of some of Treitschke's students such as Alfred von Tirpitz (1849-1930), who became well known as Commander and reformer of the Imperial Navy. It is said that Tirpitz even met with Treitschke outside of the lectures to discuss issues of armament and colonial expansion.¹⁰¹ Other students of Treitschke included Heinrich Claß, who became head of the Pan-German League, the diplomat Richard von Kühlmann, and Carl Peters who was an active supporter of Germany's colonial expansion.

One of the few contemporary critics was the young Max Weber, who was a visiting lecturer at the University of Berlin and a colleague of Treitschke. He disagreed with Treitschke's teachings and considered them to have a negative impact on students. Nevertheless, Weber felt that Treitschke was sincere in his striving for "idealist foundations" and partly blamed the audience for focusing mostly on his "excesses" in militarism and nationalism:

Treitschke does not have a desirable effect on the modesty of the judgment, discrimination, and the sense of fairness of my contemporaries. Yet there is a truly idealist element in this man so unfortunate in many respects, in spite of his crude errors and injustices. The evil effects of his lecturing are primarily due to the lack of character of his audience. [...] And if my contemporaries would not venerate military directness [...] a predilection for [Bismarck's] Realpolitik would not be the only thing they would learn from Treitschke's lectures...¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Heinrich v. Treitschke, *History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul, Vol. 7, (London, 1919), introduction by William Harbutt Dawson, p. x-xi, qtd in Heinrich v. Treitschke, *History of Germany in the 19th Century*, Gordon Craig (ed.), (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1975), introduction by Gordon Craig, p. xi-xii.

¹⁰¹ See Dorpalen, *Treitschke*, p. 234.

¹⁰² Max Weber, *Jugendbriefe*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, n.d.), p. 232-233, as quoted in Dorpalen, p. 239-240.

While it is rather obvious why German students were attracted to Treitschke's lectures, it is somewhat surprising to see that a number of foreign students were attending. Listeners included the English-born Anti-Semite Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927), whose Germanophile philosophies of Aryan superiority would later be used by the National Socialists. For him Treitschke was the "true model of the pure German."¹⁰³ Dorpalen finds it a "measure of his personal magnetism," that Jewish students as well as foreign students "could not help but being fascinated by the forcefulness of his oratory."¹⁰⁴ They, as Du Bois, must have chosen to ignore or downplay the rhetoric against their country, race or religion as did the American Arthur Hadley, who observed: "Americans come in for a share of abuse, but much less than most other people."¹⁰⁵

Treitschke's Influence on Du Bois

After establishing the content of Treitschke's teachings, and the impact he has had on the political thinking of his contemporaries, the idea that Du Bois was affected by what he heard from Treitschke, becomes somewhat more plausible. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Du Bois found Treitschke to be "by far the most interesting" of the professors, and his classes were "intensely interesting."¹⁰⁶ Du Bois liked to refer to Treitschke with titles such as the "Fire-eating Pan-German" or the "German Machiavelli."¹⁰⁷ Although both in *Dusk of Dawn* (1940) as well as in the *Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois* (1968),¹⁰⁸ he mentioned Treitschke's derogatory remark about

¹⁰³ Letter from Chamberlain to Treitschke, 27 November 1895; DSB, *Treitschke Papers*, box 5, no. 107 as quoted in Winzen.

¹⁰⁴ Dorpalen, *Treitschke*, p. 240.

¹⁰⁵ in *Saturday Review*, May 2, 1896, as quoted in Dorpalen, *Treitschke*, p. 240.

¹⁰⁶ Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 164.

¹⁰⁷ Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 162 and 164.

