

1992

Conceptions and Ideologies of the Negro Problem

Ralph J. Bunche

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cibs>

Recommended Citation

Bunche, Ralph J. (1992) "Conceptions and Ideologies of the Negro Problem," *Contributions in Black Studies*: Vol. 9 , Article 6.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cibs/vol9/iss1/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Afro-American Studies at ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Contributions in Black Studies by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.

Ralph J. Bunche

CONCEPTIONS AND IDEOLOGIES OF THE NEGRO PROBLEM

KNOWLEDGE OF RALPH BUNCHE'S PIONEERING work on African American conceptions of the world has been largely confined to specialists in political science and history.¹ Writing in 1940, Bunche and his staff prepared four, detailed memoranda² on black American organizations and ideologies for the monumental Carnegie-Myrdal study, *An American Dilemma*.³ True to design, this larger work succeeded in framing discussions on "race relations" within and without academia for the subsequent two decades. (And is still occasionally employed today as a primary text by professors who have read little else since that time!)

In comparing these original memoranda to the final, grand product distilled by sociologist Gunnar Myrdal and his co-workers, one is immediately struck by the selective narrowness of black worldviews presented and analyzed in the latter (represented mainly by assimilationist, reformist-oriented views characteristic of the NAACP and other similarly respectable organizations) in contrast to the rich diversity of African American opinion and Bunche's reflective insights present in the former. Unfortunately, however, save for publication of "*The Political Status of the Negro*" in 1973,⁴ the Bunche memoranda have remained entombed in their original, bound typescript manuals at the venerable Schomburg Collection as well as in microform at many other institutions—accessible, to be sure, but not in a popular way.

One can think of at least two reasons for this lapse, the most obvious being the hurried, uneven, and at times, highly personal character of the writing itself. But these memoranda, of course, were not intended for publication; rather they were to serve as informational references that Myrdal would draw upon in his corporate-inspired study of U.S. "race relations." The second reason, however, was eminently political. In the early 1940s Ralph Bunche believed that the destiny of African Americans, the majority of whom were workers, was to be found in the success of the labor movement. Bunche's position placed him squarely on the Left, but not so far Left as to embrace the politics of the American Communist Party during its "united front" or subsequent periods. On the other hand, his beliefs were also at odds with liberals who, while advocating the "peaceful, democratic integration" of blacks, neglected to raise corresponding and vital issues relative to the redistribution of political power and of material wealth in American society. Neither group had any particular reason to champion Bunche's analyses as a whole, and in the post-war era his radical and far-reaching intellectual contributions of the 1930s and 1940s were largely forgotten, overshadowed by his far

more conservative presence as Under Secretary-General of the United Nations.

There are still intellectual gems to be mined from Dr. Bunche's unpublished manuscripts, and we have made room in this issue to reprint selections from the most important of the three: "Memorandum on Conceptions and Ideologies of the Negro Problem." The original manuscript, consisting of less than 200 typescript pages, embodied eight sections: I. The American "Faith"; II. The Nature of Ideologies; III. Scope of Thinking on the Negro Problem; IV. Frame of Reference, Assumptions, and Value Premises; V. Analysis of Thought on the Negro Problem [by blacks]⁵; VI. Analysis of Thought on the Negro Problem [by whites]⁶; VII. Post-Emancipation Negro Thought on the Negro Problem⁷; and VIII. Conclusion. Sections II, III, and VII seem to us to be the more cogent of the eight, and it is these that we have chosen to reproduce below.

A full analysis of Bunche's views on African American worldviews will have to await another forum. Thus we shall forego, for example, any discussion of Bunche's views on class differences within the black community; of the important comparisons he makes between black "middle-class" ideals of the 19th century and those of the early 20th; of the notion of "contrast-conception" borrowed from Lewis Copeland, which today one would characterize as an expression of "otherness"; or of his elitist views concerning "articulated conceptions [of black intellectuals that filter] down into the inert Negro mass," but not vice-versa. In the meantime, let us be content to make one or two observations regarding "the nature of ideologies" as Dr. Bunche conceptualized them.

There is, of course, an intimate connection between Karl Mannheim's Ideology and Utopia and Ralph Bunche's critique of African American worldviews. In Mannheim's view, Ideologies were the views of ruling groups; Utopias, those of the subaltern, the ruled.⁸ Following Mannheim, Bunche, too, distinguished between Ideologies and Utopias, as well as between particular and total conceptions of ideology as advanced by the former.⁹ What is different is that for African American worldviews, Bunche rethought the dual category, Ideology/Utopia as Accommodationism/Escapeism:

Roughly speaking all Negro ideologies on the Negro question fall into one or the other of two rather broad, arbitrary categories: "accommodation," and release or escape. Accommodation is used here in no technical sense, but merely in the ordinary, "practical" sense—the sense in which the Negro tries to adjust his thinking and behavior in such wise as to occasion least shock to the dominant group mores and traditions, and at the same time suffer least inconvenience himself. There are tendencies to invest the term "accommodation" with a load of pedantic regalia, but by this we are left untouched. By "accommodation" is meant simply that sort of expedient (or tactful, if you please) adjustment in behavior that is part and parcel of the Negro's life in the South, and for that matter, in the entire country. Nor is there anything remarkable about this sort of adjustment, except that some Negroes seem to overdo it. for it is typical of the life of every individual in a complex, class-ridden, competitive, modern society. Workers undergo a process of "accommodation" in their relations with employers, students with their teachers, wives with their husbands (or vice versa) and Negroes with whites. (89)

While keeping in mind these nuanced provisos attached to his definitions, Dr. Bunche was nonetheless prepared, on the historical plane, to incorporate all African American worldviews beneath the rubric of those that "accommodated" to the status quo, and those attempting to "escape" from it. Therein lay a double problem with the Accommodationism/Escapism formula.

With Mannheim, first of all, there is the practical difficulty of distinguishing, in an effective way, between "ideological" and "utopian" worldviews; within working-class views, for example, how does one effectively separate the desire for specific social change—say, the demand for a redistribution of wealth—from that directed toward the maintaining of specific aspects of the society—the family, for example? Should such an ideological fragment be characterized as belonging to Ideology, or Utopia? Second, the overwhelming majority of African American worldviews addressed by Bunche tend toward the Utopian category: "If we were to use Mannheim's terminology," he confessed, "it could probably be said that all Negro ideologies and conceptions are 'utopias,' for they inevitably seek an alteration in the conditions of their existence under the status quo."¹⁰ Of what practical use, then, is the Accommodationism/Escapism dichotomy, if one is unable to muster sufficient examples of "accommodationism" in the sense of Mannheim's Ideology to impart coherence to the Ideology/Utopia framework?

Second, Bunche's categorization also mirrored a sense of political futility which was quite ahistorical, his invoking of a considerable body of historical data notwithstanding. According to this schema, all African American ideologies, historically speaking, would have to be considered as either accepting the status quo or escaping into flights of fancy. In the history of the African presence in North America, can it be said that there never existed a substantive black struggle against prevailing social conditions? The post-World War II Civil Rights movement had not yet been born, so we cannot fault Dr. Bunche for ignoring that, of course. But how might the activities of the Colored Farmer's alliance be categorized, for example? Was Ida B. Wells' campaign against lynching a reinforcement of the status quo or merely a chimerical whim? Did struggles on the part of African Americans to abolish slavery belong to accommodationist or escapist strategies? And lastly, applying Bunche's conceptual categories to his own, proffered social solutions, was his observation that the destiny of African Americans was inexorably linked to the struggles of American workers as a whole an expression of Ideology or Utopia? Or was it, perhaps, that of a dispassionate Science? Obviously a significant conceptual flaw presented itself here.

Although the substitution of a concept of "gradualism" for that of "accommodationism" might have superficially obscured at least one of the most glaring difficulties of Dr. Bunche's formulation, there are other problems to contend with. As Mannheim observed, "Political discussion is, from the very first, more than theoretical argumentation; it is the tearing off of disguises—the unmasking of those unconscious motives which bind the group existence to its cultural aspirations and its theoretical arguments. . . ."¹¹ But, noted Mannheim, since the art of unmasking is today no longer the property of any one group but of all of them, by employing the weapon of radical unmasking, competing groups have also destroyed human confidence in thought in general. It is thus inevitable that more and more people have taken flight into skepticism

or irrationalism. The reciprocal unmaskings of groups by one another has thus led to the search for thought in its absolute state. What is sought is a sphere in which partisanship and the fragmented quality of human vision, can be transcended.¹² Mannheim's *Wissenssoziologie*, or science of knowledge, claimed, of course, to have accomplished just that: a transcending of partisanship by means of a "free-floating" analysis. Between conservative Ideology, which abstractly referred to ruling class ideals, and transformative Utopia, which referred to those of the working class, stood Mannheim's "free-floating intellectual," who would mediate the conflict between the two. (Michael Löwy) Formally eschewing political partisanship, Mannheim's strategy was to intellectually unmask the ideals of both Ideologists and Utopians by exposing and dissecting the social origins of each. Secondly, he sought to develop a "scientific," non-relativist, and "free-floating" critique which stood midway between the two antagonistic positions, thus preventing civilization from tearing itself apart.

While revealing the social core inherent to the ideals of "accommodationists" and "escapists" alike, Ralph Bunche, unlike Mannheim, made no claim that his exposé constituted a "free-floating" critique. The latter sought (unsuccessfully) to avoid political partisanship, and to establish a neutral, non-relativist perspective on existing conflicts between capital and labor, neither of which forces, according to Mannheim, were able to see beyond the ideological fantasies which they had created in their own respective interests.¹³ For Mannheim the ideological unmasking that the sociology of knowledge had set for itself as a task, in itself produced problems (i.e. that people would cease to believe in worldviews at all, any worldviews). Bunche, on the other hand, employed the unmasking of the social roots of Afro-American thought as a means of demonstrating that the bulk of it was "escapist" in nature, and used this failing as a partisan political platform upon which to advocate black involvement with the industrial labor movement of the latter 1930s and early 40s. There is nothing "free-floating" in regard to Bunche's position—he is far from being a detached observer of Afro-American oppression, at least in those years, nor does he pretend to be.

The very last point to be made here concerns a shift of conceptual frameworks between Bunche's two memoranda specifically devoted to African American worldviews. While the "Extended Memorandum on the Programs, Ideologies, Tactics, and Achievements of Negro Betterment and Interracial Organizations" (not reproduced here) addresses the worldviews of specific organizations, "Memorandum on Conceptions and Ideologies of the Negro Problem" expounds upon black worldviews in a much larger context, cutting across class as well as "racial" lines. But while "Conceptions and Ideologies" is dominated by the Ideology/Utopia or Accommodationism/Escapism paradigm, "Programs, Ideologies, Tactics, and Achievements" is framed by the duality of African American social identity (and its implication for social structure):

Negroes in America since Emancipation have been subject to a dual pull. As citizens in a democratic nation the aspirations of Negroes have been directed toward attainment of full equality, not as American Negroes but as full-fledged American citizens. Such aspirations are given encouragement by the creed of human equality which forms the ideological foundations of the

American society. The wide disparity between theory and practice, however; the position of inequality and subordination arbitrarily fixed for the Negro in the political, social and economic structures, has impelled the Negro population to demand special consideration for its "own" or "Negro" problems. Thus when the Negro views any matter of broad governmental policy, he ordinarily weighs it not as an American citizen, but as a Negro American.

