Introduction

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WHEN I FIRST HEARD about the dehumanizing events that took place at Abu V Ghraib Prison, whether it was a prisoner with a leash around his neck like a dog, or Iraqi prisoners in the nude depicted in very suggestive sexual acts and forming pyramids, I immediately thought of *race*. From the many commentaries that I read or heard, the dynamics of race were absent. The content of much of the commentary that I read and heard focused around the issue of America's contradictory messages. Of course, many were quick to point out that the events that took place at the prison were isolated, limited to a few inexcusable cases only. Such discourse, however, aims to render the pervasiveness of racism invisible under the banner that most white Americans are "color blind." Acts of white racism are then deemed individual instances of *prejudice*, perhaps even categorized as hate crimes, claims that attempt to sidestep the systemic and structural nature of white racism. Indeed, President Bush announced, "This is not the America I know." But "Whose America?" and "Whose knowledge?" Perhaps it is here that Bush's "knowledge" about America might be framed within the context of the epistemology of ignorance, whereby he is blinded by a certain historically structured and structuring (white) opacity, "a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made."[1] Bush's comment only further confirmed my conviction that critics and pundits had failed to explore and interrogate the subtext of race that I theorized had been performed at Abu Ghraib. Such themes as sadistic brutality, sexual violence, xenophobic paranoia, the reduction of fellow human beings to brute beasts, played themselves out against a silent, though familiar, backdrop of a long history of America's racist drama: the racializing, stigmatizing, and brutalizing of the marked "Other." Why is it that the events at Abu Ghraib took the form of *sexual* humiliation? The photos had a spectacle and ceremonial feel to them, as if the larger semiotic message, the narrative of violence, sex, and "darkies," was intended to communicate what many white racist Americans have always thought: that the Iraqi prisoners were "sand Niggers," swarthy in complexion, morally "dark" in their deeds, bestial, and lacking in the "progressive" values of modernity.

As the events at Abu Ghraib unfolded, I found myself bombarded with thoughts of the racist historical processes of "Niggerization" and hypersexualization that Blacks in North America have undergone. Were these prisoners being "Niggerized" and hypersexualized? The events

that took place at Abu Ghraib reminded me precisely of the America that I knew and know. Recall that it was only in 1997 that, in New York, Abner Louima, a Black man, had a wooden stick shoved into his rectum and mouth by white police officers while his hands were cuffed behind his back. What is the nature of the satisfaction that white men derive from shoving a phallic object into the rectum of a Black man and then shoving it into his mouth? This is the America that I know. Then again, what desire is satisfied by getting so-called sand Niggers to perform in the nude before white onlookers? What is the anatomy of this perverse desire? The ritual sounds so familiar. Themes of white sadism, illusions of (white) absolute power and freedom from responsibility, white male phallocentrism, and feelings of psychological impotence "overcome" through pernicious acts of brutalizing the Other pervaded the white ritualism at Abu Ghraib.

I found the recent beheadings in Iraq to be despicable acts.[2] And it is only right that the world protests such acts. But at the same time, let us not forget America's history. Again, in 1997, white men hung a Black man, Garnett Paul Johnson, on a cross, poured gasoline over his body and then *beheaded* him with what I understand to have been a dull ax. "A year later," as African American writer David Bradley notes, "near a town called Jasper, Texas, three white men kidnapped a black man named James Byrd, Jr., spray-painted him white, chained him to the bumper of a pickup, and dragged him until his body parts [*head included*] were distributed along two miles of country road."[3] As much as we should be horrified by what is happening to white Americans abroad, which is by no means acceptable, Blacks at home are also being beheaded and brutalized.

Abner Louima experienced firsthand white America's pernicious racism toward the dark Other. He understood how it is not enough to be physically brutalized. He understood what it meant to be sexually abused/humiliated, symbolically "fucked" by white male members of a power structure that saw themselves as giving him what he "desired." After all, or so the mythopoetic reasoning goes, those darkies are oversexed anyway. Louima knew what it was like to experience a "torture chamber" or a "torture room." If only American prison walls could name the horrors that occur there daily, the sadism, the horror of forced rape of both men and women, forced sodomy, forced humiliation. Abu Ghraib was no exception to the rule of America's racist brutality and sexually perverse practices. Such events at the Iraqi prison were profoundly disturbing, but not new, not surprising.