¹⁰⁸ Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, pp. 98-99, and *Autobiography*, pp. 164-65.

mulattos (“Mulattos are inferior; they feel inferior”), Du Bois’ description of Treitschke still seems rather positive, given Treitschke’s racism, his belief in war and colonial expansion, and his lack of regard for anything but Western civilization. Unlike other racist remarks directed at him (or made in his presence), Du Bois in this case barely criticized the speaker and almost tries to excuse Treitschke’s remark. He goes on to describe him as “not a narrow man” with an “outlook of a born aristocrat.”¹⁰⁹

Although he never explicitly stated his admiration for Treitschke or certain parts of his doctrine, the descriptions of Treitschke in their breadth (length) and choice of words (language) reveal his fascination and even admiration. Du Bois, at least after World War I, must have been aware of the negative influence the professor had on his German audience, since he most likely witnessed some of the excesses and abuses Treitschke made in his lectures. Nevertheless, there is no direct criticism of Treitschke. The British Austen Chamberlain, one of the few foreigners who was critical of the lectures on Politics, found that Treitschke revealed a different side of the “German character—a narrow-minded, proud, intolerant Prussian chauvinism” and worried that Treitschke was “forming a school” of such thought.¹¹⁰ Du Bois in contrast to Chamberlain only had to remark, in connection with the comment on mulattos, that Treitschke “was given to making extraordinary assertions out of a clear sky and evidently believing just what he had said.”¹¹¹ The *Autobiography* gives a comparatively detailed and long portrayal of Treitschke—Schmoller, Wagner and others are given much less detail. In *Dusk of Dawn*, Du Bois’ description of Treitschke is much shorter than in the autobiography (as is his entire account of his student years in Europe). Interestingly, the description he gave of Treitschke’s outer appearance is almost contradictory to that in the

¹⁰⁹ Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 165.

¹¹⁰ Austen Chamberlain, *Down the Years*, (London, 1935), Letter of 31. October, 1887, as quoted in Winzen.

¹¹¹ Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 165.

Autobiography, and he translated the remark about mulattos somewhat incorrectly. The accounts of the *Autobiography* appear to be more accurate, since Du Bois quoted from his own notes taken during his time in Germany

It seems that one of the things that attracted Du Bois to Treitschke and his teachings was the notion of the significant role of the individual as a moving force in history. This “great man theory” which was based on philosophies of Carlyle and Macaulay was an integral part of Treitschke’s understanding of history. As described above, Du Bois early on had displayed a fascination with historical figures and leaders,¹¹² but was discouraged from this outlook on history mainly by Albert Bushnell Hart at Harvard. Treitschke’s never-ending praise for individuals like Bismarck, Frederick the Great, Luther and others, as well as his assertions that “it is individual men who make history...”¹¹³ appealed to Du Bois. To impress this point on his students, Treitschke frequently used the example of Prussia, whose “great” development he claimed, was due to an elite of “men of genius”, namely Bismarck and the Hohenzollern monarchs.¹¹⁴ Du Bois, who pictured himself to be a leader of the black race and hoped to unite black Americans, had already admired Bismarck, and was very susceptible to these teachings.

Despite his romantic view of the simple German *Volk* Treitschke was clearly an elitist. He had little interest in more than elemental education for the working class, and firmly believed that the lower classes were not fit for any intellectual pursuits or even participatory democracy. He felt that the position of a university scholar should be regarded as that of an aristocrat.¹¹⁵ Du Bois himself, although much more tolerant and

¹¹² His commencement addresses for example, focus on the abolitionist Wendell Phillips, Bismarck and Jefferson Davis.

¹¹³ Treitschke, *Politics*, Vol. 1, p. xxxvii.

¹¹⁴ Treitschke, *Politics*, Vol. 1, p. xxxviii.

¹¹⁵ see Treitschke, *Politics*, Vol. 1, i.e. p. 380.

compassionate towards the poor and uneducated, saw himself as part of a small elite (aristocracy), educated to lead the rest of the black race, as can be seen in his essay “The Talented Tenth.”

One of Treitschke’s great strengths was his ability to convey the notion that idealism was the motivation for all his theories and beliefs, that his advocating for war, his xenophobia and his elitism sprang from a noble sense of selflessness or the willingness to sacrifice for the national idea. He reiterated to his students that “[t]he individual must sacrifice himself for the community of which he is a member”¹¹⁶ Du Bois translated this into a vision for himself as he wrote on his 25th birthday in Berlin:

I am firmly convinced that my own best development is not one and the same with the best development of the world and here I am willing to sacrifice. [...] I therefore [...] work for the rise of the Negro people, taking for granted that their best development means the best development of the world....¹¹⁷

While in Germany, Du Bois admitted that he was moved and fascinated by the sense of patriotism and love for German culture and *Deutschtum* that swept through German society at the time. Without explicitly referring to Treitschke’s teachings, he wrote about how much he was impressed with the striving for unity and the militarist glory of the Hohenzollern monarchy:

...there was that new, young Emperor [...] blessed by God, German Kaiser, King of Prussia, who led and pinpointed the pageantry. Ever and again he came riding ahead of his white and golden troops on prancing chargers through the great Brandenburg gate [...] I thrilled at the sight [...]. If a stranger was thus influenced, what about the youth of Germany?¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Treitschke, *Politics*, Vol. 1, p. 94.