Thus there is a constant conflict between the Negro's unquestioned desire to be a full-fledged American citizen, and the necessity forced upon him by tradition and sentiment in the country to "think Negro" first, to demand special consideration for the Negro group and its problems.¹⁴

At one pole a paradigm framed by an ever-present pull within the African American community between American civic and national identity on the one side, African American group identity on the other. At the other pole a paradigm expressing a tension between conservation and change in African American approaches to the securing of social justice. The two memoranda stand conceptually as well as physically apart, and Bunche—to my knowledge—never attempted to resolve these dissimilar approaches to a single subject. As both frameworks are equally valid as well as indispensable to one another, there ought to be a way of combining the two into an organic whole.

We begin by posing the question: what is ideology? Following Althusser's well-known conceptualization, ideology is the way in which people express their subjective relations to their real conditions of existence. This suggests the existence of a real, that is to say objective relation, on the one side, and a lived, a subjectively experienced but not necessarily imaginary one (as Althusser postulated), on the other.¹⁵ Within ideology's representations, society, as well as institutional networks within society, always present themselves in contradictory ways: on the one hand, as activity that directly expresses subjective meaning; on the other, as structure, as a nominally objective fact or thing.¹⁶ The "positions" that people occupy in society hence give simultaneous rise to two, relatively autonomous, ideological spheres: the existential and the social-historical.¹⁷ Ideological elements of an existential or socio-historical nature are virtually never present in "pure" form but rather constitute "building blocks," so to speak, of more or less coherent worldviews. Generally speaking, ideologies or ideological fragments of an existential mien attempt to answer the question, "Who am I (or who should I be)?" ; those of a social historical-type address the question, "What is (or what should be) my place in society?" In brief, the first question embraces issues of social identity; the latter, under conditions of domination, translates into one concerned with a just social structure or what is the same thing, the pursuit of institutionalized social justice.¹⁸ And here one must stress from the outset that it is gendered social identities and gendered social relations that must form the cornerstones of our analyses. While it is true that the issue of social identity embraces the domains of gender, civic, national, and religious identities, and that the one of social justice includes gender as well as "racial" justice, oppressive material conditions as well as distortions of social identity have always been experienced differently by African Americans across gender lines. With these criteria in mind, we should be prepared to pose two sets of interlocking questions:

(1) To what extent does a given ideological tendency point towards a fundamental transformation of social relations, where the domination and exploitation of human beings by one another is to be eliminated entirely? Second, what

effects might such ultimate social restructurings have upon our internalized social identities, that is to say, upon our long-term, collective self-esteem, extending across gender lines? Lastly, to what extent does the form taken by the struggle for non-exploitative and non-dominating social relations enhance or hinder the parallel struggles for positive self-image?

(2) To what extent does a given ideological tendency address the question of African American social identities, especially in regard to the edification and preservation of our collective self-esteem across gender lines? Second, to what extent is the proposed flowering of social identity grounded in historical-social realities, as opposed to myth? Third, to what extent is the generating of positive social identities linked to struggles for truly egalitarian social relations, which alone are capable of "guaranteeing" the long-term self-esteem of African Americans across gender lines? And finally, to what extent does the form taken by the struggle for positive self-esteem enhance or hinder the parallel struggle for non-exploitative and non-dominating social relations?

In closing, while it is certain that Dr. Bunche's conceptual categories must be rethought from the ground up, it is no less true that many of his descriptive insights, even after half a century, appear surprisingly up-to-date. Take, for example, the following observation:

Another conception of the Negro problem subscribed to by many Negroes and whites, though mainly from among the upper strata, is that the solution of the problem can be attained through the cultivation of inter-racial good will, mutual understanding and respect. This ideology conceives of the racial problem as resting primarily upon the false sands of mutual hostility and suspicion deriving from ignorance. It takes the position that most whites have contact only with the "lowest class" Negroes, and learn, through their papers, of the misdeeds of Negroes but rarely of their achievements. Once it is revealed to whites that there are highly educated, distinguished, cultured, law-abiding, honest and able Negroes, it is presumed that they will surrender their false conceptions of the Negro, adopt sympathetic ones and change their attitudes toward their black brothers. (96)

Can you still recall the spectacle that besmirched our television screens during the second round of Senate hearings devoted to a certain black Supreme Court nominee last October? Do you recollect the pride that middle-class Negroes experienced at the fact that "white folks" were able to see so many articulate, Ivy-League bred Negroes together on TV at once? Can you demonstrate any tangible, material gain that has accrued to the mass of African Americans as a result of "highly educated, distinguished, cultured, law-abiding, honest [although half were 'lying in their teeth,' as grandma used to say] and able Negroes" having appeared on television this past fall? The "optimistic fatalism" of the black middle-class, noted by Bunche a half-century ago, flourishes still, and continues to substitute for concrete thought in every sphere that historical analysis is called for. (E.A.)

II. THE NATURE OF IDEOLOGIES

Though subject to local and sectional vagaries the line between black and white in this country is heavily drawn. Whatever the risk in defining the Negro as a biological entity or an ethnic group, the popular mind has created a conceptual dichotomy that is accepted with as little question as the counter-conceptions of night and day. Thus, as Copeland points out, in the white mind the Negro is regarded essentially as a "contrast conception."¹

Such counter-conceptions, conceived in terms of good and evil, long familiar to religion, when employed to interpret human relations involve a polarization of values and a comparative moral significance which must ordinarily portray one of the groups in an unflattering light. Thus in America, whites and blacks are placed in juxtaposition, and the blacks by tradition, legend and belief, are the antonym in antithesis to the whites, in whom are found the highest moral values, the virtues, the creative urges and the intelligence. The moral virtues find themselves personalized in the guise of white men and women.

The human dichotomy of white and black in America was a development that matured only as slavery became an important factor in the nation's economy. Prior to this time, the Negro indentured servants and the Negro slaves were differentiated from the rest of the population, not primarily by reason of color, but by their class status in the society. Color was a basis of differentiation, to be sure, but until slavery fastened itself as a vital institution upon the country, there was no need for the development of counter-conceptions, nor for racial stereotypes as a means of rationalizing a color caste status for the Negro. In the early colonial period it would appear that there was a vastly wider gulf in status between indentured servants, Negro and white, and Negro slaves, on the one hand, and aristocratic white land-holders and business men on the other, than there was between Negroes and whites in these lower orders. Intermarriage between white and Negro indentured servants was permitted, in some places even encouraged, and was not infrequent. This conditions prevailed at least until well past the middle of the 17th century.

But as slavery developed into a fundamental institution, and it became necessary to invent rationalizations for this inhuman practice of converting men into chattels, and in order to reconcile it with the sacred tenets of the constitutional structure, color became identified with slavery, and the firm basis for the contrast-conception and the racial stereotype was laid. The importance of rationalizing a conceptual scheme which would allot positive and negative values of the two races, with the favorable values reserved for the dominant whites, is obvious. Without such a highly refined rationalization it is doubtful that slavery could have endured as long as it did, for the democratic fundamentals of the society, as superficial and sloganized as they often proved to be, were still a vital and respectful force.

It should not be overlooked, however, that in the antebellum South there were thinkers of prominence who were, in their broad social outlook, essentially anti-democratic, and who might be classified in modern parlance as embryonic fascists. The system of slavery was boring from within the thinking of the South, and in the 1850s there

Conceptions and Ideologies

were ominous indications of growing distrust of the democratic way, even for the white population. It remained fashionable to extend mild lip-service to the basic political creed of the Constitution, but a thoroughly undemocratic social outlook and class conception was winning increasing acceptance. The slave regime was undermining the ideological scaffolding of democracy.

From slavery till now the conception of the groups as antithetical has been nourished in the societal mind. Whites allude to "Negroes" (and significantly, not to "American" Negroes as is done frequently with Germans, Irish, Jews and even Chinese and Japanese), to the "other race," the "opposite race," "colored people," etc. These designations in general involve a conceptual contrast evaluation that is ordinarily uncomplimentary to the Negro in varying degrees of intensity, depending upon the background, knowledge and contacts of the individual applying them. This contradistinction (and it must be emphasized that it is a distinction inevitably made in terms of unfavorable *contrast* rather than comparison), is typical of the thinking of the entire country, though it is found in greatest accentuation in the South, for reasons which history makes abundantly clear if it does not entirely justify.

Thus the Negro, in the thinking of the country, occupies the position of a "counter-race."² The black man has the permanent role of "end-man" in the society. He is the fence, foil and stooge, and is a handy device for the inflation of the white ego. For the white man need but mirror himself beside the Negro—not the Negro really, but the *conception of the Negro* as processed by [three] centuries of white mental legerdemain—and he becomes a god in a white mantle. For the masses of whites, and, for that matter, for a good many Negroes, the only *real* Negro is this sort of highly conventionalized, conceptual stereotype of the Negro. Practically all relations between the groups are governed by this type of delineation. The perpetuation of the sacred concept of white supremacy is conveniently rationalized on the basis of what the dominant whites conceive the Negro to be, or conceive willy nilly, that he ought to be.

The Negro, on his part, has devoted himself assiduously to the task of constructing a conceptual defense against the malevolent conception of the Negro as developed by the white man. Negroes, living in close proximity to whites, through slavery until now, found themselves taking over the white man's standards, evaluations and conceptions—even that of the Negro as a contrast conception with all of its unfavorable connotations. Negroes found themselves measuring goodness, virtue and ability in terms of white values. They too accepted the counter-conception and implied as much antipodal difference when they referred to the "white folks," "quality folks," "ofays," and "Mr. Charlies" as the white man did when he referred to "George" or "Sambo" or "the darkies." In other words the Negro was saddled with a heavy inferiority complex, which he had acquired through taking the white man's conception of the Negro. With many Negroes, this acceptance of the white man's image of the Negro was not without guile. The Negro's one chance of surviving here has been in "getting along with the white folks," and he has more frequently than not played his role, even though he has had a good laugh over his histrionics later on—and often with white man's coin jingling in his jeans.

But Negro intellectuals are sensitive about such things. They have had the benefit

of education in the best institutions and under white scholars who have themselves often achieved at least mental emancipation from the shackles of legendary concepts of the Negro. They know that pigmentation is only superficial, and that men are neither black nor white under the skin. Thus Negro intellectuals as Dr. Woodson, and loutish chauvinists such as Garvey, have set themselves to the task of creating a counter-irritant to the white conception of the Negro, and to destroy the basis for any inferiority feeling on the part of the Negro. This is to be accomplished by developing pride in origin and race, by exalting one's group, its background, its heroic figures, its talents and its achievements. This movement has proven extremely popular among Negroes; race pride has grown tremendously, and many Negroes who in earlier years could reflect upon the regime of slavery only with emotional shame, now look beyond it to the "glorious past of the ancestors of the American Negro in America." Particularly has this trend proven attractive to the Negro intellectual and upper class groups.

It is to be noted, however, that this comparatively recent "Negro" conception of the Negro, makes no special effort to invalidate the contrast-conception of the Negro as held by whites, insofar as this conception implies merely "difference" between the races. Rather, as we shall see later, as we explore the racial ideologies more deeply, it often tends to accentuate the antipodic division between the groups, by playing up the special "racial" talents of Negroes, and contending that the Negro has "racial" attributes which give him superiority over the white man, as in music, dancing, and athletics. To this view some whites lend support. But the Negro intellectuals are determined to divest the white man's contrast-conception of its moral values, and its intent to polarize the race in a good and bad conceptual scheme. Race difference and contrast is one thing; but tilting the conceptual scales in such a fashion that the white is always good, able and superior, and the black bad, inept and inferior, is quite another.

