
PRAGMATISM AND PROGRESSIVISM IN THE EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT AND PRACTICES OF BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

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Few men, particularly Black men, have wielded the power and influence of Booker T. Washington during his lifetime. A good deal of his colorful life is recounted in his autobiography, *Up from Slavery*.¹ Here Washington details the most notable events of his life, from the time he spent in slavery as a youth, to his exploits and education during his adolescence, and well into his career as head of the then-Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama. Washington tells of his experiences at present-day Hampton University and the extraordinary influence the lessons he learned and the people he met there had on his life philosophy. He also reserves a large part of his story to describe numerous occasions during which he spread his institution's seeds of success and offered his advice on improving America's race relations. Yet as revealing as his account is, both by reading its lines and between its lines, Washington's autobiography represents only a piece of his life's puzzle.

If Washington is the "trickster" that Harlan imagines and McElroy argues,² a fairer and fuller understanding of Washington's wizardry necessitates moving beyond his autobiography. Restricting our understanding of Washington to his self-representation in *Up from Slavery* (even extending to his photographic self-representation)³ and allowing his account to epitomize his worldview does more than "oversimplify Washington . . . it further contributes to the uncritical acceptance of Washington's propagandistic portrayal of Tuskegee's goals, programs, and accomplishments."⁴ Many gaps in his life story can be filled by consulting primary sources such as Washington's writings and speeches as well as by looking to extensive biographical and numerous scholarly works on Washington. As Dagbovie's comprehensive, insightful, historiographical work makes clear, a near-century's worth of

¹ Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (1901; repr., New York: Penguin, 1986).

² Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856–1901* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), ix; Frederick L. McElroy, "Booker T. Washington as Literary Trickster," *Southern Folklore* 49, no. 2 (1992): 89–107.

³ See Michael Bieze, *Booker T. Washington and the Art of Self-Representation* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).

⁴ Pero Gaglo Dagbovie, "Exploring a Century of Historical Scholarship on Booker T. Washington," *Journal of African American History* 92 (Spring 2007): 256.

multifaceted scholarship begs use to make sense of Washington's thought and work.⁵

Among this work lies a small subset pursuing (or at least suggesting) two underexplored lines of thinking on Washington's work: work situating his thought within educational traditions of pragmatism and progressivism. These are hardly synonymous terms, yet are often linked in American educational discourse, with John Dewey's thought serving as connective tissue, so justifying my treatment locating these concepts together. My goal in this paper is to uncover some of Washington's hidden complexity by drawing upon and extending arguments for labeling him both an educational pragmatist and progressivist—arguments that add to and in some cases oppugn commonly accepted understandings. In order to do so, I reconsider and analyze Washington's formal writings, speeches, and correspondence as well as extensive secondary sources dealing specifically with his educational thinking, policies, and practices.

WASHINGTON AS PRAGMATIST

The American pragmatist tradition is associated with, or formulated around, the ideas of three particular men: Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. The weight and scope of their respective contributions to the tradition differ greatly, of course, with Dewey offering both the largest contribution toward the popularization of pragmatism in America and its organic connection to the field of education. One pragmatist proposition to which Peirce, James, and Dewey all ascribed is that one must put an idea into practice in order to determine its meaning, and what follows constitutes the meaning of that idea.⁶ Specifically utilized as an educational philosophy, pragmatism relies more centrally on Dewey's thought since it is he who pairs philosophy with education and he who develops many theories within the context of educational institutions. Under Dewey's philosophy perhaps the closest one can come to defining the general aim of education would be his term "social efficiency." However, Dewey's concept of social efficiency is broadly defined; it is not limited to vocational capability, but "covers all that makes one's own experience more worth while [sic] to others, and all that enables one to participate more richly in the worthwhile experiences of others."⁷ In other words, education functions to help people direct personal and

⁵ Dagbovie, "Exploring a Century."

