

The Phenomenology of Blackness

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“However, the diverse aspects which consciousness takes upon itself are determinate in that each is regarded as existing on its own within the universal medium. White is only in contrast to black, etc., and the thing is a “one” precisely in virtue of its being contrasted with others.”

G.W. F. Hegel *Phenomenology of Spirit* §120

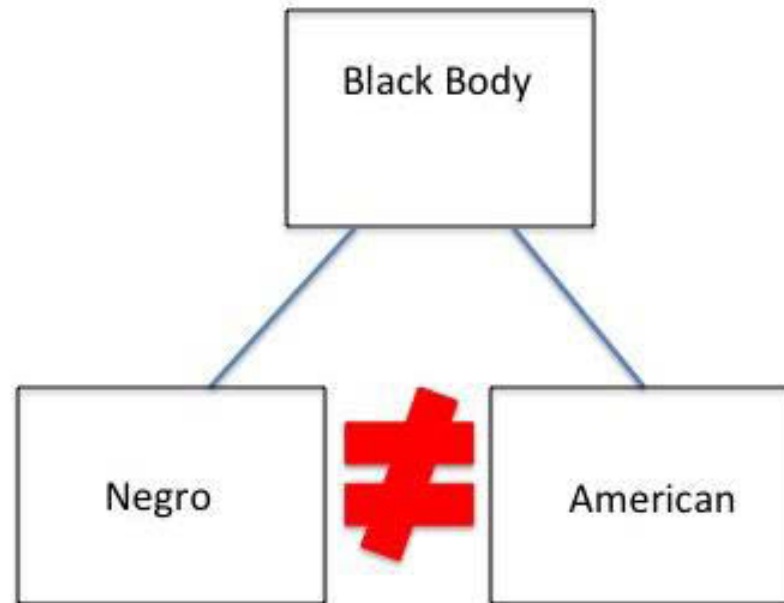
“The master is consciousness existing for itself. However, the master is no longer consciousness existing for itself merely as the concept of such a consciousness. Rather, it is consciousness existing for itself which is mediated with itself through another consciousness, namely, through another whose essence includes its being synthetically combined with self-sufficient being, that is, with thinghood itself.” Ibid. §190

“Let us then liken the soul to the natural union of a team of winged horses and their charioteer. The gods have horses and charioteers that are themselves all good and come from good stock besides, while everyone else has a mixture. To begin with, our driver is in charge of a pair of horses; second, one of the horses is beautiful and good and from stock of the same sort, while the other is the opposite and has the opposite bloodline. This means that the chariot-driving in our case is inevitably a painfully difficult business.” *The Phaedrus* (246b)

“ ‘The horse that is on the right, or nobler, side is upright in frame and well jointed, with a high neck and a regal nose; his coat is white, his eyes are coal black, and he is a lover of honor with modesty and self-control; companion to true glory, he needs no whip, and is guided by verbal commands alone. The other horse is a crooked great jumble of limbs with a short bull-neck, a pug nose, black skin, and bloodshot white eyes; companion to wild boasts and indecency, he is shaggy around the ears – deaf as a post – and just barely yields to horsewhip and goad combined.’ ” Ibid. (253d)

“After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, - a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.” W.E.B. Du Bois *The Souls of Black Folk*

Du Boisian Subaltern Self-Consciousness



““The *Operator* is the Photographer. The *Spectator* is ourselves, all of us who glance through collections of photographs-in magazines and newspapers, in books, albums, archives...And the person or thing photographed is the target, the referent, a kind of little simulacrum, any *eidolon* emitted by the object, which I should like to call the *Spectrum* of the Photograph, because this word retains, through its root, a relation to ‘spectacle’ and adds to it that rather terrible thing which is there in every photograph; the return of the dead.” Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida*