Consider Claude Neal, a twenty-three-year-old Black man who, on October 19, 1934, was arrested in Greenwood, Florida, for allegedly raping and killing a white woman. It is said that, while in the hands of white men, he "confessed" to the crime. With all the signs of whiteness gone mad (predictably so, when it comes to the need to punish "oversexed" Black male "beasts" who prey on the purity, sanctity, and innocence of white women), Neal was taken from his jail cell by white men and horribly brutalized. Neal was branded. They cut off his penis and made him eat it. They then cut off his testicles and made him eat them, forcing him to say that he liked them. His sides were sliced with knives. Whites would go on to decide to cut off a finger or toe. They burned him with hot coals. During this act of *white terrorism,* Neal had a rope tied around his neck. The white racist terrorists made sure that he did not lose consciousness. When there was no doubt that he was on the brink of losing consciousness, he

was quickly resuscitated. He was then terrorized all over again, and again, and again. The experience of terrorism is not new to Black people living in racist white America. Neal's dead body was later run over by cars, stabbed with knives, beaten with sticks, and kicked by white men, women, and children. Many pictures were taken of his mutilated body only to be sold. Like Sam Hoes, who was lynched in Georgia, who had slices of his heart and liver sold, and whose Black knuckles were on display in a store, Neal's fingers and toes were exhibited as prize possessions for all to see.

W. E. B. Du Bois was cognizant of the ritualistic nature of the lynching of Black bodies. It was not so much about whether the Black victim was guilty or not; it was about the ceremonial rite/right of taking the life and spilling the blood of *any* Black, for if you were Black you were guilty. On this score, Blackness is the state of always already being guilty. White anger could not be propitiated until the ritual was complete, until the body had been castrated, dismembered, burned, and beaten. It was only then that the white mob could rest peacefully, knowing that it had preserved the white order of things. Du Bois said:

> We have seen, you and I, city after city drunk and furious with ungovernable lust of blood; mad with murder, destroying, killing, and cursing; torturing human victims because somebody accused of crime happened to be of the same color as the mob's innocent victims and because that color was not white! We have seen —Merciful God! in these wild days and in the name of Civilization, Justice, and Motherhood—what have we not seen, right here in America, of orgy, cruelty, barbarism, and murder done to men and women of Negro descent.[4]

W. E. B. Du Bois, Malcolm X, and Paul Robeson were well aware of the dialectic that existed/exists between white supremacy and Black degradation/ brutalization. Malcolm X and Du Bois were so tired of white America's misanthropic ways that each felt the moral obligation to call upon the United Nations to hear the pernicious crimes that America had committed against its Black "citizens." Indeed, Paul Robeson was head of a New York delegation who took it upon themselves to petition the United Nations for action against the U.S. policy of genocide against Black Americans. The petition was entitled, "We Charge Genocide: The Crime of the United States Government against the Negro People."

My point here is that when we point to and construct "enemies" abroad, and become overwhelmed and seduced by a false, precarious, and short-lived sense of "national unity," as if America is not fundamentally divided by race, it is important that we remember the history of America, recall its racist past and present. Here is where historical memory can function as a weapon. To recall appropriate historical memories at the appropriate historical time has the power to silence those who would have us believe that America is the paragon of ethical leadership. The America that I know is an America that paints the world in white and black, good and evil, us and them, civilized and barbaric, peacekeepers and warmongering terrorists. In short, America has created its own Manichean divide(s). The divide that is most important to the task at hand, and within the body of this text, is that between white and Black. Of course,

this divide is by no means uncomplicated, always fixed, and neatly delineated. Indeed, it has, at moments, proven to be extremely murky, coalescing at significant points of shared interest, political struggle, and so on. Even within each hemisphere of the divide, as it were, there are tensions, contradictions, fundamental differences, rivalries, schisms, and further complex divisions and splits. What I am saying here does not overlook other sites of tension, hatred, violence, and division such as exists along lines of class, gender, religion, politics, and sexual orientation. Moreover, Blackness and whiteness are systemically interlocked along axes of class, misogyny, heterosexism, political affiliation, and so on. However, this does not negate the reality that America, at its core, is structured in the form of a systemically racist Manichean (white-Black) divide. Of course, there have been whites who have come to America and have gained psychological, moral, and material power by being designated as "white" or as identifying themselves as white. In this case, the boundary is expanded, thus negatively impacting more of those who are excluded, rendered Other and politically nugatory. Perhaps the Kerner Commission's report, which was published in 1967, had profound prescience. We are divided along racial lines, two societies, one Black, one white. Assimilation theory appears to be dead in the water. Donald R. Kinder and Lynn M. Sanders note:

