BOOKER T. WASHINGTON AND PREPARATORY CITIZENSHIP

by

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(Under the Direction of Alexander Kaufman)

Abstract

Booker T. Washington is traditionally portrayed as a pioneer in industrial education. This is not an inaccurate view, but to summarize his life with that description alone reveals a hasty and narrow reading of his work. In truth, his educational program was but a means to the greater end of citizenship as usefulness to one's fellowmen; but because the mass of the people in a large republic are not and cannot ordinarily be engaged in genuine political activity, Washington promoted a civic ethic designed to endow the common people with the skills and habits necessary for tending to their daily needs while simultaneously preparing them to assume the graver responsibilities of politics. His emphasis on technical training, the nobility of work, and the development of virtue in simplicity and self-restraint therefore served a dual purpose. In making the people prudent and useful to themselves and to each other in their private and social lives, Washington hoped to create a pool of conscientiously effective citizens from which future statesmen could be drawn.

Index words: Black Political Thought, Booker T. Washington, Citizenship, Education, Labor, Usefulness, Work

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Dedication

To my mother and father, heart-workers and hand-workers both.

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Booker T. Washington as a Political Thinker

1.1 Introduction

Booker T. Washington was an unofficial statesman whose writings and speeches promote a form of citizenship for the masses designed to strengthen the civic bonds of the community through the diligent and selfless application of personal industry. Admittedly, this is an unusual claim to make. It is also a surprising claim given Washington's less than flattering reputation as a grandstanding racial accommodationist. After all, a statesman's preeminent concern is with the common good, and he lacks the scheming politician's narrow interest in self-promotion and demagogic flattery; yet a century of common and scholastic opinion informs us that, although Washington never ran for elected office, had he done so he nevertheless would have failed to achieve the exemplary stature held by genuine statesmen. To many he was a sycophant, a sellout, and a failure.[1] Washington not only preoccupied himself with consolidating power as America's foremost black leader, but in working to secure his own legacy he condemned the black masses to permanent second-class citizenship, rebuking political agitation and praising passive composure in the face of racial prejudice.

In recent years, some scholars have attempted to defend Washington against his more strident critics, often by insisting that any fair analysis ought to place Washington in the

[1]While there are countless examples of such criticism leveled at Washington, in 1906 the inconstant Charles Satchell Morris expressed what has been a familiar sentiment for the past hundred years: "I believe Booker T. Washington's heart is right, but that in fawning, cringing and groveling before the white man he has cost his race their rights and that twenty years hence, as he looks back and sees the harm he has done his race, he will be brokenhearted over it." See second footnote in Louis R. Harlan and Raymond W. Smock, eds., "From Timothy Thomas Fortune," *The Booker T. Washington Papers, 1899-1900*, vol. 5 (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 102.

proper historical context and by highlighting numerous instances in which Washington publicly expressed his displeasure with policies designed to humiliate blacks or to discriminate against them on the basis of race. In particular, Robert J. Norrell has emerged as Washington's most prominent apologist in the twenty-first century, chastising those who breezily dismiss the Tuskegee principal for their inattentiveness to the "fallacy of anachronism, [and] of applying 1960s expectations of protest to a man who had lived two generations earlier."[2] Contrary to popular misperceptions, Washington was not "a minotaur, an amoral and manipulative wizard, [or] a bargainer with the devil."[3] He was instead a genuinely compassionate man who sought to inculcate within his race the skills and virtues necessary for enabling its members to achieve the most rewarding life within an existing social framework.

Still others would say that attempting to attribute anything to Booker T. Washington is an exercise in frustration and futility. This is not to say, however, that many have not attempted to do precisely that. Sometimes hesitantly, sometimes boldly, they tell us about Washington's compassion as an educator, his shrewdness as an institutional executive, or his authoritarian influence as the leader of black Americans during the era of Jim Crow; yet whether he is praised or condemned, those who write about Washington inevitably find themselves admitting the great difficulty they confront in trying to discern the true quality of this seemingly apatetic figure. Washington's most prominent biographer, the historian Louis R. Harlan, concluded, almost with a shrug, that despite whatever pulsated at "the core [of] his very complex personality... Booker T. Washington had no quintessence."[4] Even his contemporary admirers ribbed him for his exceptional habit of presenting himself differently to different audiences. Thus, one day prior to Washington's famous Atlanta Exposition Speech in 1895, a farmer in the town of Tuskegee quipped, "Washington, you have spoken before to the Northern white people, the Negroes in the South, and to us country white people in the South; but in Atlanta, tomorrow, you will have before you the Northern whites, the

[2]Robert J. Norrell, *Up from History*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 15.
[3]*Ibid.*
[4]Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901-1915* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), ix.

Southern whites, and the Negroes all together. I am afraid that you have got yourself into a tight place."[5]

Of course, to say that Washington was compassionate, shrewd, and authoritarian is to ascribe to him qualities that invite a skirmish of perspectives; yet the contentiousness of these qualities does not extend to the positions they often describe. It is a fact that Washington operated as an educator, an institutional executive, and the leader of many black Americans during his professional lifetime. What is not clear is whether he operated politically and philosophically as something more than that; whether, indeed, he intended to propagate a collection of ideas and principles broader and more widely applicable than both his contemporaries and later historians realized or admitted. While Harlan and many others have in one way or another concluded that Washington's vision was short-sighted, narrow, and egotistic, there is yet reason to entertain the notion that Washington's public works—his speeches, essays, and books—when taken as a whole, lead us to a sober and earnest vision of a particular type of civic life. Such a vision tends to be larger than the peculiar historical circumstances in which the visionary finds himself. Thus, although Washington lived in the era of Jim Crow and was, as a matter of course, compelled to acknowledge the questions and controversies of the day, as a thinking man he was not similarly compelled to confine his thoughts within the tapered range of his temporal experience.

1.2 Why Booker T. Washington?

The uniqueness of this project, its suddenness and the fact that it was not solicited, provokes the question, Why Booker T. Washington? Why this man, why now, and what could he possibly teach us today? The question is adversarial though not necessarily antagonistic; it is suspicious and not merely rhetorical. Its suspicion derives from two acquired beliefs about the man known as Booker T. Washington, one having to do with his character and the intent of his actions, and the other having to do with his professional legacy as an historical

[5]Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*, (New York, NY: Signet Classics, 2010), 148.

figure. The two beliefs are closely related but analytically distinct; for when we ask "Why Booker T. Washington?" in the context of citizenship, implied therein are two separate and skeptical reactions. The first is the familiar challenge that whatever Washington's conception of citizenship might be, in its compromising thinness it can hardly be viewed as something noteworthy least of all praiseworthy. The second expresses doubt concerning Washington's status as a man of thought. In other words, regardless of the relative depth and prolificity of Washington's works it remains unclear whether his ideas comprise an oeuvre that in any way contributes to the theorization of citizenship. Both objections deserve to be addressed, but we will begin with the former because the strength of our response to the latter depends on how well or honestly we attempt to understand the complexity of Washington's character and intent.

Washington's Disposition

Washington was a controversial and polarizing figure long before he passed from his world and into history. Hardly any man who had anything to say about the question of race in the early twentieth century could escape the limelight of controversy; but Washington emerged as a singularly controversial figure because he strode purposely into the center of the American stage, situating himself in the midst of the country's three most significant demographic groups: northern whites, southern whites, and blacks nationwide. Although many of Washington's critics believed that his arguments and proposals were well-intentioned, they often found themselves increasingly discomfited by his nearly single-minded devotion to maintaining social harmony and insisting that the best way forward for blacks was to tread a path of quiet virtue and competent handicraft. To W.E.B. Du Bois and others, given the multiplying instances of legal and illegal black suppression, Washington's program appeared increasingly indefensible and his consolidation of black leadership less and less tolerable. Indeed, Du Bois, who had in the past collaborated with Washington as a writer and civic

reformer, eventually felt compelled to describe his erstwhile colleague's hermetical leadership style as fundamentally corrosive to the spirit of democratic engagement.[6] Beyond that, the real danger in Washington's habit of muting his critics was that, in shielding himself against opposition, he similarly insulated his social theory of industrial education; and for Du Bois, this latter problem would have longer-lasting consequences for black Americans. If it is true, Du Bois said, that "before the Temple of Knowledge swing the Gates of Toil," Washington's emphasis on industrial training during the Technological Revolution risked establishing within the minds of white elites and the owners of capital the notion that black laborers are little more than "material resources" fit for securing "future dividends."[7] Not only would such an outcome justify the continued poor treatment of black Americans, but its stultifying effects would deprive them as human beings of the political and social opportunities necessary for ascending to the heights of civilized life. Blacks, Du Bois feared, might forever be cursed to till that stygian soil outside the great gates.

Notwithstanding the attempts made by Norrell and other apologists to place him in a fairer light, common opinion continues to frame Washington as an accommodationist and only an accommodationist. This opinion is sustained in part by modern scholarship which more often than not exhibits a critical bias against Washington and his program. Indeed, one of the more searing analyses comes from Michael Rudolph West whose extended critique is founded on the idea that Washington was so thoroughly infected by "hypocrisy," "bad faith," and "absurdity" that he not only crippled any opportunity for immediate black progress, but also poured verbal kerosene on a land whose hills and yards were increasingly spiked by burning crosses.[8] Washington, according to West, earns this harsh assessment as a result

[6]W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2003), 38. Following Washington's death in 1915, Du Bois wrote: "In stern justice, we must lay on the soul of this man a heavy responsibility for the consummation of Negro disfranchisement, the decline of the Negro college and public school, and the firmer establishment of color caste in this land." Mark Bauerlein, "Washington, Du Bois, and the Black Future," *Wilson Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (2004), 75.

[7]Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 71.

[8]Michael Rudolph West, *The Education of Booker T. Washington: American Democracy and the Idea of Race Relations*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2006), 130.

of his complicity in insulating prejudicial policies through the substitution of justice with "race relations," in which peace is preferable to protest, and any attempt to disturb the social equanimity is evidence of the sort of harmful bitterness that can do nothing else but stoke an enduring sense of resentment and an inclination toward civil conflict.[9] The result was a "pile of bodies," partly figurative and partly real, comprised of the murdered and the intellectually stifled that lay at Washington's feet—not because Washington himself executed or endorsed every plan disadvantageous to black Americans, but because he prioritized "the fable of contentment" over the critical self-reflection necessary for righting persistent wrongs.[10]

In the light of these opinions, the view of Washington with which we are left is one that portrays him at best as stubborn and misdirected, and at worst as ruinously irresponsible toward the welfare of his racial kinsmen. In either case no reasonable person would wish to have these traits belong to any man whose hands held some degree of influence over the quality of a nation's civic life. More to the present topic, no such man could ever be considered a champion of citizenship.

But have Du Bois, West, and other critics been too hasty in issuing their denunciations of Washington? Was he in fact a dangerous fool, or is it possible that in their frustration with Washington's methods they have failed to understand him as he understood himself and as he understood his program? The details of that program as it concerns citizenship will be laid out more fully in the remainder of this paper, but for now it is necessary to provide readers with a brief rejoinder that will attempt to show that Washington's intentions were principled, even justifiably so, and that in the largest sense possible he was always favorably disposed toward his people. If we take Du Bois and West's criticisms as representative of the sort often issued against Washington, we see that he is charged on two grounds: one having to do with his emphasis on industrial training, and the other, with his devaluation of the importance of politics as a solution to black Americans' ills in the early twentieth

[9] *Ibid.*, 12, 90-91.
[10] *Ibid.*, 91.

century. Together, these charges accuse Washington of being insufficiently interested in both the intellectual and civic welfare of his race.

In the summer of 1896, Washington stood before the president and faculty of Harvard University and, in spite of his great "embarrassment," became the first black American to receive an honorary Master of Arts degree from that institution. While delivering his acceptance speech, he praised the efforts of the members of his race for making progress in the face of "oppression, unjust discrimination, and prejudice," and he predicted that the next fifty years would require black Americans to "continue passing through the severe American crucible." Long-term success, he said, would hinge on his people's ability to discipline themselves economically and morally, for "[t]his is the passport to all that is best in the life of our republic."[11] Here and elsewhere is one of the most prominent themes of Washington's way of thinking, namely, that if any triumph in life is possible, it can only be claimed by enduring and eventually overcoming hardship. This is something Washington took to be a universal truth, something that applied to every individual of every race. But because he confronted the peculiar circumstances of history, he delivered his message more frequently and more emphatically to the black Americans around him, many of whom had either been enslaved or were the children of former slaves. In Washington's view, this mass of untutored, uncivilized raw material took the form of a challenge whose successful resolution would determine not only the happiness of subsequent generations but also the future character of the nation as a whole.

The apparent hypocrisy of his presence at Harvard University certainly was not lost on Washington, and he often enough acknowledged the essential contributions made by those who had trained in the softer science of teaching. "To indicate what I think of college education," he said, "I would add that the Tuskegee Institute employs more colored graduates of colleges than any single institution in the world."[12] To be sure, men like Washington, Du

[11] E. Davidson Washington, ed., *Selected Speeches of Booker T. Washington*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1932), 52.

[12] *Ibid.*, 201.

Bois, and others had received the sort of liberal education that enabled them to invoke the names of great men and to speak in grandiloquent terms about the nature of man and his place in the world; but Washington also observed that "ninety per cent of any race on the globe earns its living at the common occupations of life and the Negro can be no exception to this rule."[13] Yet unlike Du Bois, Washington had little interest in framing himself as part of a talented tenth, separate and distinct from the masses. He not only lived and taught in the South, but he also led by example. He held tree-"chopping bees" at least as often as spelling bees, and he raised chickens and pigs and grew vegetables at his residence on the Tuskegee campus. When, after a night of entertainment with Dartmouth College's treasurer, he returned home, he sent a humble bushel of homegrown sweet potatoes to demonstrate his gratitude. The purpose of these activities and gestures, though in many cases quite natural to Washington, served as much to demonstrate to black Americans that there was indeed something worthy and true about the "dignity of labor."

Labor, however, is not to be seen as absolutely indistinguishable from drudgery or toil. Washington was convinced that individuals and races alike owed the overall excellence of their lives to the nature of the preceding work that made the emergence of such excellence possible in the first place. Every genuine human achievement, he believed, is the result of a successful undertaking, and every successful undertaking must begin from a well-constructed foundation of steady effort, work, or labor. To make all human exertion synonymous with mere toil would not only produce within men and women a characterless insouciance, but left to fester long enough it would ultimately erode that essential foundation of the community itself. Yet, however easily we may assent to the argument in theory, in practice it is often the case that many human beings strive to escape labor, its frustrations and its hardships. Thus Washington's challenge: to persuade black Americans, thousands of whom had lived or been born into the brute labor of slavery, to perceive the crucial difference between choosing

[13]Stephen Mansfield, *Then Darkness Fled: The Liberating Wisdom of Booker T. Washington*, (Nashville, TN: Cumberland House Publishing, 1999), 100.

to work and being made to work, between dignified and undignified labor.[14] Moreover, in choosing to work Washington hoped that blacks would come "to see not only utility in labor, but beauty and dignity," and that in teaching them "to lift labour up from mere drudgery and toil" he could help them "learn to love work for its own sake."[15] This lifting up of labor, however, was not meant to be a mere rhetorical or psychological feat but a practical accomplishment through the application of intelligence and ingenuity. The goal of the Tuskegee curriculum, and therefore of Washington's program, was to have "brains and skill rob labour of the toil and drudgery once associated with it," not by eliminating exertion but by ensuring that the "steam" power of each individual was "rightly directed and controlled" toward the eventual betterment of the entire race rather than exhausted "in fruitless agitation and hot air."[16]

It was precisely this dismissive attitude toward political protest that, to many, rightfully earned Washington his reputation for having little interest in black Americans' civic welfare. Years later, of course, Harlan's publication of Washington's private correspondence revealed that Washington himself had been quite active behind the scenes in working to promote and preserve the legal, civil, and political rights of his people. He personally advised three Republican presidents, supported boycotts aimed at ending the practice of racial segregation, and used his own money to help finance lawsuits brought by blacks against businesses and institutions that maintained prejudicial policies. Washington did not view his covert tactics as being inconsistent with his public exhortations, however; for he did not believe that political resistance and agitation would ultimately yield the result that everyone, black and white, apparently desired: namely, civic peace as opposed to the inflammations of endless sectionalism.[17] Despite his admiration for Frederick Douglass and many of the black politi-

[14]Booker T. Washington, *The Negro Problem*, (Clifton, NJ: African Tree Press, 2015), 9.

[15]Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 103.

[16]Booker T. Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, (Boston, MA: Small, Maynard & Company, 1899), 92. The steam metaphor is found in Booker T. Washington, *My Larger Education: Chapters from My Experience*, (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2004), 24.

[17]Washington also spoke out publicly against the crimes and injustices perpetrated against black Americans, but he did so deliberately and not merely to shield himself from hostile reactions. See,

cians of the Reconstruction era, Washington never allowed his chief concern for industrial education to drift from securing the best that was possible for the great mass of ordinary black Americans. Never mind that holding political office was an unrealistic occupation for most blacks, but even political assembly and the franchise were in Washington's mind secondary to the more immediate goal of individual economic and moral development. What the mass of black Americans required was substance and not abstraction, not even the abstraction of the rights of man. For Washington, the most bothersome type of person was the educated elitist who was "able, upon every occasion, to quote a phrase or sentiment from Shakespeare, Milton, Cicero, or some other great writer," while rarely doing anything to contribute substantively to the real uplift of the black race. "In college," Washington wrote, "they studied problems and solved them on paper. But these problems had already been solved by someone else, and all that they had to do was to learn the answers. They had never faced any unsolved problems in college, and all that they had learned had not taught them the patience and persistence which alone solve real problems."[18] The particular problem of race relations in America required a particular solution; and not just a particular solution but a prudent one that took into consideration the special circumstances surrounding the problem. Washington's cautiousness in this matter exposed him to the accusation that he was satisfied with a significantly degraded form of citizenship for black Americans, but he never denied that rights were important, perhaps even necessary, to the greatest flourishing of human life; rather, he believed that speaking about rights and even "claiming" rights was insufficient for reaching the plane of existence on which such human flourishing becomes

for example, Washington's private reply to Charles W. Chesnutt's criticism of the alleged paucity of his public comments regarding illegal lynchings and disfranchisement: "I am not speaking on these subjects all the time either in the press or upon the public platform; if I were saying the [same] thing all the time the world would pay no attention to my words when the proper time came, but whenever I feel that the proper time has come for an utterance upon any subject concerning my race I have never hesitated to give that utterance." Louis R. Harlan and Raymond W. Smock, eds., "To Charles Waddell Chestnutt," *The Booker T. Washington Papers: 1903-04*, vol. 7 (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press), 198.

[18]Washington, *My Larger Education*, 105, 108.

possible. If indeed politics represents the spire of human life, then tending to the quality of the substructure on which it is balanced is necessarily a crucial and serious responsibility.

Washington as a Political Thinker

Washington was neither a political philosopher nor a statesman in the fullest sense of those terms. He never published a formal treatise and he never served his countrymen as an elected official; but this does not mean he lacked the character and intellect that serve as the creative material for both statesmen and political philosophers. In the central chapter of August Meier's influential work on black American thought we find the word "philosophy" mentioned nearly a dozen times in reference to Washington's "remarkably consistent" views regarding the essential elements of citizenship and civic development.[19] Of course Meier's use of the term "philosophy" is meant to be understood in its more colloquial sense, which is to say, it is a way of aggregating Washington's set of beliefs rather than ascribing to him the title of philosopher. Yet it would be a mistake to dismiss those beliefs as having so little consideration and substance within them that they add no value to the dialectic of academic discourse. Can Washington therefore be characterized as a political thinker and, perhaps, as one who has made intellectually astute contributions to our understanding of the theory of citizenship?

Answering that question in the affirmative requires us to tread a careful path among labels. To be sure, Washington never cloaked himself in the pretense of the "vulgar imposter" by insinuating or claiming to be a thoroughgoing political philosopher. Moreover, if it is true that "the proper form of presenting political philosophy is the treatise," here too Washington may be found wanting. But if it is also true that political philosophy is the attempt to replace political opinion with political truth or knowledge, then to the extent that degrees of philosophic inclination and aptitude are possible, it is equally possible that Washington squints out of the cave even if he does not fully emerge from it. His affection for "poems and

[19]See chapter seven in August Meier, *Negro Thought in America: 1880-1915* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1971), *passim*. There are precisely twelve instances of the word "philosophy" in this chapter, eleven of which refer specifically to Washington's thought.

stories," "tracts and public speeches"—the preferred material of the mere political thinker—is nonetheless accompanied by an enduring preoccupation with man's nature; with excellence, virtue, and character; with happiness and man's proper place in the political community.[20] In short, Washington busied himself not with mere airs but with the substance of those timeless questions examined by political philosophers of the highest order; he was not a seraph or lordship, perhaps, but still an angel in the hierarchy of blessed guardians. And in this Washington happily spent the great portion of his active life tending to the earthly matters set before him and his race. In so doing, he necessarily engaged in the sort of banal calculations required for surviving the low realm of political expediency. Washington's private letters reveal that he was forever tugging strings and pulling levers behind the scenes in an effort to protect his program, his school, and his people from the manifold forces arrayed against them; but these covert activities always occurred in parallel, not in hypocritical opposition, to his overt message of economic and moral uplift. Washington accomplished not only what many others could not, but he did so surreptitiously so as to avoid the sort of public agitation he genuinely deplored.

As a political thinker who also played the part of political coxswain, we might assign to Washington's character an additional aspect, though, like the question concerning the extent of his political-philosophical credentials, this aspect should also be qualified: namely, that Washington operated in certain important regards as an unofficial and incomplete, yet nonetheless "enlightened statesman," whose "magnanimous flexibility" reflects his knowledge "that evil cannot be eradicated and therefore that one's expectations from politics must be moderate."[21]

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[20] Leo Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 12.

[21] *Ibid.*, 27-28.

1.3 Scope, Method, and Aim

We scholars have an opportunity to use the life and works of historical figures and institutions to embellish our own work, to clarify the meaning of abstract or complex ideas, and to use the work of others as a vehicle for exploring an idea at greater length or in a new light. Aristotle, for instance, found it useful to review the political-theoretical proposals of men like Phaleas of Chalcedon and Hippodamus of Miletus. To be sure, Aristotle's efforts here are predominantly critical; but in critically analyzing these proposals he was able to elucidate additional components of thought that appear to be a part of his own opinion on citizenship and the *polis*. Thus, upon exposing the ambiguity of Phaleas's assertion that education must be equally available to all citizens, Aristotle responds, "But one ought to say *what* education is to be," and therefore presages his own discussion of education in Book VIII of the *Politics*.[22] Meanwhile, his disapproval of Hippodamus's suggestion that farmers and artisans be converted to a rankled armless class, separated from the city's guardians, serves to remind us of Aristotle's concern in the *Nichomachean Ethics* for promoting affection among the members of the political community.[23] Niccoló Machiavelli's ambitious project, *Discourses on Livy*, takes an extensive account of the history of the Roman Empire and its most influential leaders; yet the material that so many scholars glean from this work has done much if not more to contribute to our theoretical notions of classical republicanism than to historiography.

It is in this vein that I introduce Booker T. Washington as a figure whose works can aid us in grappling with the as-yet unresolved problem of citizenship, with the questions of legitimacy, membership, and civic role. The peculiar circumstances with which he remained preoccupied throughout his life do not disqualify him from serving as a source from which to draw new ideas or to consider old ideas in a different light, or even simply to remind us of ideas we have let slip through the cracks of our memory. In what follows, and in order that

[22] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1266b35.
[23] *Ibid.*, 1262b5-10, 1268a21-25; Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1155a20-30.

the reader's expectations remain properly fixed, I will briefly discuss the scope, method, and aim of this humble yet important project.

Scope

There are a number of civic issues that emerge when we examine Washington's works, of which two stand out in more prominent relief than the others. The first is Washington's famous (or infamous) announcement at the 1895 Atlanta Exposition: "In all things that are purely social [blacks and whites] can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." Delivered in the same year that Frederick Douglass died, the speech was denounced by many blacks and especially by the black intelligentsia. These groups feared that Washington's framing of race relations would be a signal to weary Northerners and foot-dragging Southerners that blacks were ready to capitulate across the board on key questions pertaining to civil rights. One year later, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* seemed to confirm those fears, and ever since, Washington's ghost has been unable to elude the label of "accommodationist." The second civic issue is Washington's lifelong commitment to emphasizing industrial education more so than education in the liberal arts. For many in the black community such a program appeared to be an unnecessary regression to the bitter life of slavery. Slavery, they had learned, was a kind of labor that was forced because the work itself was inherently degrading and unbecoming of real men and women. Exertion, perspiration, and working with one's hands is not the condition of a freeman but of a piece of chattel. Opposed to this is the life of refinement, in which manual labor is replaced by leisure. Washington's Tuskegee Institute, with its student-tilled acres and scorched brick kilns, not only defied this widespread sense of the black community, but its leader never ceased to chide the protestors for being unproductive with their time and energy. And ever since, Washington's ghost has been unable to escape the charge that he was satisfied with securing a lower plane of existence for black Americans.

Washington the accommodationist and purveyor of low expectations seems to be the only Washington we need to know; after all, his two greatest legacies appear to substantiate

and justify such a reputation. The problem with this conclusion is that it drains the man of nearly all his blood and marrow, leaving nothing but the outline of a grotesque caricature. It is true that Washington delivered controversial remarks at the Atlanta Exposition in 1895; it is equally true that he spent a great deal of his time promoting the benefits of industrial education. But I believe most scholars fail to realize that Washington held a much broader view of the American sociopolitical landscape than either of these topics alone can convey. This oversight has led to a consistently narrow reading of his works, such that all additional content is invariably strained through one of these two major filters, as if either of these things was for Washington an end in itself.