It is within these conceptual boundaries that the major ideologies on the Negro question will be revealed. Ideologies, or social beliefs, stem from social causes. They constitute thought reactions of large masses of people having a definite and pragmatic relationship to social forces. As expressions of social consciousness which deliberately attempt either to rationalize the status quo or to provide a convincing thought basis for social change, numerous complexes of ideas are diffused throughout the population. It is the structural patterns of the ideologies with which we are concerned. Within the general ideological structures, the expressions of individuals show wide variety, since the ideological reactions of the individual are subject to such controls as race, class, age, sex, education, personal contacts, experiential background, occupation, and geographical location.

It has long been recognized that there is an evaluative element in all social knowledge and that interest finds reflection in all human thought. Professor Mannheim, however, has gone a step further, and has centered attention upon the connection between the interest groups in a particular society and the ideas in which they endorse and propagate. As Professor [Nicholas] Wirth puts it in the *Preface to Ideology and Utopia*, Mannheim

Conceptions and Ideologies

has succeeded in showing that ideologies, i.e., those complexes of ideas which direct activity toward the maintenance of the existing order, and utopias—or those complexes of ideas which tend to generate activities toward changes of the prevailing order—do not merely deflect thought from the object of observation, but also serve to fix attention upon aspects of the situation which otherwise would be obscured or pass unnoticed. In this manner he has forced out of a general theoretical formulation an effective instrument for fruitful research.³

Mannheim defines two broad states of mind, the ideological and the utopian; he makes a theoretical and formal distinction between “ideologies” and “utopias.” Ideologies devote themselves to the perpetuation of the prevailing order; utopias seek social change. Each of these conceptual structures is involved with social change. Each of these conceptual structures is involved with social action and the orientation of conduct. They embrace definite values and standards, and they are inevitably confronted with historical reality, over which they seek dominance. Mannheim admits that in any given case it will prove exceedingly difficult to determine what, concretely, is ideological, and what is utopian.⁴

Mannheim further distinguishes between the “particular” and “total” conceptions of ideology. Of these two, it is to the latter that most significance adheres, for this presumes the reconstruction of the whole outlook of a social group, revealing the systematic theoretical basis underlying the particular judgements of individuals. This total conceptual structure is more than the mere collection and integration of the thought experiences of the discrete individuals comprising the group, for each individual “participates only in certain fragments of this thought-system, the totality of which is not in the least a mere sum of these fragmentary individual experiences.”⁵

Mannheim’s concept of utopia involves an incongruity between the utopian state of mind and the state of reality in which it is found.

This incongruence is always evident in the fact that such a state of mind . . . is oriented toward objects which do not exist in the actual situation . . . In limiting the meaning of the term “utopia” to that type of orientation which transcends reality and which at the same time breaks the hands of the existing order, a distinction is set up between the utopian and the ideological states of mind. One can orient himself to objects that are alien to reality and which transcend actual existence—and nevertheless still be effective in the realization and the maintenance of the existing order of things. In the course of history, man has occupied himself more frequently with objects transcending his scope of existence than with those immanent in his existence and, despite this, actual and concrete forms of social life have been built upon the basis of such “ideological” states of mind which were incongruent with reality. Such incongruent orientation became utopian only when in addition it tended to burst the bonds of the existing order.⁶

The guardians of a given order have not always been hostile to all orientations transcending the existing order. But they inevitably seek to control and render impotent those "situationally transcendent ideas and interests" which cannot be realized within the bounds of the present order, to exile them in a realm beyond history and society, and to thus insure the immunity of the status quo.

One means of obtaining a panoramic view of the ideologies on a social problems such as that of the Negro is through a survey of the programs of organizations with large numbers of constituents. Such organizations, serving black or white, or both, attempt either to perpetuate the prevailing social order, to reinforce accepted ideologies, or to pave the way for change. They are effective instruments for the dissemination of ideas and beliefs. Through the media of meetings, speakers and printed organs they subject large numbers of people to induced thinking. On the other hand, they are effective only insofar as they can maintain a following, and consequently can never advance very far beyond the thinking of their membership and the mores of the community in which they operate. Thus the ideologies of the Negro protest and reform organizations, for example, would reflect the convictions of certain significant groups of Negroes, i.e., primarily the intellectual and upper class Negroes. A better reflection of the thinking of Negroes is the mass would be gotten from the Negro churches and lodges.

It is not presumed either, that the ideologies of either whites or Negroes, on a complex and emotion-laden problem such as that of the Negro, need be consistent, logical, complete, accurate, or founded on fact. They may often be demonstrably false when measured against proven historical or biological fact; they can be revealed as sheer fiction, legend or fantasy. They frequently gain currency in the form of sweeping generalizations based upon peculiarly local conditions. They tend to become accepted dogmas; like Luther's ninety-seven theses, they are nailed on the doors of a church, and are adhered to with religious zeal. They create social blind spots against established facts which are inconsistent with the dogma.

It is characteristically human to indulge also in wish-projection. Much of our thinking is wishful, finding no satisfaction on existing reality, our imaginations seek happier havens in wish-fulfilling utopias. For many groups, and especially the disadvantaged, this is little more than a form of intellectual whistling in the dark; the mind balks at passing the cemetery of harsh realities.

When ideologies become thus deeply carved in the minds of people, history and historical fact are mere tools to serve the machinations of the belief. Conviction thus becomes fact, and all irrelevant fact is fiction. It is for such reasons that the ideologies of both Negroes and whites on the American Negro problem frequently appear to be so wildly distorted, so incompatible with known facts, and so anachronistic. Ideologies, once rooted in the minds of people as conventional beliefs, are stubbornly persistent. They can be uprooted only with great and prolonged effort, and may continue to thrive and perpetuate themselves long after the social causes which gave rise to them have ceased to exist.

The Negro, in building up an intellectual defense mechanism against the damaging value of the contrast-conception, and the infamy of the Negro stereotypes, has constructed his own counter contrast-conception and his own value premises, and these demonstrate

Conceptions and Ideologies

81

that the Negro has many, not merely good, but even superior qualities and talents. These to Negroes, are becoming just as legendary and as unassailable as are those to which the white man subscribes. On the other hand they are often quite as falsely conceived and as scientifically baseless as are those of the whites. But they are an effective means for the inflation of Negro values and have become indispensable. Thus the white man may damn us directly with his demeaning stereotypes of our indolence, childishness, docility, humorousness, irresponsibility, untrustworthiness; or damn us indirectly with paternalistic praise of our child-like faith and loyalty, hardihood and goodness. But we can counter with our faith in the strength of our blood, as evinced by our boxing champions, Joe Louis, who can whip any man in the world, and Henry Armstrong, who "can throw 300 punches per minute—more than any man who ever lived"—and who can whip his weight and fifteen pounds over, in men or wildcats. We can run faster and jump farther and higher than any other race of people, and we have our track champions, [Jesse] Owens, [John] Woodruff, [Melvin] Walker, [and] [John] Borican,* to prove it. We are by nature the best dancers, for we can boast of Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, the father of "tap," and the peer of all dancers. We excel in singing, as we sing "naturally" and have such greats as Marian Anderson, Paul Robeson and Roland Hayes of whom to crow. We have a mysterious gift of rhythm, and no one can approach our Louis ("Satchmo") Armstrong, who can toot a trumpet longer, louder and better than any living man, our improvising "Fats" Walker at the ivories, our Lionel Hamptons, Teddy Wilsons, Duke Ellingtons, etc., without end, not to mention our inimitable "Cab" Calloway, who can out-hi-de-ho anything on two feet. Moreover, how could any white woman hope to "carry the torch" in a torrid swing session like an Ella Fitzgerald, or sing a "blues" like an Ethel Waters? In the intellectual fields too, we can stake our racial claims. We may not have representatives among the world's great "academic" scientists (we have one in Dr. Just, but he is not widely recognized), but it just isn't in the white blood to produce an earthy, "practical" scientist like Carver, who got down and grovelled in the dust and came up with the peanut and scores of derivatives.

We have also developed an unbeatable technique for endless self-praise. That is the technique of "the first" and "the only" Negro. There are the "first" and the "only" Negroes for everything—to write a poem, a book, to live in a dormitory, to fly as a passenger across the Atlantic, to teach in a white school, to be appointed as judge, to sit in Congress, to speak on a problem, etc., *ad infinitum*. This affords an excellent opportunity for the Negro individual to attain immortality in the historical records of his group, and at the same time gives a filip to group prestige.

* * *

III. SCOPE OF THINKING ON THE "NEGRO PROBLEM"

The tendency is to accept the "Negro problem" as one of the major social concerns of the nation. Yet it is undeniably true that Negro status, political, economic or social,

*See Mabel Smythe, ed., *The Black American Reference Book* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ. Prentice-Hall, 1976), 949-54.—ed.

is never thought of at all in terms of a "problem" by many thousands of Americans, black or white. That is if we conceive of a "problem" in the pragmatic sense that earning one's daily bread or fulfilling one's religious needs are problems, for which the discovery of solutions is considered pressing. Somewhat paradoxically, social scientists and the intelligentsia generally are keenly aware of the existence of this vexing "problem." Yet though there may be universal consciousness of its existence, but little thought is wasted upon it by the man in the street.

For the average person, thinking on the Negro question is reduced to the most simple formula. The Negro is an accepted part of the population, and this is questioned by a relative few. That the Negro is "different" from other peoples in the population is similarly subject to but slight challenge. Moreover this difference is blandly accepted as implying a general inferiority of black to white. Thus inferior status for the Negro in the society is the inevitable *sequitur*. In the minds of most Americans this is the sum total of "thinking" on the Negro question, and it is as simple as falling off a log. An automatic routine has been evolved and the conception of the Negro is confined within a congeries of legendary stereotypes. Thus by a sort of intellectual leap-frog, it is possible to hop from one stereotype to another and never rouse a thought.

The Negro's physical and mental traits, his vices and virtues, his status in the society, are sharply, if not accurately defined by these reflex judgements of the dominant race. While the minute of race relations may show personal and local aberrations from the accepted norm, most of the attitudinal and conceptual data on the Negro question will fall within these highly conventionalized patterns of thought. These thought patterns are deeply set in the minds of the people, and when some overt challenge to them occurs, the tendency is not to abandon them or even to test them by logical process; but rather to cling to them tenaciously, and to reinforce them with intense emotional outpourings. Hence rational thinking on the Negro is reduced to a minimum.

These conventional stereotypes, which have insinuated themselves into the minds of Negroes as well as whites, are the formidable redoubts which Negroes and their organizations strive to batter down in their persistent struggle toward progress. Conflict between the groups occurs only when Negroes attempt to disavow the old conceptions and to invoke new and strange ideologies which threaten the existing order. So long as Negroes are willing to accept the well-established conventions there is little likelihood of conflict. Under such conditions there are really no active "ideologies" on the problem; thinking is dormant, since the individuals of each group are thoroughly familiar with the social scripture and keep to their respective "places" in society with such exactitude that there is never a jolt to the established mores. The result is an ideological indolence, and a consequent lack of application of intelligent thought to the problem, that is shocking. The southerner will boast that he "knows and understands the Negro" because of his long association with him. Yet every neutral observer is amazed upon learning how little the whites and blacks of the South know of each other and how little rational intelligence has been directed to the "problem" by them. Psychological stereotypes are thus unworthy substitutes for active thought processes, and a general ideological lethargy prevails.

The average American citizen can probably discuss the pros and cons of the current conflict in Europe much more intelligently and with more factual knowledge than he can

Conceptions and Ideologies

83

the problem of race at home. The average white American will explain his prejudices and racial inhibitions in clichés, and the run of the mill Negro will attribute all of his problems to the white man's prejudice and his general ["orneriness"]. The white man will explain that the Negro is just an inferior being and that is all there is to it. In its more extreme forms this formula portrays the black man as animal-like, and uncivilizable. A Georgia planter explained that the "nigras" (and the poor whites too), are just "inferior stock—leave them without white supervision and in ten years they will all revert to cannibalism and begin to eat each other."⁷ Negroes, in resigned unintelligence, likewise have their stock responses, viz; "the white man just wants to keep the black man down, that's all," "the white man's always on top," "white folks still in the lead," "niggers just can't work together," and the explanation is definitive.