> Certainly economic and social inequalities continue to divide Americans along racial lines. Even with the postwar progress taken into account, large racial differences in employment, income, and wealth remain. Blacks are twice as likely to be unemployed; they earn less when they are employed; the average black household commands less than one-tenth the financial assets of the average household; black children are more likely than not to be born into poverty [almost three times]; and it goes on.[5]

The reality continues. Blacks are six times more likely than whites to be incarcerated. Blacks constitute 40 percent of those executed. Although Blacks are about one-eighth of the national population, some 1.2 million Blacks are under lock and key.[6] White males make up a little over 35 percent of the population, yet they constitute more than 80 percent of the Forbes 400 group, those who are worth well over $240 million. Of course, within the political sphere, white males dominate as state governors and in the Congress. White males are also dominant in numbers when it comes to such areas as tenured college faculty, daily-newspaper editors, television news directors, corporate management, you name it.[7] Noting differences, it is still incredibly amazing how opinion was divided along white-Black "racial" lines when it came to the O. J. Simpson trial,[8] the events that took place in Los Angeles after the first verdict was handed down for the police officers in the Rodney King beating, and the racial binarism of opinion regarding the case of the Central Park jogger. Concerning the last case, Joan Didion points to the extreme schism over the event. She notes:

> One vision, shared by those who had seized upon the attack of the jogger as an

> exact representation of what was wrong with the city, was of a city systematically ruined, violated, raped by its underclass [that is, people of color]. The opposing vision, as an exact representation of their own victimization, was of a city in which the powerless had been systematically ruined, violated, raped by the powerful [white folk].[9]

In the above example, it is as if Blacks and whites have gotten hold of two radically different world pictures or paradigms admitting of no common ground.[10] The "no common ground" reality, however, is made all the more clear when one looks at the material ways in which America is divided, as I suggest above.

Although his book is entitled *Beyond Black & White,* Manning Marable provides very insightful comments regarding what it means to be Black in America. What he points to are some of the everyday lived realities of many Black people. Such realities have profoundly psychological and material consequences. The reader will note the effective use of the resounding refrain, "To be black." Marable maintains:

> To be black means that when you go to the bank to borrow money, despite the fact that you have a credit profile identical to your white counterpart, you are nevertheless two or three times more likely to be denied the loan than the white. To be Black means that when you are taken to the hospital for emergency healthcare treatment, the quality of care you receive will be inadequate and substandard. To be black means that your children will not have the same academic experiences and access to higher learning resources as children in the white suburbs and exclusive urban enclaves. To be black means that your mere physical presence and the reality of your being can trigger surveillance cameras at shops, supermarkets, malls and fine stores everywhere. To be black, male, and to live in central Harlem in the 1990s, for example, means that you will have a life expectancy of forty-nine years of age—less than in Bangladesh.[11]

Marable does not leave small quotidian white racist aggressions—though powerful in their impact upon Black and other subaltern people—unturned. He notes such manifestations as:

> The white merchant who drops change on the sales counter, rather than touch the hand of a black person; the white salesperson who follows you into the dressing room when you carry several items of clothing to try on, because he or she suspects that you are trying to steal; the white teacher who deliberately avoids the upraised hand of a Latino student in class, giving white pupils an unspoken yet understood advantage; the white woman who wraps the strap of her purse several times tightly around her arm, just before walking past a black man; the

white taxicab drivers who speed rapidly past African-Americans or Latinos, picking up whites on the next block.[12]

I would like to make it clear that I realize that the self-Other divide is not exhausted by the white-Black divide. This will, I hope, preempt any critique that I am trapped by a white/Black binary that trumps other forms of complex social tensions. After all, Native Americans, Latin Americans, Mexicans, Asian Americans, and Arabs have been Othered by the axiological, political, and material power of whiteness, and have felt the negative impact of the color line. My wish is not to render invisible these groups. There is no aim to erase, even by implication, the significance of such groups—their political struggles, their pain and suffering, and their cultural richness—by focusing on the white-Black divide. We are a nation that is "visibly mixed race, multiethnic, and multiracial."[13] Indeed, I fully acknowledge the fact that poor whites and poor Blacks constitute another hemispheric divide vis-à-vis both wealthy whites and Blacks.

