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W.E.B. Du Bois’s Concept of Double Consciousness and the Interrelation of “Double Self” in *The Souls of Black Folks*

Rieko Tomisawa

Introduction

This paper aims to examine multi-layered definitions of double consciousness concept of an African American sociologist, historian, philosopher, and commentator on race issues, W.E.B. Du Bois. He first introduced his famous concept, “Double Consciousness,” in 1897.¹

Du Bois’s core definitions of double consciousness include blacks’ double identity and the existence of a white gaze, “the eyes of others,” as an element in people’s psychological mechanism, by which one sees a self-image partly through others’ views of him or her. Now at the beginning of the 21st century, more than one hundred years has passed and social conditions have changed, but Du Bois’s concept has been significant and influential in studies of social relations and artistic representations.

Many scholars have noted the durability and significance of Du Bois’s logic. Randall Kennan points out the “complexity” of Du Bois’s concept.² Historians David W. Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams point out “a complex, tragic, and deeply compelling vision of the fate of black folk in America” in *Souls of Black Folks* where Du Bois elaborates the concept of dou-

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¹ Du Bois first introduced the concept in Du Bois’s article, “Strivings of the Negro People” in *Atlantic Monthly*. The article was revised as chapter 1 of *The Souls of Black Folk*, an anthology of Du Bois’s essays on race, fiction, and autobiography, published in 1903.

ble consciousness. 3 Eric Sundquist identifies an “ambiguity” in Du Bois’s concept of race, saying that “race is a concept of great ambiguity and power in Du Bois’s thought—the power, one could say, deriving precisely from the ambiguity.” 4 Keith E. Byerman insists that the concept is “richly ambiguous.” 5 And, in Souls, Du Bois himself demonstrates these points as one of his own ways of writing: “I have sought here to sketch, in vague, uncertain outline, the spiritual world in which ten thousand thousand Americans live and strive.” 6

In fact, Du Bois seems to define double consciousness in several different ways in Souls. The multi-layered character of double consciousness not only expresses the complexity or difficulty of race issues, but also produces various implications, messages, and readers’ interpretations. In other words, multiple layers have enabled this concept to be flexible and to transform itself in order to explain different historical situations and to function differently in each period. This is one of the reasons it has been important and has survived as a useful concept to the present. So we need to consider this concept in some detail in order to grasp all its implications.

Many people have discussed the concept. Some have tried to find thinkers who presented similar concepts before Du Bois first introduced the concept. Hegel and Frederick Douglas have been taken up as two of these thinkers. Sandra Adell has explored how Hegel’s philosophy influences the Du Bois’s concept and David W. Blight points out the dilemma of having “twoness”—double identity—in a common link between Douglass and Du Bois. 7 Dickson D. Bruce Jr. and others have pointed out precursors in literary and medical

sources. Some scholars such as John Thomas Askew Cobb have regarded the concept as a solution (or prescription) for the problem that African Americans face in the United States. Finally, some have emphasized the dilemma of being an American and a black in Du Bois’s sense as one of the universal themes of African American novels.

I regard the concept as an intersection of various discourses around 1897. Du Bois’s concept engages those discourses and at the same time presents his counter discourses to the existing dominant discourses. Du Bois also introduces the concept as a slogan that would enable those who feel oppression to challenge several different kinds of dominant discourses. He weaves his messages for readers into the concept, providing the means to help explain the structure of social relations surrounding the problems of African-Americans in the United States.

Although the “second-sight” discourse, a white gaze discourse, is one of the main discourses or definitions of the concept, this paper will focus on the “two-ness,” interrelation of double selves in one African American, in his autobiographical writing, The Souls of Black Folks in which Du Bois originally presented this concept and elsewhere in order to grasp its layered design. This paper will also address the ambiguity and complexity of the concept found in Du Bois’s writings such as his later autobiographies, Darkwater (1920), Dusk of Dawn (1940), and The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois (1968) and essays such as “The Conservation of Races” (1897), “Credo” (1904), and “The Frank Truth” (1905).

This paper also considers how thinkers developed Du Bois’s concept in later times. I explore a French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze’s concepts, “in-between-ness,” in Dialogue (1977), and an Algerian theorist of the African struggle for liberation, Frantz Fanon’s Black Skin, White Masks (1967). Fanon’s illustration of double lives is close to Du Bois’s illustration of “two-

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I

The notion of “double consciousness” is discussed throughout *The Souls of Black Folks*, especially in chapter 1, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” where the notion is shown firstly in the book. Du Bois notes that African Americans are

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 un reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.\(^\text{11}\)

Many researchers quote this section as the representative statement that directly explains the concept in the first place. But in order to see Du Bois’s implications contained in the concept, we should pay attention to the next part as well:

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro souls in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by

\(^\text{11}\) *Souls*, 5.
his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face.”