It is difficult to say why there has been so little real thinking on the Negro problem here. Only speculative causes can be suggested. In the first place we idealize our constitutional precepts and try to create the illusion that we do live up to them. The disparity between these precepts and the treatment of the Negro creates an awkward skeleton that must be kept in the closet. The humanitarian and equalitarian doctrines of our constitution fabric must be left unsullied. This is why the white South and southerners generally, are always self-consciously on the defensive about the Negro problem. They are invariably willing to present their purely defensive rationalization of the position of the Negro, but always within the framework of our democratic traditions.

Secondly, consciously or unconsciously, America has contrived an artful technique of avoidance and evasion. For example, American newspaper editorials carry glowing praise for the tenets of liberty and equality upon which the society is rounded, but ignore completely the inconsistent Negro status. One author has recently written a book titled *American Problems of Today*, and yet barely mentions the Negro in one or two incidental passages.⁸ The Report of the Republican Program Committee has just been released by Glenn Frank. This report of some hundred odd pages, compiled after two years of research by more than 200 researchers, is the suggested foundation for the Republican platform in the approaching campaign. As Republican documents go, this report has been hailed widely as a surprisingly liberal document and solidly within the framework of our democratic traditions. Yet it devotes but two or three short paragraphs to the Negro, and these center about relief.

As a matter of fact, the governments, both state and national, have done precious little to stimulate constructive thinking and planning on the Negro question. Most of the vital problems afflicting the society have been attacked with gusto by government agencies. Government-sponsored investigations have been gotten underway, reports of findings are published and positive recommendations are offered. Very little of this sort of activity by governments has ever been directed toward the Negro, in fact practically none at all until the W.P.A. [Works Progress Administration] and the N.Y.A. [National Youth Administration] projects were initiated.

The Negro problem, like Topsy, has been left by our responsible agencies to "just grow."

* * *

VII. POST-EMANCIPATION NEGRO THOUGHT ON THE NEGRO PROBLEM

(1) General

The emancipation of the Negro did not release him from the ideological shackles which were forced and fastened securely upon him during the long period of servitude. The patterns of thought, the stereotypes and folk-lore concerning the Negro had become fixed in the mind of the nation, and these were not subject to change by edict. It remains true today that the slave background of the Negro is a prime conditioning factor in his position in the country. Thinking, habits and attitudes were condensed into fixed moulds in this historical relationship of master and slave, and these gain expression in the persistent dogma on the racial inferiority, backwardness and immorality of the Negro, the hostility between black and white working classes, the condescending paternalism of both southern and northern upper classes, the missionary spirit of northern philanthropy, and in the various reactions in the thinking and conduct of the Negroes themselves.

Thus, though there are obvious economic factors underlying the prejudice and antagonism between black and white today, the racial ideologies inherited from ante-bellum days are ever at hand to obscure thinking and to introduce an irrational in all efforts toward solution. The competition between black and white workers in the country is a grave problem, and would in itself remain so, as long as the skin of the black man differentiated him from the white. But when to this elemental difficulty is added the distortions and fantasies implicit in the mental stereotypes relating to the Negro, there is confusion worse confounded.

It is not to be implied that there remains in the minds of most Negroes and whites a direct consciousness of slavery and the Negro's slave background. Most Negroes and whites of the present generations know little or nothing of the slave period except in an academic way; Negroes, in fact, have deliberately tried to forget the shame of that era in their history. There is only a vague recognition that the Negro was at one time associated with the system. But it is the patterns of thought about the Negro whose roots rest in the slave era, which still persist.

The factors of race and the master-slave heritage do not fully explain the perpetuation of racial thinking and problems in the United States, however. One important element in the equation has been the peculiar culture of the South, with its large poor-white population. The determination of the ruling class of large land holders in the South to perpetuate in law and custom the doctrines of the racial inferiority and subordination of the Negro, was realizable only because of the presence of a numerically preponderant poor-white population which feared the economic competition and the potential power of the large black group.

No more difficult assignment could be undertaken than that involved in the effort to delineate the thinking of "the Negro," his conceptions and ideologies, on himself, his white brother and his "problem." In the first place "the Negro" is strictly a sociological phenomenon in this country, the product of a series of historical accidents, with his collective identification resting primarily upon the color of his skin, the texture of his hair, and most importantly, the white man's conception of him as a "Negro." Who is this Negro? There are Negroes who have ceased to be Negroes, through "passing over."

Conceptions and Ideologies

85

There are strictly “voluntary” Negroes who are such only because they choose to remain so, since the white man can apply his conceptual chart to a Negro only when he can distinguish him physically. There are Negroes who are black, brown, and “high yaller,” and with hair that is “good,” “bad,” and indifferent. There are working, middle and upper-class Negroes, rich and poor, highly educated and illiterate; urban and rural, peasants, sharecroppers, tenant farmers and migratory workers; artisans, intellectuals, professionals, bankers, business men and preachers; employees and employers; butchers, bakers and candle-stick makers. There are young and old Negroes; male and female. There are Negroes who have lived all their lives in the heart of the deep and oppressive South—some of these will inveigh against its injustice, others are apologists for it and love it. There are other Negroes who have never seen the South, never intend to, and know nothing of it. There are Negroes who are ashamed of their skin and all it connotes in the white (and often black) mind; there are others who flaunt it with pride, and the blacker the better. There are Negroes who think about the problems of the Negro; there are others who never think at all, except about the daily “number” or “digit.” There are Negroes who attribute all of their problems to race; there are Negro Republicans, Democrats, Socialists, Stalinists, Trotskyists, Anarchists and “Wobblies.” There are Negro patriots who would enthusiastically lay down their lives to again save their country and make the world save for democracy, as many did before; there are others who swear they would go before a firing squad before taking up a gun to defend a country that treats them so shabbily; but most Negroes would just go along when ordered, as do most whites. There are “good” Negroes who know the white man’s power and try to placate him, with or without guile; there are “bad” Negroes who resent that power and hate the white man for it; there are others who are just “bad” on principle; and there are Negroes who just try to get along from day to day without bothering too much about it all. There are “white men’s niggers” who are stooge provocateurs and informers; and there are Negro’s Negroes who play to the Negro gallery at every opportunity. There are Negro martyrs and Negro sychophants; sincere Negro leaders and Negro demagogues. There are Negroes who read all the books written by, of and about the Negro, and the Negro press; there are other Negroes who would scorn to read the Negro press or anything written by Negroes, and there are Negroes who never read anything at all. There are Negroes who are descended from slaves and are either ashamed or proud of it; there are Negroes whose ancestors were freemen and who boast of it; and there are Negroes who know little or nothing about their ancestry and care less. There are Negroes who have the blood of prominent white Americans in their veins and whose ancestors on the white side came over on the Mayflower, and they are often very proud indeed; there are Negroes whose ancestors came over on the slave ships and who say “what of it?”; and there are still other Negroes who say, cynically, “all Negroes are of bastard stock, so what the hell.” There are Negro Baptists, Methodists (plain, M.E. and A.M.E.), Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Catholics, Mohammedans, Holy Rollers and “angels” in the Father Divine’s “heaven”; and there are Negro atheists. There are Negroes who are enthusiastic workers in Negro organizations, and there others who never heard of an NAACP, Urban League, Negro Congress or Negro Business League, and they are

probably the majority. There are Negroes who feel inferior, and those who feel superior. There are Negroes who could not be paid to commit the most minor infraction of the law, and there are Negroes who live lives of crime. There are Negroes who would never look at a white woman twice; and there are Negroes who chase after white women because they are "forbidden fruit": and there is a legend that some [white women] are curious. There are Negroes who try to ape anything white, and others who glorify "Negroid" characteristics. In short, there is no "the Negro" except to that white man to whom, because of his arbitrary conception of the Negro, "all darkies look alike."

Because of this extreme diversity of the Negro population it would be folly to attempt any categorical analysis of the Negro's ideologies on the Negro question. What the great mass of Negroes think on this question remains an unknown quantity, for it must be noted that there has never been a mass movement among Negroes in this country, nor an organization, not excepting Garveyism, with a true mass basis. There has been no vehicle for the mass expression of Negroes and they rest inarticulate today. "What the Negro thinks" therefore remains all things to all people. Moreover, it is not simple to get at the true thinking of the Negro. As an oppressed group all forces operate to induce him to express his thoughts only in such forms as to incite no unfavorable reactions from the dominant group. People who have long suffered oppression are both suspicious and obliging—they suspect all strangers and will tell them what they think they wish to hear. It is common for Negroes to have one set of ideas which they express before Negroes and a totally different set for use when in the presence of whites. I once heard a Negro black-face comedian on the stage of the Howard Theatre in Washington enact out this phenomenon most humorously. He was mimicking a "big Negro leader" in an address to a Negro audience. After citing the grievances of the Negro people, the speaker first looking about very cautiously to make sure there were no white eaves-droppers present, proclaimed, (loudly at first, stentorian in the middle, and then dwindling to a bare stage whisper at his climax): "what we cullud folks has got to do is to RISE UP AND STRIKE DOWN these hyah *damned* white folks!" Many Negroes have undoubtedly cultivated an understandable suspicion, even of their own kind, and experience a continuing conditioning toward reticence in utterance and even, perhaps in thought itself. They, like many Jews, often resent intemperate utterances by Negroes, as they fear the results of unfavorable reaction in the dominant group. For after all, Negroes, above everything else, are striving to survive in the society, and their experiential knowledge tells them what is and what is not wise.

No ideologies on the Negro problem about which we can speak are those which are the products of the articulate Negroes—the intellectuals, professional men, the Negro middle and upper classes; the expressions of the "talented tenth." Since the Negro population is primarily a working class population, this articulate group is but a minute percentage of the total Negro group, and there is little evidence that these articulated conceptions have filtered down into the inert Negro mass, whose intellectual muscles are lax. It is this "elite" group which alone indulges in vivacious theorizing on the "problem."

In his own thinking the Negro presents highly rationalized conceptions of the problem. This is because the Negro, in thinking of the "Negro problem," keeps a weather

Conceptions and Ideologies

87

eye on the white man with whose ideologies on the Negro he is entirely too familiar. Thus Negro conceptions are often bastardized—they are the issue of Negro aspirations and cautious expediency. The articulate Negro is also anxious to “get along” in the society; in fact his conception of his problem is invariably in terms of how he may better get along. He aspires for more than the Negro in the mass because he has seen more and tasted of better things.

Before turning to the more formal, rationalized ideologies of Negroes on the Negro problem, some attention should be devoted to those conceptions held by Negroes, which though less well-formulated, have attained varying degrees of currency in the minds of articulate Negroes, and also some who, though inarticulate, know which shell the pea is under.

The Negro's general conception of his problem is that it is the product of his victimization at the hands of white prejudice. This view needs no refinement. The white man, for reasons best known to himself, or simply because of his meanness, makes things hard for the Negro. The implicit assumption is, of course, that were it not for this the Negro would have no serious problems. This is a strong pattern of thought, and is about as universal as any ascertainable Negro thought pattern devoted to his condition. It is characteristic of all groups and classes in the Negro population. The basis for it is empirical. Negroes see actual evidences of prejudice all about them in their daily work-a-day lives; where they fail to see it they assume its existence. The Negro professional man thinks of the fat fees he could collect if he were a white doctor or lawyer; the Negro teacher thinks that a white skin should give him a chance in a white school or college where salaries are much higher; the Negro student thinks of the honors and fun he is deprived of because of his color; the Negro clerk and stenographer visualizes the fine choice of jobs she would have if white. All of these think of the social advantages denied them, the humiliations they are subjected to, and the restricted, ghetto life they must lead because of the white man's prejudice. The Negro worker, artisan or laborer, knows that his work opportunities are much more meager than those of the white worker. He is sure that the white worker is hostile toward him, but not always so sure of the white employer. He sometimes thinks that the white employer would give him a better chance were it not for the objections of the white employee. All of this thinking revolves on the axis of white prejudice. The white man just won't give the Negro a chance.