So, why the focus on the white-Black divide? First, within the context of this text, the focus speaks to my own "racialized" positionality. As a Black male, I am interested, indeed, existentially invested, in the dynamics that continue to create and reinforce the color line between whites and Blacks. After all, it was white people who created and segregated the social, political, and economic spaces that my Black great-grandparents, grandparents, and mother and father lived through. I, thereby, have intergenerational links to the history of their suffering, derailment, and degradation. Of course, I am also socio-ontologically and existentially linked to all of those subaltern voices and bodies (Native Americans, Latin Americans, Mexican Americans, and Asian Americans) in North America who have suffered and continue to suffer under white racist hegemony. Second, I am specifically interested in how white and Black philosophers conceptualize whiteness and Blackness, respectively. It is one thing for white and Black philosophers to theorize race as an epistemologically bankrupt category. It is quite another for them to engage the issue of whiteness and Blackness in terms of what these social categories have come to mean for them personally, and how, despite their critical philosophical analyses of race, they existentially live the sociopolitical dimensions of their whiteness or Blackness. Indeed, on a personal level, beyond the abstract conceptual domain of rejecting the concept of race, the integrity of my dark body continues—from a semiotic and physical perspective—to be under attack. And white bodies continue to reap the rewards and respect of the historical weight of presumptive innocence, intelligence, and worthiness.

Hence, the title of the book: *White on Whitel/Black on Black*. The objective was not to buttress the already white-Black racial binary. The racial binary in America existed long before this text. Each philosopher within the text has inherited the discourse of race, its history, its link with power/powerlessness, its material relations, its structured social relations, and its valuational structures. The idea was to get white and Black philosophers to explore how they understand the implications of living within one or the other of the "racialized" hemispheres, again, keeping in mind that these hemispheres are by no means static and easily drawn. My aim

was to get white and Black philosophers to name and theorize their own raciated identities within the same philosophical text. By combining both white and Black philosophical voices within the same text, these voices are designed to function to establish a form of dialogue, speaking within a common thematic framework. This approach was designed to create a space for discursive diversity, broad conceptual scope, and diverse philosophical approaches vis-à-vis race. Having the chapters appear within the same text, readers are given the opportunity to engage the text in terms of how white and Black philosophers are differentially invested in the language of racial identity, how they normatively understand such identities, how they more generally understand the epistemological and ontological status of whiteness and Blackness, and how such identities are inextricably linked to broader historical, cultural, politico-economic, ideological, and aesthetic sites. My aim was to create a teachable text, that is, to create a text whereby readers will be able to compare and engage critically the similarities and differences found within and between the critical cadre of both white philosophers and Black philosophers.

There are multiple questions that can be raised as points of critical entry into this text. For example, how do white and Black philosophers understand the concept of race? How do they read their identities in terms of the historical backdrop of race discourse? Do they manage to articulate notions of whiteness/Blackness that avoid essentialism? Is whiteness/Blackness socially constructed? If socially constructed, what does this say about the *lived* reality of race? How do white and Black philosophers *live* their raced identities differently? In what ways do white/Black philosophers seek to reconstruct whiteness /Blackness? How does one reject whiteness and yet still benefit from whiteness? Intrapsychologically, what does Blackness/whiteness normatively register for Black and white philosophers? In what ways are Blackness and whiteness ways of *becoming* and not simply static descriptor terms? To what extent do Blackness and whiteness constitute important sites of philosophical embarkation? What impact does living one's identity as Black or white have on how one does philosophy or lives one's philosophical projects, particularly in recognition of the deeply political implications of such identities? How is the phenomenon of *naming* differentially used (or deployed) in the process of critiquing or embracing whiteness/Blackness? In what way does ethical and aesthetic discourse intersect with race within the text? How is this intersection critiqued, embraced, theorized?