Du Bois puts up a concrete motto for the improving blacks’ conditions after explaining basic notions of double consciousness in the former two paragraphs: “to be a coworker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation, to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius.” Du Bois’s use of psychological and philosophical illustrations in the concept of double consciousness is a pragmatic strategy for introducing solutions to ongoing political and economic problems. Although Chapter 1 of Souls explains the concept of double consciousness in various ways, these passages are the core parts that explain implications and messages contained in the concept of double consciousness.

As Du Bois recollected the time from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century in his autobiographical writing, Dusk of Dawn (1940), “I [he] wanted to explain the difficulties of race and the ways in which these difficulties caused political and economic troubles,” in his teaching years (from 1894 to 1910), the cause and effect relationship between race and these troubles was one of the main themes. Also, he confronts the need for presenting the complexity of race for non-blacks. In this sense, the psychological mechanisms, as examples of “the difficulties of race” and “the end of his striving,” are discussed together in the introduction of double consciousness.

Double consciousness illustrates another kind of problem derived from “two-ness” — African-Americans’ double identity. In the case of the second-sight argument, “merging” was the solution. Then, what is the solution for another “two-ness” argument? The primary characteristic of the double consciousness concept which Du Bois signifies is “one ever feels his two-ness.” Du Bois describes “an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two

12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
15 Ibid., 54.
unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body,” as the content of the “two-ness.” Among these several forms of “two-ness,” the first indication is that a black is “an American, a Negro.” That means that one has two citizenships (identities) or a single double identity.\(^\text{16}\)

Keith Byerman argues that Du Bois’s accounts of “two-ness” implies “a cultural and political situation of marginality in which the problem is not lack but excess of self.”\(^\text{17}\) Byerman further argues that “Blacks in this case are not nothing, but two things, both of which are coherent and meaningful.”\(^\text{18}\) His interpretation is that Du Bois problematizes the “excess of self,” at the same time affirming the advantage of having this excess. In addition, Du Bois interpretes that blacks want to retain the excess, and it represents his emphasis on blacks’ independent and subjective nature. In 1897, Du Bois revealed blacks’ dilemma in defining their own identities in his article “Conservation of Races” (1897):

Here, then is the dilemma, and it is a puzzling one, I admit. No Negro who has given earnest thought to the situation of his people in America has failed, at some time in life, to find himself at these crossroads; has failed to ask himself at some time: What, after all, am I? Am I an American or am I a Negro? Can I be both? Or is it my duty to cease to be a Negro as soon as possible and be an American?\(^\text{19}\)

Some researchers agree that this question has been a traditional question

\(^{16}\) Keith E. Byerman interprets that Du Bois “places blacks in the context of cultures, not races or nations, and gives them equal status in this context” and that it is vague if Du Bois intends the term, double consciousness, “metaphorically as a cultural conditions” or not (Seizing the Word: History, Art, an Self in the Work of W.E.B. Du Bois. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1994), 15. The present study regards the concept as a political slogan, and includes the concept in the context of races.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.

among black writers.\textsuperscript{20}

As several researchers point out, Du Bois did not determine which is the “truer and better” self.\textsuperscript{21} Furthermore, this twoness argument results in some of “the end of strivings” — “to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation...”\textsuperscript{22}

Du Bois lamented the difficulty of having twoness saying that there were “two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”\textsuperscript{23} In thinking about Du Bois’s twoness concept, we should pay attention to his view on black and white relations. Du Bois emphasizes the polar nature of blacks and whites. In his essay, “Conservation of Races,” he categorizes the two races as “the two most extreme types of the world’s races,” whose encounter is “not only of intense and living interest to us, but forms an epoch in the history of mankind.”\textsuperscript{24} In this passage, the polarity is the cause that tears two races or two kinds of selves in blacks. In other ways, Du Bois shows the twoness as “the two worlds within and without the Veil” and stress environmental differences.\textsuperscript{25} David W. Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams argue that “double consciousness” and “the veil” are the metaphors which portray “a two-dimensional pattern of estrangement that shaped the lives of black Americans in the age of Jim Crow.”\textsuperscript{26}

In signifying this two world-ness, Du Bois situates himself as someone who can go back and forth between white and black worlds. And, in writing

\textsuperscript{20} For example, William Cosgrove argues that modern writers such as Imamu Baraka, Ralph Ellison, and Malcolm X have tried “to answer the same question: What is the place of the black writer, and black man, in American society? The two alternatives open to the black artists are clear: he can be either an ‘invisible man’ because he is black, or a ‘native son’ because he is American” (“Modern Black Writers: The Divided Self.” \textit{Negro American Literature Forum} 7.4 (1973): 120).

\textsuperscript{21} For example, William Cosgrove argues that there was “no clear indication which is the better and truer self” in Du Bois’s defining double consciousness in “Modern Black Writers: The Divided Self,” 120.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Souls}, 5.