¹¹⁷ Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 171.

¹¹⁸ Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 169.

While Du Bois seems to still be able to remember these emotions writing roughly 65 years later, the words he wrote shortly after his return reveal even more of a trace from Treitschke's teachings.

I am bound to the republican form of government by birth and education, but I must say that if there ever existed a race of divinely appointed kings it is certainly those monarchs of the House of Hohenzollern, which gave the world the Prussian state + German nation of today.¹¹⁹

Treitschke's eloquence and passionate style of speaking and writing also impressed Du Bois. At Harvard, Du Bois had been struggling to define and improve his own writing. As Rampersad points out, Du Bois had been exposed to the conflicting opinions of Hart's insistence on the "rigor of scholarship", while Barrett Wendell, Du Bois' English professor, was favoring the "work of Carlyle and Macaulay over strict German scholarship."¹²⁰ With Treitschke's opposition to the treatment of history with "bloodless objectivity" at the expense of "giving meaning to the historical past"¹²¹ and Schmoller's emphasis on objective empirical research, Du Bois faced a similar dilemma. While Du Bois seemed to have been a better student of Schmoller, whose lead he followed after his return to the US, it can be argued that Du Bois' early writings about Germany and history show a visible trace of Treitschke's pro-Prussian and monarchist rhetoric in content as well as in style.

Examples of this are "Some Impressions of Europe" and "The Present Condition of German Politics" (both ca 1894). In the latter piece, while analyzing and describing the various German parties in a rather Schmoller-like manner, he reiterates Treitschke's notion that the Germans "largely [...] lack that robust faith in itself which builds men and

¹¹⁹Du Bois, "Some Impressions of Europe", in *The Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois*, U. of Massachusetts, Amherst, R 80, F32, c.1894. This piece could have been intended as a speech for students. Only fragments are left and parts of it are illegible.

¹²⁰ Rampersad, p.. 39-40.

¹²¹ See Dorpalen, p. 133.

peoples.”¹²² He almost literally quotes from Treitschke when he states: “Germany is a nation, whose unfortunate geographical situation [...] almost entirely without natural frontiers, renders a strong military monarchy indispensable to her integrity”¹²³

Many of Du Bois’ remarks in those pieces and elsewhere, show that he accepted some of the nationalistic claims as well as the sentiment of *Deutschtum* prevalent in Germany and advocated especially by Treitschke. Nevertheless, Du Bois still firmly believed in democracy and racial equality. Paradoxically, Du Bois was able to be inspired by one of the most ardent believers in white supremacy and German nationalism, and distill out of those teachings his own philosophy of race pride and unity and his own romantic racialist theories which he hoped would help uplift his race.

Race for Du Bois had become “a matter of culture and cultural history.”¹²⁴ He started to stress the importance of a nation’s or racial group’s culture as a measurement of its development. As a basis for this, black Americans had to become united and develop yet again that “robust faith in itself *which builds men and peoples.*”¹²⁵

The Conservation of the Races

“The Conservation of the Races” is one of Du Bois’ more controversial writings. It has been analyzed, criticized and defended in much detail, often overlooking the possible source for the theories he puts forth.¹²⁶ Without going into a detailed analysis of “Conservation”, it is interesting to look at its underlying theory.

¹²² Du Bois, “The Present Condition of German Politics.”

¹²³ Du Bois, “The Present Condition of German Politics.”

¹²⁴ Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, p. 98.

¹²⁵ Du Bois, “The Present Condition of German Politics”, italics mine.