As a reader, professional philosopher or not, how important is *your*"racialized" identity in terms of your philosophical standpoint? More specifically, as a professional philosopher or a student of philosophy, *should* "race" matter in terms of your philosophical project? Or do you think that because you specialize (or intend to specialize) in the pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, medieval metaphysics, epistemology, value theory, the philosophy of mind, or the like, that your "racialized" identity has no bearing on how *you* philosophically conceptualize the world? *White on White/Black on Black* dared to ask philosophers to explore the messiness of racialized consciousness. The contributors within this text enthusiastically accepted my request to engage what it means to be white/Black. What follows is a summary of the fascinating results.

White on White

Robert Bernasconi, noting his existentialist approach to race from the outset, insightfully engages the philosophical autobiographical terrain, providing readers with a rich description of what it was like to *become* white once he moved to Memphis. He explores the importance of critiquing and disrupting whiteness but argues that whiteness, as a site of privilege, is also not simply a matter of choice. He goes on to explore the ramifications of the whiteness of philosophy and what ought to be done to address it.

Chris Cuomo, writing in a style that is refreshingly free of philosophical formality, opens her chapter with a powerful plea for help to fight against her own whiteness. She critiques naming processes that are tied to racial hierarchy and raises very powerful imagery regarding the need to have one's (white) sense of self shaken at its core. Engaging in a process of re-naming her multiple positions, Cuomo ends with advice for those whites who desire to remain shaken in their identities, to preserve the cracks.

Crispin Sartwell provides an engaging exploration of what it means to be a "wigger," which is a white person who acts like a Black person. Locating his own identity within the wigger tradition, Sartwell provides the cultural space within which his wigger identity emerged. He takes the reader on a journey through the prehistory of the wigger, shows how music is an important site of wigger formation, and moves on to the self-critical dimensions of wiggerism in terms of how it can function as an expression of the rejection of whiteness, and how this form of wiggerism is best exemplified by William Upski Wimsatt and rapper Eminem.

Greg Moses makes it clear that as a white philosopher he has long "been interested in the form that philosophy takes along the color line." He challenges whites to engage in an ethic of whiteness that is motivated to *name* and *unmask* the complex ways in which whiteness resists being named, which is actually a function of its power. He goes on to challenge the assumption that there are no modes of whiteness that are desirable. Moses draws from the work of Lucius Outlaw, revealing how an "Africology of whiteness" is capable of deconstructing the transcendental pretensions of whiteness.

Anna Stubblefield, drawing critically upon her experiences as a white woman philosopher who teaches Africana philosophy, argues that race is a social construction, but that it is very real in terms of its material manifestations. She advances a postsupremacist philosophy, one that is nurtured in the spirit of interdisciplinarity and challenges white hegemony, gender hierarchy, and so on. She boldly recommends that white philosophers should choose to be "bad" philosophers, that is, philosophers who do not fail to take the white normative dimensions of philosophy for granted, but wage powerful critiques against not only whiteness in philosophy, but philosophy's supremacist and elitist tendencies as these negatively impact Native American, Asian, and Middle-Eastern students, disabled students, and others who desire to engage the field of philosophy as a career.

Monique Roelofs moves the reader into a complex space of "racialized aestheticization" and "aesthetic racialization." Roelofs provides an insightful tracing of problematic racist links between Enlightenment philosophers and the notion of the aesthetic in terms of an engaging

analysis of taste as an expression of whiteness and other cultural vectors. Recognizing the dialectic that exists between whiteness and Blackness, she also explores ways that "racialized aestheticization" and "aesthetic racialization" get reproduced or challenged in the work of Jamaica Kincaid, Franz Fanon, Angela Davis, and others. She ends with a critique of the white self-confessional mode in much of critical whiteness studies.

Bettina G. Bergo raises the very significant phenomenological question of what it means to "see." Speaking in my own voice as editor, I believe that this is a crucial place to begin with respect to issues of race and the dynamic of "seeing" others (or one's own identity) as raced. She interrogates perception (as intentionality) as understood within a phenomenological frame of reference, emphasizing the importance of the *cultural* and *symbolic* sphere that generates values vis-à-vis the process of "seeing" white, Black, Other. Bergo goes on to explore her own whiteness, emphasizing that "seeing whiteness" is not a solitary act.