\textsuperscript{23} Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., argues that “Du Bois referred most importantly to an internal conflict in the African America individual between what was “African” and what was “American” in “W.E.B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness,” 301.


\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Souls}, 1.

\textsuperscript{26} David W. Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams, 11.
Souls, he declares that he situates himself inside the veil, “raising it that you may view faintly its deeper recesses,—the meaning of its religion, the passion of its human sorrow, and the struggle of its greater souls.”

Du Bois’s emphasis on the vast difference between inside and outside the veil still continues, not only in regard to aim, but also in relation to duty, class, and words. He calls this dichotomy “double lives”:

The worlds within and without the Veil of Color are changing, and changing rapidly, but not at the same rate, not in the same way; and this must produce a peculiar wrenching of the soul, a peculiar sense of doubt and bewilderment. Such a double life, with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals, and tempt the mind to pretence or to revolt, to hypocrisy or to radicalism.

In this sense, Du Bois had two selves: one in the neighborhood in Great Barrington and the other in the South, the white supremacist society. Also, two selves signify Du Bois and white racism in his neighborhood. Fanon also had two selves: one in a neighborhood in Martinique and the other in France, the white world. Du Bois defined blacks’ lives inside and outside of the veil as “double lives” each changing at a “different speed” and “time period”.

This model emphasizes the vast difference of the environment between the inside and the outside of the veil. The difficulty for blacks and whites to go back and forth between these two sites supports Du Bois’s theory that in American society blacks and whites are extremes. Two citizenships contradict each other, creating the difficulty of being both blacks and Americans (or citizens in white society). In this sense, the double selves of Du Bois and Fanon exemplify this model, illustrating the discourse of double consciousness in which blacks want to be both blacks and citizens of the nation.

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27 Souls, 1.
28 Souls, 164.
29 See Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1967 [1952]).
30 Souls, 256.
The disadvantage of the polarity of whiteness and blackness tears black consciousness apart. Du Bois’s emphasis on the contradictory or opposite character of this dichotomy is shown in his defining double consciousness as “two unreconciled strivings,” or “two warring ideals.” He argues that the doubleness of the black aims weakens the power of blacks. Du Bois refers to this negative effect of having twoness as the “waste of double aims,” “the contradiction of double aims,” and “the double-aimed struggle of the black artisans.”

This “waste of double aims” argument derives from the America/Black twoness issue. Du Bois brings up this issue to deny the discourses of the black inferiority myth. He deconstructs the structure in which the public image of blacks as “absence of power” was created. In doing this, he emphasizes how large the blacks’ disadvantage of having this twoness was.

As noted above, at the beginning of the introduction of the concept of double consciousness Du Bois emphasizes the disadvantage of having double identities because these two have different ideals and aims. Blacks have a difficult time in fulfilling these contradictory needs. If blacks choose to remain within the black community, they will lose both job and money, and if they try to be in the white society, and “to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture,” they are isolated from both white and black society. That he calls black and white “the extremes” or “the opposites” also shows the difficulty of ful-

32 Dickson D. Bruce Jr. argues that Du Bois’s formulated the concept of double consciousness draws from European Romanticism, American Transcendentalism, and psychology. Bruce refers to historian Arnold Rampersad’s interpretation that the term “double consciousness” was originally a medical term, especially used to cases of “split personality.” in “W.E.B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness,” 301. Bruce argues that “In the classic cases of double consciousness, the dual personalities were not just different from each other but were inevitably in opposition” in “W.E.B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness,” 301.
33 Souls, 6.
filling “the double aims.”35 Geneva Smitherman calls this “ambivalence among blacks” in Du Bois’s double consciousness “the ’push-pull’ syndrome in Black America” – “pushing toward White American culture while simultaneously pulling away from it.”36

As researchers on Du Bois’s race concept, Shamon Zamir and David W. Blight argue that the double consciousness concept as a symbol of plight derives from blacks’ contradictory ideals, and is the focus of Du Bois’s term “double aims,”37 Du Bois brings up the “waste of double aims” argument to deny the discourse of the black inferiority myth.

Here in America, in the few days since Emancipation, the black man’s turning hither and thither in hesitant and doubtful striving has often made his very strength to lose effectiveness, to seem like absence of power, like weakness. And yet it is not weakness,—it is the contradiction of double aims.38

A key passage follows in which Du Bois identifies the depth of the chasm between whites and blacks:

The would-be black savant was confronted by the paradox that the knowledge his people needed was a twice-told tale to his white neighbors, while the knowledge which would teach the white world was Greek to his own flesh and blood.39

The passage outlines the core message in Du Bois’s concept of double consciousness: that each had knowledge the other needed but neither was

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35 Souls, 28.
38 Souls, 6.
39 Souls, 6.
willing or able to communicate. The passage signifies Du Bois’s rejection of the inferiority myth by attributing knowledge to blacks as well as whites. “The paradox” that “the would-be black savant” experiences is knowledge without the ability to communicate it.