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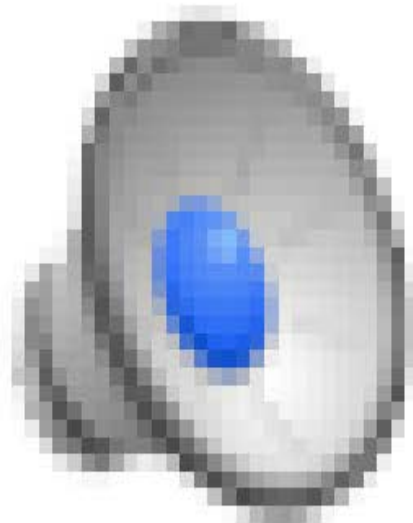
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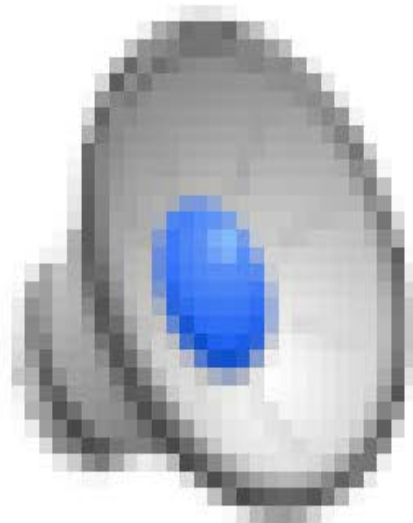




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“Suppose I am about to recite a psalm which I know. Before I begin, my expectation is directed towards the whole. But when I have begun, the verses from it which I take into the past become the object of my memory. The life of this act of mine is stretched two ways, into my memory because of the words I have already said and into my expectation because of those which I am about to say. But my attention is on what is present: by that the future is transferred to the past. As the action advances further and further, the shorter the expectation and the longer the memory, until all expectation is consumed, the entire action is finished, and it has passed into the memory.” St. Augustine *Confessions* 28:38

“...But this opposition between its appearance and its truth has only the truth for its essence, namely, the unity of self-consciousness with itself. This unity must become essential to self-consciousness, which is to say self-consciousness is *desire* itself. As self-consciousness, consciousness henceforth has a doubled object: The first, the immediate object, the object of sense-certainty and perception, which however is marked *for it* with the *character of the negative*; the second, namely *itself*, which is the true *essence* and which at the outset is on hand merely in opposition to the first. Self-consciousness exhibits itself therein as the movement within which, in its own eyes, the selfsameness of itself with itself comes to be.”

Hegel §167

“I was talking about time. It’s so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it’s not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it’s gone, but the place-the picture of it-stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head...”

“Can other people see it?” asked Denver.

“Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yes, yes. Someday you be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on. So clear. And you think it’s you thinking it up. A thought picture. But no. It’s when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else.” Toni Morrison
Beloved

“But we must deny the fact that slaves are considered merely as property, and in no respect whatever as persons. The true state of the case is, that they partake of both those qualities; being considered by our laws; in some respect, as persons, and in other respects, as property. In being compelled to labor not for himself, but for a master; in being vendible by one master to another master, and in being subject at all times to be restrained in his liberty, and chastised in his body, by the capricious will of another, the slave may appear to be degraded from the human rank and classed with the irrational animals, which under the legal domination of property. The Fœderal Constitution therefore, decides with great propriety on the case of our slaves, when it views them in the mixt character of persons and property.” James Madison *Federalist* 54

I AM BELOVED and she is mine. I see her take flowers away from
leaves she puts them in a round basket the leaves are not for her
she fills the basket she opens the grass I would help her but the
clouds are in the way how can I say things that are pictures I am
not separate from her there is no place where I stop her face is my
own and I want to be there in the place where her face is and to be
looking at it too a hot thing

All of it is now it is always now there will never be a time when
I am not crouching and watching others who are crouching too I
am always crouching and watching others who are crouching too I
am always crouching the man on my face is dead his face is not
mine his mouth smells sweet but his eyes are locked. Morrison

Beloved