In thus conceiving of the Negro problem as deriving from white antipathy, the Negro does, however, often differentiate between “types” of white people. Negroes from the South, and especially from the middle and upper class ranks, tend to draw qualitative distinction between the “high class,” “better class,” “quality folks” or “real white folks”⁹ type of whites and the poor whites, or “white trash,” “crackers,” “red necks” or “sagers.”¹⁰ It is not infrequently that an intermediate class of “strivers” or “strainers” is alluded to, with contempt, as trying, vainly, to ape their betters. The impression prevails, quite generally, that it is with these latter two classes of whites that most prejudice originates. The “high class” whites, who are usually admired by Negroes because of their upper class virtues, are generally thought to be “too big” for prejudice. Negroes know that such people are in a position to do things for them, and that their typical condescending paternalism can be exploited. Thus contact with them is sought by many Negroes and it

often pays dividends to the deferential individual. In the days of slavery there was an elite among the slaves who had access to the "big gate" and who were the recipients of special favors from the "massa."

Moton is right when he states that Negroes have devised definite and characteristic attitudes toward each of these groups.¹¹ But his assumption that Negroes have nothing but respect, admiration and awe for the white gentleman class because of their fine traits,¹² is subject to challenge. It is fairly well established by now, I presume, that upper class folks are just frail humans like the rest of us, and vulnerable to the same weaknesses. Negro servants in their intimate household duties are quick to discern these defects in the aristocratic armor, and to discuss them animatedly when and where it is discreet to do so. But deep respect, humility and flattery are component elements in the traditional pattern of conduct between the Negro and high class whites; often, purely for reasons of expediency, the Negro puts up this "front." There are probably few Negroes who have held jobs bringing them in contact with this class of whites, and especially where rewards are possible who have not enacted that role to some degree, and who cannot be adroit at it when occasion demands. This is as true of Negro college presidents be and large as it is of domestics, pullman porters, red-caps, bell-hops and waiters.

One aspect of Negro cogitation on the race problem concerns the relative influence of sex in the race prejudice equation. It has often been remarked that white women are generally much less prejudiced against Negroes than are white men. It is a well-established stereotype in Negro thinking that white women are attracted to black men, the essential element in such attraction being sex. There are stereotypes invented by whites and borrowed in toto by Negroes revolving about the extraordinary sexual virility of Negro men and the elemental passion of Negro women. One such finds unrefined but forceful expression in the oft-quoted aphorism, "the blacker the berry the sweeter the juice." Stories of the advances to Negro men made by white women in all sections of the country and in all classes are universal. Some relate to the efforts made to ensnare prominent Negroes; others to the demands made on Negro chauffeurs, bell-hops and elevator operators. Still others involve the experiences of Negro doctors with white female patients, and of actors, and male servants in Hollywood, etc. It is common, even in the cities of the deep South, to hear of white prostitutes living in houses catering exclusively to Negro men.

The general tenor of this stereotype is to perpetuate the legend that white women are not only less hostile toward Negroes, but are actually attracted to Negro men. As with all stereotypes of thought, the generalizations are based upon particular incidents and are far too sweeping. One explanation advanced for this difference in racial attitude between white men and women, is that the white woman has traditionally had no responsibility for the creation and preservation of racial policy. She has herself been in a dependent and subordinate position and has occupied a lower position in the sex caste. It has been the white man who has shouldered this responsibility. White supremacy is the white man's burden. An important rationalization of such policy has been another stereotype, viz, "the necessity for the protection of white womanhood"—a protection which white women have frequently disdained.

This thought pattern about the great racial tolerance of white women, does not apply to the latter in their relations with Negro women. Here the preservation of the prestige status of the white woman is involved, and the sympathetic racial attitude is less common. I have heard it said frequently by both white and Negro men in the South, that the most difficult problem with respect to breaking down Jim Crow customs in public conveyances would be found in the use of lavatory facilities. The real shock to the mores of the South would occur, I was told, not when white and Negro men would meet in the washrooms, but when white and Negro women would encounter each other in the ladies rooms.

In a real sense Negro and white women, even today, are often rivals for the same men. From slavery on, it has been common for white men to be free with women of the lower caste. This practice, carried on today through the Negro mistresses and prostitutes, necessarily finds some reflection in both the thinking and the status of the white woman. There is little evidence to indicate what form this thinking may take.

Roughly speaking, all Negro ideologies on the Negro question fall into one or the other of two rather broad categories: "accommodation," and release or escape. Accommodation is used here in no technical sense, but merely in the ordinary, "practical" sense—the sense in which the Negro tries to adjust his thinking and behavior in such wise as to occasion least shock to the dominant group mores and traditions, and at the same time suffer least inconvenience himself. There are tendencies to invest the term "accommodation" with a load of pedantic regalia, but by this we are left untouched. By "accommodation" is meant simply that sort of expedient (or tactful, if you please) adjustment in behavior that is part and parcel of the Negro's life in the South, and for that matter, in the entire country. Nor is there anything remarkable about this sort of adjustment, except that some Negroes seem to overdo it, for it is typical of the life of every individual in a complex, class-ridden, competitive, modern society. Workers undergo a process of "accommodation" in their relations with employers, students with their teachers, wives with their husbands (or vice versa) and Negroes with whites. When I, as a Negro, but an untamed one, and with no illusions about the ordinariness of the average "big" white man in the South, go in to interview a white executive or politician who is notoriously anti-Negro, I undergo an unquestionable "accommodation" or adjustment in my conduct. In the first place, I go to see such an individual only because he has something that I want—in this case information. Secondly, I know the mores of the South and know that if I approach him as I would a white politician from New York he will freeze up on me and I will get nothing. So, though I do not hold my hat in my hand, nor do I bow low, I do observe certain limitations that ordinarily I would not think of; that is, I do not extend my hand unless my host proffers his first; I indulge in a much longer explanation of the nature of our research; I tactfully bring out the milder questions first and carefully screen the delicate ones; I do not smoke unless invited to, and I indulge in no familiarities. It would be possible for me to escape all or most of these limitations on my conduct in talking with a southern Senator, providing I would be willing to play the role which the racial stereotype designates for me, i.e. if I would keep in my place as a Negro. Unquestionably, when I barge in on the rabidly anti-Negro southern Senator,

and with all seriousness and dignity request him to submit to a barrage of questions from me, I am "out of place." Finally, it would be impossible for me as a Negro not to be conscious of all these things and not to undergo some kind of mental and psychological adjustment in order to be prepared to meet the situation. I have even sometimes thought out before-hand just what my conduct would be in case of a personal insult or rebuff.

The release or escape ideologies embrace a wide variety of mental efforts to kick off the shackles of race and its attendant burdens. Finely spun, nebulous theories are woven by the Negro intellectuals, and through the luminous fog thus created the Negro gropingly seeks to stumble upon the providential path leading to the happier meadows of the future.

Negroes think of themselves much as whites think of Negroes. But in fact they actually think very little.

Perhaps the most characteristic feature of Negro thinking is the striving after release from the confines of lower class and color caste status. This escapist striving assumes many forms and is responsible for the creation of some almost fantastic personality types, especially among Negro intellectuals. Some of the formulas for such escape are indeed weird. Let fortune take a common "garden variety" Negro, preferably as Negroid as possible, endow him with a formal (though not necessarily effective) education, and turn him loose to make his way in this prejudice-ridden milieu. Quite understandably, he will use all possible legitimate devices at his disposal in order to climb up the ladder.

Not without prejudice, perhaps, let us take religion as a fruitful source for example. Here we find the Father Divines, the "Daddy" Graces, the "Elder" Micheaux's, and the "Prophets" by legions; religion, thus prostituted, becomes a lucrative racket and a source of status. Some of the more successful of these crude exploiters gain important status in the Negro community through the respect accorded them by influential whites, who often accept them as leaders and spokesmen for "their people." Among the more intellectual Negro religionists, it not uncommonly has been found effective, and especially among white people, to throw in a generous dash of modernized minstrelsy, a portion of mysticism and some "old-time" religion, mix well, and enact in the pulpit. The economic results are often gratifying and accolades pour in from well-entertained audiences. Pulpit minstrelsy is becoming far more profitable than the real thing ever was. There are a good many talented end-men in the Negro pulpits of today.

This escapist thinking directed toward striving for release from lower-class bonds is not confined to Negro intellectuals, though some of the most flagrant examples will be found among this group. Negroes lower down in the caste structure are also guilty of such aspirations. I know of a good many instances, especially in Washington, and one or two of them are personal, where Negro domestics flatly refuse to work for Negroes, for fear they will lose caste by doing so. My wife, who happens to fall in the category of the "voluntary" or "sociological" Negro, once hired a domestic at a wage admittedly higher than this girl had ever gotten before, when I chanced into the room. The young lady, a dark brownskin, promptly arose, exclaimed: "Oh, I didn't know you were *Colored*—I don't work for *Colored*," and left without further ado. On another occasion we had employed a nice, inefficient but highly religious old lady in the same capacity.

Conceptions and Ideologies

91

She had to attend church each Sunday morning, and would cook the dinner early in the morning and depart. After a few Sundays, she explained to us the reason for the generous portions of our larder with which she sallied out these Sunday mornings. She had a long train ride to her home, she said, and on her car she would always encounter a number of her friends who were employed as domestics in white families. These friends were always well laden with tid-bits, it seems, and she solemnly declared that this was the first time she had ever worked for colored, none of her friends ever had, though they knew she was so engaged, and that she wanted to show her friends that "colored folks are just as good to work for as white folks." Thus we sacrificed half of each Sunday dinner to maintain the prestige of the race.

Another domestic, from the rural South, who belongs to social clubs, speaks in elegant but ungrammatical English, and loves to pronounce tomatoes with a broad "a" once gave an insight into how serious this striving after status is among some Negroes. Miss Jones, we'll call her, and who insisted that she must be designated the "housekeeper" and not the "maid," was known to have a very close friend of about the same age, named Lucy Smith. One day the phone rang and Miss Jones spoke at some length and in very formal tones, frequently saying "yes, Miss Smith," etc. On the completion of the conversation, the mistress, having over heard the remarks, in curiosity asked Miss Jones if her conversation had not been with Lucy, her close friend, and if so why had she spoken so formally. The startling reply ran as follows:

Yes, that was Lucy, but I had to speak to her formally over the 'phone. That is the rule of our social club, and we are fined 25¢ for each violation when we fail to give to other club members the proper titles of respect when we talk to them in public and before others. When she comes to visit me here alone I call her "Lucy," but over the phone and at the meetings we address each other as "Miss" and "Mrs." as *we* are entitled to titles of respect, just as well as white people!

There is a great deal of thinking in terms of "good" and "bad" or "low" blood among Negroes; not to the same degree as formerly, perhaps, but still significantly. This especially true among older Negroes springing from associations with the aristocratic white families of states like Virginia and South Carolina. It is common to hear Negroes refer with contempt to other Negroes or to poor whites as "gutter stock" and "low bloods," while speaking with deference of "high class" white folks. To many it is unthinkable that "high class" white people could ever stoop to race prejudice.