As a negative aspect of blacks’ twoness or double consciousness, Du Bois explains the dilemma of those who confront their difficulties of fulfilling ideals as both blacks and American citizens. Since the ideals of blacks and whites do not match, blacks cannot pour their power into one important purpose and this tendency weakens blacks. Du Bois calls this dilemma a “waste of double aims,” showing an example of a black artists’ dilemma:

The innate love of harmony and beauty that set the ruder souls of his people a-dancing and a-singing raised but confusion and doubt in the soul of the black artist; for the beauty revealed to him was the soul-beauty of a race which his larger audience despised, and he could not articulate the message of another people.⁴⁰

He regards this dilemma as an effect of black self-esteem and the seeming impossibilities for people to accomplish their dreams.

Thus, knowing the difficulty of fulfilling ideals as both blacks and as American citizens, Du Bois searches for the way that enables blacks to have two kinds of citizenship, and some discourses that bridge the differences of both blacks and whites as one significant goal of blacks. If blacks find these discourses, they can break the limitation of possibilities imposed on them. They can open much wider opportunities to obtain jobs and to develop their talents fully in various fields. In other words, they can find their position in a wider society and get wider recognition.

Du Bois’s phrase, “to merge his double self into a better and truer self,” also suggests a combination of two citizenships, black and American. In these assertions, he rejects the “alternative”—choose life as a black or as an American—which has been imposed on blacks for a long time. He asserts that blacks do not need to choose one fixed identity or citizenship socially, and

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⁴⁰ Ibid.
that one can demand identity both as a black and as an American. Both have merit and blacks deserve both of them. The phrase “Can I be both?” in the “Conservation of Races” shows that being both is a better way than choosing one identity (nationality). Du Bois knows how cruel this alternative is for blacks. As his “end of strivings” shows, in either way blacks suffer. So Du Bois avoids this cruel alternative.

In this model it is not necessary to choose one fixed perspective. One person has both perspectives and can choose either one as needed. This also serves integration, because it carefully avoids the amalgamation of these two identities. Advocating the need to contain the “two-ness”—identity as an American and a black—establishes “a better and truer self.” By retaining two identities, “neither of the older selves [are] lost.”41 This divided subject makes possible the exchange implied by the aphorisms, “America has too much to teach the world and Africa,” and “Negro blood has a message for the world.”42

In Du Bois’s model of black psychology, blacks move between two identities as fluid or can choose to be a black or an American (or can choose a black perspective or an American perspective) as needed in their psychology, using code-switching to accommodate their identities. With double consciousness blacks cannot be both blacks and Americans at the same moment. Although each of these identities remain distinct, the subject position shifts between the two. This ability gives blacks the capacity for multiple perspectives.

Thus, the “merging” of two selves does not mean a melting of two racial identities, but a uniting of them. In other words, Du Bois introduced the identity model which contains three elements; blackness, whiteness (Americanness), and a subject that comprehends the two or can be both black

41 As for the interpretation, several researchers have commented. For example, William Cosgrove interprets Du Bois’s solution as “To merge selves without losing the individuality of either” (“Modern Black Writers: The Divided Self,” Negro American Literature Forum 7.4 (1973)), 120.
or white in one body.43

As I have argued and as most researchers agree, Du Bois’s “two-ness” is basically “black and American” which relates to the dichotomy between black nationalist and integrationist. His emphasis on retention of “African blood” relates to his life long assertion on Pan-Africanism.44

Dickinson D. Bruce, Jr. argues, “for Du Bois the essence of a distinctive African consciousness was its spirituality, a spirituality based in Africa” and that “double consciousness related particularly to Du Bois’s efforts to privilege the spiritual in relation to the materialistic, commercial world of white America.”45 Also, Bruce argues that Du Bois had a “desire to develop a positive sense of racial distinctiveness out of a distinctively African heritage” in the time when “race” had biological connotations, especially implying black inferiority among whites.46 He thinks that “Double consciousness allowed for a sense of distinctiveness that really did entail equality, a sense of distinctiveness that did not imply inferiority.”47

On the other hand, we can interpret “American” as “whites.” Du Bois wrote that in merging two identities, “he would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism.”48 “Americans” directly signifies “whiteness” because Du Bois used the verb “bleach.” Henry Louis Gates Jr. interprets Du Bois’s dichotomy as black and “white” or “whiteness”.49 If it is “white,” we can limit this argument only in a black nationalist/integrationist argument centering on a demand for full citizenship as Americans or in “double aims” which signifies a contradiction between duty as blacks or as American citizens. In his poetry, “Song of Smoke” (1907), Du Bois argues that “Souls unto me are as stars in a night,/I whiten my black men—I blacken my white!”50 Here Du Bois recognizes two kinds of selves—my “black men” and “my