This paper will be different. My position on the matter is that Washington had a far more comprehensive end in mind, and that the only proper way to understand the man and his work is to move beyond the circumscribed area in which we have traditionally placed him. This means placing him in a different light. When I say "more comprehensive" what I mean is that his written works and speeches did not have as their final end a mere pedagogical program. Despite his demur that politics held no abiding interest for him, Washington's ultimate goal was the same as that at which every good statesman in history has aimed: the peaceful continuation of the political community and the preservation of its people's welfare. However, to be able to prescribe the means for achieving this goal means that Washington's mind was directed toward the grand, singularly human questions ordinarily entertained by the scholastic class of political thinkers. This paper will therefore examine and discuss Washington's ideas from a political standpoint. I will argue that Washington's views on education, labor, and moral development comprise a conception of preparatory citizenship that is applicable as a general set of principles and not merely as a solution for the racial turbulence that defined American life at the turn of the twentieth century. In so doing, I do not intend to present an entirely innovative theory of citizenship. Most if not all of Washington's ideas, like so many others in the field of political philosophy, have been investigated in one way or another by political thinkers dating back to antiquity; though,

unlike those other thinkers, Washington did not write a single treatise to explain how his notions could be assembled and understood as a unified whole. The task I have set before myself is a first step toward bringing these disparate parts together. The results of my work will not be exhaustive, but they will help to reveal Washington's status as a political thinker and to demonstrate the transcendental value of his ideas.

In the end, what makes this paper unique is the fact that these ideas were processed and organized by a man whose name is never the first to be associated with them, and yet his own thoughts may have something to teach those of us living in the twenty-first century. This is especially so if it turns out that Washington's ideas concerning citizenship possess an ineluctable prescriptive or cautionary force. As we enter a new age of automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence, Washington, like Adam Smith and Karl Marx before him, can teach us something about the nuanced relations that govern man, labor, and life in the political community.

Method

Booker T. Washington frequently emphasized that progress is a process of construction. Any person, race, or nation intent on improving its present and future circumstances must *build* toward the achievement of its goal in a "natural and logical order."[24] It is a poor gamble and a fool's errand to attempt to reach any composite end without first meeting the preceding conditions necessary to its attainment. Washington simplified this point with a story about a slave who asked his master to teach him how to play the guitar. The young master agreed to do so, but said that he would charge the slave three dollars for the first lesson, two for the second, one for the third, and only twenty-five cents for the final lesson. Upon hearing this payment scheme, the slave replied, "All right, boss, I hires you on dem terms. But, boss! I wants yer to be sure an' give me dat las' lesson first."[25] We will always be able to find virtuosos, geniuses, and other exceptional persons for whom the rule of construction will

[24]Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 96.
[25]*Ibid.*, 65.

apply with less force, but in the ordinary course of things most of us must steadily graduate from a lesser to a higher point of completion. This paper will unfold in that same spirit of constructive effort.

A constructive approach is needed because Washington never elaborated a theory of citizenship systematically in a single work. His ideas are spread throughout the many books, articles, and speeches he produced during his lifetime. These ideas might be collated in a number of ways, but I have sorted them according to Washington's well-known "triune" of head, hand, and heart, a slogan he repeatedly employed to summarize the three areas of human development essential to social and political life.[26] The three areas are intended to work together, even though Washington frequently discussed them separately. This has contributed to the tendency to define Washington primarily in terms of his outward profession as principal of the Tuskegee Institute, thus limiting the possibility of placing him in a category of greater authority and influence. However, by bringing these areas together in a single paper, I hope to show how their cooperation elucidates Washington's larger vision concerning life as an ordinary citizen in a political community.

In the presentation of each of Washington's three areas of development, I have incorporated a combination of historical, biographical, and theoretical information. Chapter two concerns the "head" portion of the tripartite slogan and introduces readers to the tension between the liberal arts-centered approach to education advocated by W.E.B. Du Bois and the mixed industrial training favored by Washington. Chapter three begins by delving into the historically poor but fluctuating reputation of labor and work, and it ends with a description of Washington's pragmatic opinion on the unavoidability and utility of those two things. This chapter concerns the "hands" aspect of human activity. In the fourth chapter on "heart," readers are introduced to a collection of Washington's moral beliefs, primarily as they were articulated in the evening speeches he delivered to students at Tuskegee. The first section of this chapter sets the stage with a discussion of Max Weber's theory of the Protestant ethic.

[26]Louis R. Harlan et al., eds., "A Speech before the Alabama State Teachers' Association," *The Booker T. Washington Papers, 1860-89*, vol. 2 (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 432.

Finally, in chapter five I end with a first-step attempt to situate Washington's work within the context of citizenship. The result is necessarily inadequate as the project itself is much larger than what this paper can accomplish. Still, my hope is that the substratum I have laid down will furnish future investigations with useful ideas that can continue the work of elaborating and clarifying Washington's political thought.

One final word about a subfield of theory that claims at least partial jurisdiction over my subject. Several decades ago, a number of philosophy scholars began to question the scarcity of black professors among the faculties of America's universities. Surveys revealed that, especially in philosophy departments, white faculty members far outnumbered their black counterparts.[27] This, in addition to related concerns about the quality of contemporary philosophy itself, led to demands for the creation of what is now called Africana Philosophy, a method of identifying, collecting, and interpreting the disparate works of writers and speakers whose "biocultural" traits and experiences render them in some way *African.*[28] It is certainly possible if not likely that a theory-centered project about Booker T. Washington could be useful in enlarging the literature that comprises Africana Philosophy; however, that is not the purpose of this paper.

Africana Philosophy takes as its point of departure two mutually reinforcing convictions: namely, that contemporary philosophy is pervaded by Eurocentric biases and, consequently, the lives of Africans and African-descended people cannot improve without a top-down revolution that begins in the academy. By that second conviction is meant not only a repopulating of the demographics in philosophy departments but also a transformative upheaval of the attitudes and practices that currently govern the American philosophic profession. The need for such radical measures, we are told, arises in response to a history throughout the course of which African-Americans have been "steered and pushed away from one of America's

[27]Leonard Harris, ed., "'Believe It or Not' or the Ku Klux Klan and American Philosophy Exposed," *Philosophy Born of Struggle: Anthology of Afro-American Philosophy from 1917* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2000), 351.

[28]Lucius T. Outlaw, "Africana Philosophy," *The Journal of Ethics*1, no. 3 (1997), 277-278.

spheres of culture-interpreting, image-making, and conception-shaping activities."[29] It is these scholars of philosophy whose intellectual capacities and authoritative influence make it possible to disseminate a set of new ideas capable of reshaping the sociocultural landscape in a way that will free black citizens from their remaining psychological and material bonds. There are at least two reasons for not making Africana Philosophy a central element of this project. The first has to do with the hermeneutical approach generally employed in Africana Philosophy; the second, with a fundamental tension that exists between the convictions held by many Africana philosophers and those held by Booker T. Washington.

In order to acquire a unique intellectual content, Africana Philosophy must distinguish itself from contemporary or mainstream philosophy by occupying itself almost exclusively with the works of African and African-descended people. It is these works that form the relevant material for the Africana philosopher, whose hermeneutical method is intended to draw out the genuine meaning of the things said and done by black people in the past—singing, poetry, musical composition, formal writing, and so on—each of which is an "instance" of philosophy and collectively represents a broader "achievement of the intellect."[30] To that end, however, the interpreter must reject and shed himself of "the ideas and ideals of an American 'melting pot,'" which are little more than imperial cultural shackles that serve to hamper the hermeneutical enterprise and to distort its findings.[31] In Africana Philosophy, the proper hermeneutical approach is one that becomes an "experiential encounter with [the] heritage" of those whose work we are attempting to understand. In so doing, Africana philosophers contribute to the success of the "struggle for cultural integrity" on behalf of black Americans, past and present, whose meaningful existence often remains concealed behind the allegedly deceitful veil of Americanism. Africana Philosophy's hermeneutical method therefore becomes something more than just the art of interpretation; it also serves as a vehicle for liberating the collective black experience from a Eurocentric white one. By rediscovering

[29]Harris, ed., "Introduction," *Philosophy Born of Struggle*, xviii.

[30]Outlaw, "Africana Philosophy," 266

[31]Harris, ed., "Philosophy, Hermeneutics, Social-Political Theory: Critical Thought in the Interest of African-Americans," *Philosophy Born of Struggle*, 380.

and reclaiming the symbols and language of their historical experience, black Americans gain an opportunity at a "collective self-understanding" that is free of the pernicious influence of colonialism and racial paternalism.[32]

There is, therefore, an element of creative license in what we might now call Africana hermeneutics, and that is the "probing beyond the work to see, hear, question, what the work itself may not see, hear, question, but which conditions and grounds it."[33] There are two reasons for exercising such license. The first has to do with the philosophically unrefined nature or incompleteness of the material that is to be analyzed and interpreted by Africana philosophers. Phillis Wheatley and Frederick Douglass are no doubt exemplary figures in the history of black authorship, but when viewed through the lens of Africana Philosophy their works cannot be accepted as being thoroughly philosophical. These "instances" of philosophy must therefore be "retrospectively" processed by the Africana philosopher in order to isolate and collect the genuinely philosophical parts of the work that can then be incorporated into a specifically Africanized category of thought. The second reason for "probing beyond the work" has to do with the overarching goal of Africana Philosophy, which is the intellectual, cultural, and material liberation of blacks whose present-day circumstances are directly or indirectly the result of the historical colonial practices carried out by European powers. Thus, in addition to gathering and organizing the work left behind by black thinkers and writers, Africana philosophers must also engage in what one scholar refers to as third-order interpretive activities. The work of Africana Philosophy therefore remains unfinished if its students merely collate and catalog the many instances of philosophy (second-order activities) produced by thinkers who reflected on and wrote about their peculiar circumstances as descendants of an African race (first-order experiences). By reflecting on the reflections of others (third-order activities), these scholars embellish the original work so as to enable it to support the modern, emancipatory ends of Africana Philosophy.[34]

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[32] *Ibid.*, 383.
[33] *Ibid.*, 382
[34] Outlaw, "Africana Philosophy," 280

While I will be happy if my project is able to contribute to a deeper appreciation for the intellectual contributions of black thinkers, I hesitate to align myself fully with the Africana movement. One reason for that hesitation has to do with the plain fact that I am not a member of the black race, and so perhaps it is not my place to intrude where an invitation might be required. But I also hesitate because I suspect that Washington himself, despite raising awareness about the beautiful and provocative artifacts of black culture, would have resisted any suggestion that his work ought to be separated from European or American contexts in order to get at the authentically black experience concealed within it. When Washington praises aspects of the American, German, and Dutch cultures it seems to me that he is doing so honestly and deliberately, and I believe we should take him at his word. In saying this, however, I want to stress that I support any academic effort that attempts to raise the thought of black Americans to a more prominent elevation. As Washington often pointed out, black people have been inextricably interwoven into the history of the American story. They cut our timber, laid our bricks, dug our trenches, and as a group they sacrificed more for this country in blood, sweat, and tears than most others can imagine. Those black figures who miraculously or heroically rose to prominence during the darker antebellum days as well as those who arose from the ashes of the Civil War, ought to have their words inspected and interpreted in the light of philosophic investigation in the same way that we respect the works of Madison and Jefferson though they were not themselves philosophers in the fullest sense.

Aim

My primary goal in producing this paper was twofold. First, I wanted to recast Washington's familiar industrial project in political rather than strictly educational terms. Second, and closely related, I wanted to demonstrate Washington's merit as a political thinker. In making this second goal a part of my project, I tried to remain disciplined by not converting the bulk of the work into a vindication of Washington the person. I was not always successful at this. While there are moments at which I drift into sentimentality or intercede to defend

Washington against his critics, I can only beg the reader's patience and invite him to return with me to the pages of this somewhat meager yet occasionally thought-provoking reverie. This paper does not culminate with a complete exegesis of Washington's works, but instead represents the rough and unfinished results of an ongoing process of excavation, assembly, and analysis. Yet even when the project in its entirety nears something resembling completion, it is possible that Washington may not be able to teach us something new that we could not have discovered elsewhere. I am fine with that, if that is how things turn out. As I mentioned earlier, there is little in Washington's thought that has not in some way been in an object of rumination for earlier thinkers and recorded in a fashion more characteristic of the academy. Does this mean that the project will have been fruitless? No. Beyond raising Washington and his work to the level of political thought, two additional areas of research could benefit from an application of Washington's civic ideas.

First, we could bring Washington's thought to bear on contemporary sociopolitical issues relating to the black community. There are a number of ways in which this might be done. To begin with, Washington's political thought could help to elaborate our understanding of the history, influence, and development of black conservatism or at least black political ideology more generally. Some writers like Norrell and West argue that classifying Washington as a conservative is "imprecise"[35] and that the label at best captures his "conservative turn of mind rather than a political, much less philosophical, stance,"[36] but it is this conservative turn of mind that is today being adopted by certain elements within the far right of the black community. Most recently, members of the so-called Hotep Nation, an obscure group of black nationalists, have enlisted Washington's quotes and works in their effort to liberate blacks from what they see as the shackles of government dependency and monolithic partisanship.

But perhaps new and different hurdles are in development today that would hamstring Washington's program not just for black communities but for a great many American citizens throughout the country. The dawn of the twenty-first century is revealing itself to be the

[35]Norrell, *Up from History*, 439.
[36]West, *The Education of Booker T. Washington*, 53.

dawn of the Intelligent Machine. During the Industrial Revolution, advanced machinery eliminated many jobs that required routinized manual labor, but human beings were still needed to man the machines. What makes the forthcoming revolution potentially devastating is its combination of physical automation with an artificial intelligence capable of "replac[ing] substantial amounts of routine cognitive tasks in which humans previously maintained a stark comparative advantage."[37] As a result, Washington's belief in the character-forming power of productive work faces a serious challenge if the opportunities for such work become less available. It is the same class of problem that challenges every thinker who makes similar claims in his own time about the developmental necessity of overcoming hardship with hard work. Alan Trachtenberg observed this in his criticism of the nineteenth-century historian Frederick Jackson Turner, whose praise of the "heroic masculine traits" of the westward pioneers led eventually to a paradox: "If the frontier had provided the defining experience for Americans, how would the values learned in that experience now fare in the new world of cities. . . ?"[38] Machiavelli advised that if the founder of a city must build on a fertile site replete with advantages rather than a harsh, barren one, where the citizens are compelled to be industrious and not idle, then through the force of law he "must [impose] such necessities" to ensure that the people remain prepared for "any virtuous exercise."[39] Whatever solutions might have been possible in earlier times—assuming men like Machiavelli, Turner, and Washington are in some way correct—it is far from clear what path we ought to follow in a world not only saturated with portable electronics, social media, and a thousand other digital distractions, but one that is on the threshold of alleviating (or depriving, depending on one's perspective) millions of people from the necessity of personal industry.

[37]U.S. Executive Office of the President, *Artificial Intelligence, Automation, and the Economy*, 2016, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/documents/Artificial-Intelligence-Automation-Economy.PDF (accessed October 6, 2017).

[38]Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2007), 14-15.

[39]Niccoló Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov, trans. (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 8-9.

I cannot tell at the present moment whether Washington's ideas and principles can help us in navigating these future challenges, but the nature of his work certainly helps to remind us of the complexity and urgency of those puzzles. In the meantime, I intend to extend and continue refining my research into Washington's political thought; and if what I have begun here inspires others to join the investigation, I welcome their assistance in correcting and improving upon any of my errors and shortcomings.

Chapter 2

Whither the Dusky Gondoliers?

Few people are unaware of the link between education and individual character, but oftentimes many others overlook or doubt the significance of the link between education and the character or quality of the political community.[1] In committing this same oversight, some scholars fail to see in the work of Booker T. Washington a vision that expands well beyond the immediate or superficial details that defined his life at the turn of the twentieth century. Like the great political thinkers before him, Washington maintained the conviction that education ought to be the chief concern of every legislator whose responsibility is the preservation of the political community and its constitutive elements, including its laws, principles, and customs.[2] Students after all are not merely unaffected and unaffecting motes floating about the social milieu; they are future citizens. Moreover, the political community itself is meaningless, is in fact nonexistent, in the absence of citizens. This is not only theoretically conspicuous, in the sense that every political community logically entails a human component, but it is also simply a practical consideration from the standpoint of government. An oligarchic regime populated with democratically educated citizens is unlikely to endure as an oligarchy for very long. Education therefore is the means by which students acquire the habits and virtues appropriate for maintaining the political community as that *particular* political community.

[1]By "political community" I mean what the Greeks meant by the *politeia* in its broadest usage, that is, "that which gives the city its character by determining the end which the city in question pursues or what it looks up to as the highest, and simultaneously the kind of men who rule the city." Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, eds., *History of Political Philosophy*, third edition, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 61.

[2]Arist., *Pol.*, 1337a12-18.

Washington was a leader but not a revolutionary. To the extent he sought to change anything, it was the perception and expectations that many white Americans had of their black fellow citizens. He had no interest in deconstructing and remaking the basic principles and political structure of the American republic; instead, he wanted to do his part to help preserve the political community that had provided advantages to those who, along with their ancestors, had enjoyed them without the arbitrary and unjust constraints that had been used to fetter and exclude members of the black race. In order to reach his desired end, Washington required the appropriate means by which to condition his people for the rights and responsibilities peculiar to American republicanism. That such a conditioning was necessary, he believed, was a conclusion that could be reached simply by acknowledging the intellectual, material, and moral poverty that plagued many in the black community. Despite their good intentions, Washington felt that the Radical Republicans and other civil rights advocates of the Reconstruction era had largely failed, not only in "preparing the Negro to become an intelligent, reliable citizen," but also in laying the foundation that would contribute to the support of such citizenship from one generation to the next.[3] This occurred not for a want of charitable conscience and magnanimity, but because those sympathetic to black Americans yielded to that "temptation . . . to run all people through a certain educational mould, regardless of the condition of the subject or the end to be accomplished."[4] Far too quickly had the newly freed slaves been encouraged to pursue the sort of classical curriculum tailored to the white middle- and upper-classes of American society. In many ways these former slaves were like children, but they differed in a very important respect, one that Washington feared made the headlong rush into the liberal arts especially reckless.[5] As a race black Americans had no distinct heritage, no meaningful civilizational experience to which

[3]Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 11.

[4]*Ibid.*, 25.

[5]Washington emphasized that there is a distinction between a "child race" and an "inferior race," in which the latter unlike the former is destined to remain the ward of its superiors. Harlan and Smock, eds., "A Fragment of an Address at the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church," *BTW Papers: 1903-04*, 470.

they could turn for instruction and inspiration while confronting the impediments, distractions, and pitfalls that hinder the road to happiness. Without first establishing a collective foundation for themselves they risked condemning the vast majority of the race to a thin and fragile livelihood forever incapable of withstanding the perennial burdens and temptations of life. In this, Washington shared the misgivings entertained by many Southern whites that education for black Americans would do little more than train them to "a parrot-like absorption of Anglo-Saxon civilisation, with a special tendency to imitate the weaker elements of the white man's character."[6] Being mere facsimiles, as a race black citizens would continue to confuse license for liberty, favor appearance over substance, and become the pandered dupes of unscrupulous and self-serving politicians.

Unlike many of his white contemporaries, however, Washington possessed an unshakeable faith in the ultimate abilities and virtues of his racial kinsmen. He had no doubt that the only natural thing which distinguished white from black was the chiaroscuro itself. But for blacks, their posterity, and indeed, the rest of the nation, to be truly successful would require a new approach to education as a means for creating the right sort of citizen. Washington never ceased in reminding his listeners of the interconnected fate of all Americans, that "one man cannot hold another man down in the ditch without remaining down in the ditch with him."[7] What was already a Herculean task could soon become a Sisyphean one if Washington failed to convince both whites and blacks of the merits of his program; for if he failed to persuade the skeptics, the result would be the same as if his program had from the beginning possessed a fatal flaw, rendering "everything, even the teaching of Christ, false."[8]

[6] *Ibid.*, 57-58.
[7] Washington, ed., *Selected Speeches*, 194.
[8] Meier, *Negro Thought in America*, 107.

2.1 Enlarging Education

"The nigger... must fight out his own destiny at the polls... He has the ballot; let it protect him."[9] This was the sentiment of many white Southerners whose states were gradually and grudgingly adopting the laws necessary for readmission into the Union. Of course those who expressed such sentiments often delivered them with the thick undertone of malevolence, for they expected to use the machinery of politics to degrade and harass the newly minted black citizens in their midst. Black leaders at the time recognized these threats and naturally sought to defend themselves and their people by meeting their enemies on the same battlefield while employing the same general strategy, namely, to capture and hold public office. In addition to this instrumentalism, many black Americans also held fast to the notion that higher education in particular—the study of history, literature, music, and philosophy—would yield to them the qualities necessary for securing and appreciating the fruits of civilization. Politics and the liberal arts thus became the chief and immediate goals for which blacks were expected to strive. If slavery was defined by servility and intellectual privation, then office holding and cultural refinement represented the greatest achievements for any freeman deserving the title "citizen." Thus Washington observed, "After the words were spoken which pronounced the Negro free, he hesitated a minute, then sprang towards the highest place at once." These jaunts, however, could not be made by everyone, and "the common horde lingered in surprised helplessness, wondering what next."[10] Could these poor masses really "protect" themselves with the ballot and the sophisticated minds of the few?

Before gables and towers, Washington argued, must come the laying of "an absolute and unwrenchable foundation in the soil of the state."[11] The roots of this conviction are traceable to Samuel Chapman Armstrong, Washington's mentor, a man whom he described

[9] "Reconstruction and the Party Leaders," *The Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), Nov. 11, 1868.

[10] J. W. Gibson et al., *Progress of a Race: The Remarkable Advancement of the Colored American* (Naperville, IL: J. L. Nichols & Company, 1912), 5.

[11] *Ibid.*

as "superhuman"[12] and whose influence on his life, personally and professionally, was second only to that of his mother.[13] To understand Washington's thought, then, requires a brief discussion of Armstrong and the program he developed as principal of the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute.

Samuel Armstrong and the Origins of Negro Uplift

Born in 1839, Samuel C. Armstrong spent the first twenty years of his life living on the Hawaiian Islands, where his father Richard labored as a Christian missionary. Together, Richard and his wife Clarissa maintained a household whose domestic economy was influenced by the Puritan ethic as well as the Pestalozzian pedagogy, both of which lent support to the development of vocational schools designed for instilling habits of New England character within the members of the native population.[14] The young Armstrong absorbed these influences, but he was also colored by island life and by the "vitalities of the ocean," which "imparted to him a kind of mental as well as physical amphibiousness."[15] In adeptness and adaptability Armstrong possessed a well of talents that rendered him especially well-suited to navigate the social and political maelstrom presented by the so-called "Negro problem" at the close of the Civil War, during which he had led a troop of black Union soldiers and advanced to the rank of brigadier general.

The Negro problem itself was greatly multifaceted. In the South, the newly freed slaves were loathed about as strongly as the Union victors. Slave traders and some former masters despised the black man, not only because they perceived him to belong to an inferior species, but also because he stood at the epicenter of their homeland's social and economic devastation. Poor whites meanwhile feared the challenge posed by millions of new potential

[12]Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 37.

[13]Washington, *My Larger Education*, 60-61.

[14]Edith Armstrong Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong: A Biographical Study* (New York, NY: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1904), 4-5, 15-17. For an overview of the Hawaiian school system, see Ralph Canevali, "Hilo Boarding School: Hawaii's Experiment in Vocational Education," *Hawaiian Journal of History* 11 (1977), 80-81.

[15]Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 41.

competitors in the labor market. And nearly everyone, North and South alike, experienced a sustained anxiety about the possible consequences of permitting four million ex-slaves to participate as full citizens in the political community. Even the humanitarian Robert Dale Owen, who was deeply interested in the welfare of black Americans, sought to temper the zeal of the Radical Republicans by reminding them that this new class of would-be citizens was not prepared to legislate "with prudence... not because they are unworthy, but because, for the time, they are incapable." When his former colleague, Thaddeus Stevens, expressed his concern that denying full citizenship to former slaves constituted a denial of justice, Owen replied that "[the Negro] thirsts for education" and that the greater injustice would be to "call him away from the schoolroom to take a seat which he is unfitted to fill in a legislative chamber."[16]

Education as a solution to the Negro problem quickly gained support among Northern politicians, missionaries, and philanthropists. But this solution raised another question: What type of education was best for the great mass of the emancipated? Upon joining the Freedmen's Bureau, the federal agency tasked with resolving this and many related matters, Armstrong put his mind to finding a new solution to the old solution. He agreed with the former slaveholder that "to put a veneer of learning on the plantation Negro would be dangerous nonsense," yet he disagreed with the notion that blacks were somehow naturally inferior to whites in their ability to develop their faculties.[17] Armstrong's faith in the potential of the black race did not, however, incline him toward an educational solution centered solely on the liberal arts. He wanted black students to have a "rounded character" rather than "mere technical skill"; he wanted to produce a "self-reliant man" more so than a "specialist."[18] This meant combining some form of manual training with a more traditional curriculum in the higher arts and sciences. The Hampton Institute was not the first to make such an attempt. Previously, both Wellesley College and Oberlin College had incorporated

[16]Benjamin B. Kendrick, *The Journal of the Joint Committee of Fifteen on Reconstruction, 1865-1867* (New York, NY: Longmans, Green & Company, 1914), 299.

[17]Talbot, *Samuel Chapman Armstrong*, 151.