Black on Black

Clarence Sholé Johnson provides a historical exploration of the Enlightenment conception of Blackness. He delineates three procedural elements involved in the social construction of Blackness, a construction grounded in the utility value of Black bodies, and the hegemonic aims of whites. He also explores the meaning of "becoming" Black, rejecting an essentialist characterization of Blackness and stressing the importance of transcending the negative valuation of Blackness, and not the natural pigmentation of skin color. Dialectically locating his own position, Johnson critically addresses various points raised by such race theorists as David B. Wilkins, Naomi Zack, and Lucius Outlaw. He ends his chapter with an insightful description of how he personally enacts his Blackness—that is, Blackness as *resistance*—through philosophy.

Molefi Kete Asante explores the meaning of Blackness as an ethical trope. On this score, Blackness is not reduced to skin color or, for example, the ability to speak Ebonics. Blackness, for Asante, signifies an ethic of resistance and human liberation. As for Johnson, "Blackness" for Asante functions as a descriptor that can be applied to whites who enact forms of resistance against injustice and oppression. Blackness, for Asante, points to a post-Western mode of sociopolitical existence; for Blackness, in terms of its anti-imperialist history, emphasizes the centrality of a social universe governed by mutual respect and an ethical fervor against national and international injustice.

Janine Jones's use of language is provocative, calling seriously into question the normative discourse found in much of philosophical writing. She moves the reader through philosophical insights, personal memories, and a powerful form of performative discourse. She says, "I was born black." This assertion undermines the kind of voluntarism implied in a form of social constructionism that holds that simply by changing the name of a thing one can generate something entirely different. She interrogates so-called "white curiosity" and "white innocence," revealing how these performative sites of whiteness have negatively impacted Black people. Jones's chapter moves the reader through a personal recollection of a complex performance by Helmutt and Brenda Gottschild on the tragic African female figure known as Hottentot Venus. It is through the recollection and strategic appropriation of this performance

that Jones explodes the often hidden realities of whiteness, its perverse imaginary, and its unconscionable acts of ocular and physical vivisection vis-à-vis the Black body.

In my own chapter, I explore the meaning of Blackness through the medium of whiteness. This is by no means to suggest that "Blackness" is limited to the white imaginary Rather, I locate Blackness within the historical space of whiteness so as to emphasize how the emergence of Blackness is itself dialectically linked to whiteness. Like Jones, I integrate a performative discourse, one that appears as breaks within the body of the chapter. The breaks are designed to engage Blackness as historical memory, ancestral heritage, along magical realist lines, in terms of deep interreferential cultural signs and symbols. Like Jones, I also engage the narrative life of the so-called Hottentot Venus. My larger aim is to explore the structure of the white gaze, to reveal, like Bergo, its historical, cultural, and semiotic embedded nature.

Robert Birt explores the possibility of Blackness as a form of authenticity. He answers in the affirmative. Arguing that whiteness "is self-delusion and abandonment of responsibility," Birt argues that authenticity is grounded in the recognition that both facticity and transcendence is part of human reality. Black authenticity is achieved through the process of reclaiming Blackness as a site for liberation and the rejection of "thingification." Of course, this also involves the acceptance of one's facticity, one's Blackness, and not maintaining that one is simply human; for this would involve another form of flight and hence movement toward inauthenticity. According to Birt, Black people cannot affirm human transcendence or existence without affirming their existence in Black. He then links the notion of self-affirmation with that of Black communal affirmation.

John H. McClendon III opens with a self-narrative regarding his experience of Blackness as something that was coded as negative when he and a group of other young Black students were told (ironically, by a Black teacher) not to act their color. McClendon draws links between the negativity associated with his dark skin—coming from the outside world—with his own eventual identity as a Black philosopher. This sets in motion a deep affirmation of his Blackness, a choice that would have implications for his life project as a Black philosopher, scholar, and activist. He then discusses the emergence of Black philosophy, linking it to larger sociopolitical movements initiated by Black people, and the importance of the work of Black philosopher William R. Jones in terms of the latter's affirmation (unlike Black philosopher William Banner) of the very legitimacy of Black philosophy. Drawing from his own political standpoint, McClendon provides an analysis of Blackness in terms of what he calls a minimalist definition of Blackness (MDB).