It was formerly very common also for Negroes descended from free rather than slave ancestry to boast of the fact that they were descended from "free-issues." One of my friends has related to me an interesting and authentic example of this sort of thinking. It seems that his grandfather was descended from a free mother and a father who had been a slave, in a fine old Virginia family. A Negro acquaintance of the grandfather continually boasted of the fact that his ancestors had been "free" for generations back, and to prove it brought forth his "pass," which was required of all Negroes in Virginia at that time. The old grandfather snorted, and exclaimed, "Huh, a pass. All niggers are

the same, slave or free. You never heard of a white man carryin' a pass did you?"

Racial barriers such as those erected in American have a demoralizing effect upon the character and thinking of Negroes. As I have heard it put more than once by Negro intellectuals, "it is a miracle that Negroes can think straight and without confusion on anything, when one considers the involved web of anomalies, contradictions and irrationalities in which the Negro is enmeshed." The individual often finds the pressure too heavy and seeks the easiest avenues of escape. Thus there is a tremendous effort put forth by Negroes everywhere in the country to attain middle-class status within their own group, and with the relatively greater security and comfort that it insures. Among Negroes as among no other group, have there been almost fanatical attempts to put up a middle-class "front," to "keep up with the Joneses," to have a fine house, lavish furnishings (most frequently without even typical *nouveau riche* taste), a big car, a domestic, a dog on a leash, etc. Bourgeois graces are exalted, formalities are emphasized, and the society columns of the Negro press are liberally employed to let the black world and perchance some of the white, know just where in the class structure, Mr. and Mrs. "Black" are now found. Practically all of this can be reached to sheer escapist striving, and is a most vulgar sort of petty-bourgeois exhibitionism; it is often the subject of devastating ridicule in some Negro intellectual circles.

It does not appear incongruous to many Negroes in Washington, for example, that Negroes should be asked to pay reserved seat prices in order to view "Gone With the Wind" in a dingy, Jim Crow movie crackerbox on "U" Street, the main Negro thoroughfare. Negroes line up far in advance to get tickets to see the glory of the Confederacy, and the uncomplimentary stereotypes of the Negro invented during slavery, perpetuated, exalted and romanticized on the screen. Some Negroes have even talked about a "U Street" Premiere of the picture at which Negroes would dress formally. Others have spoken of boycotting the film. To whites it must often appear that Negro thinking on such questions is obscure and devious. But this is only because it is almost impossible for Negroes in such situations to separate thinking from feeling. Thus it is clear to me why a Negro should remark heatedly: "I will go to see 'Gone With the Wind' on Broadway, but I'll be damned if I'll pay to see the Confederacy and slavery glorified in a Jim Crow dump on 'U' Street." Some Negroes might wish to go, however, even under these conditions, just to see the Yankees burn Atlanta.

There is some evidence of a disturbingly widening difference between the character and make-up of the older Negro intellectuals and those of the younger generations. There is, of course, some considerable progressivism in the thinking of many younger generation Negroes, and certainly there is more of mental training and discipline, and more self-assurance. But some of these Negro octaroons or near octaroons, are great spirits, though many of their ideas would be considered "old-fashioned," "Uncle-Tomish" or downright reactionary, by some of the "young'uns" of today. However that may be, a good many observant Negro intellectuals fear that newer generations of the Negro are lacking in moral fibre, in toughness of character and in the human quality. The members of the younger group are so often grasping, self-seeking, and escapist. I think that the essential difference between the old and the new is implicit in the change in their

ideals.

The objective in life for the modern Negro generations is the attainment of Negro middle-class status at the earliest possible period. Thus money becomes the stimulus and aim of life. The Negro is less concerned about aping the white man now than formerly, except insofar as the white middle-classman may serve as convenient model of "how to obtain riches and display them when gotten."

The fine old gentlemen of the earlier days, with all of their old-fogeyism, tolerance and patience, worshipped a different god. They were under the spell of the aristocratic whites of their day; they took as their model the best educated and most cultured men of their period, and they attempted to acquire and did acquire many of the graces and talents of this group, without, through lack of riches, being able to cultivate their more costly vices.

It does seem that the current generations of Negroes have lost something valuable in the transition, and this not merely in poise, dignity and the graces, but also to a damaging degree in the qualities of honor, principle, integrity and intellectual honesty.

(2) "Accommodation" Ideologies

If we were to use Mannheim's terminology it could probably be said that all Negro ideologies and conceptions are "utopias," for they inevitably seek an alternation in the conditions of their existence under the status quo.

The Negro, clogged in the mire of racial circumstance, tries to make the best of things. He just "don't want no trouble." In attempting to so conceive of his problems as to incite as little more trouble for himself as possible, or to escape his burdens he has concocted a variety of conceptions of his problem and its incidents which afford him some sort of intellectual anchorage. Some of these conceptions merit careful analysis; others, of lesser significance, will be dealt with only casually.

First, let us consider what may be designated, for want of a better classification, "accommodation" ideologies. These can be roughly grouped under two headings, viz., (1) adoption of white conceptions; (2) conciliation and gradualism. Within the first of these categories will fall those Negro conceptions which express what has been called the Negro's "inferiority complex." It is beyond cavil that it is still a common tendency for many Negroes to regard themselves and all other members of their racial group as inferior to whites. Such expressions as "niggers ain't for nothin!," "Negroes can't win," "niggers is evil," "free schools and dumb niggers" are commonly bandied about among Negroes on all levels. It is commonplace for intellectual Negroes to speak disparagingly of their racial group. On a good many occasions I have left gatherings of intellectual Negroes, including faculty meetings, and have heard sentiments of despair and disgust summed up in "there's just no hope for Negroes."

This placid acceptance of Negro inferiority is the refrain of the professional Negro's plaint. Negro doctors and lawyers, Negro businessmen, and even Negro teachers claim to suffer from the lack of confidence in the ability of Negroes typical of so many of the group. It is alleged that many Negroes go out of their way and even suffer humiliations from whites, in order to avoid going to the Negro doctor or hospital. A Negro lawyer will

charge that the local Negro doctors, who themselves lose much of their potential Negro clientele to white doctors, will yet engage only white lawyers when they require legal service; and vice versa. Negro students at Negro private schools under white control have, occasionally, when polled, indicated a preference for white teachers, though this is a sentiment that is fast changing. Negro businessmen allege that Negroes prefer to go downtown to white stores which do not want their trade, and often suffer insults, rather than trade in a Negro store. And even when, by circumstance, Negroes are compelled to turn to the Negro professional man, they not infrequently do so without confidence. I was seated in the outer office of a prominent Negro dentist in Richmond not long ago, when a Negro woman came in with an infected tooth. She informed the dentist that the "white lady" she works for had told her to come. After careful examination the dentist informed her that the tooth would have to be extracted. She became firm on hearing this and promptly informed him that he was quite wrong, as her "lady" had assured her that the tooth would not need to come out. The dentist could not convince her of the correctness of his trained judgement over that of her white "lady" so she stalked out angrily.

This sense of inferiority in comparison with whites is injected into the Negro while very young. If the Negro child goes to white schools he will be given the white man's stereotypes concerning the Negro; if he goes to Negro schools he may still be exposed to them. It is not unusual for students in Negro schools to be given the white man's explanations of Negro inferiority, as taken uncritically from the books of white authors. I have seen it done. Just the other day one of my little daughters came home all excited and explained that her teacher had told the children that they would have to come to school next day "very clean and all dressed up, as some *white* people from New York were coming to visit the school."

The basis for this acceptance of Negro inferiority for many Negroes is not simply a blind acceptance of white judgement. With many it involves a recognition of the fact that the Negro has had so little chance to become proficient because of the controls in the society that the can rarely compete successfully with the white man in those fields where proficiency is at high premium. But in either case the conception dove-tails with that held by most whites.

On a slightly different level is the conception of the Negro problem in terms of the Negro "catching up" with the white man. This view holds that the Negro could not develop beyond the level of a child in slavery, and that it cannot be expected that he could equal the white man in background, training, ability and intelligence in the short time since emancipation. The rapid progress already made is pointed to with pride, and it is expected that with the help of time the black man will some day be able to meet the white on something approaching equal terms.

In such conceptions as the foregoing there is no clash with the white mores and no shock to the white man's conception of the Negro. This is a sort of intellectual "knocking at the big gate." It is a great aid in keeping the Negro in his "place," since he himself accepts it.

The "conciliation" and "gradualism" conceptions are noteworthy for their timidity and "realism." Conceived in an atmosphere of full realization of the difficulties in the

Conceptions and Ideologies

95

Negro situation, they profess to be “practical” and “realistic,” and are so toned as to commit the least violence against the sensibilities of the prejudiced white mind. Thus they are dictated to by considerations of “expediency,” “tact,” “immediacy” and “opportunism.” They tacitly, but not overtly, disavow some of the more damaging of the white man’s conceptions of the Negro. They tend to ignore the harsher, economic bases of the Negro problem, and choose to operate on the less dangerous levels of good will and education. Great store is placed in what the future will bring. Confidence is expressed in the ability of the Negro to help himself, and also in the valuable push he will receive from sympathetic whites.

Education is the “white hope” in the conceptions of many Negroes and whites on the Negro problem. The type of education conceived of varies in the minds of those who advance it as a panacea. Some think in terms of an education which will make the Negro an effective competitor of the white man and aid him to raise himself by his own bootstraps; others think in terms of education about the virtues of each group which will lead to mutual respect and understanding between the races. But there is no question of the power of education to strike a telling blow at the forces pressing down upon the Negro.¹³

At one stage of the Negro’s development in this country there was widespread opposition to any but the most elemental education for him; in fact, during slavery there were many who even opposed teaching him to read and write. The white world has become more or less reconciled to education for the Negro today, however, though there is great division of opinion as to whether this education should be of a “practical” nature, i.e., with emphasis on handicraft and vocational work in conformance with the white conceptions of the Negro’s ability and place in the society, or whether it should be the same type of education given to white children. There is as much difference of opinion among Negroes as among whites on this matter.

Thus it is relatively safe today for the Negro to wage his fight on the educational front. The conception of his problems as intimately tied up with his educational advancement is not calculated to offend many whites. A magic quality is identified with education and great hopes are placed in it. It provides a formula for “getting along” in the society without too great violence to the established order of things racial. There are many evidences of its effectiveness. Increasing recognition and respect are accorded educated Negroes even in the deep South. The educated Negro himself experiences a degree of release through his privileged position among the “elite” of his group. The progress of the group is largely attributable to its vastly higher educational status. There are few, if any whites in responsible positions today, who would openly dare to denounce and kind of education for Negroes. Some of the most rabid Negrophobes in the South point to Tuskegee with pride, because, as they think, it is giving Negroes the sort of education they ought to have, and is turning out the sort of people Negroes should be.

However, it does seem that those who are so blithely sanguine about the efficacy of education applied to the racial problem, ignore certain salient facts. Education, especially on the higher levels, reaches comparatively few Negroes or whites. But more important is the fact that Negro education, to an even greater extent than white, is subject to controls

exercisable, more frequently than not, by people who have not very liberal conceptions of what the Negro should be in this country. Negro education, like white, is rather compelled to reflect the *status quo*. It is subject to grave doubt that the education of Negroes could devote itself to a program, for example, directed toward vigorous solutions for the problems of the masses of working-class Negroes. It is not likely, in view of their controls, that Negro schools can very soon turn themselves sympathetically toward such delicate but vital subjects as labor tactics, the weapons of labor, mass organization, protest and propaganda. Nor can white schools.¹⁴

Another conception of the Negro problem subscribed to by many Negroes and whites, though mainly from among the upper strata, is that the solution of the problem can be attained through the cultivation of inter-racial good will, mutual understanding and respect. This ideology conceives of the racial problem as resting primarily upon the false sands of mutual hostility and suspicion deriving from ignorance. It takes the position that most whites have contact only with the "lowest class" Negroes, and learn, through their papers, of the misdeeds of Negroes but rarely of their achievements. Once it is revealed to whites that there are highly educated, distinguished, cultured, law-abiding, honest and able Negroes, it is presumed that they will surrender their false conceptions of the Negro, adopt sympathetic ones and change their attitudes toward their black brothers.