[18]*Ibid.*, 212.

into their curricula a requirement that students engage in a certain amount of manual labor in order to strengthen their moral fiber. Their efforts eventually failed, in part, because the students spent every day struggling to meet the demands of both labor and academic course-work. The students came to class exhausted and unable to focus on the teacher's lecture, and they became increasingly averse to leaving the classroom for the field. At Hampton, however, Armstrong established a schedule that required students to engage in manual labor for only two days each week, and even then, only during the morning hours. The afternoons and four remaining schooldays were reserved for classroom studies.[19]

As with Oberlin College, one purpose of Hampton's manual labor program was to instill within black students a firm work ethic that would enable them to become independent and self-sufficient; and in so doing, to acquire a set of rustic virtues, such as thrift and industry, that would develop within them a character inclined toward sobriety and moderation. The chance for "mischief" to become neutralized, Armstrong believed, increased in proportion to a student's lack of time to be tempted by it: "Activity is a purifier," he declared.[20] But the activities at Hampton were not intended to reproduce the "stupid drudgery" that was the hallmark of slavery or, to varying degrees, the postbellum sharecropping system. The rounded character Armstrong envisioned would find itself in the man with "skilled hands" who also possessed a polished mind. Indeed, this combined approach to education for black students caught many observers by surprise. Seven years after the Hampton Institute's founding the *New York Times* dispatched a correspondent to the school who was amazed to discover that, in addition to manual labor, the students attended classes whose topics centered on algebra, metaphysics, music, and poetry.[21]

A Hampton student himself, Washington was immersed in the school's environment and, like so many others, was unable to resist the rousing vivacity that radiated from Armstrong. He did not merely endorse Hampton's program of manual training but, as the founder and

[19] *Ibid.*, 157-158, 167-168.
[20] *Ibid.*, 186.
[21] "Education for Negroes," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Jun. 17, 1875.

principal of Tuskegee, he assimilated the bulk of Armstrong's beliefs. Washington did, however, go beyond Armstrong by taking a broader view of the distribution of mankind; although he acknowledged the importance of providing these particular students with the practical skills they would need in order to become self-sufficient in this particular moment in history, he never yielded in his opinion that the great majority of people in any society would, either through lack of resources or aptitude, be unable to live the life of contemplative leisure so often envisioned by philosophers. What, then, was to be done with these children made of bronze and iron? For Washington, the answer could not be any one of the species of moral inertness. Somewhere amidst indifference and contempt, he believed, must lie a path on which the compassionate can tread and through which the masses can find real meaning and fraternity in the polity.

2.2 The Sound of Sighs and Cadence

From the moment Washington became a public figure, he was unable to elude the accusation that he intended to provide black Americans with industrial training at the permanent expense of a liberal arts education. The persistence and intensity of these accusations compel us to look into the nature of the liberal arts; to discover what it is about this form of education that turned many of Washington's would-be supporters into entrenched detractors. What exactly is meant by the liberal arts and why is it perennially revered by nearly everyone, regardless of social or economic status?

Like the nature of man, there is something inherently political about the liberal arts. "Liberal" as it is used here, however, does not refer either to the ideology of the American political left or to the contractarian theories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; rather, the "liberal" in liberal arts signifies the requisite status for obtaining that particular type of education.[22] The freeman therefore must precede the liberal arts insofar as he must first possess the liberty necessary for benefitting, or having the opportunity to benefit,

[22]Michael Lind, "Why the Liberal Arts Still Matter," *The Wilson Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2006): 54.

from the goods that the liberal arts are expected to provide. Presupposed by the freeman's existence, then, is the opposite quality which the Greeks called *ascholia*, a state of being that is defined by occupation and thus signifies the absence of leisure; shorn of its privative alpha (a), the word becomes *schole* and refers to man's liberation from the sort of work that would otherwise prevent him from engaging in activities that are predominantly contemplative. The life of *schole* is the scholastic life and the life capable of preparing men for philosophy.[23] Now the traditional method by which a liberal education is transmitted occurs through the medium of great books that we sometimes call the classics. These books were written by the sort of men whose ideas resonate with such inspiration and ingenuity that they emerge from history as autochthonous tutors. They are the font of philosophic thought and not merely intermediaries in the reproduction and transmission of philosophic thought.[24] To have access to a liberal arts education is to have access to the great books; and these in turn, we believe, provide us with the means to escape the vulgarities of quotidian existence by passing through and into the supremely "humanizing and civilizing" realm of contemplative life.[25] Thus the liberal arts seem to offer man his best opportunity for completing himself by moving him nearer to the fulfillment of his nature.

To remain stagnant, or worse, to regress away from the peak of human existence, is to settle for a degraded form of human existence. Slaves, being commanded and often employed for chattel purposes, inhabit the bleakest realm of humanity and are in the most debased condition; while merchants and moneymakers, though free from involuntary servitude, remain bewitched by the petty distractions of the merely acquisitive life. Washington's great sin thus comes into view, for he would have blacks evacuate the void of the Southern plantation only to have them gaze through the myopic loupe of economic enterprise for the remainder of their free lives. For Du Bois and others this exchange of fates was unacceptable given

[23]Arist., *Pol.*, 1334a16-25. See also Leo Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 13.

[24]Strauss, *Liberalism*, 3.

[25]*Ibid.*, 8, 15.

that black Americans now had the opportunity to strive for something beyond the lower and middle tiers of life.

The Talented Tenth

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was a man steeped in the ether of the academy. He earned two bachelor's degrees, one from Fisk University and a second from Harvard, attended the University of Berlin to study with several eminent German sociologists, and became the first black man to acquire a doctorate from Harvard University.[26] Du Bois was intelligent, highly educated, and culturally seasoned; and as such, it is unsurprising that his approach to the "color line" problem of the early twentieth century differed markedly from that of Booker T. Washington. From his own vantage, Du Bois soon came to believe that the solution to the problem of the color line would depend on emphasizing the line separating the educated elites from the ordinary masses. Indeed, he insisted that all "progress in human affairs is more often a pull than a push," an uplifting force that must originate with "the exceptional man" whose task it is to raise his "duller brethren" to greater heights.[27] These exceptional men, rare and few by definition, were conceived by Du Bois as the Talented Tenth.[28] Such men, he believed, were essential not only for raising the mass of black citizens from the depths of political obscurity, but also for serving as role models for those who wished to travel the path toward a fuller and more fulfilling manhood.

This manhood represents the final destination of man's ascent from the life of mere necessity and drudgery to the life of sublime acculturation. Du Bois feared that by stressing the ordinal primacy of industrial training, Washington recklessly sought to upend the natural order through which human progress and civilization have always developed. The proper foundation for any body of citizens is not artisanship but liberal education. To say otherwise is to commit oneself to "a foolish and mischievous lie."[29] The great danger in pedaling such

[26]Jacqueline M. Moore, *Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and the Struggle for Racial Uplift* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2003), 47-50.
[27]Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk,*, 72.
[28]Washington, *The Negro Problem*, 23.
[29]*Ibid.*, 25

a notion, especially in the hostile atmosphere of the Jim Crow era, was that it would effect the gradual defunding and depopulation of black colleges and college graduates, thereby depriving both the black community as well as the nation of the opportunity to benefit from thoughtful and intelligent leaders whose authority and guidance are essential for "the transmission of knowledge and culture from generation to generation."[30] Without such leaders, hope for peaceful race relations dimmed nearly to the point of invisibility; for only "the influences of culture" were capable of tempering the prejudicial passions of the South. In the absence of a permanent cadre of exceptional black gentlemen, nothing else remained but an "ignorant, turbulent proletariat" of Negro laborers from which no true civilization could ever arise.[31]

In an apparent Aristotelian vein, Du Bois reproves Washington for pressing the gospel of work to the diminution of higher education in the liberal arts, the sole result of which can be nothing other than that men will become habituated "to have no aims higher than their bellies, and no God greater than Gold."[32] The salvation of the black race, as with the salvation of mankind in general, depends upon the preservation of the belief that material possessions and the external goods of the body, though necessary for mere life, do not constitute the final measures by which to assess the life well lived. Man, in other words, must never "mistake the means of living for the object of life."[33] Du Bois' position on this matter bears a notable resemblance to Aristotle's depiction of the emergence of the *polis* in his *Politics*, in that, "while [the city comes] into being for the sake of living, it exists for the sake of living well."[34] Impelled by the desire to see his people live well, Du Bois implicitly adopts the classical political-philosophical belief that all impediments to leisure necessarily act as impediments to the best possible life. His goal, therefore, was as much to liberate black Americans from the constraints of Washington's program as it was to liberate them

[30] *Ibid.*, 27.
[31] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 78.
[32] Washington, *The Negro Problem*, 27.
[33] *Ibid.*, 21.
[34] Arist., *Pol.*, 1252b29-30; see also 1280b39.

from the manifold constraints of institutionalized racism, and to do so by having the noblest expression of manhood assured by the provision and preservation of a system of liberal arts education. However, in speaking of black Americans as a plurality Du Bois forces us to confront the question, and ultimately the practical problem, inherent in the exclusivity of the liberal arts. Despite his claim that all black men "will not cease to think, will not cease attempting to read the riddle of the world," Du Bois also confesses that "all men cannot go to college."[35] In saying this, he is referring not only to those lacking material means but also to those without the curiosity and aptitude necessary for participating in and benefitting from a liberal arts education.

In what way, then, could the Talented Tenth possibly lift the masses? This question seeks an answer beyond that of mere instrumentality. There is, to be sure, the interesting question of how exactly a small group of highly educated men could use their talents and resources to elevate the bottom ninetieth above their busy, narrow, impoverished lives; but we might also ask why we ought to expect the Talented Tenth to concern themselves with such a task, for any hesitancy or refusal on their part may indicate a willing disregard for the welfare of their less talented brethren who, left unaided, will continue their directionless wallowing in the dim light of ignorance.[36] If liberal education does, in fact, prepare and guide its students toward the contemplative life, then we must be prepared for the possibility that these students may never want to leave the sunlit fields of the mind to return to the shadow-world of mere opinion and superstition. In praising the sublime activity of philosophic introspection, Du Bois therefore, and, perhaps not unexpectedly, finds himself describing this activity as a process toward the achievement of a "higher *individualism*."[37] But the individualism that concentrates a man's mind on itself may leave that same man in a state in which he is not

[35]Washington, *The Negro Problem*, 27.

[36]Du Bois acknowledges that light can emerge from darkness without the aid of external talent, as in the case of the "self-trained" Frederick Douglass; but he seems to have little interest in dwelling on such unlikely demigods, preferring instead to focus his argument on the need for cultivating leaders in formal institutions of higher learning. See Washington, *The Negro Problem*, 24-26.

[37]Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 80. Emphasis added.

inclined to consider the concerns of the plurality of men around him or, what often amounts to the same thing, of the men who comprise his community. This would result in a turning inward whereby the philosophic scholar gradually abandons his observations of the gritty, disorderly, and particularized world of public affairs in favor of becoming a stargazer whose activity is the "disinterested contemplation of the eternal."[38]

Yet, even if by returning to the city the liberal arts scholar becomes interested in political matters, it is unclear whether his presence and prominence would necessarily be beneficial to the community, and especially to that part of the community whose members have the least opportunity for a formal liberal education themselves. This doubt arises from two considerations. First, it is not at all predetermined that the liberal arts scholar will possess the practical wisdom requisite for supplying his fellowmen with the sort of good advice that is conducive to producing true happiness; and this, in turn, is assuming that the scholar has been blessed with a perspicuity that has enabled him to discern the ultimate source or sources of true happiness. Nor is it predetermined that attending a liberal arts institution necessarily bequeaths to the scholar a proper or decent interest in political matters. Nothing naturally inheres in either Harvard or Fisk which can guarantee that the man with a copy of the *Nicomachean Ethics* under his arm will be more inclined toward virtue and less inclined toward self-serving acquisitiveness than the man who carries with him a copy of *The Art of the Deal*. Second, to the extent that the liberal arts scholar evolves in the direction of the true philosopher, his activity will increasingly become irrelevant or disruptive to those whose lives are inextricably linked to the routine, domestic responsibilities of sustenance and shelter.[39] Philosophy is disruptive because it prizes truth over the things that are familiar to us and that we love;[40] it questions and unsettles the laws, rules, and standards that govern the community and the political regime, including the principles of organization intended to protect against misfortune, by establishing order and a degree of predictability in the forward

[38]Plato, *Republic*, 489a; Strauss, *Liberalism*, 20.
[39]Strauss, *Liberalism*, 14.
[40]Arist., *Nic. Eth.*, 1096a10.

movement of life. The man in the field or the factory needs to know that the dollar he spends today will have the same value tomorrow. He is not necessarily hostile to the liberal arts, but his interests do not easily coincide with those of the liberal arts scholar. This implies that he is in some way inhibited by his available means to find uninterrupted enjoyment in the pleasures of *haute culture* and philosophic contemplation. Again, we must ask: In what way is the Talented Tenth able to uplift the farmer in Pisgah, Alabama? Suppose that he comes into contact with a man of letters who engages with him in a conversation about music, literature, and other topics about which he had previously not considered at great length. Once the conversation has ended and the man of letters has departed the field, has he left the farmer in a state of significantly greater manhood than before his arrival? Has he, to use Du Bois' formulation, succeeded in making men out of farmers rather than farmers out of men "by the effort and example of this aristocracy of talent and character"?[41]

Up through the Swamps and Soil

If Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas were the American reincarnations of Socrates and Thrasymachus, then Booker T. Washington and Du Bois seem to represent the standard-bearing champions of the two major parts of the soul's *logos*: that which contemplates the universal and that which contemplates the particular.[42] Washington did not disagree with Du Bois' basic assertion that a man of talent and character could produce a positive and lasting effect on others; but he did not share Du Bois' faith that the intellectual class would, as a result of its formal liberal education alone, necessarily possess souls with greater fecundity for the cultivation of moral and political virtue; nor was he convinced that, should such a virtuous assembly come to exist, its qualities of culture would permeate throughout the nation's fields and plains, ultimately transmigrating the souls of the greater part of the working class to an Eden their bodies could never visit. To Washington's mind, Du Bois

[41]Washington, *The Negro Problem*, 27.

[42]Harry Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided: An Interpretation of the Issues in the Lincoln-Douglas Debate* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), v. See Arist., *Nic. Eth.*, 1139a, for the subdivision of the soul's reasoning part.

and his intellectual allies erred in their approach to solving the Negro problem because they were, quite simply, impractical; not because they had failed to acquire technical expertise in some or another trade, but because the pronouncements they issued concerning the nature of human relations came almost exclusively via the medium of books and not through the direct and intimate contact of the very human beings about whom they presumed to have knowledge. "My experience," Washington reflected, "is that people who call themselves 'The Intellectuals' understand theories, but they do not understand things."[43] Such first-hand experience, he believed, is essential for forming prudent opinions about how men ought to live. In the absence of this vital element, the elite class found itself increasingly stressed as the intellectual abstractions with which it dealt seemed to remove them further and further from the common people they wanted to uplift.[44]

Washington frequently referred to his efforts as a public figure as a process of construction. In saying this, he had in mind not only the problem of race relations but also the education of the black race, which is to say, of a race whose peculiar circumstances left them in the condition of being politically neophytic. He believed that race relations and education were intertwined, with the latter serving as a key component in the resolution of the former. The process of construction, however, necessarily begins at the beginning and builds toward, if not a final end, then at least an intermediate end that is for the sake of the final end. It has an origin and requires a foundation upon which to make future developments and improvements. For Washington, a successful, constructive education strategy was one with a curriculum rooted in the practical concerns of the student's community; for it is here that a student is going to absorb the lessons of experience, which will in turn provide him with the sort of information that is required to make sound judgments about his own life and, if he is especially observant, about the lives of those around him. Far too often, said Washington, do we see teachers and scholars submit to the "temptation. . . to keep everything connected with

[43]Washington, *My Larger Education*, 30, 110.

[44]Booker T. Washington, *Working with the Hands* (New York, NY: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1904), 13.

education in a sort of twilight realm of the mysterious and supernatural," and to claim for themselves a supposed "secret knowledge. . . inaccessible to the rest of the world."[45] For many self-reliant citizens without a formal education, the arcane simply becomes the irrelevant because it has no clear application to the realities of their lives. Bills need to be paid and children need to be fed and clothed. In what way and to what extent will a philosophic treatise on metaphysics help to address those necessities? This question, though pertinent in other civic contexts, reveals its cruciality in the singular context faced by Washington at the dawn of the twentieth century: Guided by the lights of prudence, what is the best way to induct millions of untrained and unaccustomed citizens into an established political community? New, because they represent the rawest of civic material, with one portion having no prior experience with ruling except that of the relationship between slave and master, and the other, the children of the enslaved who entered the world without the slightest civilizational inheritance. And, as if this difficulty were not enough, how will such people be integrated when one half of the community's existing members are hostile toward them?

It may be true, Washington said, that "the wonderful art" of reading enables us to "master the secrets" hidden in books; but it would be unkind and unwise to dangle these potentially "fatal charms" before the minds of the unprepared masses, of unprepared *citizens*, and to convince them that the only proper and noble end for every man and woman is any activity belonging to the fine arts, with all other activities outside this sphere being irredeemably vulgar and shameful.[46] It is unkind, not so much because it dazzles the individual with an illusion designed to conceal the hard necessities of actual life, but because it leaves such a person wholly unprepared to meet and overcome those hardships. It deceives a man into thinking he will never find himself in a situation that would require him to confront "the

[45]Washington, *My Larger Education*, 124.

[46]Booker T. Washington, *The Story of the Negro: The Rise of the Race from Slavery* (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, 2009), 268-274. Washington did not, of course, disapprove of literature as such. He emphasized the importance of developing in students "an appreciation of good books by contact with classic authors" to ensure that "the mind is furnished with knowledge" and to recognize "what is most fitting and beautiful in expression." Washington, *Working with the Hands*, 87-88.

necessity of the ordinary training to live."[47] This holds for the man beset by the destitution of sudden misfortune as well as the man of letters who wishes to live the upscale life of a gentleman. If, in addition to knowledge of art, music, and poetry, higher education instills in students a desire to live amid the trappings of art, music, and poetry, then there must exist a source of wealth that makes the acquisition of these refinements possible. Unless he is content to live the life of the barefooted philosopher, and barring the windfall of a large inheritance, the aspiring gentleman must be willing to invest his golden intellect as he would any other sort of capital, namely, by employing it in a wealth-generating occupation.[48] The "mere performance of mental gymnastics," Washington insisted, is insufficient for sustaining the daily "cost and character" of a liberal arts education. A bridge must exist between the "educated brain" and the means "for supplying the wants of an awakened mind."[49] Such a disjunction between the real and the ideal was, in Washington's view, exemplified by the graduating theme of an Alabama high school for black students. Entitled "An Imaginary Trip to Europe," the theme was thoroughly fantastical. It failed to "touch a common chord" with the audience because "it was too far removed from all the practical, human interests of which they had any experience." Not a single student in the graduating class or their parents had ever traveled to Europe, nor were they likely to do so anytime soon.[50] In too many instances, Washington observed, liberal education for the masses is reduced to ceremonialism, whereby the student exits the school with a head full of the lofty ideas originated by others but no skill in his hands that will empower him with the lifelong means to entertain those ideas comfortably and in the absence of privation. What this student needs to understand is that studying cabbages is just as "edifying, broadening, and refining" as studying Latin. Moreover, in learning about cabbages the student is in a better position to tend to his own wants in addition to "the fundamental interests of the community."[51]

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[47]Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 53.
[48]*Ibid.*, 76-77.
[49]Washington, *Working with the Hands*, 137.
[50]Washington, *The Negro Problem*, 13-15; Washington, *My Larger Education*, 125.
[51]Washington, *My Larger Education*, 127, 137.

For this, Washington was accused of being a "blind worshipper of the Average."[52] However, his preoccupation with the "fundamental interests of the community" reveals that his campaign to ennoble farming and other foundational trades had a purpose that went beyond informing students of the material limitations and consequences of a strictly liberal arts education. What makes deriding the "average" unwise is that, in its haughty self-esteem, it devalues an element of human activity that is essential to the livelihood of the polity. During the antebellum days, many whites in the South enjoyed their aristocratic privileges in large part because their comforts were sustained by the system of slavery, that is, by an involuntary workforce whose productive labor liberated the ownership class from having to perform such hardships themselves. After the Civil War, both whites and blacks faced the daunting challenge of rebuilding a civilization without the conveniences afforded by a system of slavery. This challenge fell more heavily on the shoulders of blacks because they had learned from their masters that labor was something to be escaped, a sentiment later intensified by the so-called Radicals and other black intelligentsia from their strongholds in the North.[53] Washington argued that this sentiment was largely mistimed rather than misplaced. There is nothing wrong, he said, with wanting to satiate one's hunger for music and poetry, but without an underclass of slaves to carry out the routine functions of domestic life and local economy, there is no realistic way to make the liberal arts available and beneficial to all. Someone somewhere must make the sacrifice to tend to "the rough affairs of life."[54] Ideally, this responsibility would unfold intergenerationally, with each subsequent generation inheriting not only its parents' work ethic but also the various resources that make the increased

[52]Washington, *The Negro Problem*, 26.

[53]William Monroe Trotter, the Harvard-educated editor of the *Boston Guardian*, repeatedly used his publication to launch harsh rebukes against Booker T. Washington, doggedly criticizing him for his unflinching and unapologetic support of industrial training over "higher academic education." Charles W. Puttkammer and Ruth Worthy, "William Monroe Trotter: 1872-1934," *The Journal of Negro History* 43, no. 4 (1958), 300. For a discussion of how Northern black intellectuals struggled to understand the conditions and cultural idiosyncrasies of black Southerners, see William Toll, "Free Men, Freedmen, and Race: Black Social Theory in the Guilded Age," *The Journal of Southern History* 44, no. 4 (1978), 571-596.

[54]Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 73.

availability of leisure possible. To do otherwise, Washington argued, would be disastrous for the long-term prospects of the black race. The natural order of progression is to begin with the basics and advance toward a more complete whole. Flip this rule on its head, and you find yourself standing in the ramshackle home of a poor black family, where a new rosewood piano stands in the corner unplayed and purchased on credit. "Am I arguing against the teaching of instrumental music to Negros?" asked Washington. "Not at all . . . There are numbers of such pianos in thousands of New England homes. But behind the piano in the New England home there are one hundred years of toil, sacrifice, and economy."[55] Ignoring, devaluing, or belittling the civilizing function of productive labor is detrimental not only to the individual and the family, but also to the greater political community. Should blacks or any other race disregard this rule, the people would eventually become a "veritable body of death, stagnating, depressing, retarding every effort to advance the body politic."[56]

2.3 Reaching the Blessed Shore

What then can we say about the total character of Washington's conception of education? In what does it consist and at what end does it aim? The most recognizable feature of Washington's program is, of course, his emphasis of industrial training. He had practical as well as theoretical reasons for making this type of education the capstone of the Tuskegee curriculum; but Washington frequently repeated a threefold slogan—head, heart, and hand—to describe his view of what a complete education encompasses.[57] In addition to gaining the practical skills to work and live, every student and citizen must also receive an education that stimulates the mind and supplies him with moral counsel. Failing to cultivate the head and heart, Washington understood, while devoting all efforts to enhancing individual industry, would

[55] *Ibid.*, 32-33.

[56] Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 155.

[57] The phrase seems to have originated with the Swiss educational reformer Johann Pestalozzi. His ideals and methods were familiar to Samuel C. Armstrong, from whom Washington likely absorbed them. Keiichi Takaya, "The Method of Anschauung: From Johann H. Pestalozzi to Herbert Spencer," *The Journal of Educational Thought* 37, no. 1 (2003), 86.

produce a worthless community of golems and Midases. Indeed, any training that neglects the "grand trinity" of "the physical, intellectual, and spiritual man" can produce nothing more than an incomplete man. Sparta's "mere muscular force," Athens' "superstitious" philosophers, and the "narrow, bigoted, tyrannical priesthood" of medieval Christianity exemplify the lopsidedness and corruption that results when men *en masse* are educated only with a view to one part of themselves. Each of the three educational aspects supplements the others, and if any perfection of man is possible, it is possible only "through a systematic and harmonious development of body, mind, and soul."[58]

> Physical development makes a man capable of greater exertion; intellectual development makes him keener and better able to utilize his physical force; moral development will enable him to choose right, and hence to direct expenditure of the physical and intellectual strength in higher and purer channels.[59]

Washington did not believe that such perfection was possible, certainly not on a grand scale; however, he did believe in the sufficiency of the general framework. The question he proposed was this: What is the best yet most feasible kind of education for the great mass of citizens, that is, for the general public generally speaking? His answer includes the grand trinity, but it inclines slightly in the direction of industrial training. As we saw earlier, Washington predicted that most people would not have the means or interest to live the life of the philosophic scholar; he also insisted that a productive class is necessary for sustaining the community as well as its individual members. But the true purpose of education, he believed, goes a step beyond these explanations. In other words, regardless of the desirability of the liberal arts and the necessity of labor, what is the ultimate end of education?

> What did Socrates seek to do when he chose the fatal drug in preference to a cessation of his teaching? What ideal did Plato have in view in devoting his life to the instruction of his fellowmen? What priceless jewel hidden in the human soul did Pestalozzi and Horace bid us seek after?... Is the ability to master and converse in foreign languages;

[58]Harlan et al., *The BTW Papers, 1860-89*, 430-431. Washington emphatically reasserts this position in the preface to *Working with the Hands*, noting, "Mere hand training, without thorough moral, religious, and mental education, counts for very little." Washington, *Working with the Hands*, v.

[59]*Ibid.*, 432.

