

Notes for Soc 0150

4.11.06

Recorded by Erin Davis with some comments or clarifications from Dr. Brush

Dubois and the self

-wrote *Philadelphia Negro* (1899), which is highly descriptive and “devoid of what is usually thought of as theory” (Ritzer & Goodman: 304).

-not theoretically embedded in canon of theory

-like Gilman, wrote a lot outside of theory

-his writing has passion-shows his feelings, talks in first person and tells of experiences

Example:

Wild is the world and witless, terrible in its beauty and crime. Can one forget sunrise on Lake Baikal, the gray oaks of Nara, the hills of light of Manhattan? Who may not remember the lynching of Mary Brown, the suicides of bankers in 1929, and the cripples crawling out of Guadalcanal, Aachen, and Leyte? Behold the starving children of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Such a world, with all its contradictions, can be saved, can yet be born again; but not out of capital, interest, property, and gold, rather out of dreams and loiterings, out of simple goodness and friendship and love, out of science and missions. (1945)

Doesn't sound much like theory – and makes you wonder why DuBois is included in our anthology of the canon, when Gilman isn't.

Dubois's Concepts in "Souls"

Double consciousness- the sense of twoness and dissociation that comes from being a subordinate in an oppressive hierarchy, where the rulers don't have to acknowledge the subjectivity of the ruled, but the ruled must understand the whole system to survive

^ Standpoint epistemology-much like Marx does—ppl who are subordinates understand system as a whole or they would get punished

-if subordinate acts like he doesn't understand the rules, then he will get knocked down by oppressors

-uses the metaphor of the veil-theorizes as though the veil was real

-veil is the fundamental manifestation of racism

The Color Line- the problem of the 20th century; division between white and black

-Traces the different things that colored ppl thought were going to be the solution to their problems:

-emancipation- thought it was just freedom they needed but wasn't

-enfranchisement- thought just needed political power and the ability to vote

-education- by education he means 2 things: a kind of craft learning or book learning

^^^need all 3 so we do not have to be second class citizens

-says racism is the problem, not the person

-the privileged agent- is the person w/ double consciousness

-Idiom is empiricism, very modernist commitment to progress

-his goal is racial justice.

Societies shape selves

Mead: reflexive formation of self as both subject and object through communication and symbolic interaction

Freud: traumatic formation of self as conscious/unconscious minds (divided or split subject) through civilization and renounced desires

-Freud seems to say that everyone has this process

-not social world that's divided, but ourselves

Dubois: conflicting formation of self and group and individual consciousness of differentiated hierarchy through oppression

^^^all talking about the same thing, but different ways of discussing it

Compare DuBois to:

- Mead's "multiple personalities" refer to the different "selves" we produce in response to different interactions. Mead's "social" is differentiated in terms of structure (positions) but not power; the divided self comes from taking different roles in different situations and from the subject/object split between the "I" and the "Me", which makes a self possible.
- trauma of the split subject in Freud [undifferentiated Victorian "social" but micro-level power struggles] Freud's "social" is uniform in requiring the regulation or sublimation of both erotic and destructive instincts; the split subject or divided consciousness in Freudian psychoanalysis comes from the trauma of reconciling impulse and control.
- alienation in Marx [product of labor is alien object; estranged in the act of production from nature, from most basic human activity, from species-being, and from other people]
- *anomie* in Durkheim [inadequate social organization >> lack of the organic solidarity that ought to result from specialization >> social disorders and conflict]).
- DuBois's "social" is divided by the color line, by the veil of racism; "double consciousness" refers to the awareness subordinates have of what happens on both sides of the veil – of (1) their own plight and subjective experience AND (2)

what goes on for the superordinates – and from seeing themselves as both American and African.

-Dubois said our selves are formed in the experience of racism

-Dubois's social is divided by the color line

- standpoint epistemology: specific location in a structured social world provides unique (indeed, potentially privileged; see Lukács) view of social relations. DuBois (in a different text, written in 1920) “argues that his standpoint as a black American gave him special insight into white Americans” (R&G: 308):

Of them I am singularly clairvoyant. I see in and through them. I view them from unusual points of vantage. Not as a foreigner do I come, for I am, native, not foreign, bone of their thought and flesh of their language. Mine is not the knowledge of the traveler ... Rather I see these souls undressed and from the back and side. I see the working of their entrails. I know their thoughts and they know that I know ... I seem the stripped, -- ugly, human.

Epistemologically privileged the subordinate subject, who had to be made equal through education and opportunities to excel, not just technical training advocated by Booker T. Washington.