43 The last one is later called Black Americans or African Americans.
44 Du Bois is often called the father of Pan-Africanism.
45 Bruce, 301.
46 Ibid., 305.
47 Ibid.
48 Souls, 5.
white” in him and assumes the dichotomy of the double selves is “black” and “white.” Du Bois implies two kinds of dichotomy: “black and white” and “black and American.” He not only pursues having two identities and citizenship as black and American, but also advocates the need of having a “black” self and a “white” self in one African-American person. Du Bois’s twoness model has two kinds of dichotomy, and as his words, “the truth lies between the extremes,” suggests, he believes that “between” two identities, a solution for blacks to survive in American society exists. In this sense, double-consciousness not only signifies a “two-ness” problem or “the eyes of others” problem, but also is a dramatization of “between-ness” of various kinds of dichotomy. This logic, that “the truth lies between the extremes,” is to admit both the importance of having two separate identities and of his avoidance of the exclusive alternative—either black or white.

II

In Du Bois’s model how do these double identities interrelate? One possibility is that the “older selves” have a mutual effect. In the phrases, “America has too much to teach the world and Africa,” and “Negro blood has a message for the world,” if “the world” contains America, “Negro blood” and America are directed toward each other. The mutual effect of “older selves” in one African-American’s psychology is related to his ideal that “some day on American soil two world races may give each to each those characteristics both so sadly lack.” This ideal implies the two races’ complementary relationship.

At the same time we can infer that the two identities do not direct toward each other. In Du Bois’s definition, blackness is not directed toward America.

51 When King made speech, he gathered white brains in order to know what white audience think. In this sense, Du Bois’s assertion on the need of having “white eyes” might suggest the need of understanding other’s logic.

alone, but toward “the world.”\footnote{As Dickson D. Bruce Jr. says, “Negro blood has a message for the world” was “of spiritual sense and a softening influence that black people could bring to a cold and calculating world,” in “W.E.B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness,” 301.} If the “world” toward which blackness throws a message does not contain “America,” or if Du Bois intentionally omits “America” as the exclusive destination of “a message,” the interrelation of two identities does not have a mutual effect. Du Bois carefully avoids limiting his twoness argument to a simple mutual-effect model between blacks and Americans or blacks and whites.\footnote{This idea relates to his linkage of the race argument in America with that in the world.} Then, why did Du Bois use an unbalanced juxtaposition of the directions of two identities? That is, why is only America clearly defined to direct toward the other side, toward “Africa”?\footnote{This is one of the complexities of Du Bois’s logic.}

This is an expression of his resistance to white America; it is a declaration that he distrusts America, and that he would not appeal to America on the need for justice.\footnote{Also, if Du Bois assumes a white middle-class readers in writing Souls, he threatens them with what he or other African Americans would declare to the world about what white Americans do to them.} In the final chapter of The Souls of Black Folks, “The Sorrow Songs,” Du Bois defines African American folksongs as “the articulate message of the slave to the world.”\footnote{Souls, 207.} He says that these songs “are the music of an unhappy people,...they tell of death and suffering and unvoiced longing toward a truer world, of misty wanderings and hidden ways.”\footnote{Ibid.} Further, they are “music of trouble and exile, of strife and hiding.”\footnote{Ibid., 210.} Du Bois also thinks that “through all the sorrow of the Sorrow Songs there breathes a hope—a faith in the ultimate justice of things”\footnote{Ibid., 203.} and argues that this “hope” is “assurance of boundless justice in some fair world beyond.”\footnote{Ibid., 214.}

For him, a “truer world” in which blacks should tell their “strife” and seek “justice” is not America, but “some fair world beyond” — outside America or that includes America in a larger world. So his definition of
“the message” of “the Negro blood” reveals his denial of America as a “fair” place. When Du Bois introduced the concept of double consciousness in 1897, he had just finished studying in Europe and came back to the “disturbed world” of “nigger’-hating America.” For Du Bois in those years, Europe looked like a better place than America. So the contrast between America and the world outside of America might have deepened his distrust of America.

“The Negro blood” appeals to “the world” including other black people in America and the rest of the world about what was going on in America, and what constituted racism at the end of the 19th century. This is the voice with which to seek a fair judgment of racism, which did not exist in America and therefore blacks’ declaration of dignity was ignored. This is Du Bois’s sense of “the message.” Du Bois suspected that the people in the world were not aware of the realities of racism in America and tried to make them imagine what racism really is. In *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois*, he appeals to the reader by repeating the italicized “Suppose.” For example, he writes, “Suppose I have missed a Harvard scholarship?” “Suppose the Slater Board had then, as now, distinct ideas as to where the education of Negroes should stop?” and ends with “Suppose and suppose!”