> to travel through the wonderful intricacies of geometry and trigonometry education, or the end we seek for? No; they are but the means to an end. Education is all this, and more. When we have understood all that Newton and Kepler and Tyndall and Edison teach concerning the physical world; when all that Aristotle and Hamilton and McCosh teach concerning the human soul shall have been comprehended, have we found that which we seek for? Verily, these acquirements are education, but not all nor the end.[60]

The "supreme end of education" is "usefulness" in the form of "service to our brother."[61] In other words, education rightly done is a means to securing the goodwill that binds a community together. It is the fine art of "getting along with people."[62] This overarching concern for friendly civic relations often gets lost amid Washington's seemingly strict, barebones economical posture—an understandable oversight, but one that must be corrected if we are to benefit from the fullness of his thought. Chapter three will expand on the importance of the relation between labor and usefulness. For now, the crucial point is to understand that Washington's conception of general education does not have as its final purpose the mere accumulation of wealth through labor. The laboring activity, if performed intelligently, may result in material gains, but this is praiseworthy only insofar as it enables a man to be "useful, honest, and liberal" toward his neighbors and countrymen.[63] It is here, in this moment of ethical rumination, that Du Bois would protest that his emphasis of the preeminence of the liberal arts is justified; but Washington's reply is that the liberal arts are at best coextensive with industrial training, participating in the admixture of educational ingredients that will cultivate citizens with the means to be practicably conscientious. This, Washington believed, was especially important in deciding how to begin resolving the problem of the color line. The observable and tangible benefits derived from productive labor would do more to thaw relations between blacks and Southern whites than the vocative or literary effusions of "abstract eloquence."[64] Unaccompanied, a liberal arts education reveals itself to be an unsteady or

[60] *Ibid.*, 430.

[61] Washington, ed., *Selected Speeches*, 61.

[62] Theodore S. Boone, *The Philosophy of Booker T. Washington* (Fort Worth, TX: Manney Printing Co., 1939), 136.

[63] *Ibid.*, 72.

[64] *Ibid.*, 112. Du Bois, in fact, hoped that his book *The Souls of Black Folk* would be read widely, and that "from out its leaves" the "ears of a guilty people [would] tingle with truth" and give rise

uncertain ally in the quest to preserve the political community. It certainly has the potential to enrich the community by turning out men and women of taste and refinement, whose elevated thoughts and senses can sculpt columns out of crags, but it is limited in its capacity to motivate the multitude of oarsmen to work together in keeping the ship of state moving forward and toward its destination.

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to "thoughtful deed." Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 189. Ben Burks restates this plea in a more straightforward manner, saying that Du Bois' intent was "to provide an informational bridge across the chasm of color." Ben Burks, "Unity and Diversity through Education: A Comparison of the Thought of W.E.B. Du Bois and John Dewey," *Journal of Thought* 32, no. 1 (1997), 103.

Chapter 3

Life Is but a Motion of Limbs

Even at the dawn of the Age of Machine Learning, we bemoan the inevitability and inescapability of labor. Whether we task ourselves with the never finished work of household chores or sit in an air-conditioned office suite entering data into a spreadsheet, we tend to describe these moments of exertion by drawing on idioms of exaggeration. We "slave away" at the "daily grind" of "working in the salt mines." All this to answer the inquiry, What was your day at the office like? Booker T. Washington could lay claim to a more literal interpretation of all three expressions, not only because he had in fact at one point been a slave, but because his first job as a free youth involved moving barrels in a salt furnace.[1] And yet Washington, despite the variety of his own travails, never ceased in delivering his sermon on the dignity of labor. He is not a solitary outlier in holding this position; Hesiod's enthusiastic command to "Work!" can be traced as far back as the eighth century of antiquity. Nevertheless, both ordinary human inclination and philosophic meditation all seem to resist Washington's conviction. In practice, we find that people attempt to avoid or hurry through the sort of work that is repetitive, necessary, or difficult, or that is some combination of all these traits. Moreover, the desire to be free from such work has been justified by some of Western civilization's most authoritative thinkers. Washington, however, not only pushed back against this overwhelming feeling on the part of humanity, but he went so far as to insist that labor itself, properly engaged, maintains the stitching in the fabric of society.

In order to appreciate the apparent unnaturalness of Washington's conviction, we must try to understand why labor *as* labor has been unable to shed its poor reputation. The

[1] Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 18.

first section will sketch a brief outline of some of the key developments that have marked the evolution of work and labor throughout the history of Western civilization. This is important because our various conceptions of what work is and what value it possesses are matters of dispute whose resolution has significant implications for the organization of our communities and the fulfillment we can expect to find in them. While it is not the aim of this section to provide an exhaustive overview of each form of economic organization, it will illustrate the interesting variety of forms through which such organization has occurred and how they shaped the opinions of those who lived under their governance. The second section will present a condensed summary of Hannah Arendt's philosophical views elaborating the futility of labor and its distinction from other, more elevated forms of human activity. The third and final section will return us to the consideration of Washington's program and show how he understood labor, in spite of its many variations and detractors, to be both an essential and noble pursuit.

3.1 From the Fields to the Factories

The ancient Greeks were not the first human beings to appear on the earth, not even according to their own anthropogony; yet they often serve as the point of departure for historians, scholars of philosophy, and others who wish to understand, in one way or another, the present in the light of the past. Alfred Whitehead's well-known pronouncement that the whole tradition of Western philosophy "consists of a series of footnotes to Plato" is a testament to the radical comprehensiveness if not the ineludible authority of ancient Greek thought. Whether we glorify or denounce their words and deeds, whether we embrace them in romance or reject them in rebellion, they are, have been, and likely ever will be the central stimulus of Western intellectualism. So, if for nothing else but tradition's sake, let us begin with the ideas and habits of the Greeks and in particular with those who lived in the fourth and fifth centuries prior to the Christian era.

The most vivid feature of community life that we find in ancient Greece is that of the *polis*.[2] It is a difficult word to translate into English, and we often must settle for something like "city" or "city-state"; yet it is crucial to divorce ourselves from our modern conceptions of what a word like "city" implies, not only in structural terms but, more important, in normative terms as well. The *polis* was not a body of bureaucratic administrative agencies concerned with regulating a matrix of financial activities and dedicated to the protection of its citizens' rights. Nothing so technical and oriented toward the individual was ever conceived by the ancient Greeks. Instead, the *polis* was the ultimate union of a common people, one which represented a natural culmination arising from the joining of families and tribes. No permanent union of several *poleis* was ever imagined by the ancients because nothing exceeded the self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*) of the *polis*.[3] "Isolation," as Fustel de Coulanges put it, "was the law of the city."[4] Once established, the only remaining external relations available to it were those of war and diplomacy with respect to other *poleis*. Despite the existence of occasional alliances and confederations, the *polis* itself stood alone.

Internally, a *polis* received its overall character from its *politeia*, that is, its regime, understood as "the way of life of a city as reflected in the end pursued by the city as a whole and

[2]One of the most common translations of *polis* is "city-state," though it has sometimes been translated simply as "city" or "state." Harry Jaffa argues that all three translations are problematic because the sphere in which political activity occurs has changed significantly over the past two millennia. The muddled etymology of *polis* is evident when we consider another Greek word whose meaning has not changed at all in two thousand years: the "athlete" is to us what *athlētēs* was to the ancient Athenians. The same, however, cannot be said of the *polis*. Harry Jaffa, *The Conditions of Freedom: Essays in Political Philosophy* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 10. Strauss defines the *polis* as "the most comprehensive and the highest society since it aims at the highest and most comprehensive good at which any society can aim," which is happiness. This implies that the *polis* cannot remain neutral with respect to "the moral character of its members," a position that is antithetical to our modern belief that the state exists to serve our private interests as they manifest themselves in society. Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 31-33.

[3]Arist., *Pol.*, 1252b29-30. See also 1326b29-30: *to gar panta hyparchein kai deisthai mēthenos autarkes* ("for self-sufficiency is having everything available and being in need of nothing").

[4]Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study of the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc.: 2006), 202-203.

by those constituting its governing body."[5] Thus, at one time Sparta could be described as a diarchical kingship governed largely by a combination of oligarchic and democratic overseers, and the ends to which its conventions and laws were directed were war and domination.[6] In the paradigmatic *polis*, the citizens who actually possessed lawmaking power comprised a fraction of the community's total population. It excluded or severely reduced the political participation of women, constrained the membership of foreign inhabitants, and in most instances did not contemplate the political status of slaves.[7] As such, participation in the *polis* was reserved for a relatively small group of men. The life of these citizens, however, was not a quiet one free from incessant disturbances, for the *polis* encompassed many aspects of human activity, including religion and morality, that today we segregate into the sphere of society.[8] Neither "the philosopher [nor] the studious man," nor any other "private" individual, had "a right to live apart." No one could "escape this omnipotence of the of the state."[9]

Yet the pervasive lawmaking authority of the *polis* did not completely eliminate certain areas of nonpolitical activity, of which the most significant is the *oikos*. The *oikos* (in Latin, *domicilium*), or "home," constituted for the ancient Greeks what we today would call our sphere of privacy. It was in this "refuge" from the city that marital relations, childrearing, and all the activities properly belonging to the management of household affairs (*oikonomia*)

[5]Lord provides this definition in his glossary to the *Politics*, p. 247. A shorter rendition by Aristotle appears at 1295b: "...for the regime is the way of life of a city."

[6]Arist., *Pol.*, 1270b5-1271b5, 1324b8-9, 1333b10-15; Plato, *Laws*, 625C-626C.

[7]Slavery was not absolute in theory or practice, but to the extent a man happened to be a slave, his status during that time relegated him to the lowest rank in Greek society. For examples of the theoretical and practical flexibility toward slavery, see Arist., *Pol.*, 1330a32-34 and *Ath. Pol.* chap. 12. See also Jill Frank, "Citizens, Slaves, and Foreigners: Aristotle on Human Nature," *The American Political Science Review* 98, no. 4 (2004), 95, 101-102. Regardless, although the manumission of slaves in classical Greece was not uncommon, in the vast majority of cases freedmen (*apeleutheros*) never obtained the privileges of true citizenship. See Yvon Garlan, *Slavery in Ancient Greece*, Janet Lloyd, trans. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 80-81.

[8]Strauss, *The City and Man*, 33.

[9]Coulanges, *The Ancient City*, 220-221.

were performed without the constant oversight or intrusion of political functionaries.[10] Nevertheless, life in the *oikos* could not be separated from the deprivation that inheres in the original meaning of the word "privacy"; for although the *oikos* provided a citizen with food, shelter, and a bed, it alone could not serve as a space for him in which to achieve a fuller human existence.[11] That existence was one in which man was not only free from the multitude of burdens attending mere life (*bios*), but one in which his freedom would enable him to spend his leisure engaged in the definitive human activity of politics. However, in order for the political life to remain accessible over time, the active citizen needed a system to ensure that the bare necessities of his *bios* could be met without having to tend to all those matters personally. This was the liberating function fulfilled by the *oikos*; hence, it is why Aristotle, borrowing from Hesiod, describes the home as consisting of a house, wife, ox, and, in the case of well-to-do citizens, slaves.[12] Each of these served as a component whose economical functions maintained the household as a self-contained community; but while the daily routines they performed—farming, rearing, cleaning, cooking—sustained everyone who belonged to the household, only the husband and father was able to enjoy both the benefits of the *oikos* and the privileges of the *polis*. This opportunity was available mainly to the household head who had the material means to support a number of slaves whose work could be left to the stewardship of his wife.[13] As such, "[t]he visible *polis* constituted by the male citizens rested on an invisible and politically inarticulate body of slaves condemned to labor in private so that their masters might be free to devote time and effort to speech and action in public."[14] This escape from the life of necessity was not simply a matter of ridding oneself of upleasantries; according to Aristotle's conception of the best regime, the sloughing

[10]Paul Rahe, "The Primacy of Politics in Classical Greece," *The American Historical Review* 89, no. 2 (1984), 269.

[11]*Ibid.*, 273.

[12]Arist., *Pol.*, 1252b10-12.

[13]Dotan Leshem, "What Did the Greeks Mean by 'Oikonomia?"' *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 30, no. 1 (2016), 227. See also Arist., *Pol.*, 1260a34: "...the slave is useful with respect to the necessary things."

[14]Rahe, "The Primacy of Politics in Classical Greece," 271.

off of such menial duties made possible the opportunity to participate in a life in which the greatest virtue could be practiced and the greatest happiness achieved.[15]

With the dissolution of the Greek *polis* and, later, the destruction of the Roman Empire, came the gradual development of feudalism and the manorial system of economy and governance. Coeval with this system, but operating independently of it, were the various monastic orders whose organization and activities centered on worship and agriculture. Both systems were the result of a degree of reinvention during the Middle Ages. As Roman elites fled the remnants of their former empire, they tended to move toward one of the two new forms of occupation: lordship and liturgy.[16] In the manorial system, large swaths of arable land were divided among a number of lords whose estates served as the various loci of collective habitation. These lords then further divided their land among lower ranking vassals who in turn subdivided it even further among those below them. This process of subinfeudation had as its primary motive, not the capitalistic division of labor, but rather mutual assistance compelled by necessity. Primitive transportation and communication technologies made trading across expansive distances impractical if not totally prohibitive cost-wise, while the absence of enforceable law in the back-country served as a major disincentive for those who might otherwise have attempted to establish trade routes near areas patrolled by bandits.[17] Convenience and safety, therefore, impelled farmers, craftsmen, and others to enter serfdom by signing contracts with their local lords, whose wealth and military resources could protect the community and its property.[18] In return, the lord could rely on the numerous services

[15]Arist., *Pol.*, 1328b35-1329a3.

[16]Robin Patric Clair, *Why Work? The Perceptions of a "Real Job" and the Rhetoric of Work through the Ages* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008), 19.

[17]Douglass C. North and Robert Paul Thomas, "The Rise and Fall of the Manorial System: A Theoretical Model," *The Journal of Economic History* 31, no. 4 (1971), 782.

[18]Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), vol. I, bk. III, ch. III: "Those whom the law could not protect, and who were not strong enough to defend themselves, were obliged either to have recourse to the protection of some great lord, and in order to obtain it to become either his slaves or vassals; or to enter into a league of mutual defence for the common protection of one another."

and products provided by the serfs through which his manorial estate achieved a tolerable level of self-sufficiency.[19]

Living separately from the manor were the several orders of medieval monks, and particularly the Cistercians, who, "extirpating themselves from feudal entanglements," sought to replace "the manorial system with the use of lay brothers, and a sophisticated grange economy."[20] Their monastic abodes, or abbeys, were not to "be constructed in cities, castles, or villas, but in places far from human society."[21] Though not completely isolated from other inhabitants, the monks distinguished themselves by securing and cultivating many "compact blocks" of arable land, the products of which contributed to the economies of the surrounding region.[22] In addition to selling or trading their products with secular tenants and subjects living on manorial estates and in towns, those who lived the monastic life successfully propagated a number of their moral views. Thus, despite the image of aggrandizement supplied by the striking growth of monastic estates and capital, the prevailing moral strictures against defraudation and "profiteering from the extreme needs of others" remained essential components of moral uprightness.[23] What set the medieval mentality apart from that of the ancient Greeks, however, was an increasingly accepted belief in the holy responsibility men had "to live by the fruits of their own labor."[24] To be sure, the new virtue of industry could not in practice be disentangled from the economic utility of productive growth; but many monks, like those of the Cistercian order, rooted their justification of work in both Scripture and the early precepts of Saint Benedict. Thus:

[19]North and Thomas, "The Rise and Fall," 781.

[20]Ilana Friedrich Silber, "Monasticism and the 'Protestant Ethic': Asceticism, Rationality, and Wealth in the Medieval West," *The British Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 1 (1993), 114. See also Constance Hoffman Berman, "Medieval Agriculture, the Southern French Countryside, and the Early Cistercians. A Study of Forty-Three Monasteries," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 76, no. 5 (1986), 74-76.

[21]Berman, "Medieval Agriculture," 6.

[22]R.A. Donkin, "The Cistercian Order and the Settlement of Northern England," *Geographical Review* 59, no. 3 (1969), 408.

[23]Albino Barrera, "The Evolution of Social Ethics: Using Economic History to Understand Economic Ethics," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 27, no. 2 (1999), 288.

[24]Isabel Alfonso, "Cistercians and Feudalism," *Past & Present* no. 133 (1991), 3.

> Manual labor was both essential, as a means of subsistence following the Cistercian rejection of the traditional monastic income from rents, tithes, and the possession of churches, and intrinsic to a life of poverty and a way to salvation. It formed an essential part of monastic life as defined by Saint Benedict in chapter 48 of the Rule: "Idleness is the enemy of the soul. The brethren, therefore, must be occupied at stated hours in manual labor," and only if this is observed are they truly monks "when they live by the labor of their hands, like our father and the apostles."[25]

Yet whatever force these religious beliefs had over the minds of those who lived during the medieval period, a radical economic distinction began to arise between those who labored in the country and those who worked in the towns.

Townspeople and city dwellers were not contractually bound to a lord, and as a result, they gained a significant degree of independence to develop a separate system of economy.[26] This independence, however, exposed the working-class population to an unregulated and unstable environment. To bring some sense of order and predictability to their communities, artisans and tradesmen organized themselves into guilds segregated by profession and committed themselves to securing the common interests of their members.[27] While these common interests included a concern for economic security, guilds did not ordinarily operate according to the principle of profit maximization through mass production; other motivations, including "the transmittal of the craft, the aims of honour and prestige embodied in the 'masterpiece,' [and] the solidarity of the collective," had the effect of concentrating guild members' economic efforts on preserving a status quo of local self-sufficiency.[28] Work still required exertion and an occupation with technical activities, but these "societies as a rule were regulated by normative, non-market principles."[29]

Now, whether it was man's natural "propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another," or a portentous series of uncoordinated yet mutually reinforcing transforma-

[25] James France, *Separate but Equal: Cistercian Lay Brothers, 1120-1350* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 60. Cf. Psalm 128:2: "You will eat the fruit of your labor."

[26] Michael A. Zmolek, *Rethinking the Industrial Revolution: Five Centuries of Transition from Agrarian to Industrial Capitalism in England* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2013), 49-50.

[27] *Ibid.*, 55.

[28] *Ibid.*, 57-58.

[29] *Ibid.*, 54.

tions, the local protectionist matrices of the Middle Ages steadily dissolved and were replaced by mercantilism.[30] Adam Smith attributed the economic shift to a gradual if incomplete relaxing of the relationship between burghers, or city-dwellers, and their sovereigns. As the townspeople perceived themselves to be acquiring a greater degree of liberty and security, they felt encouraged to direct their industry beyond mere subsistence toward "the conveniencies and elegancies of life."[31] From their ranks emerged the class of professional merchants, whose "pedlar principle of turning a penny wherever a penny was to be got" spread not only among the spirited class of budding entrepreneurs, but also was adopted by the governing powers of Europe.[32] The acquisition and accumulation of wealth in the form of gold and silver became the chief motivation of private men and heads of state alike; yet the two groups did not at first agree on the same principles of political economy. Sovereigns sought to restrict the exportation of precious metals on the grounds that an outflow of those materials to other countries engaged in the market exchange risked permanently diminishing the wealth of one's own country to the advantage of one's competitors. The merchants, however, insisted that it was impossible to prevent the exportation of gold and silver, such that, rather than constrain the mercantilist activities of individual actors, the state should concern itself with pursuing a "balance of trade" through protectionist measures at the international level, including the levying of imposts and the subsidization of "domestic industries."[33]

By the eighteenth century, Smith and other economic thinkers had rejected the mercantilists' protectionist position on the grounds that money, like wine or linen, was simply another commodity for which "the attention of government never was so unnecessarily

[30]The quoted phrase comes from Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, vol. I, bk. I, ch. II. Karl Polanyi calls this fundamentally economic view of man "almost entirely apocryphal," and he argues that the development of a pervasive (i.e., countrywide) market system arose as "a response to many challenges," including somewhat tautologically, "the Commercial Revolution" itself. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1957), 44, 65.

[31]Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, vol, I, bk. II, ch. III.

[32]*Ibid.*, vol. I, bk. III, ch. IV.

[33]Jonathan Barth, "Reconstructing Mercantilism: Consensus and Conflict in British Imperial Economy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 73, no. 2 (2016), 266. See also Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, vol. II, bk. IV, ch. I.

employed."[34] Not only would an application of the principles of free trade to the international market produce a "naturally" self-regulating system, enabling nations to maintain an acceptable state of economic equilibrium, but the mercantilist obsession with amassing an ever-growing national stock of gold and silver was itself a pernicious and wrong-headed belief. "Wealth," Smith insisted, "does not consist in money... but in what money purchases." Consumable goods such as bread, clothing, and livestock may be less durable or permanent than money, but they possess an essence that renders them far more vital in the light of life's endless exigencies.[35] Moreover, as exchangeable goods their "real value" arises from the labor by which they were produced. In primitive societies, for example, the cost of producing something like a wool tunic would include, among other things, shearing the sheep, spinning the yarn, dyeing the wool, and weaving the material into a wearable garment; and the entire process may have been the responsibility of only one or two people. The "quantity of labor" built into a tunic, however, fell on the ancient laborer in greater proportion than it does on the modern employee, whose efforts have in many cases been simplified and alleviated by the introduction of machines and the division of labor. This improvement in the "productive powers" of the working class causes the market value of mass-manufactured goods to decrease, and "a general plenty diffuses itself through all the different ranks of society."[36]

Together, the division of labor and the self-regulating market formed the basic components of early capitalism and helped to drive the progress of the Industrial Revolution. This transformation did not and could not have occurred without simultaneously producing great shocks and disruptions throughout the countries and societies affected by it. Those most adversely affected by the new political economy were the members of the working class. It is true, as Smith said, that, generally speaking, the poorest man in a capitalist society experiences a degree of personal welfare far greater than that experienced by some of the most

[34]Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, vol. I, bk. IV, ch. I.
[35]*Ibid.*, vol. I, bk. IV, ch. I.
[36]*Ibid.*, vol. I, bk. I, ch. I.

well-off figures in the least developed societies; yet, like every sociopolitical invention designed by human minds, capitalism proved to be an imperfect system. By converting the majority of skilled craftsmen into assembly-line wage earners, the new system was susceptible of two significant hazards. First, "the rivalship of competitors," resulting from a playing field of free competition among a surplus of workers, created an environment in which all men seeking a job "endeavour[ed] to justle one another out of employment."[37] Those whose industrial upbringing had reduced their marketable talents to the performance of a limited number of narrow, repetitive tasks could not easily shift for themselves in the barren land of joblessness. In the larger cities, at least, the prospects for success as a skilled craftsman diminished in the face of factory-powered mass production, while the largescale accumulation of land and capital by others reduced the opportunities available to a poor man to farm the fruits of his own labor and still raise a family. Second, the nature of the work accomplished through the division of labor tended to have a deleterious effect on the minds of those who earned their livelihood through it. Smith himself acknowledged that, "[i]n the progress of the division of labor. . . [t]he man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations" becomes insensate toward "any generous, noble, or tender sentiment," instead losing his intellectual and social virtues to a "drowsy stupidity."[38]

More than the practical upheavals wrought by the forceful onset of industrialism, it was the attendant impoverishment of man's inner world that led Karl Marx to become the champion of communism as the alternative to an economy founded on capitalism. Marx rejected Smith's optimistic view that "a general plenty diffuses itself through all the different ranks of society." He feared, rather, that wage labor and the factory structure of the new workplace inevitably extinguished the vibrancy of life within a human being; that "[b]y reducing the worker's need to the barest and most miserable level of physical existence, and by reducing his activity to the most abstract mechanical movement," the capitalist system ensured that "everything that goes beyond the most abstract need," including those experiences in "the

[37] *Ibid.*, vol. II, bk. V, ch. I.
[38] *Ibid.*, vol. II, bk. V, ch. III.

realm of passive enjoyment," is an unnecessary luxury.[39] The very nature of capitalism, Marx believed, guaranteed this outcome; for capitalism is nothing more than "governing power over labor and its products" the sole purpose of which is to yield profits to the owners of human stock.[40] Capitalism therefore divides society into a mass of commoditized workers and a few privileged "masters of labor."[41] Through competition, that "war among the avaricious," these owners of capital and men are supposed to pursue invention and methods of efficiency for the purpose of lowering the cost of production and thus securing a greater proportion of the market's consumer base, with the result being a wider and more affordable menu of goods available to every citizen; yet regardless of the individual man's ability to purchase such things, his cog-like integration into the capitalist system instead resulted in the gradual ruination of both his life and the life of his society. As the "world of things" increases in value, the "world of men" undergoes a proportionate "devaluation" whereby the worker is transmogrified into a creature-commodity tasked with the endless, repetitious production of consumer commodities.[42] His labor is absorbed by the products he helps to make, which, in exchange for wages, are then separated from him to be sold by the capitalist for a profit. It is this "alienation" from the fruits of his labor that truly reduces man to a subhuman existence; for not only does he lose possession of what his hands have made, but his laboring activity itself becomes a means "to satisfy needs external to it," namely, the demands of the capitalist to secure his ever-deepening bottom line.[43] What man truly surrenders, asserts Marx, is not just the product of his labor but rather his very essence as a human being. Labor as a "life-activity," as mere subsistence, is common to both man and beast; neither can escape it without terminating in suicide. It is man's consciousness, however, that distinguishes him from all other beings and enables him to direct his labor toward the creation of a world

[39]Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, trans. Martin Milligan (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988), 118.
[40]*Ibid.*, 36.
[41]*Ibid.*, 81.
[42]*Ibid.*, 71.
[43]*Ibid.*, 74.

drawn from the raw materials of nature. In so doing, the creative products of his willed labor result in the "objectification" of a life unique to the human species. They become enduring instantiations of the "spontaneous activity" that characterizes the life of a freeman.[44] Thus, despite his abhorrence toward modern industrial society, Marx, like many before him, parted ways with the ancient Greek opinion that labor was something to be shunned and instead placed labor at the center of man's active life.