Du Bois' presumption that the gifts— that all the different races he is struggling to define—contribute to humanity resembles Treitschke's doctrine of the role of nations and peoples. While arguing against the ideas of eternal peace and one universal nation Treitschke found:

All nations [...] have their limitations, but it is exactly in the abundance of these limited qualities that the genius of humanity is exhibited. The rays of the Divine light are manifested, broken by countless facets among the separate peoples, each one exhibiting [...] another idea of the whole. Every people has a right to believe that certain attributes of the Divine reason are exhibited in it to their fullest perfection.¹²⁷

While Treitschke would have almost certainly limited this theory to the white race only, the general idea laid out is similar to what Du Bois wrote in "Conservation." Here Du Bois holds that the deeper meaning of racial (or national) differences existed so that the races could be "striving, each in its own way, to develop for civilization its particular message, its particular ideal, which shall help to guide the world nearer and nearer that perfection of human life which we all long for, that 'one far off Divine event.'"¹²⁸

Although Du Bois later modified his theory of race, the concept of the "gift" can be found in his writings as late as 1957, when he warns that the "Negro" under American capitalism comes in danger of "self-destruction or loss of his possible gifts to America."¹²⁹

¹²⁶ See for example Lucious Outlaw, "Conserve Races?" and Robert Gooding-Williams "Outlaw, Appiah and Du Bois' 'The Conservation of the Races'", both in Bernard Bell et al (eds.), *W. E. B. Du Bois on Race and Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 15-56.

¹²⁷ Treitschke, *Politics*, Vol. 1, p. 19.

¹²⁸ Du Bois, "The Conservation of the Races", reprinted in David Lewis, (ed.), *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Reader*, (New York: Holt and Company, 1995), p. 23.

While he believed that the black race (like the yellow race and the Slavs) still had to fully develop its “gift” to humanity, there probably was no doubt in Du Bois’ mind that with dedicated leadership of a gifted few, a “talented tenth,” it is capable of doing so.

Du Bois admired Bismarck mainly for his leadership and his ability to unify Germany. During the time Du Bois studied at Berlin, the spirit of the struggle for Germany’s national unity was kept alive by Treitschke and others who had fought for it. National unity is presented as the path to salvation and advancement of the German people. Du Bois seems to take up this ideal of unity when he writes in “The Conservation of the Races” that in order to come to a “broader humanity” free of racism” the black race must, strive by race organization, by race solidarity, [and] by race unity.” He strongly believes that “[t]here is no power under God’s high heaven that can stop the advance of eight thousand thousand honest, earnest, inspired and *united* people.”¹³⁰

The Talented Tenth

The essay “The Talented Tenth” was written in 1903 and published in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today*¹³¹, which also included contributions by among others, Booker T. Washington and Charles Chestnutt. It is clearly an attempt by Du Bois to argue his position in the growing controversy between him and Washington over the method of education for blacks, but it also demonstrates some of the German influence on Du Bois’ thinking.

“The Talented Tenth” is based on a thorough empirical study and analysis of education levels and occupations within the black community in accordance with

¹²⁹ Du Bois “The Present Leadership of American Negroes”, in the *National Guardian*, May 20, 1957, reprinted in David Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Reader*, p. 357.

¹³⁰ “Conservation”, p. 27, italics mine.

¹³¹ (New York: James Pott & Co., 1903), pp. 33-75.

Schmoller's teachings. Backed up by the results of this study, Du Bois puts forward his arguments for the necessary plan of action. The essay begins (and ends) with the same assertion that "The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men."¹³² This statement reflects the view of history in which great men are the true force of progress and advancement of people, a view that had been eloquently propagated by Treitschke.

Du Bois also reiterates the element of idealism and personal sacrifice of this elite for the common good of the race. "90 per cent of the Southern-born [black college] graduates instead of seeking their personal freedom and broader intellectual atmosphere which their training has led them [to], [...] in some degree [...] conceive, stay and labor and wait in the midst of their black neighbors and relatives."¹³³ Du Bois sees himself as part of this elite who is sacrificing its own best development for the advancement and the unity of all blacks in America. This resembles the idealism and willingness to sacrifice that Treitschke had demanded of his fellow Germans, in order to ensure the best development of the new *Reich* and the German nation.