This juxtaposition is also related to his ideal, “large conformity to the greater ideals of the American Republic.” By avoiding limiting the olderselves dichotomy to a mere mutual effect between blacks and whites, he emphasizes the need to pursue larger ideals—“the greater ideals of the American Republic” and establishing “a better and truer self.” Although Du Bois does not trust America, he trusts democracy, which America advocates.

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63 He calls the days after returning from Europe to America “My Days of Disillusion” but says those days were not disappointing enough to discourage me” in *Autobiography*, 183. Also, after coming back, he taught at Wilberforce University.

64 *Souls*, 5.


66 Ibid.

67 *Souls*, 11.

68 Ibid., 5.
The passage, “America has too much to teach the world and Africa,” also shows Du Bois’s stance of resisting America. His use of “too much” shows Du Bois’s emphasis on America as a problematic country. Although he uses the verb “teach,” he does not mean to show respect for America as a teacher. Rather, he declares that “Africa” and “the world” benefit or gain advantage from America. This leads to his assertion that having a correct perspective on America is advantageous for African Americans. Du Bois also declares that not only “Africa” but “the world” is the observer of “America,” and shows the sense of solidarity of “Africa” and “the world” as the judges of “America” and its racism.

The third possibility is that the “America” that “has too much to teach the world and Africa” directly relates to the function of “the eyes of others” — prejudice against African Americans and Africans, exploitation of them, as “the Devil” who “strikes” blacks “that cannot strike again” and hates “the image which their Maker stamped on a brother’s soul.” What “the eyes of others” as “the Devil” claim is blacks’ inferiority that engenders in blacks a self-hatred, causing them to relinquish the basic rights that enable them to fight back.

Manning Marable argues that “race is essentially a group identity imposed on individuals by others.” If this definition is applied to Du Bois’s model, America’s “too much teaching” signifies the “stamp” or imposition of a wrong image of blacks on blacks. Marable further argues that “Blackness, or African-American identity, is much more than race,... [it] is not something our oppressors forced upon us,” that obliterated “our sense of ethnic consciousness and pride in our heritage of resistance against racism.” If this is true, “the message” of “the Negro blood” is the revelation of blacks’ pride in resisting racism and their pursuit of active independence, escaping the dominance of “America” and its “teaching” — imposition of a bad image of blacks on blacks themselves. It signifies rejection of “the eyes of others” and


71 Ibid., 295.
the necessity of striking back against America. Marable also defines blackness as “our culture, history, music, art, and literature.”\textsuperscript{72} His definition fits with Du Bois’s emphasis on the cultural heritage of Africa. So the “message” of “the Negro blood” signifies blacks’ demonstration of pride in their cultural heritages.

All in all, this unbalanced juxtaposition reveals Du Bois’s positioning of “the Negro” as an advantageous one in “America.” The function of “the Negro blood” is the crucial factor and symbol of an active and independent perspective for African Americans. Although he emphasizes the importance of the “between”ness of the two,—Africans and Americans—, Du Bois treats them as different in nature and differently directed, and retains the unlimited possibility that these two might develop (the possibility that a solution might be found in communication with other countries).

Du Bois also avoids the easy alternative—either blacks or Americans.\textsuperscript{73} All in all, he turns the seemingly disadvantageous condition of having opposite ideals into possible or potential advantage in which blacks can have multiple perspectives. Turning a weak point into a strong one, Du Bois not only shows the complexity of his logic, but also affirms blacks’ strong points and makes his people self-confident.

Du Bois argues in Chapter 1 of \textit{Souls} that:

\begin{quote}
Each growing and aiding each, and all striving toward that vaster ideal that swims before the Negro people, the ideal of human brotherhood, gained through the unifying ideal of Race; the ideal of fostering and developing the traits and talents of the Negro, not in opposition to or contempt for other races, but rather in large conformity to the greater ideals of the American Republic, in order that some day on American soil two world-races, may give each to each those characteristics both so sadly lack.\textsuperscript{74}
\end{quote}

As for the solution of having double identity, Du Bois’s integrationist idea is

\begin{footnotes}
\item[72] Ibid., 295.
\item[73] Du Bois’s complexity of race concept emerges from this idea.
\item[74] \textit{Souls}, 12.
\end{footnotes}
shown in his rhetoric which emphasizes the common advantage for both blacks and whites. For example, in his “What is the Negro Problem?” (1899), he wrote that, “[i]t is to the advantage of all, both black and white, that every Negro should make the best of himself.”\textsuperscript{75} He also argued in “the Niagara Movement” (1906) that “[t]he battle we wage is not for ourselves alone, but for all true Americans.”\textsuperscript{76} In “To the Nations of the World” (1900), he also threatens white America that:

if now the world of culture bends itself towards giving Negroes and other dark men the largest and broadest opportunity for education and self-development, then this contact and influence is bound to have a beneficial effect upon the world and hasten human progress. But if, by reason of carelessness, prejudice, greed and injustice, the black world is to be exploited and ravished and degraded, the results must be deplorable, if not fatal—not simply to them, but to the high ideals of justice, freedom and culture which a thousand years of Christian civilization have held before Europe.\textsuperscript{77}

He does not aim for a mere mingling of two races. By keeping the two races distinct categories in these passages, he aimed to make whites treat blacks equally.