Yet not everyone has been convinced of the centrality or even of the great importance of labor as an aspect of man's life. In the mid-twentieth century, the political theorist Hannah Arendt emerged as one of the most trenchant critics of the pro-labor viewpoint. Her proposition, in which she relegates labor to the lowest possible level of existence while elevating speech and action to the highest, resonates with an affection for the ancient Greek perspective. Arendt's work is significant, not only because it stands athwart the prevailing common opinion, but because its skepticism of the alleged dignity of labor serves as a powerful indictment of Booker T. Washington's civilizing efforts. The following section supplies a brief outline of Arendt's proposition while the third and final section of this chapter will attempt to determine whether Washington's favorable opinion toward labor has any merit.

3.2 Labor as the Lowliest Rung

Published in 1958, one year after the successful launching of Sputnik, Hannah Arendt's book *The Human Condition* is a reflection on man's constant desire to liberate himself from "the burden of laboring and the bondage to necessity." The advent of Sputnik, of man's desire to escape "the earth as a prison for [his] body," foreshadows several tragedies, including the inability of humans to communicate coherently, a necessary consequence of the displacement of ordinary language by scientific notation and technobabble. But the greatest tragedy, Arendt claims, will be man's successful liberation from labor. This is because "[t]he modern age has carried with it a theoretical glorification of labor and has resulted in a

[44] *Ibid.*, 76-77.

factual transformation of the whole of society into a laboring society."[45] Having been bred out of the awareness of "other higher and more meaningful activities," the end of labor through technological advancement leaves us facing "the prospect of a society of laborers without labor, that is, without the only activity left to them." The rapid deterioration of such a life-defining belief would strip from people the meaningfulness of the sum of the efforts, hardships, and sacrifices they endured to secure the American-bred aspiration we call a career. "Surely," Arendt says, "nothing could be worse."[46] And yet, we find ourselves in this predicament because we have been persuaded by men like Booker T. Washington whose emphasis on the dignity of labor, it is said, occluded our vision of an alternative and more specifically human way of life. This of course raises the question: What in addition to labor is there for man to do?

Arendt's answer to this question is found in the unpacking of the titular theme of her work. The human condition is nothing more than the conditioned life of man. That is to say, man as man is understood to be what he is in the light of those things of the world that engage his mind and body and which bring about the experiences that define his existence. Although she admits the possibility of numerous conditioning factors, Arendt chooses to focus on three conditions that contribute to the comprehensive or complete human condition. These are life itself, worldliness, and plurality. She employs the word "condition" to mean an aspect or fact of our existence that determines our activities as living human beings, that is, our *vita activa*. Thus, the condition of mere life results in the human activity of labor, whose utility is intended simply for the preservation and reproduction of "the biological process of the human body"; the condition of worldliness is work, that human activity that takes the raw materials of nature, shapes them into durable goods through the process of fabrication, and therefore creates the human world of artifice; and the condition of plurality results in action which is specifically the condition of politics.[47] By plurality, Arendt means to emphasize the

[45]Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 4.

[46]*Ibid.*, 5.

[47]*Ibid.*, 7.

"paradoxical plurality of unique beings" that comprise the human species. In other words, although all men belong to the same species, every particular man is different from every other man.[48]

With the use of the term *vita activa*, Hannah Arendt wishes to clarify the "distinctions and articulations" within it, which she believes have been "blurred" by the supreme status assigned to the *vita contemplativa* by both Plato and certain medieval Christian scholars. The blurring that Arendt finds most objectionable is that which sorts politics into the same "abased" category of low activities that includes labor and work.[49] The development of ideas leading to this recategorization began shortly after "the disappearance of the ancient city-state." Prior to that, the term *vita activa* was not much different than the Latin rendition of Aristotle's *bios politikos*, that is, the "life devoted to public-political matters." For Aristotle, the *bios politikos* was preferable to both labor and work because it could be chosen freely by those with the means to engage in it. To commit oneself voluntarily to the activity of labor, as Washington would have us do, represents a perverse willingness to live, if not a subhuman life, then a life that is human in only the most minimal sense. In its Aristotelian rendition, the life of political activity was a life liberated from all the chains of necessity. Yet even as early as Plato, the *vita contemplativa* (in Greek, *bios theoretikos*) emerged as a contender for the highest human activity, as the busybodiness (*polypragmon*) of politics came to be seen as an impediment to the philosopher's way of life, whose contemplative goal requires "an almost breathless abstention from external physical movement and activity of every kind."[50] Plato's famed kallipolis, the "beautiful city" that could exist only in speech, revealed itself as a paradigm designed to accommodate philosophy and to shield it from the innumerable distractions destined to erode the silence required for the contact of the

[48] *Ibid.*, 176.

[49] *Ibid.*, 16-17.

[50] *Ibid.*, 12-15. Cf. Strauss, *The City and Man*, 29: "[T]he only reason why not Socrates but Aristotle became the founder of political science is that Socrates who spent his life in the unending ascent to the idea of the good and in awakening others to that ascent, lacked for this reason the leisure not only for political activity but even for founding political science."

soul's intellect with those "ungenerated and indestructible" eternal things of the universe that form the immaterial sources of our knowledge. It is this concern with the eternal that truly distinguishes the *vita contemplativa* from the *vita activa*. The central concern of the *vita activa*, Arendt asserts, is the quest for immortality; not biological immorality but the "everlastingness" obtained through the production of "works and deeds and words" whose significance grants them the durability and memorability to survive across the ages. It is the active life, and not the strictly contemplative life, that for most men offers them the opportunity to leave their mark on the world; to prove to themselves and others that a man whose life meant something once dwelled here.

Today, we sometimes refer to our public affairs as those things that transpire in the *polis*. For Arendt, this use of the term is too casual and therefore inaccurate. It is also misleading because it supplies us with an image of politics in which the real meaning of the *polis* is no longer remembered. In the ancient Greek world, the two lower tiers of the *vita activa*, labor and work, were viewed as occupations whose activities must be assigned to others of a lower status, like slaves and women, for there to exist a separate realm of activity where man's actions could be said to be authentically free. Not free in the sense of being an "isolated monad" sequestered from all human noise and motion, but free from the necessities of life and the distractions of work. In contrast to the life of the philosopher, the *polis*-inhabiting man of public affairs finds that his actions are "entirely dependent upon the constant presence of others." This congregational environment is what gives political action its singularly human quality. Drawing on Aristotle's assertion that only beasts and gods can live outside the city, Arendt acknowledges that man can still engage in labor and work in the absence of companions; however, the isolated laborer devolves into a mere *animal laborans* while the isolated fabricator is transformed into something like a "divine demiurge."[51] In theory both lives are possible, but neither achieves the dignity or fulfillment of man at the height of manhood.

[51]Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 22. For Aristotle's comment regarding beasts and gods, see *Pol.* 1253a25.

The rise of the modern nation-state, with its vast territory and large populations, accelerated the gradual transformation away from a world in which the *polis* existed independently of both the private realm of the *oikos*, the "home," and the frenzied bustling of the marketplace; meanwhile the subsequent rise of political economy helped to bring about the completion of this transformation by absorbing many of the management tasks traditionally reserved for housemaids and merchants. When the spheres of politics and household management merged, the result was the emergence of a new intermediate sphere we now call society. Thus, "the rise of society" is nothing more than "the rise of the 'household.'"[52] In ministering to the economic needs of its people, the nation-state necessarily comprehends its collective citizens as "one super-human family." Whereas in the ancient world the political sphere offered man a "second life" above and beyond the *oikos*, where he was "no longer bound to the biological life process," the dissolution of the political into the economic and social environments practically eliminated any opportunity for the expressive individuality that can reveal itself only in the immortalizing "deeds or achievements" of a true citizen class.[53] Once politics became a mere "function of society," it lost its meaning as a "sphere of freedom" and "in a relatively short time the new social realm transformed all modern communities into societies of laborers and jobholders."[54]

Recalling that Arendt makes a distinction between labor and work as two components of the *vita activa*, we might ask ourselves what it is exactly that differentiates one from the other. Although today we might still conceive of labor as requiring greater exertion than work, both activities appear to be similar enough that we could call them synonyms. Yet it is precisely the persistence of these two separate words, across millennia and across numerous European languages, that suggests a peculiarity worth investigating.[55] The distinction appears when

[52] *Ibid.*, 33

[53] *Ibid.*, 24, 36-37, 41.

[54] *Ibid.*, 46.

[55] As examples, Arendt lists the Greek (*ponein* and *ergazesthai*), Latin (*laborare* and *facere*), French (*travailler* and *ouvrer*), and German (*arbeiten* and *werken*) versions of the verbs "to labor" and "to work."

we recognize that "the word 'labor,' understood as a noun, never designates the finished product" of the laboring activity.[56] The work of the worker, on the other hand, signifies something both concrete and complete. It is the endless repetition of labor that renders it fruitless and even futile in the light of alternatives. This distinction between meaninglessness and meaningfulness is what led the ancient Greeks to relegate labor to its lowly status. The biological life process may be an ineluctable aspect of the human condition, but to the extent that the laboring activity can be reassigned and still serve its purpose, so much the better; otherwise, to be compelled to labor because of one's circumstances "meant to be enslaved by necessity." This is what distinguished the Greek system of slavery from its modern variants: "The institution of slavery in antiquity... was not a device for cheap labor or an instrument of exploitation for profit but rather the attempt to exclude labor from the conditions of man's life."[57]

In contrast to labor, Arendt describes work as that activity which offers man the opportunity to change his relationship with nature. *Homo faber*, man the maker, takes the raw materials of nature and uses his hands to craft entirely manmade artifacts. He becomes a "creator of artifice" and a "destroyer of nature."[58] Unlike the laborer, the worker or craftsman is not subjugated by nature as a result of his menial dependency but rather subjugates nature through his ingenuity and the strength of his manufacturing activity.[59] His products are defined by their durability and utility, and they become permanent features of the manmade world. This process of world-building via the creation of artifacts grants *homo faber* a degree of freedom that the laborer does not have; for the worker chooses what he wants to make and for what purpose. It is true, of course, that repeated use of manmade objects can degrade or even destroy them, but the difference between labor and work is that destruction is only "incidental" to the use of objects, whereas it is "inherent' in the consumption of nature's

[56] *Ibid.*, 80.
[57] *Ibid.*, 83-84.
[58] *Ibid.*, 137.
[59] *Ibid.*, 140.

products.[60] The laborer *qua* laborer may use the tools created by the worker, but in a sense the instrumentality of the instrument becomes indistinct as the tool is absorbed into the rhythmic cyclicality of the life process to which the laborer is bound.[61] In perceiving the contrast between the mere laborer and the energetic craftsman it is tempting to become preoccupied with the imperfections of the former and blind to those of the latter; yet there is a fundamental problem—that is, a problem insofar as meaning is concerned—built into the life of *homo faber*, and that is his utilitarian orientation. The laboring activity earns its poor reputation on the basis that its "compulsory repetition," in which "one must eat in order to labor and must labor in order to eat," integrates man's life so thoroughly with the endless reproductive process of nature that his existence is no more distinctive than that of the programmatic organelle in its cytoplasmic microcosm.[62] In the pale light of such bleakness, the craftsman's creative freedom appears to be the key to finding meaning in life; but because work as opposed to labor is often guided by the standard of utility, it is questionable whether the life of *homo faber* is capable of aiming at the highest end available to man. That is because, Arendt says, all the apparent ends of the craftsman's productive efforts soon become means for other ends. The ax, the coat, and the glass window all are products of the manufacturing activity, and therefore each an "end with respect to the means by which it was produced," but none is "an end in itself."[63] The ax becomes a means for chopping; the coat, a means for providing warmth against the cold; and as for the window, "the whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it."[64] Man the maker ensnares himself in a kind of meaninglessness when he makes "usefulness and utility... the ultimate standards for life and the world of men," for if the "worthless" materials of nature can in his hands do no more than produce objects without any "intrinsic value," then the world of

[60] *Ibid.*, 138.
[61] *Ibid.*, 147.
[62] *Ibid.*, 143.
[63] *Ibid.*, 153.
[64] C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1974), 81.

men itself becomes lost in a never-ending chain in which "every end is transformed into a means."[65]

Neither labor nor work, Arendt concludes, can lead men to the uniquely human fulfillment of actualization. That actualization depends on man's ability to become the individual that he is through his contact with the multitude of other individuals around him. Human contact is of course present in both the laboring and working activities, but its quality differs from that which obtains among men engaged in the action of public-political affairs. The mere "somatic experience of laboring together," of toiling in unison, binds men together as a single writhing body whose joint efforts are no more able to escape the endless metabolism of life than the isolated *animal laborans* who sweats in solitude. In either case, the individual's identity is effaced in the oblivion inherent to the apolitical environment of nature.[66] And while it is true that "craftsmen meet their peers" in a "common public realm," their association lacks the authentically human element of political community. In the end, the public realm in which the craftsmen gather is an "exchange market" whose participants "are primarily not persons but producers of products."[67] The emergence of the *what* as opposed to the appearance of the *who* indicates that the individual man and his unique identity remain hidden. If we ask, "John, who are you?" and he replies, "I am a carpenter," it is likely we have learned little more than *what* John is. This is not to say that the *who* becomes easily apprehensible in any public space in which one interlocutor persistently interrogates another; however, to the extent that such apprehension is possible, it is possible only in the "realm of human affairs, where we exist primarily as acting and speaking beings." The individual distinctiveness that arises from the plurality of men requires speeches and deeds; without these things there would be no need "to make themselves understood."[68] Like T.H. White's formicidine colony, all human life would be reduced to a binary experience in which the only perceptible signals are Done and Not Done. Through public or political action, however,

[65] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 156-157.
[66] *Ibid.*, 214-215.
[67] *Ibid.*, 209.
[68] *Ibid.*, 175-176, 181.

man is able to make himself "appear" to others as this or that particular man and not just another "physical object" of "mere bodily existence." Indeed, speech itself is the key to making action "relevant," for in its absence action "would lose its [distinctive] subject" and render man a mere "performing robot."[69] But when speech combines with deed in the realm of public affairs, men become the heroes of their unauthored lives and *who* they are is continually revealed in the meaningful interactions they have with those who congregate with them.[70]

3.3 The Balanced Man

Arendt's criticism of labor's ascendance, in addition to her powerful image of the man of action, is an intimidating challenge for anyone who wishes to propose something different; yet Washington's proposal does just that. This is not to say that Washington is hostile toward the Arendtian conception of man, but his thought, though broad and forward-looking, was also formed in large part by the reality of the circumstances around him; and from the particular features of those circumstances he reached certain general conclusions about man's nature and its relation to finding meaning in civil society.

> For years I have had something of an opportunity to study the Negro at first-hand; and I feel that I know him pretty well—him and his needs, his failures and his successes, his desires and the likelihood of their fulfillment. I have studied him and his relations with his white neighbours, and have striven to find how these relations may be made more conducive to the general peace and welfare both of the South and of the country at large.[71]

The unusual situation presented by the sudden influx of millions of untutored former slaves and their children into civil society confronted Washington and other leading Americans with a jarring image of two starkly different groups of human beings who by some miracle must be brought together in civic unity for the general welfare of their shared nation. But this could not be accomplished simply by "graft[ing] a fifteenth-century civilization onto a

[69] *Ibid.*, 176-179.
[70] *Ibid.*, 184-186.
[71] Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 16.

twentieth-century civilization."[72] The gulf between them was too great, not in terms of their fundamental humanity but in terms of each race's collective experience in moving, thinking, and acting within the world of rights and responsibilities of Western civilization.[73] Not only had the original American slave population been involuntarily uprooted and transplanted from its homeland, but, despite having begun "to reproduce itself naturally [on the plantations] sometime around the middle of the eighteenth century," all attempts to establish any semblance of natural social community were the targets of manipulation, forbiddance, or outright destruction by the slave owning class.[74] Indeed, "with no past, no inherited traditions of learning," the black freedmen were unequipped to prosper in a regime that expected of its citizens an aptitude for self-government.[75]

Slavery, however, revealed itself to be "a curse to both races."[76] For Washington, this truth was crystallized in the image of the dilapidated mansion of the former slave master, whose broken plaster walls, missing windowpanes, faded paint, gap-toothed fencing, and weed-conquered lawns left him in possession of an estate hardly more admirable than the humble cabin belonging to the hapless freedman. More than that, the gradual ruin of the master's estate exposed the extent to which he had become "dependent upon the activity and faithfulness of his slaves" and to which "slavery had sapped his sinews of strength and independence," leaving him in "despair, almost utter hopelessness, over his weak and childlike condition."[77] Whatever else manhood may comprise, it would seem odd not to find in it a degree of autonomy and self-direction by which the man in question becomes capable of personally contributing his talents to the formation and maintenance of the "visible signs

[72]Washington, ed., *Selected Speeches*, 67.

[73]"The Negro is behind the white man because he has not had the same chance, and not from any inherent difference in his nature and desires." Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 26

[74]Steven Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2005), 17, 32-33.

[75]Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 25-26.

[76]Washington, *The Negro Problem*, 10.

[77]*Ibid.*, 43-44.

of civilization."[78] Washington stresses that he is not interested in "exalting too high the material side of life"; but without the will or means to tend to the productive processes that supply a community with its necessities year to year, the opportunities available for citizens to practice the political and contemplative arts as a matter of course will become as uncertain as the inclemencies of the natural environment around them. Every man must therefore have something of a founder within him. He must recognize and cultivate, rather than shun and neglect, the spirit of initiative that drives the political mason as well as the political architect. But when slavery is fully integrated into the political regime, it leads to the dissipation of that spirit and makes a man so thoroughly opposed to the ordinary tasks of life that when chaos upsets the established order—and at some point it always does—he will either flounder or, like Locke's man of sullen resignation, "not use his legs, but sit still and perish, because he had no wings to fly."[79]

Neither of these outcomes is in Washington's view fit to be called noble or praiseworthy. Indeed, "It is more lamentable to see educated people unable to support themselves than to see uneducated people in the same condition."[80] This is so, not because the educated person has fallen from such great heights to such low depths, but because his education signifies that at one point he had the opportunity to make himself into a well-rounded and balanced man; one who, in addition to mental training, invested himself with the habits and rugged virtues necessary for standing stalwart in the face of fortune's hardships, able to rebuild himself and restore his community after the last gale and quake have quit. Not every day brings with it of course the threat of utter catastrophe, but there is nonetheless a constant duty and responsibility to make oneself capable of surmounting life's numerous difficulties as they arise. This is not to say that every person ought to exhaust himself in the pursuit of becoming a jack-of-all-trades. The thrust of Washington's admonition is simply this: to underscore the

[78]J. J. Pipkin, ed., "The Negro and the Signs of Civilization," in *The Negro in Revelation, in History, and in Citizenship*, (St. Louis, MO: N.D. Thompson Publishing Company, 1902), 252.

[79]John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1997), 57.

[80]Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 72.

importance of learning not to recoil from labor *qua* labor as something so loathsome that it becomes as embarrassing as the excremental process. "Working," says Washington, "means civilization."[81] And the building of civilization, insofar as it results from human will and activity, requires both ascension and preservation.

Washington was acutely aware of the essential role of preservation in transmitting civilization across generations. Like other serious thinkers before him, he understood that beneath the city's bricks and concrete were roots connecting it and its citizens to the inhospitable heath. The origin of every political community arises from a desperation to pare the numerous inconveniences and miseries that accompany the life of civil disaggregation. Men may in part be driven toward one another by an inborn sociability, but it is out of necessity that the initial political association develops.[82] "The three prime conditions for growth, for civilisation" are "food, clothing, [and] shelter."[83] No imagined prepolitical state of nature is needed to acknowledge this truth. In the immediate aftermath of every widespread catastrophe—tsunamis, tornadoes, famine, war—the miserable state of the deracinated victims is proof enough to convince us of man's natural indigence; and until help arrives in the form of modern technology, nothing else but grim determination and hard work is capable of ferrying him from one day to the next. Washington grasped this fact first-hand in his experience both as a freedman and as a leader of black Americans; but the examples provided by the decaying plantation homes and the postbellum subservience of the black community enabled him to draw the more general conclusion that civilization cannot be a self-sustaining enterprise

[81]Washington, ed., *Selected Speeches*, 111.

[82]According to Socrates: "Well, then, a city, as I believe, comes into being because each of us isn't self-sufficient but is in need of much." Pl., *Rep.*, 369b. "The complete community. . . is the city. . . and while coming into being for the sake of living, it exists for the sake of living well." Arist., *Pol.*, 1252b28-30. "The finall cause, end, or designe of men, in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves (in which we see them live in Common-wealths) is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby." Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, 2004), ch. XVII. "God having made Man such a Creature, that, in his own Judgment, it was not good for him to be alone, put him under strong Obligations of Necessity, Convenience, and Inclination to drive him into Society. . . ." John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1992), II, ch. VII, §77.

[83]Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 52.

without constant human effort of which labor and work form a necessary part. Necessary activity is the prerequisite to the necessary things, and it is these things in turn that make possible the "highest civilization" today and tomorrow.[84] Neither Aristotle nor Arendt deny this, but their dim view of labor and work prompts us to attend carefully to at least two important questions: Who is to shoulder the burden of performing civilization's ongoing, necessary tasks? What is to be the status of those who shoulder the burden?

In Book I of the *Politics*, Aristotle issues his famously provocative claim that some men are slaves by nature and that, as a consequence, slavery is not in every instance unjust. He reaches this conclusion in the following way. All living things are comprised of numerous parts that possess an internal functional relationship in which there is "a ruling and a ruled element." In animals, and particularly in the case of human beings, this relationship arises between the soul and the body, where the "soul rules the body with the rule of a master."[85] The soul too is comprised of more than one part. In it we find the intellect and the appetite, and, according to Aristotle, the former rules the latter in a kingly or political fashion. In a well-governed man, then, his intellect superintends over his passions and his well-ordered soul directs his body toward those things and habits that are noble, proper, and good. The natural slave, however, is identified by his limited reason which makes him amenable to instruction but leaves him best suited for the type of work (*ergon*) that requires bodily exertions.[86] He is "as different from other men as the soul from the body or man from beast."[87] Slavery

[84]Washington, ed., *Selected Speeches*, 76.

[85]Arist., *Pol.*, 1254a35-1254b10.

[86]The noun *ergon* is quite versatile, and while it is often used to refer to many kinds of activity in which a person is occupied by some sort of productive work (e.g., carpentry and leather-working), Aristotle's use of the term gives it a broader application. This is evident in the *Nicomachean Ethics* wherein he refers to the *ergon* of the eye as well as to the *ergon* of the human being (*anthrōpos*) itself. Arist., *Nic. Eth.*, 1.7. For a lengthy discussion of *ergon* in both the *Politics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, see A. W. H. Adkins, "The Connection between Aristotle's Ethics and Politics," *Political Theory* 12, no. 1 (1984), passim. Still, in ancient Greece the word frequently was associated with work such as farming that was laborious, physically taxing, and required muscular force. As such, although natural slaves are responsive to reasoned instruction, the *ergon* natural to their condition is, like that of tame animals, "bodily assistance in [procuring] the necessary things" that sustain both the home (*oikos*) and the city (*polis*).

[87]Arist., *Pol.*, 1254b17-18.

as such is aptly a despotic form of rule. But, in addition to being a natural relationship, wherein the higher rules the lower, it is also "advantageous and just" insofar as the natural slave is safekept through the supervision provided to him by a good master. To equalize or reverse such a relationship, Aristotle says, would be "harmful."[88] But what sort of person is rightly categorized as a natural slave? Aristotle does not provide a clear or precise answer to this question; though he does seem to consider that such a category must at times include within it the "barbarians" (*barbaroi*) of Europe and Asia, who themselves unjustly enslave women and lack the practical reason necessary for living a virtuous and happy life.[89] But Aristotle does not stop here. Regardless of the natural slave's ethnography, a person cannot be a citizen of the city so long as he is unable to be a "craftsman of virtue," that is, someone who possesses the means and the will to pursue the noblest life possible. Such a life therefore is unavailable to the natural slave as well as to the Greek laborer whose waking hours are spent performing an endless series of menial tasks.[90] Yet in conceiving of the "best regime" we could possibly wish for, Aristotle also permanently excludes from the citizen class farmers and merchants. Indeed, in such an ideal state the only true citizens turn out to be a rare class of individuals who not only possess enough wealth to free themselves from the necessities of daily life but are also imbued with a practical wisdom that guides them toward the virtuous use of their money and leisure. "Farmers, artisans, and the entire laboring element must necessarily be present in cities," not just because their efforts yield the productive material that serves as the ineliminable mortar and foundation on which the whole community rests, but because they extend to "those to whom it is not open to be bothered with such things" the opportunity to "engage in politics or philosophy."[91]

[88] *Ibid.* 1254b9-10.

[89] "In every other respect a natural slave may be extremely intelligent; but he lacks the capacity to make reasoned judgments about what he should do consistently with his conception of living well in general. And this renders him incapable of living a worthwhile human life." Malcom Heath, "Aristotle on Natural Slavery," *Phronesis* 53, no. 3 (2008), 253. See also Arist., *Pol.*, 1252b5-9, 1280a31-34.

[90] Arist., *Pol.*, 1328b35-1329a21.

[91] *Ibid.* 1255b34-38, 1329a36-37.