At this time, there seemed to have been no doubt in Du Bois' mind that it was "from the top downward that culture filters" and that there was never a "nation on God's fair earth civilized from the bottom upward." While this notion was not uncommon in 19th century thinking, it reminds one of Treitschke's words that "the wells of knowledge must first be filled from the heights of original research [by an intelligentsia] before they can flow down to the lower levels [the uneducated masses]."¹³⁴

Du Bois' demand for adequate education of a "Talented Tenth" is also based on the belief that the advancement of the race is not only to be measured in an improvement of its economic situation. The leaders of the race are also to be a living example of moral

¹³² Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth", p. 17 (and 29).

¹³³ Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth", p. 22.

excellence and cultural development. To teach only “industrial skills” would neglect the need for moral elevation and idealistic strivings in the black masses. The goal of developing the “gift” of the black race to humanity was not to be lost sight of by focusing all attention on economic advancement. Du Bois recalled that most Europeans viewed Americans as preoccupied with material advancement,¹³⁵ and Treitschke had often ridiculed Americans as “money bags” for their preoccupation with money. Du Bois attributed this materialism as a vice mainly characteristic of white Americans. In “The Talented Tenth: Memorial Address”¹³⁶ a speech given in 1948 to the fraternity Sigma Phi Pi, Du Bois revisited his earlier theory and defended it against accusations of neglecting the masses for the profit of an aristocracy. He admits that the main mistake, committed out of youthful idealism, was his automatic assumption that the black elite would be willing to sacrifice personal gain for the common good: “I did not realize that selfishness is even more natural than sacrifice. I made the assumption of its wide availability because of the spirit of sacrifice I learned in my mission school training.”¹³⁷ While Du Bois, like Treitschke, now deplores the materialism and lack of idealism in his people, he still encouraged the idea of a black elite to lead the masses. By 1957, in a review of E. Franklin Frazier’s *The Black Bourgeoisie*, Du Bois believes this theory to have only “its kernel of truth” although “[e]ven prominent Negro leaders long thought that a Negro intelligentsia would be able to lift the Negro mass upward as a largely self-contained social unit...”¹³⁸ He is disillusioned and sees the reason for the failure of his theory in capitalism as well as in the immoral and selfish black leadership.

¹³⁴ Treitschke, *Politics*, Vol. 1, p. 377.

¹³⁵ Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 157.

¹³⁶ In *Boulé Journal*, 15 (October 1948) pp. 3-13, reprinted in David Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Reader*, pp. 347-353.

¹³⁷ Du Bois, “The Talented Tenth: Memorial Address”, p. 348.

¹³⁸ Du Bois, “The Present Leadership of American Negroes”, in Lewis, p. 354.

CHAPTER 3

DU BOIS' PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN GERMANY

On a personal and social level, in Germany Du Bois for the first time experienced life in a non-segregated society. There was some curiosity, but very little prejudice directed towards him. He made a few (white) friends, recognizing for the first time “human companionship, unveiled by the accident of color”¹³⁹

The way he was received in Germany (or Europe) made his outlook on the race problem become much more universal, less dictated by his experiences in the US. It is very likely that Du Bois had his first interracial relationship while he was staying with the Marbach family in Eisenach. As Du Bois later described it, he knew better than to make marriage plans with Dora (one of the daughters), since he was still very aware of the difficulties an interracial marriage would create in the US and besides, he was fully devoted to his calling of solving the “Negro problem”.¹⁴⁰

During his stay in Europe, Du Bois began to think in broader categories, detaching himself from the one dimensional black/white dichotomy. Describing this new experience he wrote:

I met men and women as I had never met them before. Slowly they became, not white folks, but folks. The unity beneath all life clutched me. I was not less fanatically a Negro, but ‘Negro’ meant a greater, broader sense of humanity and world fellowship. I felt myself standing, not against the world, but simply against American Narrowness and color prejudice, with the greater, finer world at my back.¹⁴¹

His description of his time in Germany, as quoted in his autobiography shows that Du Bois was eager to defend this sense of “common humanity” against intrusion by white

¹³⁹ Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 159.

¹⁴⁰ Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 161.

¹⁴¹ *Autobiography*, p. 157.