I argued that Du Bois’s illustration of African Americans’ psychology in the concept of double consciousness is a metaphor of external social relationship, mainly a black and white relationship. His solution for the African Americans’ “two-ness” problem, is “to merge his double self into a better and truer self.” Elsewhere “a better and truer self” is related to “the greater ideals of the American Republic” and the effort “to merge double self into a better and truer self” is in “large conformity to the greater ideals of the American Republic.”\textsuperscript{78} Rather than a melting pot of sameness, Du Bois moves toward

\textsuperscript{76} Du Bois, “the Niagara Movement” in The Oxford W.E.B. Du Bois Reader, 374.
\textsuperscript{78} Souls, 11. Here Du Bois talks about what kind of rights African Americans need such as suffrage.
the conditions for a pluralistic democracy.

Bruce argues that “The meaning of African and American selves was, or at least could be, an act of will, and Du Bois so treated it.”\(^{79}\) Keith E. Byerman argues that “It is unclear whether Du Bois intends the term to carry the full connotation of a pathological state or intends it metaphorically as a cultural condition.”\(^{80}\) While presenting both advantage and disadvantage seems to be contradictory, it actually turns the status quo into the means for a solution. In this sense, the “double self” is not only an “American” and “Negro” dichotomy, but also a dichotomy between blacks’ “strife” to establish their own view, “true self consciousness,” and “the eyes of others” which can be a challenge for blacks not to fall into “self-conscious manhood.” Du Bois thinks that the “integration” of two identities—“an American and a black,” or self and “the eyes of others”—is the solution for blacks. So, one of the definitions of “a better and truer self” is establishment of a self freed from the assessment of the whites.

Throughout his analysis of blacks’ psychological mechanism, Du Bois regards blacks as victim of the “eyes of others,” and the “American world,” and discloses the existence of power which always tries to impose an inferiority complex on blacks or deprive them of sound self-esteem. That is, he argues that the public image of blacks is not their nature but whites’ creation.

One of the characteristics of Du Bois’s logic in his introduction of double consciousness is the use of the verbs “merge,” “conform” or “weld.” Houston Baker, Jr. points out Du Bois’s role as “synthesizer.”\(^{81}\) He argues that “The more interesting part of the statement is the portion that deals with synthesis, the melting and welding of a wide range of ideas into a broader and more effective whole; for it is his stand as a synthesizer that marks Du Bois as a man of culture.”\(^{82}\) That he ends with the lines “And my soul and thy soul shall meet that day” when “I lay this body down” in the epigraph of the final chapter “The Sorrow Songs” represents the tendency of his discourse.\(^{83}\)

\(^{79}\) Bruce, 307.
\(^{80}\) Byerman, 15.
\(^{82}\) Ibid.
\(^{83}\) *Souls*, 204.
physical freedom” originally signifies African-Americans’ urgent need to be freed from slavery. But even after the Emancipation, freed blacks confront the possibility of being lynched. As Du Bois’s use of the word “the second slavery” signifies, blacks were bounded by a new kind of system. Whites’ violence against blacks was legalized by the enactment of laws represented by Black Code and Jim Crow laws at different times by Southern States. “Political power” is another theme for African-Americans. After the Emancipation, they had actual political power, suffrage and civil rights, but they were deprived of these immediately. So the name “Emancipation” and acquisition of equality did not signify their actual freedom.

As Du Bois argued, “The power of the ballot we need in sheer self-defense, — else what shall save us from a second slavery?” Du Bois regarded the ballot as one solution. But this must lead to democratic possibilities. “Freedom, too, the long-sought, we still seek, — the freedom of life and limb, the freedom to work and think, the freedom to love and aspire.” Also, Du Bois argues that “Work, culture, liberty, — all these we need, not singly but together, not successively but together...” His use of the word “together” signifies simultaneous realization of blacks’ ideal and the denial of gradualism. Simultaneity and “merging” signifying gathering of plural different items are different. But they are similar in terms of a synthesizing mechanism, and this denial of gradualism is also a variation of Du Bois’s solution.

Why does Du Bois put more emphasis on “I” and “I” relationships or one’s view of self-image than Sartre’s “I” and “the other” relationship? As I argued before, one of the effects of Du Bois’s double consciousness, the political slogan, provides an answer to this point. What Du Bois problematizes was the self-degradation mechanism in African-Americans’ psychology in America and the possibility that it would directly cause their accommodation to the oppressed conditions. Du Bois argued that:

But the facing of so vast a prejudice could not but bring the inevitable self-questioning, self-disparagement, and lowering of ideals which ever
accompany repression and breed in an atmosphere of contempt and hate...we cannot write, our voting is vain; what need of education, since we must always cook and serve?  