On the one hand, then, we have Aristotle's well-governed man, whose leisurely life of scholarly and political pursuits are made possible by a toiling slave class; and on the other, we have Washington's balanced man, who is exhorted to develop himself morally and intellectually while at the same time earning his living within the community through the practice of some profession. Are these two models mutually exclusive? Must we reject one in favor of the other? The answer to these questions depends on the theoretical perspective we adopt. If we look to Aristotle's method in the *Politics*, we find that he directs his philosophic inquiries toward two different types of matters: those that are ideal or spoken of in an "unqualified" (*haplōs*) sense and those that are practicable given the constraints of actual circumstances.[92] Unlike Aristotle, Washington left behind no written meditations on ideal states; his nature and immediate responsibilities instead always led him to concentrate his thoughts on the substantive challenges surrounding him. Ultimately, the resolution of sociopolitical problems requires something real and concrete; for "the further [a man] gets away from the material, and the more nearly he approaches the intellectual and spiritual life, the more uncertainty surrounds him."[93] But Aristotle was also a practical man, and he repeatedly emphasized the difference between imagining a political community whose coming into being would require almost divine assistance[94] and arriving at actionable judgments about the best possible regime here and now,

> for it is perhaps impossible for many [cities] to obtain the best [regime], so neither the one that is superior simply nor the one that is *the best that circumstances allow* should be overlooked by the good legislator and the political ruler in the true sense.[95]

[92]For Aristotle's purposes, an ideal conception is not useful if any of its suppositions exist outside the realm of possibility. Its perfection may be highly improbable in terms of the likelihood of its realization, but its imagined features and qualities cannot be impossible. For example, in conceiving of an ideal city, Aristotle is not prepared to entertain the notion of limitless territory or populations. Arist., *Pol.*, 1265a17, 7.4.

[93]Washington, ed., *Selected Speeches*, 107.

[94]Aristotle frequently precedes his discussions of ideal states by describing them as things so perfect or excellent that we must yearn for them through prayer (*euchē*). See fn. 1 in Book 2 of Lord's translation of the *Politics*, 2nd edition. For instances of this expression, see Arist., *Pol.*, 1260b30, 1265a18, 1288b24, 1295a29, 1327a4.

[95]*Ibid.* 1288b25-28. Emphasis added.

Moreover, good statesmanship requires one to consider not just political communities whose circumstances make them incapable of receiving either the absolute best regime or even the "best possible among existing [models]," but also those whose flaws, weaknesses, and privations render them capable of receiving nothing greater than that which is "poorer" (*phauloteron*) relative to all the others.[96] In other words, the duties that inhere in the classical understanding of politics, that architectonic science, do not dissolve simply because the city in question lacks the means to ascend to the highest theoretical form. Within every particular community there is both an apex and a nadir, and it is the task of the wise statesman to devote the entirety of his activity toward pursuing the former. The ancient political reformer Solon stands out as a paragon in this respect. Having been pulled in a dozen directions by competing Athenian factions, his reconstitution of the regime involved preserving some customs while repealing others; and when asked later whether he had left the people with the best possible laws he replied, "The best they could receive."[97]

As in every age, Washington lived at a time and in a place defined by unique circumstances. The United States of America was a country founded on principles of liberty drawn from the Age of Enlightenment, which in some very significant ways departed from the classical Greek understanding of politics and citizenship. It had also recently emerged from a devastating civil war, the most consequential result of which was the immediate conversion of approximately four million racial slaves into four million citizens. And finally, amid all this was the persistent, ongoing transformation of the country's economy from agrarianism to industrialism. These were powerful realities and no one man, no matter how skillful or virtuous, could ever change them in his lifetime. But a skilled and virtuous man might nonetheless figure out a way to work effectively within those limits to bring about a civic order that met the plain facts head-on without altogether discarding a due respect for the ideals of the finest human life. Such a man was Washington, and it is conceivable that Aris-

[96] *Ibid.* 1288b32-35.

[97] Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 1992), 115.

totle would have acknowledged the nobility of his efforts in the face of such overpowering odds. Washington lacked the divine blessing of perfect resources and perfect conditions from which to hew a perfect polity. So instead, he set out to define a mode of life that would at the same time make the mass of citizens keen, hard-working, and generous; and he did so by drawing on his observation of man's naturally poor condition in the absence of institutional and technological conveniences. His solution as such was no simple stopgap measure but rather a sober reflection on what was necessary in order for both men and the city to have a meaningful existence. The city requires constant social and infrastructural maintenance. Law enforcement officers, medics, street sweepers, waste management personnel, bridge and road repairmen—all these and many more must be present and active if the political community is to have any real long-term prospects. Aristotle, as we saw, readily admits this but also tells us that, ideally, such workers must be relegated to a slave status; yet in Washington's time, converting these people into slaves was an utterly preposterous idea. The success of any great collective endeavor, Washington believed, requires even the most common man—the one "who makes the mortar, who lays the bricks"—to put "his whole conscience into that work."[98] Hence his devotion to instilling within his own people a desire to train the head, hand, and heart; to avoid the danger of turning out pretentious, materialistic, and dissipated individuals by striving always for the more fittingly American ideal of the balanced man, whose spirit of independence and love of gaining a dollar might be harnessed in the service of providing for his own well-being as well as that of the broader community.

[98]Booker T. Washington, *Character Building* (Radford, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008), 18.

Chapter 4

The Unselfish Spirit

In the fall of 1904, a short, handwritten letter arrived at the newly built post office at the Tuskegee Institute. It read:

> Dear Sir,
>
> Being here a speaker at the Congress of Arts and Science, I should be very glad to visit—if I am allowed to do so—your world-known Normal and Industrial School at Tuskegee. I am going now to Oklahoma and the Indian Territory and shall come, I think, the 1st October to New Orleans, so that I could be October 3d at Tuskegee. I should be very obliged to you, if you kindly would write me to *New Orleans, St. Charles Hotel*, if I may have the honour to visit you and see your Institute. I made here the acquaintance of Mr. DuBois, from Atlanta, and am *exceedingly* interested in your great and humanitary work.[1]

The letter's valediction read "Yours very respectfully" and was undersigned by the German sociologist Max Weber, who had traveled to the United States to deliver a lecture in St. Louis, Missouri, as well as to conduct a survey of American life that would help him to expand on his monumental work *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism*.

Both Weber and Booker T. Washington were born in April in the middle of the nineteenth century and both men died prematurely when exhaustion exacerbated their ailing conditions. For Weber, the exhaustion was psychological; for Washington, physical.[2] The similarities between the two men, however, extend beyond mere natality and mortality. Each was in his own way intensely focused on the human quality of personal industry. Washington, of course, continually sought to inculcate the habits of diligence and frugality in the black students

[1]Lawrence A. Scaff, *Max Weber in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 264. Emphasis in the original.

[2]Fritz Ringer, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 2. Norrell, *Up from History*, 418.

under his supervision, insisting that the short- and long-term success of the race depended fundamentally on material security and self-support. Weber meanwhile was a career academic whose interests centered on uncovering the origins of the disposition that drove a person like Washington to praise the dignity of work. Thus, for Weber industriousness was an object of curiosity in need of an explanation; whereas for Washington it was an indisputable matter of prudence and morality in need of promotion. Perhaps it is not so surprising, then, that despite being bombarded for three months by the kaleidoscope and cacophony of American culture, including the sights and sounds of modern metropolises like New York City and Chicago, Weber declared that his "deepest impression of the journey" was made during his visit to the Tuskegee Institute.[3] Having familiarized himself with Washington's works, he left the campus full of "high admiration and consideration" for its project and confessed emphatically that in his travels throughout the South he found no other place animated by such "enthusiasm."[4]

While *The Protestant Ethic* was not the product of Weber's interest in and admiration for the Tuskegee Institute, its investigation into the source and development of the capitalist spirit provides a useful launching pad for a discussion of Washington's views on what constitutes a proper moral character. Section 4.1 will therefore provide readers with a summary of Weber's famous essay on labor. In section 4.2, I will identify and attempt to unite several of Washington's most desired character traits into an ideal composite individual, which is similar to but not identical with Weber's "historical individual."

4.1 Weber's Protestant Ethic

As a sociologist, Weber became interested in a social phenomenon that had generated "much lively debate in the Catholic press, in Catholic literature, and at Catholic conventions." It

[3]Henry Walter Brann, "Max Weber and the United States," *The Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (1944), 26.

[4]Scaff, *Max Weber in America*, 265.

was the fact that Protestants dominated the modern economy in terms of capital ownership, labor participation, and management.[5] Explaining this phenomenon, however, was not as simple as some might assume. For instance, while it is true that both Protestantism and capitalism overturned preexisting traditions in religion and economy, the former did not share the latter's *laissez faire* position on matters of human activity; the Protestant reformers not only had no interest in establishing a theological free market, but in breaking away from the Catholic Church they sought to institute "an infinitely burdensome and earnest regimentation of the conduct of life, which penetrated every sphere of domestic and public life to the greatest degree imaginable."[6] Nor could the Protestant domination of capitalist economy be explained solely by the transference of inheritable wealth. While such inheritances did explain individual instances of intergenerational access and opportunity, the practice itself did not account for the fact that secondary-school Catholic students tended to pursue "classics-based" curricula while their Protestant counterparts tended to enroll in schools that offered "technical studies" in preparation for "commercial and business careers."[7] The temptation, Weber warned, is to attribute the phenomenon to the distinction between Catholic unworldliness and Protestant materialism. In other words, the reason that Protestants overwhelmingly occupy the many seats of the capitalist economic machine is that they have forsaken the spiritual peace of the ascetic life in exchange for a life of hectic acquisition and accumulation. When confronted with the dilemma of having to eat well or sleep soundly, "the Protestant likes to eat well, while the Catholic wants to sleep soundly."[8] Yet, even here we find evidence to suggest that something else is at work; for if the capitalist spirit thrives only in the absence of ascetic self-abnegation, we are left trying to explain why austere sects such as the Quakers and Mennonites also demonstrate a habit of industry, despite the "religious control"

[5]Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2002), 1.

[6]*Ibid.*, 2.

[7]*Ibid.*, 3.

[8]*Ibid.*, 5.

that permeates their private lives.[9] Indeed, when one examines the earnestness with which Protestant businessmen in the early twentieth century strove, it is clear that many of them labored under such self-imposed constraints as frugality, simplicity of taste, and a tireless, sometimes sleepless commitment to see the job done. "Could it be," Weber asked, "that their superiority in the field of commerce" has "some connection with" an "unrivaled degree of piety?" If so, it would mean that, rather than drawing a line separating worldliness from unworldliness, we might need to consider the possibility that the spirit of capitalism depends at least in part on an "inner affinity" between commercialism and a sense of religious duty that is unique to the Protestant faith.[10]

In order to understand this phenomenon, however, we must also understand the "spirit of capitalism" as Weber perceived it in the first quarter of the twentieth century. This, he said, is best accomplished not by attempting to define the term using "abstract generic concepts" but rather by an "illustration" that can capture the "essence of the matter in almost classical purity."[11] To that end, Weber reproduces Benjamin Franklin's popular essay "Advice to a Young Tradesman," wherein the elder statesman admonishes his readers against slipping into idleness or wasteful recreation and exhorts them to cultivate the habits of thrift and hard work. This "little sermon. . . is the characteristic voice of the 'spirit of capitalism."' But the content of Franklin's advice must not be mistaken as justifying the "auri sacra fames," that ravenous desire for gold, which fuels the mere "commercial daring" of those whose pursuits have no ethical motivation.[12] Its purpose is not to enable the individual to achieve "eudaimonistic" or "hedonist" ends, for this type of moneymaking is "coupled with a strict avoidance of all uninhibited enjoyment. This "diligence" to work in the place and under the circumstances in which God has placed us is "the alpha and omega of Franklin's morality."[13]

[9] *Ibid.*, 7.
[10] *Ibid.*, 7-8.
[11] *Ibid.*, 9.
[12] *Ibid.*, 11.
[13] *Ibid.*, 12-13.

> The idea, so familiar to us today and yet in reality far from obvious, that *one's duty consists in pursuing one's calling*, and that the individual should have a commitment to his "professional" activity, whatever it may consist of, irrespective of whether it appears to the detached observer as nothing but utilization of his labor or even of his property (as "capital"), this idea is a characteristic feature of the "social ethic" of capitalist culture.[14]

Franklin absorbed this moral view from his Calvinist father who often quoted the proverb: "Seest thou a man active in his calling, he shall stand before kings."[15] Yet Franklin himself was a "dispassionate and nonsectarian deist" and a simple printer who lived in a New England community in which the form of capitalist political economy had not yet been established. The ability of the capitalist spirit to exist independently of the capitalist form of economy is an important observation, said Weber, because it indicates that the history of economic development cannot be reduced solely to a materialist cause. How then do we explain a plain and frugal person like Franklin who nonetheless emphasized the moral duty every man has to commit himself to a life of hard work?

The "drive" to earn money can be found in both the seafaring adventurer as well as the humble cobbler, but the capitalist economy cannot fully develop if the prevailing personalities in the system are spendthrifts and showboaters. Capitalism requires trust and a certain degree of restraint in order to maximize the returns on its investments and therewith to maintain itself over time. It has no use for "the businessman who is simply unscrupulous in his outward conduct."[16] Granting that capitalism benefits from rules of scrupulous conduct, to guarantee contracts and to prevent the market from descending into a marauders' melee, why is it additionally needful for the actors in that system to possess the drive of industry? There are two answers to that question, one obvious and the other not so obvious. The obvious answer is that owners of capital require dedicated human labor to meet their competitive production goals. Assuming there is a demand for a particular product, the

[14] *Ibid.*, 13.
[15] Prov. 22:29.
[16] Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, 20.

most basic entrepreneurial strategy for increasing one's wealth is to increase productive efficiency and the availability of that product. But before that can happen—that is, before the entrepreneur can, as a matter of course, count on a productive labor force—the working-class people themselves must in some way acquire a deep and abiding inclination toward industriousness. That they must acquire it is a point that lies at the center of Weber's essay; for although the *form* of the capitalist economy existed in earlier periods, the *spirit* through which it could fully bloom did not. This ancestral spirit is what Weber called the "traditional" attitude. In earlier times, one readily finds evidence of commercial activity involving entrepreneurs and capital stock, but the atmosphere in which such business was conducted tended to produce an "unhurried lifestyle" and not the frenetic "acquisitive sense" that has made capitalism virtually inseparable from consumerism.[17] Prior to the spread of the capitalist spirit, employers often discovered that they were unable to entice their employees to work harder by offering them higher wages. To illustrate this phenomenon, Weber described the challenge faced by precapitalist entrepreneurs in agriculture who sought to speed the harvesting of crops ahead of damaging weather. In an effort to encourage their employees to increase their productive labor, crop owners instituted a piecework strategy whereby each worker would receive a higher rate of pay per acre of land harvested. Yet, according to Weber, "[w]ith remarkable frequency, the raising of the piecework rate did not result in *more*, but in *less*, work being done in the same period of time, because the workers responded to the raising of the piecework rate not by *increasing* but by *reducing* the amount they worked in a day." In other words, "[t]he extra money appealed to [them] less than the reduction in work."[18] Then again, when employers attempted to institute punitive measures by reducing wages, they found it difficult to hire skilled workers willing to perform high-quality work. In either case, precapitalist workers generally gravitated toward a degree of productivity that would satisfy their "traditional needs" as dictated by their traditional attitude. Thus, an attitudinal transformation could not come about through rewards or punishments alone, but

[17] *Ibid.*, 21.
[18] *Ibid.*, 18. Emphasis in original.

instead required "a well-developed sense of responsibility" to perform one's "work as though it were an absolute *end in itself*—a "calling."[19]

The religious notion of a calling is traceable to the theologian Martin Luther, whose reformative efforts aimed to discredit the Catholic Church's practice of accepting indulgences in exchange for a reduction in the punishments one could expect to face in the afterlife. Weber, however, stressed the importance of not attributing the spirit of capitalism to Luther. Like most others who lived during his age, Luther would have disapproved of any argument that proposed to make "chrematistic conduct" central to one's activity on the material plane of life.[20] Man indeed is meant to "remain in the estate and the secular occupation in which the 'call' of the Lord has found him," but this is first and foremost a matter of holy obedience or submission to God and a reminder that "[o]ne could attain salvation in any station of life."[21] Still, Luther's understanding of the calling laid the beginning of a foundation for future developments concerning man and his relation to physical work. In particular, it was English Puritanism that began to see work as something different than a mere passive circumstance to which the individual was expected to resign himself; instead, work was transformed into a divine command whereby the individual was expected to work actively to the glory of God.[22] But it was through the influence of Calvinism that English Protestantism, generally speaking, supplied the new attitude necessary for linking piety with the moneymaking drive of the capitalist spirit. The transformation began with the belief that wealth is not intrinsically bad but rather a seductive byproduct of the efforts of work. A person who amasses wealth may be tempted into "*resting* on his possessions," thereby abandoning his obligation to God by sinking into "idleness and indulgence."[23] But the temptation of wealth no more requires a man to shun work or possessions than do the temptations of the flesh require him to shun

[19] *Ibid.*, 16-17. Emphasis in original.
[20] *Ibid.*, 24.
[21] *Ibid.*, 31.
[22] *Ibid.*, 108.
[23] *Ibid.*, 106. Emphasis in original.

the company of women ("Be fruitful and multiply," Gen. 1:28.)[24] What God demands of the wealthy man is the proper use of his possessions which accumulate as he diligently performs the duties of his calling; and that proper use is bounded by certain ascetic strictures designed to inhibit ostentation, profligacy, and other selfish or wasteful practices that distract a man from doing that which he owes to God. Hence, frugality and simplicity ought to govern the industrious man's habits with respect to himself while a charitable spirit ought to guide him in employing his surplus wealth ("a blessing from God") for the benefit of those in his community.[25]

When the idea of the calling merged with asceticism it generated the spirit of capitalism that was needed for the fullest realization of the capitalist form of economy; for "if that restraint on consumption is *combined with* the freedom to strive for profit, the result produced will inevitably be the *creation of capital* through the *ascetic compulsion to save*."[26] Thus the "Protestant ethic" is appropriately so called not simply because of its theological origins but also because of the extraordinary durability of those Protestant characteristics in the modern age. Even if today we are not all religious, in a sense we are all inescapably Protestant; we are all either possessed by or subject to the spirit of capitalism. "The Puritans," Weber asserts, "*wanted* to be men of the calling—we, on the other hand, *must be*." But the pietism that in the beginning was essential for changing the traditional attitude toward work is no longer necessary for the day-to-day functioning of the capitalist economy. The "spirit" has since been stripped of all its ghostly divinity and we are now spurred to labor by the material demands of "the machine" itself. And, "[w]here 'doing one's job' cannot be directly linked to the highest spiritual and cultural values. . . the individual today usually makes no attempt to find any meaning in it."[27]

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[24] "The fight against the lusts of the flesh and the desire to cling to outward possessions, as not only the Puritans but also the great apologist of Quakerism, Barclay, expressly testify, is *not* a fight against wealth and profit, but against the temptations associated with them." Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 116.

[25] *Ibid.*, 109, 116.

[26] *Ibid.*, 116-117. Emphasis in original.

[27] *Ibid.*, 121.

4.2 Service as Civic Calling

This tendency of the modern individual not to find "any meaning" in his job was especially pronounced among many blacks during Washington's time. The reason is both obvious and justifiable. As Washington said, although slavery taught many blacks *how* to do certain tasks, such as wheelwrighting, blacksmithing, and cooking, it did not train them toward a sympathy for the work itself; nor was the quality of their work necessarily good inasmuch as slave labor—forced, unrewarded, relentless, and harsh—could not offer slaves much in the way of positive incentives. But because much of the American regime operated according to the principles of free-market competition, Washington knew that if blacks were to survive and prosper as free individuals, they would need to liberate their memories from the past and form new attitudes and habits. These new attitudes and habits, however, could not ever be usefully adopted if they were perceived as either alien or spurious. Thus, Washington constantly drew his audience's attention to certain natural realities that appeared to serve as a source from which to derive normative rules of behavior. Key to his civic project of preparing blacks for the exercise of citizenship was the idea of *interdependence.* From this idea he then derived the duties one has to oneself and to others. Washington's moral exhortations can be found throughout most of his works, but they are especially visible in the addresses he delivered to students and faculty at the Tuskegee Institute.

In a speech entitled "Each One His Part," he asked his audience to consider "the fact that one thing is dependent for success upon another." It is a fact, he said, that runs throughout all of the natural world: "Without vegetable life we could not have animal life; without mineral life we could not have vegetable life. So, throughout all kinds of life, as throughout the life of nature, everything is dependent upon something else for its success."[28] This holds for human beings and their communities as well, such that "one individual is dependent for success upon another, one family in a community upon other families for their mutual prosperity, one part of a State upon the other parts for the successful government of the State." To be

[28]Washington, *Character Building*, 91.

sure, Washington's reason for emphasizing interdependence had much to do with providing a wider sense of connectedness among blacks themselves, and particularly those in the South, who faced dreadful atrocities in the form of lynch mobs and Ku Klux Klan terrorism; yet as always, Washington also held before himself his longer vision of uplift and peaceful race relations which he deemed essential to civic stability and happiness. Thus, while at times he praised the efforts of some blacks to form predominantly black communities,[29] in the end he believed that the only true solution to the nation's color line problem was friendly cooperation between the races. The success of any common enterprise "depends on upon having every person connected with the institution do his or her whole duty," and that "whole duty" is in reality only a part, though an essential one, of what sustains the greater whole itself.[30] To put this in the form of one of Washington's most repeated refrains: "Wherever our life touches yours we help or we hinder."[31]

To maintain the community as a community, and thereby to secure the common advantage to all, requires each individual citizen to tend to his responsibilities conscientiously, no matter how small or seemingly trivial they might be. Students at Tuskegee learned this well with Washington as their principal. "This institution," he declared, "does not exist for your education alone; it does not exist for your comfort and happiness altogether." In providing students with "intelligence, skill of hand, and strength of mind and heart," its goal was to prepare them to go out into the world to help others in "an unselfish spirit."[32] This would require initiative and self-direction; those without such qualities, those who idle while awaiting orders, "ought to pay rent for the air they breathe, for they only vitiate it."[33]

[29]For example, Washington praised the all-black town of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, as a "place where a Negro may get inspiration by seeing what other members of his race have accomplished... [and] where he has an opportunity to learn some of the fundamental duties and responsibilities of social and civic life." August Meier, "Booker T. Washington and the Town of Mound Bayou," *Phylon* 15, no. 4 (1954), 397.

[30]Washington, *Character Building*, 91.

[31]Booker T. Washington, *Black-Belt Diamonds: Gems from the Speeches, Addresses, and Talks to Students of Booker T. Washington* (New York, NY: Fortune and Scott, 1898), 4.

[32]Washington, *Character Building*, 9.

[33]*Ibid.*, 10.

Harsh as this rebuke is, for Washington it was necessary to impress upon the students the importance of self-sacrifice as an element of citizenship. He admitted that instilling this conscientiousness into the minds of the masses was the "general problem" faced by his and other similar black institutions. "Can we," he asked, "educate the individual conscience?... Can we educate your consciences so that you will do certain things, not because it is the rule that they should be done, but because they should be done?"[34] For Washington, this was the essence of character. He did not deny the utility or desirability of public reputation, but it was the internal, "unseen" conditioning of oneself that he believed was more important.