Americans. Most things American in these pages are described as negative, invading his newly found freedom from color prejudice. Du Bois seemed to enjoy German and European criticism of (white) American politics and culture: He characterized the United States as Treitschke's "bête noire", the country detested most by the German nationalist. While Treitschke seemed to have believed that a German who immigrated to the United States was "lost to civilization,"¹⁴² Du Bois' statement may be an exaggeration, as Treitschke's attacks on the US were comparatively benign.

The white American couple that stayed with the Marbachs for a few weeks is described as intruders that bring with them American race prejudice, as they warn the family against social contacts with blacks. The Berlin (or German student) was also better mannered than his "brother at Harvard," always displaying a "collar, gloves and cane", a style Du Bois soon began to copy. An American student who was in the group Du Bois traveled with during the Christmas holidays of 1893 was "good-hearted, but rather vulgar [...] with an education that [had] left no visible results."¹⁴³ All this is best characterized by Du Bois complaining of the eagerness of Germans (and Europeans in general) to introduce him to fellow American travelers: "If there was one thing less desirable than white 'fellow Americans' to me, it was black 'fellow Americans' to them."¹⁴⁴ Du Bois claimed that the low regard most 19th century Europeans had for the United States sometimes even got under his "anti-American skin."

As pointed out in previous chapters, Du Bois was fascinated by the Germans' passionate love for their country, a feeling largely foreign to him. After describing Germany's pride and nationalism personified in the young Emperor

¹⁴² Balfour in his introduction to *Politics* claimed that Treitschke had made this statement (although it is not part of *Politics*), p. xx.

¹⁴³ Du Bois, *Autobiography*, pp. 161-162; p. 163; p. 166; p. 173.

¹⁴⁴ *Autobiography*, p. 159.

William II, Du Bois wrote: “I began to feel that dichotomy which all my life has characterized my thought: how far can love for my oppressed race accord with love for the oppressing country?”¹⁴⁵

His relationship to the US grew even more distant as he looked upon it from the outside, as a critical spectator sharing his views with other spectators. He felt a sort of triumph that “they with [him] did not regard America as the last word in civilization.”¹⁴⁶

Besides this new outlook on race and racism, Du Bois also developed his interest in art and culture. In his autobiography he wrote:

Europe modified profoundly my outlook on life and my thought and feeling toward it [...] I gained respect for manners. I had been before, above all, in a hurry [...] Now at times I sat still. I came to know Beethoven’s symphonies and Wagner’s *Ring*. I looked long at the colors of Rembrandt and Titian. I saw in arch and stone and steeple the history and striving of men and also their taste and expression. Form, color and words took new combinations and meanings.¹⁴⁷

Du Bois often remarked that his appreciation for culture and especially classical music was much impacted by his time in Germany. He wrote “Germany took up my music and art where Fisk had left me; to religious oratorio was now added opera and symphony, song and sonata.”¹⁴⁸ By leaving out his years at Harvard, he seems to disregard them as not having had anything to add to this experience. By cutting out Boston and Harvard with their cultural life, Du Bois knit together black music (Fisk) with Western European culture, denying the importance of any white American influence.

¹⁴⁵ Autobiography, p. 169.

¹⁴⁶ Autobiography, p. 157.

¹⁴⁷ Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 156.

¹⁴⁸ Du Bois, *Autobiography*, p. 169.

In “Some impressions of Europe”,¹⁴⁹ a piece probably written in 1894, Du Bois noted that “Europe preserves some things not because they pay not because they are ‘big’ but simply because they are beautiful.”¹⁵⁰ His Berlin teachers, and especially Treitschke, emphasized the importance of art and culture as an indicator of the advancement and level of civilization of a nation or race. While in Berlin, Du Bois went to the theater and symphony almost on a weekly basis and when travelling around Germany and Europe, he never failed to visit the famous art galleries and museums. In later years, Du Bois tried to instill an appreciation of art and music into his (black) students. In speeches such as “The Art and Art Galleries of Modern Europe”¹⁵¹ he attempted to convey this sense of importance by explaining to his listeners that “The Good, the True and the Beautiful” are the “three great ends of living.”¹⁵² The Beautiful, art and music, was essential to round one’s education and needed to complete the other essentials of life.