⁶ J. Donald Butler, *Four Philosophies and Their Practice in Education and Religion*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

⁷ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (1916; repr., New York: Free Press, 1966), 120. Dewey sees social efficiency as antithetical to the privileging of the "natural" for which some of his contemporaries (and, importantly, also Rousseau) argue—that is, the belief the end goal of education should be a natural development that rebels against being shaped in a social environment (ibid., 114–115). At the same time, Dewey acknowledges the antidemocratic impulses inherent in some connotations of efficiency:

social experience both in the interest of personal growth and the growth of others.⁸

In explaining his justification for naming Washington a “true pragmatist,” Bill Lawson insists upon starting from a clearly defined understanding of pragmatism. Locating this definition requires wading through some terminological murkiness, but the definition on which he bases his judgment locates “solving basic life problems” as fundamental to pragmatism.⁹ He elaborates on his definition by claiming a pragmatist must first understand the nature of the problem he or she is trying to solve, and then must be creative in his or her thinking:¹⁰ hence his argument for why one should include Washington in the pragmatist camp since he considers Washington no “mere puppet,” but instead a creative, flawed leader dealing with difficult educational and racial problems. In dealing with these problems, Washington fuses theory and practice to fashion an inventive approach to achieving improved dealings between races in the South and a better life for African Americans.¹¹ Washington’s emphasis on industrial education for southern Blacks as the best avenue to racial progress, in Lawson’s view, is one feasible plan of action among others, an option Washington chose given his understanding of (and orientation towards) the time’s social situation. Lawson sees further evidence of Washington’s pragmatism in his efforts to make Tuskegee an important community institution for both Blacks and whites. Washington’s belief Tuskegee needed to help change attitudes (and thus behavior) of whites by rendering itself, and especially its Black students, indispensable to the larger community demonstrates, for Lawson, a pragmatist approach to contending with the hostile environment Washington faced.¹²

“The error is in implying that we must adopt measures of subordination rather than of utilization to secure efficiency. The doctrine is rendered adequate when we recognize that social efficiency is attained not by negative constraint but by positive use of native individual capacities in occupations having a social meaning” (ibid., 118).

⁸ Butler, *Four Philosophies*, 413–414; Howard A. Ozmon and Samuel M. Craver, *Philosophical Foundations of Education*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall, 1999), 150–152.

⁹ Bill E. Lawson, “Booker T. Washington: A Pragmatist at Work,” in *Pragmatism and the Problem of Race*, ed. Bill E. Lawson and Donald F. Koch (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 126, 131. Making sense of his line of argument is a bit challenging because of the fluidity with which Lawson moves between the descriptions “pragmatist,” “pragmatic” and “practical.” There is substantial overlap between these terms since they share close to the same meaning in common usage. But Lawson’s broad usage is unhelpful to the specific argument he attempts to make.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Michael Rudolph West argues the idea of “race relations” was the “most important and longest enduring element” of what he calls “Washingtonianism” (14). See *The Education of Booker T. Washington: American Democracy and the Idea of Race Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

¹² Lawson, “Booker T. Washington,” 126, 131.

Cornel West's more precise conception of American pragmatism as "a diverse and heterogeneous tradition" whose "common denominator consists of future-oriented instrumentalism that tries to deploy thought as a weapon to enable more effective action" is a tradition with which Washington's thought is fairly compatible.¹³ One now knows Washington's faith in the notion his educational agenda would elicit the goodwill of whites and overcome the pernicious effects of legal segregation largely was misplaced, and the outmoded industrial preparation he championed at Tuskegee ultimately insufficient.¹⁴ However, that fact is not the criterion by which one determines whether or not Washington was a pragmatist thinker.

Even more can be said to further the case for Washington's place in the pragmatist tradition. As noted earlier, a central tenet of pragmatism positions the meaning of an idea as determined by putting that idea into practice and this proposition seems to underlie Washington's expressed distaste for abstractions, not finding "a solution for many of the actual problems of life"¹⁵ within abstractions. He contends, "Ideas are valuable, but ideas that do not bring themselves into the activities of the world are valueless."¹⁶ Elsewhere, Washington defends a related line of thinking:

No race can permanently succeed until its mind is awakened and strengthened by the ripest thought. But I would constantly have it kept in the thoughts of those who are educated in books that a large proportion of those who are educated should be so trained in hand that they can bring this mental strength and knowledge to bear upon the physical conditions in the South.¹⁷

His views express a consistently held belief—and one in keeping with pragmatist thought: academic preparation and abstract thinking are not unimportant, but they earn value only when applied to life's real problems.

Curti may have been the first scholar to imply (without declaring) Washington's pragmatist orientation by establishing a connection between Washington and Dewey, correctly placing Washington's Tuskegee model

¹³ Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 5.