Kal Alston explores Blackness in terms of its epistemology, ontology, and axiology. Alston draws from her own personal experiences as a Black philosophy graduate student and as a Black woman philosopher. She is aware of how the history of philosophy is indeed a history of the conceptual and social consolidation of race. She emphasizes the importance of "knowing Blackness" in terms of how it "is always bound up with critical, dialectical thinking." Out of this epistemic awareness of engaging philosophy in Black grows the importance of becoming and valuing Blackness. Alston very insightfully explores how she "became" Black more than

once. The second time she describes as coming to terms with the significance of her Blackness "beyond my phenomenal experience." The implications here in terms of identity formation as a dynamic process and the claim that Blackness is an *essential thing* (once and for all) are very intriguing. After all, Black consciousness changes relative to historical specificity and sociopolitical stasis/disruption. Black knowing, becoming, and valuing can be significantly aided through the liberatory actions of others. In Alston's case, her parents were very influential in this regard. Alton also explores how valuing Blackness must lead to positive actions. She then insightfully suggests ways that philosophy itself might engage in the process of valuing Blackness.

Edited books are collaborative efforts. Even if the project is conceived while sitting in the park alone, the coming into being of an edited book occurs through the combined efforts of contributors, a publishing industry, copyeditors, indexers, readers, bookstores, capital, and so on. In other words, this book (and any book for that matter) came to be within a shared space. In fact, *White on White/Black on Black* came into existence as the result of a single conversation. That conversation took place with Eve DeVaro, philosophy editor at Rowman & Littlefield. I suggested the idea to Eve of editing a work similar in structure to another project of mine that was under contract with another publisher, and has since been published as *What White Looks Like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question.* My idea was to edit a book that would complement this text but that would exclusively deal with white philosophers examining whiteness. It was at this juncture that Eve suggested two possible projects: (a) either a book where Black philosophers wrote on whiteness and white Philosophers wrote on Blackness or (b) a book where white philosophers wrote on whiteness and Black philosophers wrote on Blackness. I was much more excited about the second idea than I was about the first. The rest, as they say, is history. As Eve says, "And so the project *White on White/Black on Black* was born."

Notes

1 Charles Mills, 1997, *The Racial Contract,* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 18.

2 At the time of this writing this included Americans Daniel Pearl, Nicholas Berg, and Paul Johnson, and South Korean Kim Sun-il.

3 David Bradley, 2002, "To Make Them Stand in Fear" in Bernestine Singley (ed.) *When Race Becomes Real: Black and White Writers Confront Their Personal Histories,* Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books, 117.

4 W. E. B. Du Bois, 1995, "The Souls of White Folk," in David Levering Lewis (ed.) *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Reader,* New York: Henry Holt and Company, 455.

5 Donald R. Kinder and Lynn M. Sanders, 1996, *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals,* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 285.

6 Glenn C. Loury, 2002, *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality,* Cambridge, MA: Harvard

University Press, 137.

7 See *The Philadelphia Tribune Magazine,* April 1999, 9.

8 Although making it clear that she had not been polled and that polls are always inflected by such variables as gender, class, education, religion, location, etc., Ann DuCille, 1996, notes: "Although percentages fluctuated throughout the trial, the reported polarity remained constant: a majority of white Americans—anywhere from 60 to 80 percent—believed Simpson guilty, and a majority of black Americans judged him innocent." See her book, *Skin Trade,* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 147.

9 As quoted in Kinder and Sanders, 1996, *Divided by Color,* 288.

10 Kinder and Sanders, 1996, *Divided by Color,* 288.

11 Manning Marable, 1996, *Beyond Black and White: Transforming African American Politics,* New York: Verso, 6.

12 Marable, *Beyond Black and White,* 7.

13 Johnnella E. Butler, 2000, "Reflections on Borderlands and the Color Line," in Shirley Geok-Lin Lim and Maria Herrera-Sobek (eds.) *Power, Race, and Gender in Academe: Strangers in the Tower?* New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 8.