It seems that Du Bois first mentioned this “trinity” in the description of his 25th birthday in Berlin,¹⁵³ and he seemed to have believed in it throughout his career. While the importance of art and its relation to “the Good and the True” remains, Du Bois’ thinking on art evolved over the years. In an article “The Criteria of Negro Art”¹⁵⁴ published in the *Crisis* in 1926, Du Bois found that “Negro Art” should be propaganda

¹⁴⁹ Du Bois, “Some Impressions of Europe”, in *The Papers of W. E. B. Du Bois*, U. of Massachusetts, Amherst, R 80, F32, c.1894. Only fragments are left and parts of it are illegible.

¹⁵⁰ Du Bois, “Some Impressions of Europe”

¹⁵¹ “The Art and Art Galleries of Modern Europe”, in *Against Racism*, Herbert Aptheker (ed.), (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1985), pp.33-43. The speech was originally delivered at Wilberforce University ca 1896 and later in Augusta, GA in 1898. Some of these ideas can also be found in “The Spirit of Modern Europe”, in *Against Racism*, pp. 50-64.

¹⁵² Du Bois, “The Art and Art Galleries of Modern Europe”, p. 34.

¹⁵³ See Du Bois, “Celebrating His Twenty-fifth Birthday (1893),” in *Against Racism* p.28-29.

¹⁵⁴ Du Bois, “The Criteria of Negro Art”, in 32, (October 1926), p. 292. For a discussion of Du Bois’ ideas on art and propaganda see Keith Byerman, *Seizing the Word: History, Art, and Self in the Work of W.*

for the race, thereby making art also a means to the end of uplifting the race and improving its image. This still reflects the view that the advancement of a people or race can be measured by the standard of its art or culture.

E. B. Du Bois, (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1994, especially pp. 100-115. Byerman, however, does not focus on the origins of Du Bois' understanding of the role of art.

The Concept of *Volkgeist* or “Folk”

Du Bois’ relationship to the uneducated masses of blacks is somewhat ambiguous. His own privileged position —privileged not by wealth but by education—early on divided him from the mass of black people. His theories on “the Talented Tenth” and the definition of himself as part of this aristocracy reveal elitist tendencies in his thinking. Du Bois’ early appreciation of Western culture and “manners” often made him highly critical of the life style of the majority of the black population. In the chapter “On Alexander Crummell” in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Du Bois lets Crummell see a “fatal weakness” in the black masses ” which long years of mistreatment had emphasized”. Their “greatest shortcoming” was a “dearth of strong moral character, of unbending righteousness.”¹⁵⁵

While Du Bois always believed in the possibility of uplifting the masses, and that racism and slavery were the main causes for their current condition, he still disapproved and criticized their ignorance and “immoral behavior.” In “The Conservation of the Races” Du Bois laid out the Creed for the Negro Academy in which he wrote:

We believe that the first and greatest step toward the settlement of the [...] Negro Problem lies in the correction of the immorality, crime and laziness among the Negroes themselves, which still remains as heritage from slavery....¹⁵⁶

In connection with his belief in the personal sacrifice of the leading elite, Du Bois seemed to perceive that the masses through their moral shortcomings made the task of their leaders even more difficult. Again in writing about Germany, specifically of the founding of the *Reich* in 1871, Du Bois lamented the lack of character and intelligence in “simple folk.”

¹⁵⁵ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1903), 1993 edition. P. 174.

¹⁵⁶ Du Bois, “The Conservation of the Races”, p. 27.

The lazy will shirk, the envious refuse to work + the fool will not know enough: the result of this will only be that others must bear more than their burden, unthanked + unhonored for it: but they are the world-makers: they are the heroes that raise life out of its depths of litheness + meanness to the blue of God's own sky.¹⁵⁷

Du Bois obviously identified with those “heroes and worldmakers” and his pathos seems to indicate that he saw these same weaknesses and shortcomings in black Americans.

