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Aldon D. MORRIS, *The Scholar Denied: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology* (Oakland, CA, University of California Press, 2015)

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This is an extraordinary and an extraordinarily important book. In *The Scholar Denied*, Aldon Morris convincingly demonstrates that W.E.B. Du Bois and the Atlanta School, not Robert Park and the Chicago School, are the rightful founders of sociology in the United States. This alone constitutes a major intellectual statement that should provoke American sociologists to revise the history of their discipline. But the story Morris tells is not simply one of Du Bois and his colleagues beating Park to the methods of inference that we recognize as the core of empirical sociology today. It is also a story of how Park came to adopt his views about race and racial accommodation from his work as the public relations director of Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute. We learn of how Park's allegiance to his former employer lasted through his tenure as the leader of the Chicago School and motivated him to suppress the work of Du Bois, Washington's primary political rival. Du Bois, with academic publications that, by today's standards, are irrefutably superior to those of his peers, was ritually excluded from the leading academic conferences and major sources of research funding. Nonetheless, he produced a body of scholarship that managed to influence generations of scholars through what Morris [2015: 193] calls "intellectual insurgent networks."

This is also a story about unacknowledged academic influences. Morris [2015: 145] reveals subterranean similarities between Park's idea of the "marginal man" and Du Bois's earlier—and today better-known—concept of "double consciousness." He shows how Du Bois—Weber's contemporary, not his student as many have supposed—nudged Weber towards a flawed but nonetheless more scientifically defensible theory of racial inequality than he previously held. And Morris persuasively argues that much of what attracts scholars to sociology—its openness with regard to method and ways of knowing, and its commitment to studying problems of inequality and

domination—can be found in Du Bois before just about anyone else calling themselves sociologists.

In short, this is a book about how politics and racism profoundly influence scholarly production and rewards.

I would like to focus my comments on two themes from Morris's book. The first is politics and science and what we can learn about the relationship between them by studying Du Bois. The second is canonization: who is kept in, who is left out, and what we can do about it.

Let me start with the first: politics and science. If I had to summarize the main message of this book, it would be the following: W.E.B. Du Bois had a normative and political agenda that differed from that of the gatekeepers of his discipline, and because of this agenda he recognized that his work had to be more scientific and defensible than that of his opponents. This is not the sort of statement we are used to hearing in seminar rooms in sociology departments in the United States today. As graduate students, many of us are told to draw a bright line between our normative and political commitments and our scholarship. The fear is that scholars' political beliefs will infect their findings, leading them to deny the data or examine them selectively and to reach only those conclusions that are consistent with their politically motivated premises. This is an important and well justified concern that, in the case of Du Bois, Morris turns on its head.

Du Bois was well aware of the racism that suffused the scholarly environment in which he worked. Advising Gunnar Myrdal on the research project that would ultimately become *An American Dilemma*, Du Bois warned, "One of your difficulties in selecting experts is going to be the intense bias of most Americans, black and white, on the Negro problems" [Morris 2015: 216]. Given this environment, Du Bois could have spent his time railing against mainstream American sociology and denying its ability to produce valid knowledge claims. It is worth recalling that in writing *Black Reconstruction in America*, Du Bois [1935: 731-732] had to divide his bibliography into several sections: one, for instance, devoted to authors who believed African Americans to be sub-human; another he entitled simply "Propaganda." It would be easy to understand why a scholar, even one of Du Bois's caliber, might be led by such a dismal intellectual environment to turn away from the social scientific enterprise altogether. Indeed there is a temptation among many

scholars writing against the grain to attack the foundations of scientific knowledge rather than work towards its accumulation.

Du Bois took another path. He recognized that precisely because he was writing against the grain, his work had to be better substantiated than that of his rivals. The Chicago School had networks and power; these he would fight with evidence. “The whole history of Reconstruction,” Du Bois [1935: 381] wrote in *Black Reconstruction*, “has with few exceptions been written by passionate believers in the inferiority of the Negro. The whole body of facts concerning what the Negro actually said and did, how he worked, what he wanted, for whom he voted, is masked in such a cloud of charges, exaggeration and biased testimony, that most students have given up all attempt at new material or new evaluation of the old.” Writing in the *AJS* in 1944, Du Bois [1944: 456, quoted in Reed 1997: 50] observed that “race fiction is still taught in schools, in newspapers, and in novels.” Du Bois decided that he would fight what he called “race fiction” with facts. “The investigative tools of the Du Bois–Atlanta school,” Morris [2015: 62] writes, “encompassed surveys, interviews, participant observation, organizational documents, and census data [...] Through such means, they believed, crucial data for overthrowing racial ignorance and stereotypes would be gathered.”