¹⁴ Manning Marable, *Black Leadership* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). On this point, also see West, *The Education of Booker T. Washington*, especially 13–14.

¹⁵ Booker T. Washington, *My Larger Education: Being Chapters from My Experience* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1911), 116.

¹⁶ Booker T. Washington, "A Commencement Address in Washington, D.C." (June 16, 1905), in *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, ed. Louis R. Harlan (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 8:313.

¹⁷ Booker T. Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1902), 228–229.

temporally before the popularization of Dewey's doctrine.¹⁸ Although Curti does not name Washington a pragmatist per se, he plays up an "emphasis on the social significance of a purposeful education which lies at the heart of Washington's social philosophy."¹⁹ The Dewey connection, though anachronistic, is clear when one considers his three criteria related to educational aims: (1) grow out of existing conditions, (2) be flexible enough to meet circumstances and (3) represent a freeing of activities.²⁰ The consonance of Washington's philosophy with Dewey's aims is apparent, for example, in the specific praise of his Hampton education he tenders in *Up from Slavery*. He criticizes the frequent temptation in "missionary and educational work among undeveloped races . . . to run each individual through a certain educational mould, regardless of the condition of the subject or the end to be accomplished." The Hampton model, Washington contends, is quite different.²¹

In sum, Washington's educational philosophy fits within the realm of pragmatism; moreover, based upon their shared general educational positions and pedagogical influences Washington belongs at the same pragmatist table occupied by Dewey. DeLaney also documents at length the philosophical consonance between these two men. Even though he argues Washington "might well be called a realistic pragmatist," he claims no single philosophy was sufficient to encompass Washington's purposes.²² DeLaney sees Washington and Dewey as different in approach, but quite similar in principle. As a way of demonstrating the similarities, DeLaney enumerates many elements of Dewey's philosophy, then offers Washington's more—simply stated, less abstract formulations (in his opinion) of the same ideas.²³ Even Dewey himself may have been tacitly supportive of Washington's educational thought and practices—or at least indifferent and not opposed to them.²⁴

Similarities notwithstanding, there are of course distinctions between the two men's respective philosophies. To take one instance, Washington emphasizes constantly the importance of an education addressing the actual

¹⁸ Merle Curti, *The Social Ideas of American Educators* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), 290–293.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 293.

²⁰ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 104–106.

²¹ See Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 95–96, for instance.

²² William H. DeLaney, *Learn by Doing: A Projected Educational Philosophy in the Thought of Booker T. Washington* (New York: Vantage Press, 1974), 122.

²³ DeLaney repeatedly argues, sympathetically, that Washington's philosophy is less refined because he lacks Dewey's intellectual background and training.

²⁴ See W. E. B. Dubois, *The Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois, Volume 1: Selections, 1877–1934*, ed. Herbert Aptheker (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973), 79. Interestingly, Washington was also the object of William James's adulation. See William James to BTW, 30 May 1897, *Papers of Booker T. Washington*, box 58, reel 53; and William James to BTW, Cambridge, MA, 28 March 1909, *BTW Papers*, 10: 78–79.

needs of those being taught. However, there is no evidence of him honoring the *desires* of students; in fact, he argues on many occasions for the suppression of students' desires. Washington speaks of the mistake "of feeling that the great object to be obtained by the cultivation of all these powers . . . is the gratification of your own desires."²⁵ In contrast, Dewey views natural impulses and desires as an educational starting point. What sometimes gets glossed over, though, is Dewey's admonition against pairing impulse and desire with purpose, seeing occurrences of desires and impulses as occasions for education, not as aims, for "impulses and desires that are not ordered by intelligence are under the control of accidental circumstances."²⁶ In short, both men see education as synonymous with the creation of the power of self-control,²⁷ but differ in the degree to which they pay honor to the desires of their pupils in the process.