He regards raising self-esteem as a key for uplifting the race. Du Bois assumes that other blacks (or non-blacks) do not know this degradation mechanism, so he thinks that acknowledgement of this hidden mechanism would enable blacks to sweep the familiarized black inferiority discourse from their minds. Trusting (or recovering) their self worth would be the starting point for them to fight against oppression and to acquire the full rights they deserve.

If blacks are aware of how their self-esteem was lowered, they can be careful about this. But Du Bois thinks that blacks do not know this mechanism which happens in their own minds. Without judging whether black inferiority discourse is fact or not, they are unconsciously violated by this discourse which “the eyes of others” represents. Du Bois tried to problematize this mechanism in the double consciousness concept.

Du Bois argues that blacks want to be both “a Negro and an American” “without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows” and “without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.” These passages take up the relationship between the fluid identity model of blacks between Americanness and blackness and blacks’ economic problem. Also, in the theory of double consciousness, these two racial identities were defined as equal ones. In his description of “the end of strivings,” he evokes a slogan, “to escape both death and isolation.” Du Bois’s observation of the relationship between whites and blacks in the South around 1985 in Dusk of Dawn (1940) fits this slogan. Du Bois remembered that when Booker T. Washington made the speech in Atlanta in 1895, many black papers criticized Washington’s “proposition of compromise with the white South.” Du Bois wrote to the New York Age and suggested that “here might be the basis of a real settlement between whites

87 Souls, 10.  
88 Souls, 5.  
89 Ibid.  
90 Du Bois, Dusk of Dawn, 55.
and blacks in the South, if the South opened to Negroes the doors of economic opportunity and the Negroes co-operated with the white South in political sympathy. But disfranchisement of blacks and passing of “Jim Crow” laws hindered this “offer” Du Bois argued.

In his description of “the end of strivings,” Du Bois raised slogans such as “to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture,” “to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius,” and to accomplish “the ideal of fostering and developing the traits and talents of the Negro.” This is Du Bois’s presenting the counter discourse to the discourse which forced African-Americans to give up exercising their talents and ability, and to accept accommodation to an alleged inferiority myth or whites’ wish to suppress blacks after the Emancipation. Du Bois’s plan and advocacy of the importance of higher education, the Talented Tenth, was one representative example of his resistance against this dominant discourse.

Du Bois argues that: “The bright ideals of the past,—physical freedom, political power, the training of brains and the training of hands...” and “[t]o be really true, all these ideals must be melted and welded into one.” One of the characteristics of Du Bois’s logic in his introduction of double consciousness concept is that he uses the verbs “merge,” “conform” or “weld.” As I argued so far, these similar keywords are used as a solution for the “Negro problem.” As Du Bois advocates the need to gather ideals of two races, here he insists the need for “weld” these three ideals into “one.”

As I have argued, however, Du Bois emphasizes that “truth lies between extremes,” not so much synthesis as pluralism. Here synthesis is replaced by “betweenness,” as space where various interpretations might happen, as Deleuze observes. Du Bois’s definition of betweenness involves all possibilities of communication or misunderstanding of two races. Second, this betweenness allows shifting or fluid identity. Black Americans have the po-

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91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
93 Souls, 5.
94 Souls, 11.
95 Ibid.
tential for multiple perspectives, the back and forth between dichotomies of twoness, first and second sight, two worlds and so on.

Conclusion

Various statements in *The Souls of Black Folks* related to the double consciousness concept provide multiple implications of the concept. Among the various implications or discourses, such as the discourses on “the eyes of others” and “to escape both death and isolation,” this paper examined W.E.B. Du Bois’s formation of the “two-ness”—double selves—discourse of the double consciousness concept, on the assumption that the concept has a multilayered structure and multiple implications. Furthermore, in formulating the concept of double consciousness, Du Bois originally tried to deconstruct the power structure and social relations surrounding African Americans and whites, and demonstrate the unseen or subjugated mechanism that embeds certain values in the minds of both whites and blacks.

Du Bois problematizes the hardness of African Americans having double identities—as an American and a black—and its polar nature. At the same time, he emphasizes the advantage of having multiple identities. His portrayal of African Americans’ fluid identity model and his observation that African Americans want to retain two selves, emphasize their subjectivity in choosing their own identities. The unbalanced juxtaposition of the directions of these double selves implies the active and independent stance of African Americans. Introducing the concept, he argues that raising self-esteem is a key to uplifting the race.

His proposed solution, “merging” the two selves, signifies the simultaneous realization of blacks’ ideals and hopes and the denial of gradualism.