Now, Morris’s book is a case study in how evidence is not sufficient to generate intellectual or political influence, and Du Bois’s philosophy of science was anything but naive. Facts are not straightforward things. And Du Bois’s combination of methods, while it appears mainstream to us, was revolutionary during his time. Nor will the facts always contradict the fictions we target. That is why we study them. But Du Bois recognized that facts—even inconvenient ones—are essential to the progress not only of social science, but of society itself. He understood that his political allies would not benefit if he got it wrong. I think Morris is right that part of Du Bois’s continuing influence today stems from the intellectual networks of which he was a part. But I think a nontrivial part of that influence is due to the sheer power of his scholarship, by his decision to fight fiction with fact, and to assemble evidence more persuasive than that of his intellectual and political opponents.<sup>1</sup> In Du Bois we confront a scholar who was simultaneously unflinching in his normative and political commitments and unflinching in his commitment to getting it right. He saw

<sup>1</sup> The opposition between these perspectives is probably false, as Du Bois’s scholarship and networks undoubtedly reinforced one another.

no conflict between these allegiances because he saw evidence as the ally of progress.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to note that Morris is not arguing that the Atlanta School equaled the Chicago School. Instead, he writes, “From a purely scientific perspective, Du Bois’s school of sociology examining race was superior to the ‘scientific’ research of the period—and of decades to come—that was based largely on conjecture, speculation, racist assumptions, and scant empirical data [...] [B]y ignoring Du Bois’s groundbreaking scientific work,” Morris [2015: 3-4] continues, “the Chicago school, mainstream sociology, and social science generally were impoverished theoretically and methodologically for a century.” *The Scholar Denied* aims, I believe, to draw our attention not only to Du Bois’s example, but to Park’s dis-example: contending that one’s scholarship is value-neutral when it is far from it, while basing one’s claims on what Du Bois called “car window” sociology [Morris 2015: 26, see also Zimmerman 2010: 231-232]. It also compels us to consider whose work we could be ignoring today.

This leads me to my second theme: canonization. What should we do about the fact of Du Bois’s exclusion? One answer is clear: we should teach more Du Bois and teach Du Bois more frequently. For starters, I would advocate assigning *Black Reconstruction* in our classical theory courses. We should also read more extensively and cite the work of the Atlanta School. My own debts to Du Bois and the Atlanta School, for instance, run deep. I found the work of Atlanta School scholars like George Edmund Haynes indispensable to understanding the Great Migration and I simply could not have written my dissertation without data Du Bois collected. It is difficult to conceive of the considerable scholarship in historical sociology on lynching without the careful tabulations published in *The Crisis* under Du Bois’s editorship [Lewis 1993: 514; Tolnay and Beck 1995: 28]. And what would we know of the “Massacre of East St. Louis” in 1917 if not for the thorough documentary work of Du Bois and his colleague Martha Gruening [Du Bois and Gruening 1917]? Other scholars will undoubtedly benefit as I have from reading these texts.

But there is a more radical implication of the theory of intellectual movements that Morris advances in this book. Morris uncovers the unacknowledged intellectual influence of Du Bois on Park, Weber, and

<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that Du Bois never betrayed his principles. “According to Lewis [1993: 540], when Du Bois revised his remarkable investigative report with Martha Gruening,

“The Massacre of East St. Louis,” he at least once succumbed to “the temptation to romanticize the facts” (compare Du Bois and Gruening 1917 to Du Bois 1999 [1920]: 47-59).

other scholars whose academic prestige at the time exceeded his own. He also shows how the thought of all of these scholars was influenced by their political allegiances. Many of the questions Du Bois asked originated in his work with the Niagara Movement, the NAACP, and the Pan-African Congresses, as well as his grappling with socialism. Just as evidence disciplined his politics, his political engagement prevented him from becoming detached from the world outside of academia and doing work that was only of scholastic interest.

This perspective might encourage us to devote more attention to how not only sidelined intellectuals but also social movements have influenced and extended the sociological canon. A growing number of scholars are tracing hidden intellectual inheritances like those described in *The Scholar Denied*. Morris is undoubtedly correct, for instance, that Du Bois before many other scholars adopted a theory of race that stressed its historical and political rather than its biological foundation. But so did the framers of the Haitian revolutionary constitution of 1805, as political philosopher Anthony Bogues [2013] has shown. Political scientist Alex Gourevitch [2015] has demonstrated how the Knights of Labor extended republican conceptions of domination to encompass the unfreedom implicit in wage labor contracts. Their philosophical attachment to ideas of non-domination, he argues, was a central reason they advocated “equal pay for equal work,” defended women’s suffrage, and organized domestic servants and African-American agricultural workers in the South. More recently, before many of us were writing about mass incarceration, groups like Critical Resistance were organizing not just protests but conferences on topics we are still debating today (Critical Resistance Publications Collective 2000). Pursue this line of thought long enough and the barrier between sociological theory and social movements begins to fall away. Where do these movements fit in the intellectual history of sociology and where should they fit in its future? I do not have the answer, but these are the sorts of questions Morris’s book provokes us to ask.

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