human nature and consciousness

From the Glossary:

consciousness

a. the state of being conscious; awareness of self and awareness of one’s knowledge of self-interest and things in the world

Smith, WN, Book IV, ch. 1

b. awareness of being observed by others

Smith, TMS, Part II, section I; ‘Of Merit and Demerit’

Marx, 1844 M

Gi, p. 180

c. the property of humans; awareness of self, other, and being part of the species (species-being)

Marx, 1844 M

Gi, p. 180

d. the product of society affected by forces and conflicts shaping society, typically expressed in language

Gi, p. 187; CM

e. in capitalism, affected by alienation; dissociation of consciousness of self from humanity, and labour from self (see alienation); replacement of consciousness of (belonging to a) species with consciousness of (belonging to a ) class

Durkheim, DL., esp. Bk. II, ch. 3, pp. 226 ff. (on the change of consciousness with increasing preponderance of organic solidarity

state of nature, or natural condition

The State of Nature is a depoliticized state of affairs of virtually unrestrained freedom. Methodologically, the state of nature acts as an extension of a social contract theorists account of human nature, and their differing views lead to fundamentally different descriptions of what the state of nature actually entails. For example, Hobbes and Locke, strip man of his socio-political influences: nationality, religion, politics, and culture, among others. Instead of considering existing relations between man and the state, they posit man in his natural state.

- For Hobbes, social relations in the state of nature devolve into nihilistic chaos because there is no external check on individual passions. Life in the state of nature is thus solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short (L 186)

- Locke, unlike Hobbes, has a generally more peaceful description of the state of nature. For Locke the state of nature is essentially state of perfect freedom where men act as they think fit and without asking leave or depending on the will of any other man (STG 8).

- Dustin

veil

W.E.B. DuBois:
The veil is a term which is utterly salient to understanding The Souls of Black Folk, DuBois applies it in a few different applications but in general the term can be taken to mean: a crystallized term for the segregation between blacks and whites in America and the negative effects it has on the African-American population. In the opening of the book, DuBois states, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, (DuBois 2). The African-American is born with this racially segregated consciousness, One ever feels his two-ness,-an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts (DuBois 2). The veil is a crisis in identity for the African American, one that DuBois hopes will be taken away in the future, the veil itself is one of the main problems DuBois identifies and discusses throughout his work.

In perhaps the most relevant chapter of the book, VI On the Training of Black Men, DuBois employs the veil once again. The old Souths perspective on the African American, as described by DuBois, a clownish, simple creature, at times even lovable within its limitations, but straitly foreordained to walk within the Veil (DuBois 56). Even though DuBois is primarily describing a generally accepted racial stereotype, even though the racist description, he identifies the presence of the Veil. As before, the Veil represents the realm of the repressed African-American, they must walk within the Veil. But DuBois concludes his chapter on education with a fairly poetic passage which contains this line: I summon Aristotle and Aurelius and what soul I will, and they come all graciously with no scorn nor condescension. So, wed with Truth, I dwell above the Veil. (DuBois 67). DuBois asserts that truth, found through successful education, will bring the repressed African-American above the Veil and above their current status in America. Through education truth can be found and the Veil taken away, according to DuBois.

-Eli Edelson

3.6.11