WASHINGTON AS PROGRESSIVIST

Pragmatist philosophy is distinguishable (though not neatly so) from progressivism. Within the realm of education, pragmatism is a philosophy, whereas progressive education is primarily a loose collection of practices (with some pragmatist philosophical underpinnings, of course) started in opposition to a perceived formalistic and undemocratic element in American schooling—an "ethical movement" even.²⁸ In fact, the progressive education movement encompassed several philosophical strands and had some established roots before the ascendancy of James or Dewey. But while there has been close affinity and some political intermingling between progressivism in education and Dewey's pragmatism, there are many who have embraced progressivist practices without accepting a pragmatist philosophy.²⁹

To complicate matters, the origins, founders, and duration of the progressive education movement remain highly disputed points of fact. Determining the soul of the movement has been particularly troublesome; Cremin even opines a "capsule definition" does not exist and never will.³⁰ The imprecision of the term "progressive education" has been attributed by

²⁵ Washington, "A Sunday Evening Talk" (to Tuskegee students, November 1, 1908), *BTW Papers* 9:683.

²⁶ John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (1938; repr., New York: Touchstone, 1997), 83, 75.

²⁷ See Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 75; "A Sunday Evening Talk" (to Tuskegee students, January 15, 1911), *BTW Papers*, 10:549.

²⁸ James B. Macdonald, "Introduction," in *A New Look at Progressive Education*, ed. James R. Squire (Washington, DC: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1972), 1.

²⁹ Butler, *Four Philosophies*, 416; Ozmon and Craver, *Philosophical Foundations*, 149–150, 161–162.

³⁰ Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876–1957* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), x.

Graham, in part, to a shift in meaning with World War I as a major turning point. Before the war progressive schools often upheld the social and political views of prominent American figures connected to political progressivism. Afterwards, a progressive school became synonymous with an experimental one. The term even took on different shades of meaning during the Depression era and again in the late 1940s.³¹ Another historian of the movement contends that while Cremin and others have defined progressive education rather broadly, a progressive school, at least during the 1920s and 1930s, “was usually defined as one that followed a child-centered rather than a subject-centered curriculum.”³² At any rate, Graham argues “[t]hroughout the ideological oscillations” of progressive education at least two elements consistently appear: “an appreciation of innovation in education and an acknowledgment of John Dewey’s status as prophet and elder statesman of the progressive education movement.”³³

Moreover, educational progressivism was connected to the larger progressive reform movement in political and social arenas. Locating agreement on the genesis and boundaries of this larger era of reform in America has proven a frustrating task, perhaps even more so than the attempt to define educational progressivism. This is due to the range of sometimes-incompatible sentiments and actions comprising the movement. Nevertheless, one useful, if vague, description of progressivism is “the emergence in the arena of national politics of all of the impulses to reform which had hitherto expressed themselves ‘socially’ and ‘locally.’”³⁴

Washington’s progressivism is traced by Moses as a part of Moses’s exploration of contradictions in Washington’s thinking. He underscores the “confusing” nature of the term progressive, and points to contradictory notions subsumed under progressivism, like the coincident struggle for social justice and faith in social Darwinism. Even so, Moses comfortably places Washington within the tradition of progressivism. He does note Washington “had the tricky task of adjusting [progressivism’s] Anglocentrism and social Darwinism to his reform agenda,”³⁵ but implies Washington’s mindset corresponded so well to that of other white progressives he dealt with the task more as challenge than

³¹ Patricia Albjerg Graham, *Progressive Education: From Arcady to Academe, A History of the Progressive Education Association, 1919–1955* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1967), 12–13.

³² Arthur Zilversmit, “The Failure of Progressive Education, 1920–1940,” in *Schooling and Society: Studies in the History of Education*, ed. Lawrence Stone (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 254.

³³ Graham, *Progressive Education*, 13.

³⁴ Page Smith, *America Enters the World: A People’s History of the Progressive Era and World War I* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), 347.

³⁵ Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Creative Conflict in African American Thought: Frederick Douglass, Alexander Crummell, Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Marcus Garvey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 148.

obstacle. More specifically, Moses claims Washington's "utilitarian" educational theory may also be called progressive.³⁶

Like Moses, *Generals* places Washington squarely within the progressivist tradition. However, *Generals* offers a more specific, elaborate investigation of Washington's educational work, focusing particularly on his "experimentalist" approach to education. *Generals* is ultimately critical of what he sees as the scholarly exclusion of the importance of Washington's contributions to the advancement of the experimentalist transformation.³⁷ To begin, *Generals* identifies Washington with the progressive education movement because his ideas "reflect the belief that the personal experiences of the student should serve as the basis for their educational experiences," because Washington's practices were intended to address class disparities in American society,³⁸ placing more explicit emphasis on learning through solving real-life problems central to the Tuskegee curriculum—what could be called a "project approach." Educational historians (e.g., Cremin) generally attribute development of the "project method" to William Kilpatrick, who systematizes Dewey's general practice, yet *Generals* argues Washington deserves more credit, for it was Washington who built an entire institution around this approach some thirty years earlier, well before Kilpatrick's or even Dewey's influence was felt³⁹ (Kilpatrick's earliest formal public discussion of the project method appeared in 1918).⁴⁰