> If I were to ask you individually as students to deliver an address upon this platform, or to read an essay, I should not be at all afraid that you would fail. I believe that you would carefully prepare that address or essay. You would look up all the references necessary in order to give you what information you needed, and then you would get up here and speak or read successfully. *The average man and woman do succeed when before the public.* But where I fear for your success is when you come to the performance of the small duties—the duties which you think no one else will know about, the things which no one will see you do.[35]

The potential risk in concerning oneself with external reputation alone is that it is a selfish rather than a selfless pursuit. A person who takes pains to ensure that his public performance meets with approval pursues only a sham excellence. He is incomplete. To develop his character fully he must be willing to carry out the small responsibilities of life, even when there is no audience to see him do it; for it is in this way that the person strengthens his habits of honesty and fairness. "If while sweeping or dusting a room, or weeding a bed of flowers or vegetables, there remained the least imperfection," Washington said, reflecting on his own experience, "I was unhappy, and felt that I was guilty of dishonesty until the flaw in my work had been removed."[36] Washington's point here is easy to overlook and deserves clarification. This example is not intended to illustrate the nature of a relationship between two people but rather between an individual and himself. When a person says to himself, "I am going to sweep and make this floor clean," he shirks the duty he imposes on himself if,

[34] *Ibid.*, 93.
[35] *Ibid.*, 92. Emphasis added.
[36] Washington, *Working with the Hands*, 10.

at the end of his work, the floor is not *in fact* clean; he compounds his sins if, in leaving the floor in a less than clean state, he tells himself that he has in fact cleaned it. This is the crucial point for Washington. Sweeping floors, weeding gardens, and other necessary but often mundane tasks are not in themselves—that is, in the basic physical activities—the sources of character. What cultivates good character is the compact a person makes with himself and the self-discipline he employs to honor it. When a person has formed his character to such an extent, to where he can deal honestly with himself in performing small tasks out of the limelight, only then is he prepared to assume the highest privileges of citizenship. "If we cannot turn out a man here who is capable of taking care of a pig sty," Washington said drolly, "how can we expect him to take care of affairs of state?"[37]

The person who is honest with himself is now capable of fair-mindedly engaging with others, but he is not necessarily prepared to serve others in a "spirit of self-sacrifice."[38] Overcoming the drive of self-interest is not an easy hurdle, but Washington seemed to believe that progress toward selflessness could be made by learning how to live in moderation. Some of Washington's critics would look askance at him for saying such a thing, because they believed his call for industrial education would encourage blacks to become "too much materialized."[39] However, Washington did not see moneymaking as an end in itself but a means to achieving more proper ends. In the first place, acquiring some wealth for oneself satisfies the basic necessities without which "a man cannot have moral character."[40] Referring to his own observations, Washington admitted, "We find it a pretty hard thing to make a good Christian of a hungry man. No matter how much our people 'get happy' and 'shout' in church, if they go home at night from church hungry, they are tempted to find something before morning. This is a principle of human nature, and is not confined to the Negro."[41] Money purchases food, clothing, and a comfortable home in which a person is kept safe and

[37]Washington, *Character Building*, 10.
[38]*Ibid.*, 11.
[39]*Ibid.*, 111.
[40]*Ibid.*, 57.
[41]Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 121.

shielded from the elements. They enable him to look beyond mere existence and toward the satisfaction of his intellectual and spiritual wants. After all, there is little opportunity to philosophize or meditate in a tempest or while hopping from boxcar to boxcar. But in order for money to be used well, so that a person is able to do more than merely eke through life, it must be saved and used wisely. "People cannot get hold of money—or at least cannot keep hold of it—who have not learned to exercise self-control." They must learn to say "no" to themselves when struck by the impulse to spend their money on frivolities. Doing so enlarges a person's savings and "enables us to get to the point where we can do our part in the building of school-houses, churches, [and] hospitals."[42]

Washington certainly wanted workers to find some degree of purpose if not pleasure in their jobs. In thinking this he did not mean for the person at the very bottom to remain content with any occupation that amounted to drudgery.[43] Intelligent work meant learning "how to make the forces of nature—air, water, steam, electricity, horse-power—assist [workers] in their labour," thus freeing them from the mind-numbing monotony and exhaustion of mere toil.[44] But Washington also believed it was important to discover the things in life worth appreciating, no matter one's circumstances. If one did happen to be employed in an undesirable line of work, then he ought to be thankful for the opportunities presented by the hardship to strengthen and develop himself; to wrestle with and overcome the problems arising from his lowly station; and to direct the knowledge and experience he gains to bettering the conditions of others. Washington referred to this as living on the "bright side" of life. It is the trained disposition whereby a person "consciously or unconsciously" inclines toward optimism rather than pessimism. Going "too far in either direction" is unwise, he said. It is perfectly reasonable to acknowledge the "disconsolate appearance of things," but a balanced person "will find something attractive" nonetheless by "constantly looking for the bright, encouraging, and beautiful things in life."[45] What is more, those in need of help are

[42]Washington, *Character Building*, 112.
[43]Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 62.
[44]Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 103.
[45]Washington, *Character Building*, 5-6.

attracted to "bright" and cheerful people, who are seen as capable of providing "intelligent advice and support."[46]

This is the greater calling that awaits the person of character who is honest with himself, who is industrious yet prudent in his finances, and who makes a constant effort to look on the bright side of life. It is the calling peculiar to the well-rounded citizen. "Every individual who amounts to anything," asserted Washington, "is a servant."[47] Not *servile*, but oriented toward serving the needs of the community as a civic function. This holds for the president of the country, the governor of the state, the merchant, the cook, and the housemaid. Each person, regardless of his status, possesses a capacity for doing something useful given the means at his disposal. He does well enough when he habituates himself to such service, but he does that much better when he discovers through that service a purpose arising from the knowledge of the interconnected fate he shares with his fellow citizens.

[46] *Ibid.*, 7.
[47] *Ibid.*, 64.

Chapter 5

The Unanswered Prayer

This paper concludes in a way that some may find unsatisfactory. Up to the present chapter, it has not been meticulously analytical or even very critical. Instead, it has been primarily an unhurried sojourn through the diffuse ideas of an otherwise ordinary man who was extraordinary in what he hoped to achieve not only on behalf of a sprawling race of former slaves and their children but also on behalf of an entire nation. Booker T. Washington's postmortem reputation, however, has rarely acquired praise without a string of yes-buts trailing behind it. Yes, he was a constant supporter of education for blacks *but* he spent too much time emphasizing industrial training at the expense of the liberal arts. Yes, he provided leadership for black Americans following Frederick Douglass's death *but* as a leader he negotiated away essential rights in exchange for a tenuous peace. These criticisms are not immaterial from an academic standpoint, yet they have the effect of concealing what we might call Washington's grand vision. Like the captain on rough waters who steers this way and that but aims always for the shore, Washington and other farsighted pioneers tend not to preoccupy themselves with resolving the many individual instances of misery incidental to the greater challenge standing before them. This exposes them to accusations ranging from callousness to egomania. Hence the reason behind this paper: Washington, regardless of his alleged imperfections, is worthy of reexamination; and not just from one or two angles, but in a comprehensive fashion with respect to the end at which all his efforts were directed. Nothing like this has yet been attempted, and, as such, this first-step effort is necessarily not as thorough or as complete as it will be with subsequent iterations and refinements.

The goal of this chapter is to offer the scholarly world a budding conception of citizenship as it was understood by Washington. To that end, this conception will be contextualized within the standard dichotomy employed by many political theorists: namely, the simplified but useful division of all citizenship theories into one of two traditions, liberalism and republicanism. The word "tradition," as it is used by citizenship scholars, has a double meaning. First, in its etymological sense the word conveys the idea that something has been passed along or handed down from one party to another. History has given us a vast series of heterogeneous political models; but while each example is in its own way unique, every example is capable of being recognized as having a greater proclivity for freedom and individuality on the one hand or virtue and community on the other. Thus, second, "tradition" is used as a shorthand device for identifying regimes, policies, and theories that are arguably more or less liberal or republican in their structures, goals, and principles. As such, each tradition can be fractionated into numerous variations influenced by particular historical examples and philosophical or political writings. For instance, we might speak about the classical republican structures of the ancient Greek *polis* and the Roman *civis* or the liberalism of Lockean natural rights theory and Mill's principle of creative individuality, each of which differs somewhat from its nominative consorts but not so greatly that it could be mistaken as belonging to the other tradition.

My hope is that, by using the liberal-republican dichotomy as scaffolding, I can at least begin the process of framing and organizing Washington's disparate works into a consolidated and coherent whole by describing its particular civic features. To that end, sections 5.1 and 5.2 will provide readers with a brief outline of some of the ideas and ideals generally associated with the liberal and republican traditions, respectively. These sections are necessarily incomplete as it is neither my intent nor within my means to attempt an exhaustive explication of the origins and development of the two traditions. For my purposes, it will suffice to serve up a general flavor of each. Finally, in section 5.3 I will close with a preliminary sketch of what I call Washington's preparatory citizenship.

5.1 Liberalism

It has been said that "liberalism is a world of walls."[1] The metaphor is not intended to transmit an image of imprisonment but rather that of a fortress established by each private individual against the coercion and interference of third parties. Derived from the Latin *liber*, liberalism is essentially a doctrine of human freedom that sprang from the great intellectual revolution we now call the Enlightenment. It was Thomas Hobbes who first broke with the Aristotelian tradition to propose that man's natural condition is not first and foremost that of the *zoon politikon*, whose personal insufficiencies bring him into association with others for the purpose of living well, but rather, we might say, of the *zoon polemikon*, whose suspicious and envious nature predisposes him toward combative dissociation.[2] Hobbes does not disagree with Aristotle that men eventually come together for the sake of preservation, but he ascribes to human beings a nature so antagonistic that the political community appears to be something of a miracle; for whether a people voluntarily enters into an agreement to produce a commonwealth or submits to a conquering force, it does so out of an abiding "fear" of those with whom it must live in close association.[3] The Hobbesian world is a dark and violent place, and it seems to contain very little light by which to discern freedom; yet every man, says Hobbes, has a natural liberty in the prepolitical state of nature to dispose of himself and his property as he sees fit and insofar as he is not obstructed by another stronger or cleverer person.[4] In this, *inter alia*, Hobbes earns his rightful place among the Enlightenment thinkers. What prevents him from claiming the title of liberalism's true forefather is his defense of the state's near-unlimited power to command its subjects, and even to injure or kill them.[5] The great Leviathan summoned by Hobbes erects walls against foreign sovereigns

[1] Michael Walzer, "Liberalism and the Art of Separation," *Political Theory* 12, no. 3 (1984), 315.
[2] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. XIV.
[3] *Ibid.*, ch. XX.
[4] *Ibid.*, chs. XI, XIII, and particularly XIV.
[5] *Ibid.*, ch. XXI.

but does almost nothing to preserve the people in their capacity as private and autonomous individuals.

It is therefore John Locke who emerges as liberalism's true progenitor. Like Hobbes, Locke arrives at his conception of man by imagining him in a prepolitical state of nature, where he is in a state of "perfect freedom" and natural equality with respect to all other men.[6] He also agrees with Hobbes "that civil government is the proper remedy for the inconveniences of the state of nature." These inconveniences, says Locke, arise from the "partiality and violence of men" whose reason is often corrupted by self-interest. The solution, however, cannot be a sovereign of unlimited power for an "absolute monarch" is still a man, who, once in power, "may do to all his subjects whatever he pleases, without the least liberty to any one to question or control those who execute his pleasure."[7] Here, Locke is not just appealing to self-interest but more so to the duty every person has to obey the divine command to preserve oneself and, when possible, others as well.[8] Anyone who subjugates himself to the "inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary will of another man" is not exercising liberty but is instead offending God's will through an act of naturally unlawful licentiousness.[9] As such, it follows that the only legitimate government is that which has as its "great and chief end" the "preservation of [the people's] lives, liberties, and estates."[10] In practice, this means that the government's lawmaking authority is limited primarily to those policies necessary for assuming the burden of self-preservation and the dispensing of justice that in the state of nature would fall to each person individually. Unencumbered, the people are then free to pursue the "innocent delights" of their private tastes; beyond that, their only political duty is to keep a vigilant eye on their elected rulers to ensure that no encroachments are

[6]Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, II, ch. II, §4.
[7]*Ibid.*, II, ch. II, §14.
[8]*Ibid.*, II, ch. II, §6.
[9]*Ibid.*, II, ch. IV, §§22-23.
[10]*Ibid.*, II, ch. IX, §§123-124.

made upon the natural rights (liberty, property) that are necessary for preserving "the most fundamental of all rights": the right to preserve oneself (life).[11]

In the mid-nineteenth century, nearly two hundred years after the publication of Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*, the English political philosopher John Stuart Mill presented an expanded notion of liberty that would grease the skids for the advent of today's devotion to the inviolability of the individual. Although he eschewed the idea of rights essential to Locke's work, he was nonetheless intensely focused on securing the greatest liberty for the exercise of thought and action. What makes Mill's entrance into the historical stream of political philosophy notable is his shift from the traditional concern over the relationship between the political ruler and the people to that of "the nature and limits of the power which can be legitimately exercised by *society* over the individual."[12] The tense association between hereditary sovereigns and their subjects had with great assistance from Locke's philosophical contributions been dissolved and replaced by new forms of government in which lawmaking authority was assigned by the people to a parliament of elected representatives. As time passed, a feeling developed among the citizens that their representatives were merely an extension, or a *representation*, of the people themselves. There was no longer any reason to fear the ascension of a true despot, because the responsiveness of the people's representatives meant nothing more than that the people's will was now indistinguishable from the nation's sovereign authority.[13] To be sure, inasmuch as perfect unanimity is elusive in any free society, it did not take long for others to question whether there could not also be a tyranny of the majority over the minority. Mill shares these concerns, but urges his readers to consider that the means by which the majority may subjugate the minority "are not restricted to the acts which it may do by the hands of its political functionaries"; indeed, "it practices a *social*

[11]Leo Strauss, "On Locke's Doctrine of Natural Right," *The Philosophical Review* 61, no. 4 (1952), 483.

[12]John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty & Utilitarianism* (New York, NY: Bantam Dell, 2008), 3. Emphasis added.

[13]*Ibid.*, 5.

tyranny more formidable than many kinds of political oppression."[14] Liberty, therefore, was no longer threatened by the decrees of capricious kings but by the "prevailing opinion and feeling" of the majority of one's fellow citizens.[15] This led Mill to champion the creative and independent flourishing of the individual, who was to be protected not only from the intrusion of the state but also from "the traditions or customs of other people."[16] Human beings, he believed, reach their greatest potential when they grow freely like wild trees and not when "clipped into pollards."[17] This emphasis on individuality, on the need for "different experiments of living," has as its end not only the protection against despotism but also the ennobling effect of lifting governments up from mediocrity through the genius of truly free individuals.[18]

Yet although the principle of individuality suggests a character-building, bootstrapping life, Mill and certain other liberal thinkers worried that the capitalist economies of the modern nation-state had resulted in creating unnecessary and even harmful impediments for society's least advantaged members. This question received its most memorable articulation in a series of lectures delivered by the twentieth-century English sociologist T.H. Marshall, whose "primary concern" centered on citizenship and "its impact on social inequality."[19] According to Marshall, there are three different kinds of rights: civil, political, and social. Civil rights refer to the liberties possessed by individuals as individuals, and they include the freedoms of speech, publication, and faith; political rights entitle persons "to participate in the exercise of political power" either directly as a politician or indirectly as a voter; and social rights guarantee to citizens the "life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society."[20] In earlier and more primitive societies these rights had

[14] *Ibid.*, 7. Emphasis added.
[15] *Ibid.*, 8.
[16] *Ibid.*, 72.
[17] *Ibid.*, 80.
[18] *Ibid.*, 72, 85.
[19] T.H. Marshall and Tom Bottomore, *Citizenship and Social Class* (Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 1992), 17.
[20] *Ibid.*, 8.

been "wound into a single thread," but they gradually became disaggregated following the sociopolitical and economic transformations arising from the Enlightenment era. The pivotal consequence of this disaggregation was that, while civil and political rights existed in a comfortable symbiosis with free-market capitalism, social rights "sank to vanishing point" in the harsh "economic struggle" playing out across the industrial landscape.[21] Marshall argued that insofar as citizenship imparts to a person a status of equality, then any citizen whose indigent conditions severely limit him from enjoying the full *menu de citoyen* is a citizen in name only. For if you

> explain to a pauper that his property rights are the same as those of a millionaire, he will probably accuse you of quibbling. Similarly, the right to freedom of speech has little real substance if, from lack of education, you have nothing to say that is worth saying, and no means of making yourself heard if you say it.[22]

In other words, "Civil and, later, political rights in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were, in fact, equal only in principle, not in access."[23] Only the reintroduction and emphatic defense of social rights could protect the concept of citizenship against the atomizing forces of classical liberalism, which had overstressed the Horatio Alger-like independence of the individual to shift for himself in a competitive marketplace. But a community of citizens, Marshall believed, is necessarily an integrated and interdependent enterprise; and if we are to take citizenship seriously, then at some point or under certain circumstances "individual claims must be subordinated to the general programme of social advance."[24] To a significant degree this has already been achieved precisely because the idea of "enriched" citizenship emerged as a catalyst to produce a "change of mental climate" favorable to the spread of egalitarian principles.[25] In a certain light, Marshall's analysis may strike some readers as possessing a communitarian tincture if not a republican one; but his published lectures on citizenship were rightly called "the most famous single work to have been composed on *liberal*

[21] *Ibid.*, 17, 21.
[22] *Ibid.*, 21.
[23] Derek Heater, *What Is Citizenship?* (Maldon, MA: Polity Press, 1999), 14.
[24] Marshall, *Citizenship*, 35.
[25] *Ibid.*, 22.

citizenship," for in the end his conception of citizenship requires an ever-multiplying set of rights in order to keep abreast the prevailing yet progressive standards of society.[26]

5.2 Republicanism

Marshall was fully aware of the tradeoff that occurs when one chooses to emphasize rights as the foundational element of civil society. In a modern, progressive, and liberal society duties tend to fade as the state increasingly assumes authority over the policymaking and policy-executing functions necessary for ensuring citizens' access to the latest rights now owed to them, which are determined by the constantly evolving moral and material standards of that particular community. This is not to say that rights *per se* are causally linked to the depreciation of civic duty, but there does seem to be a point at which liberalism, in its pursuit of ever more rights, causes the scales to tip dramatically in its favor at the expense of its counterpart. Eventually, citizens begin to see the state as something of an automated provisioner that exists separately from them, such that the only requirement "necessary for the fulfillment of the right is the duty to pay taxes and insurance contributions." But because these duties "are compulsory, no act of will is involved, and no keen sentiment of loyalty."[27] Citizenship becomes a passive status.

This is incomprehensible from the standpoint of the classical republican tradition, which conceives of citizenship as being fundamentally inseparable from an active civic life.[28] Although the term "republican" derives from the Latin *res publica*, meaning "public matters" or "public affairs," the conception of citizenship it encompasses dates back to ancient Greece, where the indissoluble link between the citizen and the public sphere is manifest in the linguistic morphology: a *politēs* (citizen) is a member of a *politeia* (polity;

[26] *Ibid.*, 45. The quote describing the import of Marshall's work comes from Heater, *What Is Citizenship?* 12. Emphasis added

[27] Marshall, *Citizenship*, 45.

[28] One way of characterizing the difference between liberal and republican citizenship is to view the former as a "status" and the latter as a "practice." Adrian Oldfield, "Citizenship: An Unnatural Practice?" *The Political Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (1990), 177.

commonwealth) and his definitive activity centers on *ta politika* (politics). The connection, though, between citizenship and public-political activity is not merely linguistic. From the Aristotelian perspective, "it did not seem that the human—being cognitive, active and purposive—could be fully human unless he ruled himself."[29] This we know because man is by nature a political animal; and his intrinsic political nature makes him capable of achieving the teleological goal of *autarkeia* (self-sufficiency) that is possible only through the coming into being of the *polis*, that thoroughly political realm wherein the true citizen is able to exercise the self-completing civic virtues unique to ruling and being ruled over and by his peers.[30] As such,

> politics. . . is a good in itself, not the prerequisite of the public good but the public good or *res publica* correctly defined. What matters is the freedom to take part in public decisions, not the content of the decisions taken.. . . Citizenship is not just a means to being free; it is the way of being free itself.[31]

Whereas air is essential for the mere biological existence of man as a living creature, politics is essential for man to live as a freeman.

While today the human essentialness of political activity is rarely articulated outside the academy, several features as well as the so-called "implications" of the republican model continue to be viewed favorably by many politicians and citizens in the modern era. Republicanism, as the political theorist Richard Dagger observes, is supported by the twin "cornerstones" of publicity and self-government.[32] Publicity refers to the open—or as we sometimes say today, transparent—process of engaging in the political activities of rhetoric, debate, and legislative deliberation. The importance of publicity is that it lends itself to the mitigation of corruption and thus ideally to the promotion of civic virtue.[33] Despite the thinness of our contemporary levels of public engagement, the idea of the public good or the general

[29]Ronald Beiner, ed., "The Ideal of Citizenship Since Classical Times," *Theorizing Citizenship* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press), 33.

[30]Arist., *Pol.*, 3.4.

[31]Beiner, ed., "The Ideal of Citizenship," *Theorizing Citizenship*, 32.

[32]Richard Dagger, "Communitarianism and Republicanism," in *Handbook of Political Theory*, eds. Gerald F. Gaus and Chandran Kukathas (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2004), 168.

[33]*Ibid.*, 169.

welfare remains firmly rooted in what we believe is the proper end of public affairs. The *oikos* and the *polis* may now be irreversibly blended, but politics itself retains its original character as a distinctly public-oriented activity. Yet, while publicity impairs the ability of deceptive figures to hoodwink the mass of their peers through self-serving demagoguery, those peers must themselves be willing to practice the civic virtues necessary for ensuring that the ordered constitution of the republic remains intact. A virtuous citizen is an engaged citizen. His activity contributes to the formation of "promulgated rules or decrees that guide the conduct of the members of the public," and from this "the rule of law quickly follows."[34]

This republican demand for public-spiritedness is the chief point of difference between it and liberalism. Inasmuch as the good of the *common*wealth has a greater claim to our attention than the individual, it might be said, and in fact has been said, that at times the individual may be sacrificed for the sake of the community. This is so even when the individual being sacrificed is a person laden with honors, as in the case of the Roman general Caius Marcius Coriolanus. According to Machiavelli, the popular element in any republic is going to be prone to temporary bouts of agitation; and if the regime as a common enterprise is to maintain its liberty for any length of time, it must have laws whereby the citizens can formally accuse and punish one of their peers for some real or imagined malfeasance. Thus Coriolanus, despite his widespread reputation for valor and virtue, was formally charged with crimes against the people and subsequently exiled. It is preferable, says Machiavelli, that a single citizen be "crushed" (*oppresso*) through lawful means, even if he is innocent of the charges, if through his conviction the republic is saved by allowing the people an "outlet by which [their excited humors] may be vented ordinarily."[35] Yet it is crucial to understand that

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] Niccoló Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, bk. I, ch. VII. See also Plutarch, *Lives*, 304-306. Rousseau too was startlingly frank in his description of the citizen's place with respect to the good of the political community: "The Lacedaemonian Pedaretus runs for the council of three hundred. He is defeated. He goes home delighted that there were three hundred men worthier than he to be found in Sparta. I take this display to be sincere, and there is reason to believe that it was. This is the citizen." And again: "A Spartan woman had five sons in the army and was awaiting news of the battle. A Helot arrives; trembling, she asks him for news. 'Your five sons were killed.' 'Base slave, did I ask you that?' 'We won the victory.' The mother runs to the temple and gives thanks to

Machiavelli's praise of this practice does not terminate with the emotional pacifying of the agitated group; rather, that pacification is itself the means to the noblest end, which is to protect the republic against crippling "disorder" and ultimate "ruin." This is not to say that the body politic completely erases and supplants the individual; after all, republicanism is strongly associated with human liberty. But republicanism holds that the individual becomes freest when he joins his peers in ruling and being ruled in turn. Such a life can be sustained only in the public sphere where the law as a common creation replaces the caprice and interest of the individual personality. Viewed through the lens of republicanism, liberalism degrades its citizens by convincing them that the purpose of politics is to ensure that a man is free to indulge his idiosyncratic desires without having to concern himself with matters of the state. This disagreement between the two traditions over what it means to be truly free is captured by Montesquieu in his censure of fourth-century Athens, when he says that the city, while standing in the twilight of its former glory, "dreaded Philip, not as the enemy of her liberty, but of her pleasures."[36]

5.3 Washingtonian Civics

As with all things that come from human art and effort, any ideal by which such practical activities are guided forever remains an abstraction of the mind. Even if under a perfect arrangement of circumstances the ideal were to become manifest, its appearance could be ascertained only during the inevitable impermanence of the moment. Thus liberalism and republicanism, like "citizenship" itself, exist as paradigms that enable us to define and critique the political realities surrounding us; there has never been a perfect republic just as there has never been a perfect liberal order. These comments are necessary before venturing into the final section of this paper. More than others, Booker T. Washington was sharply

the gods. This is the female citizen." Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Emile* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1979), 40.

[36]Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat, baron de, *The Spirit of Laws* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002), 21.

aware of the imperfections of the world; aware of them but, though he acknowledged their existence, had no interest in using his time merely to daydream about a world without them. He was convinced that there exists an "eternal justice" as surely as there exists a "present justice"; but although that eternal justice is, in its divine abstraction, free of every mark of human fallibility, each self-possessed person has a responsibility to confront life's challenges, to endure its misfortunes, and to do what is possible here and now to improve conditions for himself, his family, and his community.[37] Such improvements, however, are not obtained by adhering strictly to either a liberal or republican model of government. What is needed is a statesmanship that combines provisional flexibility with steady and farseeing vision. Nature conditioned and history appointed Washington to this position.

That said, for the purposes of this paper, it is nonetheless useful to keep our liberal and republican models near at hand, if only because the ideals they encapsulate give language and epistemic structure to a topic as slippery as citizenship and in a context as beset by academic confusion as that of Washington's life and work. Before exploring the specific civic character of Washington's conception of citizenship, however, a brief reclarification must be made. It is understandable that a person unfamiliar with the range of Washington's thought would assume that his idea of citizenship was intended predominantly for black Americans living at the dawn of the twentieth century; that it was intended for a particular people at a particular moment in history. This is mostly inaccurate. The assumption is correct only insofar as Washington accepted that many if not most human practices—pedagogy, social mores, even citizenship—will, and perhaps must, fluctuate over time in the face of compelling circumstances. But acknowledging the need for circumstantial adjustments does not require a wholesale or permanent abandonment of the core principles and general aims around which those changes have been made. It is also true that Washington's speeches about the responsibilities and rights of citizenship often were directed at the black community, but they were not intended *exclusively* for the black community. As we will see shortly,

[37] Washington, ed., *Selected Speeches*, 116-117.

Washington believed that the elements contained within his understanding of citizenship applied in common to every person holding that title. What was generally expected of the black man was to be generally expected of the white man. Moreover, these expectations comprise the very spirit of citizenship, wherever it exists. In their absence, the essential relations binding one man to another as civic kinsmen cannot survive. It is in this sense that citizenship, for Washington, rested on certain transcendent rules and truths that could not be confined within the historical moment.

The Complexion of Washington's Civic Thought

In 1897, on a crisp spring day in Boston, Saint-Gaudens' renowned bronze relief of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th black regiment was unveiled. The dedication ceremony was attended by many of the black Union veterans who had served under Shaw's brief but valiant leadership in the charge against Fort Wagner. Also present were several speakers, including the philosopher William James who, beholding the monument, said, "There they march, warm-blooded champions of a better day for man. There on horseback among them, in his very habit as he lived, sits the blue-eyed child of fortune."[38] Booker T. Washington also had been invited to speak in honor of the "death and deeds of our hero." Yet when he took the stage, following his first and belated mention of the name Robert Gould Shaw, he spoke these words: "But an occasion like this is too great, too sacred, for mere individual eulogy. *The individual is the instrument, national virtue the end.*"[39]

It would be difficult and perhaps unwise to attempt to reduce Washington's whole civic thought to a single, pithy expression; but the value in that expression lies precisely in its directness. Although Washington most often spoke in a plain and unadorned style, he was famous for his ability to say nearly the same thing to different audiences but in a different way during each engagement. The words he selected and where he chose to place his emphasis

[38]Stephen T. Riley, "A Monument to Robert Gould Shaw," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 75 (1963), 37-38. For William James, see Russell Duncan and William S. McFeely, eds., *Blue-Eyed Child of Fortune: The Civil War Letters of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 55-56.