The other half of Du Bois' picture of the masses is much more positive and exhibits a pride in his race. Du Bois' concept of the masses or “black folk” as he dubbed them, seems to have been shaped to some extent by the theories of the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803)¹⁵⁸ from which most German (and some American) scholars, including Treitschke, have drawn in respect to the philosophy of *Volksgeist* or “Folklore.” In *The Souls of Black Folk* Du Bois celebrates the black gift of religious song and music, and as Rampersad put it, “accepted Herder's basic terms for evaluation of [folk] culture.” With Du Bois' rather harsh criticism of the black masses in mind, Rampersad goes on to argue that his “definition of folk is primarily political” and is much more limited than Herder's.¹⁵⁹ Rampersad traces this to the “reactionary” influence of the Harvard English professor Barrett Wendell had on Du Bois. I would argue that Du Bois' concept is similar to Treitschke's romanticized view of the *Volk*. Treitschke would praise the “good and simple *Volk*” and evoke them in connection with Teutonic virtues and the supremacy of the German “stock”, while on the other hand he had little compassion for and interest in the problems and condition of the actual working masses.

¹⁵⁷ Du Bois, “Some Impressions of Europe”.

¹⁵⁸ Herder had inspired German literature and philosophy by his writings about “*Volkstum*” and the importance of folklore. This led German literature from a focus on French and English examples to German folk tales, song and poetry. Herder believed that a national German literature should be based on folklore and that only the “*Volk*” could be the true inspiration for this culture.

¹⁵⁹ Rampersad, p. 74.

Du Bois writings show a lot of empathy and understanding for the life style of the poor black “folk” much more than many of his contemporaries. This includes some of his fellow black leaders (such as Booker T. Washington with his “pull yourself up by your own bootstraps” approach.) Du Bois’ tolerance could be an effect of his teaching experience in rural Tennessee while a student at Fisk. The first hand experience of the rural black living conditions seem to have had a humbling effect, and Du Bois showed more understanding and tolerance for the lack of education and poverty as he described it in the chapter “Of the Meaning of Progress” in *The Souls of Black Folk*. Du Bois had also followed Schmoller’s advice to get “his hands dirty” and through his research studies had much direct interaction with poor blacks in the South as well as in major cities like Philadelphia.

This race pride and understanding of the difficult living conditions of black folk, as well as his elitist outlook and distaste for ignorance and “moral weakness” all shape Du Bois’ concept of the masses and characterize his work.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

This thesis has demonstrated that Du Bois' two years of study in Germany had a significant impact on his intellectual as well as personal development. Du Bois' training by the political economist Gustav von Schmoller led him to fashion a career out of this model. Until about 1910, Du Bois did scientific research and hoped that the facts he gathered would lead to significant improvements for black Americans. At the same time, he followed his German professors' example and sought an activist role through writing and lecturing, as well as by his membership in the ANA. Although Du Bois eventually left the "ivory tower" of academia to be more directly engaged in political activism, I would argue that he still believed in the importance of empirical research as the basis for policy change. An indicator of this are a number of studies and congressional testimonies prepared or presented by Du Bois throughout his life, i.e. "On Federal Aid for State Public Schools" in 1937.¹⁶⁰

The section on Heinrich von Treitschke and the influence of his Lectures on Politics have shown a number of parallels between certain parts of Treitschke's teachings and Du Bois' concept on race and culture. This is not to say that Treitschke has served as a conscious role model for Du Bois, but it seems to me that the nationalism and reverence for culture and *Volksgeist* had a lasting impact on Du Bois' intellectual development. *The Souls of Black Folk* could be an attempt by Du Bois to establish a cultural tradition and a black American *Volksgeist*, in order to insure a contribution to humanity by "the black race."

¹⁶⁰For complete information see: W. E. B. Du Bois, *Contributions by W. E. B. D Bois in Government Publications and Proceedings*, Herbert Aptheker (ed.), (Millwood: Kraus-Thompson, 1980).

Treitschke was not the single proponent of these ideas in 19th century Germany or even at the University of Berlin. Nevertheless, he epitomized those trends and movements more than anyone else, and his teachings were more extreme than those of his contemporaries. Treitschke's elitism and view of history appealed to Du Bois and led him to admire Treitschke and certain parts of his doctrine. It seems to me that the exposure to German nationalism and Treitschke's concept of romantic racism offer a possible explanation for Du Bois more controversial writings.

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