Further underscoring the egregiousness of Washington's omission from progressivism's record, *Generals* cites a 1904 letter from Paul Monroe, education department head at Teachers College, to Wallace Buttrick, secretary of the Rockefeller-funded General Education Board, in which Monroe applauds the Tuskegee approach as being "of great interest to the student of education on account of the illumination it is giving to educational theory, as to those interested practically in the elevation of the Negro people and in the solution of a serious social problem."⁴¹ But one instance of such an omission, Kliebard, in his excellent history of curriculum reform, restricts his brief consideration of

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 155–156.

³⁷ Donald *Generals*, "Booker T. Washington and Progressive Education: An Experimentalist Approach to Curriculum Development and Reform," *Journal of Negro Education* 69 (Summer 2000). Even though most of *Generals*'s effort is spent reasserting Washington's place in educational progressivism, he briefly discusses his connection to pragmatism as well.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 216, 220.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 216–217. Similarly, Curti highlights Washington's work at Tuskegee as "anticipating the project method which Dewey popularized many years earlier." *Social Ideas*, 292.

⁴⁰ See William H. Kilpatrick, "The Project Method," *Teachers College Record* 19 (September 1918): 319–335.

⁴¹ Paul Monroe as cited in *Generals*, "Booker T. Washington," 219.

Washington's work to its manual training dimension without fitting Washington's ideas into the "experience curriculum" camp whose ground he devotes so greatly to Kilpatrick.⁴²

Generals bolsters his argument for Washington as a progressivist by pointing to Washington's ostensible reliance upon the ideas of Pestalozzi and Fröebel. Washington was certainly familiar with Johann Herbart (who draws from Pestalozzi), given his reference to Herbart's work in his 1902 annual report to Tuskegee trustees.⁴³ As Burnett argues, progressive education has its roots in two philosophical camps: romantic naturalism (particularly that of Rousseau) and American pragmatism.⁴⁴ Precursors Horace Mann and Henry Barnard demonstrate an interest in the child-centered philosophy of Rousseau and the works of Pestalozzi, a follower of Rousseau and in turn an influence on Fröebel and Herbart. Later, Dewey's pragmatism joins forces (somewhat uncomfortably) with the romantics, a combination that helped cultivate progressive education.⁴⁵ Washington's belief in "correlating" industrial with academic instruction seems a manifestation of his adaptation of Pestalozzi's philosophy and Fröebel's "object studies." Washington's apparent knowledge of the work of Pestalozzi and Fröebel—and his attempt to graft their thinking onto the context of the Negro in the South—helps situate him in the progressive education tradition.

The "progressivist" label suits Washington as well as pragmatist, elusiveness of the precise meaning of the term notwithstanding. As Moses points out, Washington's philosophy is undergirded by a social Darwinist yet reformist sentiment, rendering his thought of a similar mindset to Theodore Roosevelt, and placing him under the big tent of progressivism.⁴⁶ Similarly, Generals justly reestablishes Washington's work within the progressive education movement, with much emphasis on Tuskegee Institute's use of a project approach to education. Generals's overall argument is well-evidenced: Washington's practices are just as reform-oriented in their challenge to the traditional delivery of subject matter as those otherwise identified with the movement.⁴⁷

⁴² Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893–1958* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986).

⁴³ Basil Mathews, *Booker T. Washington: Educator and Interracial Interpreter* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948), 129.

⁴⁴ Joe Burnett as cited in Ozmon and Craver, *Philosophical Foundations*, 161.

⁴⁵ Ozmon and Craver, *Philosophical Foundations*, 161–162.

⁴⁶ Moses, *Creative Conflict*, 148.

⁴⁷ Generals, "Booker T. Washington." Unfortunately, Generals's argument suffers slightly from the same mislabeling that he tries to correct: he uses the term "critical theorist" too loosely and without sufficient justification.