[39]Washington, ed., *Selected Speeches*, 55. Emphasis added.

would change depending on what he believed his listeners' general disposition happened to be. There is nothing essentially condemnable about this; a good speaker must know his audience if he is to have the desired effect on them. But it does mean that Washington's deepest and most meaningful message often remained concealed beneath the aw-shucks anecdotes and exoteric encouragements to commit oneself to industry, economy, and moral excellence. It is therefore something of a rare opportunity to light upon an expression like the one quoted above; and it is through this unequivocal utterance that the natural complexion of Washington's civic thought becomes visible. Whatever homage Washington paid to individual liberty, like a flower at the base of an oak tree, it always remained in the shadow of his indomitable conviction that fortitude, perseverance, and duty to one's fellowmen were the surest means to the greatest blessings.

In this, Washington appears to stand nearer the republican rather than the liberal tradition of citizenship. He is not of course thoroughly republican in his political thought. But who in the modern era could be, in any practical sense, this far removed from the classical ideal of ancient Athens? Still, stricter republicans today could be forgiven for being less receptive to Washington, because he was notorious for his disparagement of both political careerism and street-side political chatter. He had little patience for the man who remains "absorbed in idle gossip and political discussion" as well as the one "who yields to the temptation to live merely by politics or other parasitical employments."[40] Washington arrived at this position through a combination of his New England Puritanical training and his own observations of the character and material conditions of many black Americans who, in his estimation, did nothing constructive but instead resorted to political agitation as a full-time activity: "Having learned that they are able to make a living out of their troubles, they have grown into the settled habit of advertising their wrongs—partly because they want sympathy and partly because it pays."[41] Such political activity is disgraceful for two reasons. First, in its

[40]Washington, *Working with the Hands*, 22; Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 153.

[41]Washington, *My Larger Education*, 109. This habit of making one's living from the airing of complaints and grievances is further illustrated in the following story: "I remember one young man in particular who graduated from Yale University and afterward took a post-graduate course at

purely vocative form—that is, political activity in the form of the daily gripe—it accomplishes nothing of real or permanent value for the community, but succeeds only in "keeping the troubles, the wrongs, and the hardships of the Negro race before the public" without proposing or doing anything constructive to repair the situation. To borrow some terms from a modern-day observer with similar views, the professional agitators tend to be "problem-oriented" not "solution-oriented."[42] Second, political activity as an occupation means little if the product of one's efforts does not have as its primary end the improvement of the common good. This was the reason that Washington decided against entering into a political career, despite being pressured to do so by many of his friends and acquaintances who believed that his skill in public speaking would make him popular. Reflecting on a moment of personal opportunity, Washington recalled that he could have "[succeeded] in political life, but I had a feeling that it would be a rather selfish kind of success—*individual* success at the cost of failing to do my *duty* in assisting in laying a foundation for *the masses*."[43] Moreover, in a city like the District of Columbia, where politics is the most prominent field of occupation, it becomes increasingly questionable whether political life can have the same ennobling effect on an ever-swelling morass of denizens. Washington was "greatly alarmed" by what he saw there:

> I saw other young men who received seventy-five or one hundred dollars per month from the Government, who were in debt at the end of every month. I saw men who but a few months previous were members of Congress, then without employment and in poverty. Among a large class there seemed to be a dependence upon the Government for every conceivable thing. The members of this class had little ambition to create a position for themselves, but wanted the Federal officials to create one for them. How many times I wished then, and have often wished since, that by some power of magic I

Harvard, and who began his career by delivering a series of lectures on 'The Mistakes of Booker T. Washington.' It was not long, however, before he found that he could not live continuously on my mistakes. Then he discovered that in all his long schooling he had not fitted himself to perform any kind of useful and productive labour. . . .The last I heard of the young man in question, he was trying to eke out a miserable existence as a book agent while he was looking about for a position somewhere with the Government as a janitor or for some other equally humble occupation." *My Larger Education*, 106-107.

[42]Ali Shakur, "Hip-Hop Is Not a Culture," YouTube, 13:35, January 27, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoUDkudNnVc.

[43]Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 64-65. Emphasis added.

> might remove the great bulk of these people into the country districts and plant them upon the soil, upon the solid and never deceptive foundation of Mother Nature, where all nations and races that have ever succeeded have gotten their start—, a start that at first may be slow and toilsome, but one that is nevertheless real.[44]

It appeared to Washington that immersing oneself in the political world is not something that is beneficial for most people. Indeed, even the most qualified people—those who are spirited, intelligent, and possess brilliant personalities—are said to be the most in need of virtuous education if their political activity is going to produce anything that can be called wise or noble.[45] Politics itself is not innately generative of excellence. In the absence of decent character and proper training, those who attempt to engage in it to any great extent risk falling prey to the temptation of self-interest and will become either bloviating demagogues or shiftless freeloaders.

Yet if Washington was skeptical of the value of political activity neither was he effusive in his demand for rights. He acknowledged that the American regime is "an outgrowth of the desire for liberty that is natural in every human breast,"[46] and he often enough sought to reassure his black audiences that they were entitled to every right guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution; but when rights and individual freedom came into competition with duty and tradition, Washington almost invariably sided with the latter. This bias is most evident in his criticisms of the mistakes made by the former slaves during the Reconstruction Era. In Washington's view, many of these newly freed slaves "plunged into excesses, undertook responsibilities for which they were not fitted, [and] in many cases took liberty to mean license."[47] Contra Mill, Washington had little tolerance for any liberty that blithely condoned much less encouraged "conduct [that is] foolish, perverse, or wrong,"[48] and he was contemptuous of "educated loafers" including "the proud fop with his beaver hat, kid gloves,

[44] *Ibid.*, 62-63.
[45] Arist., *Pol.*, 1334a28-34.
[46] Washington, ed., *Selected Speeches*, 100.
[47] Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 45.
[48] Mill, *On Liberty*, 17.

and walking cane."[49] Freedom, he believed, required such great responsibility that it could only be truly enjoyed "through seeming restriction" and "the most severe training."

> The child who wants to spend time in play, rather than in study, mistakes play for freedom. The spendthrift who parts with his money as soon as it is received mistakes spending for freedom. The young man who craves the right to drink and gamble mistakes debauchery for freedom. The man who claims the right to idle away his days upon the street, rather than to spend them in set hours of labor, mistakes loafing for freedom.[50]

It is the "tremendous cost" we pay in regulating our desires through studiousness, frugality, moral fortitude, and industry which transports us down that "old, old road" that leads eventually to the life of self-government and usefulness to our community. This is not a new idea, of course. That the quality of the political regime depends upon the quality of individual regimentation is an ancient belief whose roots creep throughout all of history. "Can it be," a different Washington once asked, "that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue?"[51] For the Washington of this paper the answer is an emphatic *no*: "Every government, like every individual, must have a standard of perfection that is immovable, unchangeable, applicable to all races, rich and poor, black and white, towards which its people must continually strive."[52] Only then can a person acquire "freedom in its highest and broadest sense." That freedom is true freedom, all others being spurious.

> There is a freedom that is apparent, and one that is real; a superficial freedom, and one that is substantial; a freedom that is temporary and deceptive, and one that is abiding and permanent; one that ministers to the lower appetites and passions, and another that encourages growth in the higher and sweeter things of life—a freedom that is forced, and one that is the result of struggle, forbearance, and self-sacrifice.[53]

It is important to note that Washington does not consider "struggle, forbearance, and self-sacrifice" to be examples of "forced" freedom; rather, these things shape and strengthen a person's character, and make him useful to himself and to his fellow citizens by liberating him

[49] Washington, ed., *Selected Speeches*, 9.
[50] *Ibid.*, 110.
[51] George Washington's "Farewell Address," 1796.
[52] Washington, ed., *Selected Speeches*, 115.
[53] *Ibid.*, 108.

from narrow vices. The debasement that results from our personal moral failings not only adversely affects the success and happiness we can expect for ourselves, but in proportion as we turn our attention inward to gratify specious pleasures, we that much more surrender to the carelessness that distracts us from the duties we owe to our community. In submitting to the firmness of our self-imposed strictures, we discover a liberty that "so far from being incompatible with authority, becomes virtually identical with it."[54] What makes this striving for excellence a "continual" effort is that the temptations we face, combined with our inextirpable fallibility, guarantees that the freedom we seek "can never be a bequest; it must be a conquest."[55] And a lifelong conquest, at that. In the same way that we have mastered the materials of nature, we must become craftsmen *pro tempore* of our better selves. Like blacksmiths hammering an anvil in the soul, we must work and labor with our heads, hands, and hearts to become the instruments through which the nation as a common enterprise can achieve its greatest happiness.

This crescendo of enthusiasm may swell the breast of the communitarian, but the traditional republican might still be skeptical. It may be all well and good that the citizens are encouraged to develop themselves mentally, manually, and morally; but without either the encouragement or the opportunity to participate in political activity, can those citizens ever be anything more than nominal citizens? If we use Aristotle's ideal standard, the answer is no. But if we are willing to accept that citizenship is still possible in a qualified sense, the answer is yes. In the last section of this paper, we will see how Washington's understanding of what is both appropriate and necessary for the mass of people in a political community

[54]Isaiah Berlin, *Liberty* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 194. Washington's call for self-control did not, however, lead him to the threshold of Sarastro's temple, asseverating, "I must do for men... what they cannot do for themselves, and I cannot ask their permission or consent, because they are in no condition to know what is best for them." Nor did he align himself with those "ascetics and quietists... who have fled the world, and escaped the yoke of society or public opinion, by some process of deliberate self-transformation that enables them to care no longer for any of its values, to remain, isolated and independent, on its edges, no longer vulnerable to its weapons." *Ibid.*, 182, 197.

[55]Washington, ed., *Selected Speeches*, 108.

helps us to arrive at an idea of citizenship that suits a large, populous, market-driven regime like the United States.

Preparatory Citizenship

In speaking about education, labor, and moral development, Washington always had at the forefront of his mind the great mass of the people. Despite his often tepid and even censorious tone when speaking about politics and other traditionally exalted professions, he was not in fact hostile to them.[56] What he wanted was to secure the greatest attainable satisfaction for the greatest number of people; and in his view, the greatest number of people could not practicably become legislators, philosophers, and religious leaders. Limited resources, opportunities, and natural talent made this a simple fact; yet Washington ached with the desire to ensure that this great flock of human beings would not degenerate into a faceless and nameless clump of disregarded matter.[57] Farmers, hoteliers, architects, and many others all play a vital role in providing the political community with the products and services that sustain it and make it a happy place to reside. Be that as it may, did Washington assume too much when he referred to these people as citizens? Are they merely instruments for increasing wealth and material comforts?

If we take the classical definition of citizenship in the unqualified sense, it seems impossible that Washington can have what he wants. The *polis*, we know, "[comes] into being for the sake of living" but "exists for the sake of living well."[58] The essential object missing from

[56]Washington spoke favorably about the character and achievements of men like Blanche K. Bruce (U.S. senator), George Washington Carver (botanist and professor), George W. Clinton (bishop), and other "high-souled gentlemen under black skins." *My Larger Education*, chs. V and IX.

[57]The individual may be the instrument of national virtue, but the *person* is never fully consumed by the role he plays. Not only is honest, intelligent work dignified and honorable, but the moral virtue displayed by every man whose character is formed by such work deserves to be looked upon as a living repository of education. Even those who live small and petty lives embody certain humanitarian lessons. Washington himself abided by this rule: "I said to myself that I would try to learn something from every man I met; make him my text-book, read him, study him, and learn something from him. So I began deliberately to try to learn from men. I learned something from big men and something from little men, from the man with prejudice and the man without prejudice." *My Larger Education*, 30.

[58]Arist., *Pol.*, 1252b29-30.

this description becomes evident when we ask, But for *whom* does the city exist? For *whom* is it advantageous or beneficial (*sumpherontos*)? To answer this question, Aristotle began with two examples that he claimed are often confused for genuine political rule (*archē*). The first is the relation between master (*despotēs*) and slave. It is true, he said, that a certain advantage accrues to the slave insofar as his life receives order and direction from the master, but this advantage is merely "accidental"; for the slave, like other tools, is employed primarily because his work allows the master to avoid having to engage in activities deemed to be base and troublesome. The second example is that having to do with the relations of the household, where the patriarch lives with his wife and children. Rule here is not mastery but household management (*oikonomia*). And while the father benefits incidentally from his position as household head, in the same way the fitness trainer benefits from his "rule" over gymnasts, it is for the sake of his wife and children—the natural inhabitants of the *oikos*—that his supervision exists. True political rule, however, is identifiable with "those regimes which look to the *common* advantage (*to koinē sumpheron*)" of both rulers and ruled.[59] The regime, therefore, is more than simply a set of institutions; it includes the whole class of citizens whose activity contributes to its character and maintenance.

But whose activity ought to be counted as rendering a specifically citizenly service? The technical but unqualified answer to this question is, that activity which involves "sharing in deliberative and judicial authority."[60] Aristotle, however, argues that there is more to identifying the true citizen than simply naming his civic activity. He reaches this point through the dilemma presented by the laboring and working classes of the community. These people are neither foreigners nor slaves, yet Aristotle does not wish to call them citizens in the fullest sense. Every person who is engaged in the performance of some task, if he is to become excellent in performing it, must seek out the virtue connected with that specific activity. This holds for the individual citizen as well. To illustrate this point, Aristotle gives the example of a ship and its crew:

[59] *Ibid.*, 1278b30-1279a22. Emphasis added.
[60] Curtis Johnson, "Who Is Aristotle's Citizen?" *Phronesis* 29, no. 1 (1984), 80.

> Now just as a sailor is one of a number of sharers, so, we assert, is the citizen. Although sailors are dissimilar in their capacities (one is a rower, another a pilot, another a lookout, and others have similar sorts of designation), it is clear that the most precise account of their virtue will be that peculiar to each sort individually, but that a common account will in a similar way fit all. For the safety of the ship in its voyage is the task of all of them, and each of the sailors strives for this.[61]

To clarify, in the analogy of the ship the various sailors are not comparable to the city's butchers and shoemakers. Each rower, pilot, and lookout is instead similar to the various officeholders who share in the regime's deliberative and judicial authority. Thus, the specific virtue that counts for the citizen will in some way be a civic virtue and not any technical expertise specific to the artisan. To cultivate the virtue connected with a particular occupation, however, requires a great deal of time. This holds for the citizen as well as for the craftsman. Each must be able to concentrate on the perfection of his activity if he is to approach that which we call excellence. Those who are capable of preserving the regime *as* the regime (*politeia*) are the true citizens (*politēs*), and no one else. But if the non-true-citizen workers are neither foreigners nor slaves, to what class of people can they be assigned? Undoubtedly, they are members of the community. Perhaps they can be sorted into that category that includes children and the very old, whose respective age groups and relative mental acuity limit their participation as full citizens but entitle them to being "incomplete (*atelēs*) citizens."[62] This is a possible solution insofar as the workers are not permitted to have a share in political authority. But if, in moving from theory to practice, we allow workers to engage in political participation, while they will be citizens technically speaking, at best that citizenship can be understood only in a "secondary and divergent sense."[63]

Whatever logic is bound up in this theory of citizenship, the conclusion must appear unsatisfactory to the conscientious statesman. It certainly appeared that way to Washington. In his view, the highest end of citizenship is helpfulness toward one's neighbors and fellow citizens. This is not entirely at odds with Aristotle's ideas concerning life in the political

[61] Arist., *Pol.*, 1276b20-28.
[62] Johnson, "Who Is Aristotle's Citizen?" 85.
[63] *Ibid.*, 84. Internal quotation marks omitted.

community. Recall that the *polis* exists for the sake of living well and that any good regime will be organized so that its offices and the activities of its functionaries work toward securing the common advantage. To stop here, however, leaves us with an impression of the *polis* as something mechanical and strictly procedural. Humans are social creatures who require more than just institutional order and stability. The city or state or government may be necessary for community life, but although it has tangible components, it often settles in our minds as an abstraction and is insufficient for cultivating the bonds that keep the members of that community connected. "Community," Aristotle said, "involves the element of affection" (*koinōnia philikon*).[64] As such, we might say that the most fundamental task of every citizen is to do what he can to prevent the community from disintegrating into factional disputes, or worse, civil war. He must strive to be a force of construction rather than destruction. This is Washington's overriding interest throughout the whole of his work. Some biographers and historians have chided him for what they perceive to be a cowardly or self-serving accommodation to race prejudice in the South; but from a civic standpoint, Washington heroically assumed the responsibilities of the true statesman. Civic harmony and not mere armistice was his ultimate aim.

But what do we mean when we say that a citizen must *do* what he can to keep the community united? In her book *Talking to Strangers*, political theorist Danielle Allen proposes the art of rhetoric as a new "habit" by which citizens can learn to maintain (or regain) trust for one another.[65] When matters of dispute arise among citizens, persuasive speech becomes the vehicle for constructive civic discourse. It substitutes discussion for combat and acknowledges the equal status of the participants. "To be fully a 'persuader' and not a master or aggressor, one must address oneself to others as a friend and democratic equal."[66] To be a persuasive persuader, however, requires something more. If the speaker is to be successful at bringing the interested parties in a dispute to an agreeable resolution, thereby extinguishing

[64]Arist., *Pol.*, 1295b24.

[65]Danielle S. Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since* Brown v. Board of Education (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 140.

[66]*Ibid.*, 142.

the heat of controversy, he must demonstrate to his audience the proper logos (his history of pragmatic success), ethos (his respect for law and social norms), and pathos (his goodwill toward others).[67] Lest readers mistake Allen's proposal as one that is directed primarily to politicians, she says the following:

> Rhetoric is relevant not only in the halls of the legislature and in the courtroom but wherever any stranger has to convince another of anything. Any interaction among strangers can generate trust that the polity needs in order to maintain its basic relationships. If citizens keep in mind these guidelines for speaking and listening to their fellow citizens, they will import the expertise of ordinary friendship into the political realm, and political friendship will grow out of that.[68]

Yet despite Allen's insistence that such rhetorical acts are available to the ordinary citizen, Washington would likely point out that the most ordinary citizens, though theoretically capable of such speech, do not often consciously aim to address their peers in that way. This is not to say that their preferred or default mode of speech is therefore hostile or antagonistic; it is only to suggest that ordinary people are usually immersed in the hustle and bustle of daily life, whether they are at work, going to work, or running errands. Moreover, many if not most citizens who are more or less strangers to each other do not tend to engage in complex, controversial political discussions outside traditional venues like college campuses, political conventions, formal speaking engagements, and protest events.

Washington would not dismiss Allen's proposal as useless, but he would forcefully restate his case for the large-scale civilizing power of honest, diligent work. He would emphasize deeds over speeches. He would do so not only because the great mass of ordinary citizens must work for a living, but because he believed that a conscientious commitment to one's occupation—to one's calling, as Weber put it—yields the material and character-forming benefits that, with proper examples and encouragement, do more than speech to stitch together the gaps and tears that appear in the well-worn fabric of society. He reached this conclusion originally through his observations of former slaves, but soon realized that the

[67] *Ibid.*, 145-151.
[68] *Ibid.*, 158.

advice he gave to poor Southern blacks applied for the same reason to poor Southern whites. Both classes had been trained out of a sympathy for work as a consequence of the system of slavery. Blacks wanted to escape work because they associated it with all the soul-crushing misery and inhumanity that involuntary servitude naturally entails; poor whites meanwhile resented their own hand-to-mouth existence because they lacked the resources that would enable them to live like the plantation owners whose wealth could be used to purchase slaves. Washington saw that this swirling maelstrom of contempt, resentment, and indignation had as its source the desperate feeling to liberate oneself from having to do work. Yet he also saw that the flight from work did not necessarily lead to a promised land where the masses could find genuine meaning and satisfaction in their lives. The throng that abandons the fields and factories can only abandon them if they are able to go elsewhere. But where will they go? And what are they to do once they arrive? During Washington's time, observers in the South worried that if liberal education became the primary aim of the mass of poor blacks and poor whites, it "would result merely in increasing the class who sought to escape labor," and "the South would soon be overrun by the idle and vicious."[69] Washington felt the same anxiety, but his main concern was that an idle or useless class would gradually find for itself the sort of "work" that is mischievous and nettlesome. Unable to find permanent liberal employments for lack of demand and resources, and unable therefore to provide for their material needs and comforts, they would search for or instigate quarrels about real or perceived problems in society to justify their own insatiable feelings of dissatisfaction. But because they renounced ordinary work as undignified, and with it the skills necessary to perform it, they would have no other tools left to them but their chanting mouths and marching feet. In becoming what Robert C. Ogden called "unprincipled agitators,"[70] they would do more to rend the bonds of civic fellowship than to heal or improve them.[71]

[69]Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 94.

[70]Harlan, *The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901-1915*, 51.

[71]"A useless, shiftless, idle class," said Washington, "is a menace and a danger to any community." Washington, ed., *Selected Speeches*, 89.

Traditional work (Washington would never call it illiberal) occupies the masses in employments that provide both the individual and the community with their "cardinal needs" as well as their trimmings and comforts. But it is more than simply a means to occupation; more than a method simply for depriving the Devil's workshop of its contraptions or for replacing waspishness with the distractions of avarice. The improvement of the people's "industrial" and "material condition," in connection with sufficient intellectual training, is essential "before there can be any permanent change in their moral and religious life."[72] Moreover "material possessions are not, and should not be made, the chief end of life," but instead ought to be invested in "that education and development which enhance our usefulness and produce that tenderness and goodness of heart which will make us live for the benefit of our fellow men and for the promotion of our country's highest welfare." This is the "primary training for good living and good citizenship."[73] For Washington, one could not lay claim to the fullest citizenship simply by participating in basic civic activities such as voting, serving on juries, or even entering political office. By "training" for "good citizenship" a person is *preparing* himself to acquire the talents and character necessary to become a thoroughgoing citizen. Too often, "too much stress [is] placed upon the mere matter of voting and holding political office rather than upon the preparation for the highest citizenship," of the sort which reminds the people that *as citizens* their most solemn duty is to aid and even to sacrifice for each other.[74]

[72]Washington, "The Awakening of the Negro."

[73]*Ibid.*, 88; Washington, *The Future of the American Negro*, 34.

[74]*Ibid.*, 13. "It requires little wisdom or statesmanship to repress, to crush out, to retard the hopes and aspirations of a people; but the highest and most profound statesmanship is shown in guiding and stimulating a people, so that every fibre in the body and soul shall be made to contribute in the highest degree to the usefulness and ability of the state." *Ibid.*, 150. In emphasizing the need for training in both intelligence and conscience: "Here, then, you have on the one hand an ignorant vote, on the other an intelligent vote minus a conscience. The time may not be far off when to this kind of jury we shall have to look for the votes which shall decide in a large measure the destiny of our democratic institutions." *Ibid.*, 20.

The possibility of such community-centered living was exemplified on the Tuskegee Institute's campus. In 1896, the school decided to add a chapel to its property. As reported by Washington,

> Our students have made the bricks for this chapel. A large part of the timber is sawed by students at our own sawmill, the plans are drawn up by our teacher of architecture and mechanical drawing, and students do the brick-masonry, plastering, painting, carpentry work, tinning, slatting, and make most of the furniture. Practically, the whole chapel will be built and furnished by student labor; in the end the school will have the building for permanent use, and the students will have a knowledge of the trades employed in its construction.[75]

In that same year, Washington could boast that of the thirty buildings belonging to the Tuskegee Institute, all but three had been planned and built by the students and faculty. Had that not been the case, had the Institute instead used its funds to purchase labor and materials beyond its immediate community, that community would have lost much of its character, and with it, the robust sense of fellowship that is generated through the interdependence of collective endeavor. They would have been that much more like strangers and that much less like kinsmen, until the community as a *res publica* became as absent-mindedly shared as the air we breathe. To illustrate the same point more humorously, consider one of Washington's favorite stories about a funeral that took place in a rural community in Georgia (originally told by Henry W. Grady):

> The grave was dug in the midst of a pine forest, but the pine coffin that held the body was brought from Cincinnati. Hickory and other hard woods grew in abundance nearby, but the wagon on which the coffin was drawn came from South Bend, Indiana, and the mule that drew the wagon came from Missouri. Valuable minerals were close to the cemetery, but the shovels and picks used in digging the grave came from Pittsburg, and their handles from Baltimore. The shoes in which the dead man was buried came from Lynn, Massachusetts, his coat and trousers from New York, his shirt from Lowell, Massachusetts, and his collar and tie from Philadelphia. The only things supplied by the county, with its wealth of natural resources, was the corpse and the hole in the ground. . . .[76]

It may perhaps be too much to say that the community which remains uninvolved with itself faces death and the abyss, but Washington was convinced that the body and soul

[75] *Ibid.*, 112-113.

[76] Washington, *Working with the Hands*, 21.

of the community could not be alienated from each other without losing the very civic character that makes it what it is. Part of that civic character is formed by the political activity we traditionally associate with the regime; but although political offices must have political officials, those officials are themselves drawn from the body of the people; and that body in turn dwells in a realm that is neither entirely private nor entirely public, but is, in Washington's eyes, nonetheless entirely civic.

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