CONCLUSION

Booker T. Washington's life's work is represented by a wealth of evidence, which undoubtedly explains the abundance of interpretations put forth during the past century. The evidence marshaled in this paper warrants reconsideration of Washington as a pragmatist and a progressivist. However, such a reconsideration does not equate to an attempt to rehabilitate Washington's image or to rescue it from critique. One sees from a particular vantage point Washington's solutions have a narrow base of application. For one thing, Washington's system of self-help using industrial education restricts Black people's potential for broad success and likely impedes prosperity in all aspects of life. While Washington acknowledged (at least initially) the shortcomings of this type of education, he nevertheless thought it best suited for the Negro masses—or at least for the leaders of those masses and “for any other race in the same relative stage of civilization.”⁴⁸ While he recognized the advantages of studying philosophy or law, he failed to appreciate how such subjects could be integrated into a pedagogy that could help empower Blacks to win struggles on political and other fronts. To date, it is not clear how well Tuskegee students under Washington's leadership were educated.⁴⁹ By limiting the development of Black talent in this way, Washington likely gave many white people additional grist for their mills in order to reify the argument Blacks were unable to succeed in other areas; consequently, the rules of society were altered accordingly in order further to disfranchise Blacks. His consistent discouragement of Blacks' entrance into the political arena may have brought a temporary *détente* between whites and Blacks, but it more likely delayed Black people's fight for equal rights.

Washington's great influence on society resulted in conflicting outcomes: his strategies helped to bring a measure of success to some Blacks and to some poor whites, but his insistence on the correctness of his Tuskegee method and on the unconditional acceptance of that method effectively stifled the emergence of new ideas. In this way, he became an oppressor (as Fanon suggests oppressed people are sometimes wont to do⁵⁰) within other sociopolitical projects, lessening other means of attaining human equality. Furthermore, his oft-professed faith in white goodwill to overcome Black subjugation and, more importantly, his largely uncritical endorsement of the notion of achieving enfranchisement through the channel of American capitalism were crippling naïvetés at best: naïvetés that had been challenged by

⁴⁸ Booker T. Washington, “Tuskegee: A Retrospect and Prospect,” *North American Review* 182 (April 1906): 518.

⁴⁹ See James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860–1935* (Chapel Hill, NC and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

⁵⁰ See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 53.

his ideological kinsman Alain Locke as early as 1912.⁵¹ On the other hand, Du Bois once claimed “Washington had no more faith in the white man than I do.”⁵² If Du Bois was correct, then perhaps Washington was not as naïve in this regard as he now appears. Washington employed a pedagogy of uplift informed by hope as well as addressed a concern for improving immediate conditions, what Robert Franklin calls his “modest utopian vision.”⁵³ However, it seems his specific brands of pragmatism and progressivism along with his utopianism formed a combination too bogged down by failure to look beyond itself for answers. Washington suffered from pedagogical tunnel vision, among other things.

In the end, Harlan’s attempt to reconcile multiple portrayals of Tuskegee Institute is instructive for how we should deal with multiple characterizations of that institution’s leader: that is, to see him as “none of these abstractions, but an amalgam of parts of each.”⁵⁴ Labels should not be used to place people in a box from which their legacies cannot escape, but rather ought to be used as heuristic devices that assist us in understanding those very people. The many extant accounts of Washington’s work have labeled and categorized him in several ways. Yet, as the preceding examination hopefully makes clear, there are notable indications of Washington’s educational pragmatism as well as progressivism—and these indications merit even further examination, especially since they lead to interpretations that depart from those widely held and staunchly defended. As we continue to comprehend and to characterize Washington’s legacy, let us neither lose sight of his complexity nor allow any particular label to crowd out the rest.

⁵¹ Alain L. Locke, *Race Contracts and Interracial Relations: Lectures on the Theory and Practice of Race*, ed. Jeffrey C. Stewart (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1992), xxxix–xl.

⁵² Du Bois as quoted in Eric F. Goldman, *Rendezvous with Destiny: A History of Modern American Reform* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1965), 81.

⁵³ Robert Michael Franklin, *Liberating Visions: Human Fulfillment and Social Justice in African-American Thought* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 34. Franklin offers an interesting analysis of Washington’s “modest utopian vision.” Moses explores this contradiction as well in *Creative Conflict*.

⁵⁴ Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington*, vol. 2, *The Wizard of Tuskegee: 1901-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 144.