By and large this conception steers clear of the more ominous aspects of the problem, such as strife between black and white labor, and operates within the more tranquil realm of complete respectability.

Its circulation is confined almost entirely to the Negro and white upper classes. It sometimes violates the prevailing ideologies and codes of behavior by encouraging Negroes and whites to meet together on the basis of social equality, i.e. they eat together occasionally. While the whites involved do not do so surreptitiously, exactly, many do admit, especially in the South, that they "never talk" about such experiences, especially among their "unemancipated" white friends, unless they are directly "asked." Upper class Negroes are often all atwitter at the opportunity thus afforded them to meet on a common level with prominent whites, from which they derive a terrific "lift." There is no competition of any kind between blacks and whites on this level however, and it is difficult to see how this in any way affects the mass situation.

Education for racial understanding is an important feature in this conception. Through speeches and pamphlets, forums and discussion groups, the white race is informed of the finer traits of the Negro, though no suggestion of a frontal attack upon the fundamental relationships is made. It is via this conception that much of the liberalism of the "New South" finds expression.

Booker T. Washington was the early exponent of the ideology of inter-racial conciliation. In what might be called a policy of "appeasement," Negroes were advised to "cast down their buckets" where they are; to avoid conflict with the white mores; to accept racial separation and its implication of inferiority as inescapable; to rely upon the good-will of the white upper classes; to work hard, develop thrifty habits and strive for economic independence.¹⁵ Washington discouraged the Negro worker from the identi-

Conceptions and Ideologies

97

fication of his interests and organized efforts with the white working class, whose objectives he mistrusted. That he should advocate the dignity of labor but not the importance of its organized unity in an industrial society, apparently did not appear inconsistent to him. In short, the policy of Washington was a policy of cautious expediency, designed to win the approbation of southern whites and northern philanthropists.¹⁶

The policy of relying upon “good” white men—a direct throwback to the pattern of master-favored slave relationships—became accentuated when northern philanthropy began to take an active interest in the freed slave, and to build institutions for his relief, education, moral and material uplift. The individual missionaries first came down from the North, backed by church groups, and later the great northern philanthropic foundations—Rosenwald, Peabody, Slater and Rockefeller—pursued a systematic policy for the improvement of the condition of the Negro. Booker T. Washington was the outstanding spokesman for these interests. In order to carry out this policy successfully, however, the cooperation of the white upper classes of the South was needed, and this was given on the understanding that there would be no tampering with the fundamental relationships between the races in the social structure of the South. Separate Negro institutions of all kinds were thus established through the mutual cooperation and encouragement of northern philanthropy and the southern upper classes. Thus the pattern for the ideology of interracial conciliation within the framework of the established order was created.

Another aspect of the ideology of conciliation involves the cultivation by the Negro of the middle-class virtues of thrift, industry and self-respect. This conception has become linked to the idea that it is possible for the Negro, confronted with the stone wall of prejudice, to develop self-sufficiency within the ghettos of prejudice. Here is a conception born of resignation and despair, but rationalized in terms of practical opportunism and Negro potentiality. The Negro, stymied by the stern obstacles of prejudice, thinks in terms of settling down to “make the best of things,” rather than to storm the obstacles.

It was in the decade prior to emancipation that Martin Delany and Dr. [James] McCune Smith advocated the principles of thrift, industry and the exploitation of economic separatism as a means of economic salvation for the free black man. Some fifty years later Booker T. Washington borrowed these principles for the foundation stones in his National Negro Business League. This concept has won significant acceptance among Negroes, especially since the migrations, when the torch was taken up by Washington’s successor, Robert R. Moton.¹⁷ It has been a source of hope for the Negro, through feeding him on the traditional American illusion that even the men or group on the very lowest rung of the economic ladder can, by industry, thrift, efficiency and perseverance, attain the top rung. The Negro has been encouraged to engage in business enterprise, with the frank recognition that the segregation imposed by the racial situation will constitute the main stock in trade of that business. The resolution drawn up by the business section at the first meeting of the National Congress in Chicago, in February, 1936, made it quite clear that Negro business is much more than mere “business”:

The development of sound and thriving Negro business is most indispensable to the general elevation of the Negro's social and economic security . . . all Negroes consider it their inescapable duty to support Negro business by their patronage.¹⁸

Through the combination of the middle-class virtues and successful Negro business enterprise it is thus thought possible to erect a strong Negro middle-class and a black economy within the white economic structure. In the very nature of the case, this would be ghetto enterprise, but its proponents hold that it will benefit the Negro in many ways. It will stimulate his initiative, give him valuable training and experience, increase his confidence in Negro ability through successful competition with white business, increase his wealth, create a relatively secure Negro middle and upper class, give employment to Negroes, and provide a reservoir of wealth and opportunity for employment against the increasing severity of the discrimination policies practiced by whites. Many Negroes have been attracted by this philosophy and many Negro business ventures have been embarked upon, with varying degrees of success.

It would seem clear, however, that this hope for the salvation of the Negro within the existing ideological and physical framework, by the erection of a black business structure within the walls of white capitalism, is doomed to futility. In the first place, it would affect beneficially only a relative handful of Negroes, and these would mainly be those who have sufficient capital to become entrepreneurs. The advocates of Negro business have little to say about the welfare of Negro workers engaged in such business, except to suggest that they do not suffer from a discriminatory policy of employment. No one argues, however, that their wages and hours would be better, their working conditions improved, or their work less hard. What evidence there is points in quite the opposite direction. The apologists for the self-sufficiency ideology are in pursuit of a policy of pure expediency and opportunism through exploitation of the segregation incident to the racial dualism of America. They refuse to believe that it is impossible to wring much wealth out of the already poverty-stricken Negro ghettos of the nation. Moreover, it should be clear that Negro enterprise exists only on the surface of that dominant white business world which completely controls credit, basic industry and the state. "Big" Negro business is an economic will-o'-the-wisp. Negro business strikes its appeal for support on a racial note, viz.: the race can progress only through economic unity. But the small, individually-owned Negro businesses have little chance to meet successfully the price competition of the large-capital, more efficient and often nationwide white business. The very poverty of the Negro consumer dictates that he must buy where buying is cheapest; and he can ill afford to invest in racial good-will while he has far too little for food. In this sense, Negro business looms as a parasitical growth on the Negro society, in that it exploits the "race problem." It demands for itself special privilege and parades under the chauvinistic protection of "race loyalty," thus further exploiting an already downtrodden group. It represents the welfare only of the pitifully small Negro middle-class group, though demanding support for its ideology from the race-conscious Negro masses. Negro business may offer a measure of relief from racial and economic disadvantages to a handful of the more able or the more fortunate members

Conceptions and Ideologies

of the race. But it is much more certain that the vast majority of Negroes in America will continue to till the soil and to toil in the industries of white America.¹⁹

A logical corollary of the Negro business philosophy, and one that also seeks adjustment within the segregated framework, is that embraced in the "don't buy where you can't work" or "buy where you can work" ideology. This idea has had a vogue in recent years, but shows evidences of waning popularity. It has formed the ideological basis for a number of local movements which have displayed in some places an unusual degree of militancy and tenacity. In numerous instances the labor weapons of the boycott and picketing have been enlisted against white stores in Negro districts which refuse to employ Negro workers, especially white collar workers. It has operated against both neighborhood independent enterprises and chain stores, with signal success in some instances, but with indifferent results in most. From the standpoint of concerted group thinking and action this movement has had some real significance to the Negro. Though not a mass movement, and lacking any mass appeal, except on the general score of "race-consciousness" and black against white, it has in some cases made contact with the Negro consuming masses. For many of these it was their first knowledge of the activities of any Negro improvement organization. This has had some social educational value for the Negro, and it has offered him some slight inkling of his latent economic power, as well as a first acquaintance with the recognized weapons of labor. Never before have Negroes had so much experience with picket lines, and it may be a lesson that will sink in.²⁰

This ideology turns on a narrowly racial axis. At best it could only result in a vicious cycle of job displacement on a racial basis, since it creates no new jobs but only struggles to force Negro workers in at the expense of whites. Its protagonists do not seem to realize that Negro communities do not offer sufficient economic opportunity to absorb even a small number of the Negroes now employed in white industries. Its appeal has only been primarily on behalf of the Negro white-collar worker, and its supporters have been enrolled mainly from Negro middle-class professional and intellectual groups and Negro business men. It appears unable to grasp the fact that there is an economic system as well as a race problem in America, and that when a Negro is unemployed, it is not just solely because he is a Negro, but, much more seriously, because of the defective operation of the economy under which we live—an economy that finds it impossible to provide an adequate number of jobs and economic security for the population, white or black. More seriously still, the projection of the ideology, with its sights trained on white workers and often with an anti-union and anti-everything-white bias, tends to widen still further the distressing gap between black and white workers. Like Negro business, it offers racialism and little more, to the Negro masses.

The ideology of civil libertarianism directs its emphases in a different direction but seeks to work out the destiny of the Negro within the prevailing American structure. Essentially a conciliation philosophy also, and inter-racial, it has tended to adopt a more militant tone than the ideologies previously considered. It campaigns for the removal of discrimination against Negroes, especially in political and civic affairs, and demands that they be given the full measure of the blessings to which they are entitled as Americans by tradition and constitution: political and social equality, and equality of

economic opportunity. It proposes to wage an insistent fight for the imprescriptable rights of the Negro through the legislatures, courts, lobbying and the propaganda of enlightenment. It leans heavily upon the race-consciousness of the Negro in an effort to obtain numerical strength, and it also appeals to the consciences of the liberal, reform and justice-loving elements in the white population.

In the early years of the Negro's freedom, Negro leaders like Frederick Douglass adopted civil libertarianism as the ideology which held most promise for the newly freed Negro. Great store was set by the exercise of the franchise and full participation in the civic affairs of the nation. The Negro had the Republican Party at his back and he saw before him an aurora of bright promise for the future. To him, the Republican Party, the party of Abe Lincoln, the party that set him free, was the acme of all that was good. As Douglass put it: "the Republican Party the ship, all else the sea." Newly freed Negroes, literate and illiterate, were voting. Negroes held high office in both state and national governments. It was also a period of labor ferment, but Negro leadership, dizzy on the lofty political heights to which it had risen, considered such problems as the need for unity between white and black working classes, even in a period in which the Negro had suddenly become a free and much more menacing competitor against the white worker, as secondary.

Reconstruction ran its course. However, the Radicals had had their day, and the Negro too, for the reaction set upon the black man in the South with pent-up fury. All of the Negro political gains were nullified, Negro office-holders were put out, the franchise was taken away by intimidation and legal subterfuge, and the Negro of the South found himself with no more political rights than an ox has feathers, and as politically helpless as he had been in slavery. White supremacy was reestablished in the South in the wake of the Klan and the constitutional conventions. Thus civil libertarianism retained little but academic appeal to the Negro; the eighties and nineties saw him embrace the more practical ideology of conciliation, with Washington as its great and able champion.

Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois became the titular leader of the revived civil libertarian movement, which had its renaissance in the early years of this century. He was the ideological heir of Frederick Douglass and the Reconstruction leaders. Du Bois early set himself up as a forceful antagonist of the Washington philosophy. In 1903 he had come out with a demand for full social and political equality for the Negro.²¹ In the Niagara Movement of 1905 he issued a broadside of protest against racial discrimination of every kind.

Du Bois and the NAACP, which he helped to found, moulded the form of the Negro civil libertarian ideology to which the great numbers of articulate Negroes subscribe today. It boldly embraced a program for complete cultural and political assimilation of the Negro in the American Society. Equality for Negroes could only be best obtained by waging a relentless fight on the political front. The ballot and the courts must be used to the fullest to win social justice for the group. Full faith was placed in the ability of these instruments of democratic government to free the black minority from social proscription and civic inequality. All social, legal, and political disabilities tending to draw a line

Conceptions and Ideologies

101

of distinction between the black citizen and the white must be eradicated. The Negro, like the white American, is entitled to quaff the full draught of eighteen-century democratic liberalism. The Negro citizen is to cash in on his right to the franchise, to equal accommodations in public places and on common carriers, to voluntary choice of place of residence, to jury service, to equal expenditures of public funds for education and other public services, and to protection against mob violence. Though this philosophy essentially ignored the economic interests of Negroes, the pressure of economic circumstance has been so great that those who accept it have been forced to expand its scope to include equality of economic opportunity, protection against racial discrimination in employment, and opposition to discriminatory policies of labor unions.

The conceptions thus outlined clearly involve a serious clash with the white mores, especially in the South. Political equality for the Negro in the North was already a *fait accompli*, and no serious problem was posed, since the plea for social equality was largely a rhetorical one. But the ideology constituted a dire threat to the hegemony of the South, where white political supremacy would be quickly undone were the black man again admitted to the voting booths. In the South the doctrine was regarded as a sinister form of Negro radicalism, and its advocates were considered dangerous characters.

Those who have expounded the doctrine of civil libertarianism for the Negro have usually remained within the bounds of respectability, however. No serious effort has been made to corral behind it the immense potential pressure of the Negro masses, and to use it as the rallying symbol for the birth of a real Negro mass movement throughout the country. It has had a widespread appeal to Negroes, though one can only speculate as to whether the cry for civil liberties or the cry for bread could be most effectively employed to arouse the dormant black masses. The Negro middle and upper class groups have been universally attracted by its lure, however, and it still dominates the thinking of most Negroes of this level today, even after ten years of depression. We are constantly told that until the Negro in the South gets the ballot there is little that can be done for him.

For the upper-class Negro exercise of political rights is connected with status and prestige. No man is truly a man in a democratic country unless he is entitled to the right of free choice of those who govern him. Thus it is not merely of practical but even more of psychological importance to the Negro "elite." But it is not at all established that the Negro sharecropper and the day laborer in the rural South, or the unskilled worker in Birmingham, is more exercised about being deprived of his right to vote, or being Jim Crowed on a street car, than he is about his inability to earn enough to make ends meet. Those Negroes might well say that the poor white man of the South hasn't been able to do very much for himself with the ballot in all the years that he has had it.

There is a tendency toward creating excessive illusions in this sort of thinking. The inherent fallacy in the political militancy thus outlined is found in the failure to recognize that the instrumentalities of the State—Constitution, government and laws—can do no more than reflect the political, social and economic ideology of the dominant population, and that the political arm of the State cannot be divorced from the prevailing economic structure. Civil libertarianism is circumscribed by the dominant mores of the society. In the final analysis, whatever success it may have must depend on its ability to elicit a

sympathetic response to its appeals from among influential elements in the white population. In the long run, therefore, its militancy tends to shade into conciliation, its demands into gradualism. This is inevitable if the doctrine is to meet response from the white "better classes," whose good will is coveted. Were all of its political demands to be met there would be no radical alteration in the fundamental position and relationships of the black and white populations of the country.

The large scale migrations of the Negro from rural South to both southern and northern industrial centers during and after the World War gave tremendous impetus to the development of race consciousness among Negroes. The highly competitive conditions of urban life also impressed upon the Negro the gravity of his economic problems, the terrible insecurity of his economic position and the value of collective unity. The ideologies which germinated in this fertile soil were many and varied. For one thing, an intense racial chauvinism took form. The Negro, as a defense mechanism, concluded that he must counter the white man's allegations of inferiority with kudos to the Negro's background and superior talents. There was a militant note in all this thinking, and a determination to throw off the shackles of race in one way or another. This new racial spirit provided a powerful springboard for both ideologies of accommodation and adjustment, such as the civil libertarianism, and also for those of escape, such as Negro nationalism.

Another product of this environment, however, though not so widely accepted as the "racial" conceptions, is that of class consciousness and class unity. This conception, advanced by numerous progressive intellectuals and labor leaders of both races, postulates the identity of interests of the working masses of the two races, and that these interests can be protected only by unity of action by both groups, against the employers and the capitalistic structure which dictate their exploitation. Among Negroes this view got its initial impetus in the early twenties of this century through the socialistic writings of young Negroes such as Chandler Owen, A. Philip Randolph and others, whose publications appeared in the radical publications, including the *Messenger*, the *Emancipator*, the *Challenge* and the *Crusader*.

This conception of the problem finds its immediate roots in the economic competition institutionalized by the capitalistic system. Under this system all workers are equally exploited, and division in the ranks of the working class is a fatal weakness. The employing class exploits the traditional hostility between black and white workers, deriving from the days of slavery, by playing black against white, keeping the two groups divided through fanning the flames of race hatred, and thus providing a mutual threat. Thus the Negro is often used as a scab and strike-breaker. This division decimates the strength of labor unions and reduces the collective bargaining power of all workers. The strength of the working class is in its unity and its ability to present a united front to the bosses. Therefore, white and Negro workers must cast aside their traditional prejudices, in their own welfare; they must lock arms and march shoulder to shoulder in the struggle for the liberation of the oppressed working masses. The overwhelming majority of Negroes are working class, and most of these are unskilled. Thus, practically the entire Negro race would be included in the scope of this ideology. The black and white masses,

Conceptions and Ideologies

once united, could employ the terrifying power of their numbers to wring concessions from the employers and from the government itself. Some visualize the formation of a powerful labor party in which all workers, of whatever race, color, or creed, would work together for the exertion of that political influence, to which their numbers entitle them, on behalf of the masses of people. Economic interest was thus to override conventional group prejudice, and the Negro worker would be accepted as a brother and equal. The basis of race conflict is economic competition, it is said, and as soon as the economic structure undergoes such alterations as are necessary in order to guarantee economic security to the working masses, the dynamic causes of race conflict will have been liquidated.

This radical ideology pursues three main courses, viz: (1) That comparatively mild alterations can be made in the American economic structure, so as to insure to all workers in the society greater economic structure and a higher standard of life; that these changes can be assured by a powerful and unified American Labor Movement, which will make its will felt in the political life of the nation; (2) that a violent revolution must occur, led by the black and white workers of the nation, who will seize the power of the State and exercise it on behalf of the long-suffering masses; (3) that the Negro working masses in the South constitute essentially an exploited colonial population. They must be liberated on the principle of self-determination for the Negro in the Black Belt and be supported by the revolutionary agencies in setting up an independent black state or soviet of their own. This third ideology has been advanced by the Communist Party. It is in essence an escape ideology and will be considered with the ideologies under that heading.

The Negro worker, as the white, has been under the spell of frontier optimism and the American Dream, and has not been very receptive to the class-struggle and revolutionary appeals. In the first place, the Negro has long been trained to regard the white worker with suspicion and hostility. The white worker has been his traditional competitor and enemy, and the Negro points out that in the South it is the poor and not the rich whites who compose the lynch mobs. The Negro leaders have almost invariably indoctrinated the Negro masses; through press, pulpit, rostrum and school room, they believe that the rich, employing white man is the Negro's best friend. It is pointed out that the rich whites have always been sympathetic to the Negro; that the Rockefellers, Rosenwalds, et al., have donated millions of dollars to help the Negro along through building schools, hospitals, libraries and in many other ways. The white worker just wants to "use" the Negro, and when the black man has been prostituted to his selfish ends he will be set aside. The white workers have never cared about the Negro worker before, and have tried to starve him to death through barring him from his labor unions, with relatively few exceptions.

The schism in the ranks of labor, through the secession from the AF of L of the unions forming the CIO, while weakening the labor movement temporarily, at least has served to bring many thousands of Negro workers who had never before had union experience, into the ranks of organized labor. The CIO, pursuing its policy of industrial unionism, covered those brackets of unskilled labor which the exclusive AF of L craft unions had disdained, and these are the brackets in which most Negro workers are found.

Moreover, the CIO openly avowed a policy of absolute equality and welcome for workers of all races, and exerted active efforts to bring Negro workers in. To meet this new conception many AF of L unions also lowered their racial bars.

If there is any ideology which offers any hope to the Negro it would seem to be that which identifies his interests with the white workers of the nation. There is no strong labor movement now, and there seems to be little possibility that one will obtain in the near future. Nor is there any assurance that either white or black masses would give it sufficient support to build it into a real people's movement. Yet it would seem that it must be in this direction that whatever hope there may be for material progress of the Negro in America must point. There has been encouraging evidence in recent years that, even in the deep South, it is possible for working class and peasant whites to develop a consciousness of class and to subordinate racial prejudice to economic interest.

Negro religion, canalized through the institution of the Negro evangelical church, reveals a dual ideology on the Negro problem. It is both conciliatory and escapist. The Negro church is the social center of Negro life and in the world of practical affairs it envisions the racial problem in terms of racial separatism on the one hand and conciliation with the upper class whites on the other. The Negro is encouraged to develop his own separate and independent enterprise and institutions, free of white influence and control; the Negro church itself is the living embodiment of this philosophy. On the other hand, every effort is to be put forth to appease the ruling class whites and to win their sympathy. Thus policy is dictated by considerations of tactfulness and expediency. The Negro is to adjust himself to conditions as they are, in the hope that the barriers against race will gradually give way before the slow pressure of an enlightened public opinion that is grounded in godliness. Race problems will vanish when both the white and the black man "get religion" and subscribe to the Christ-like principles brotherly love and "do unto others as you would be done by." Patience and restraint became the keynotes and militancy is frowned upon as a disrupting influence.

In the period of slavery, and to a lesser extent today, Negro religion was the principal means of escape from the burdens of race. A religion of great hope and rapture, it offered the Negro his sole means of emotional escape. The down-trodden Negro, enthralled by the vision of the golden paradise that is the world to come, gave way to abandon, unloosed his emotions and permitted himself to be transported to the green pastures of the "promised land," where the black man drops his heavy load and walks with dignity and authority.

These various ideologies of accommodation and conciliation are the dominant influences in the thinking and conduct of the Negro today. There are many aspects of Negro thought and behavior which stem directly from these trunk-line patterns of thought. There is a great striving for "culture" and refinement among many Negroes, and not at all confined to the upper classes. Respectability is the watchword, among the Negro upper class especially. There is an anxious desire to prove that the Negro has assimilated all of the bourgeois graces. In other words, being like the "best white folks" is one means by which the Negro can acquire status and prestige in the Negro society, and at the same time throw back into the teeth of the white man his charge of racial

Conceptions and Ideologies

105

inferiority. Thus a premium is put upon property-holding, fine homes, exquisite furnishings, expensive clothing, luxurious automobiles, lavish entertainment, teas, socials, "at homes."

Among many Negroes, too, there is an adjustment which expresses itself in what may be called the "hush-hush" conception. Such Negroes, usually of the "elite," take the ostrich-like position that the problems of race should not be thought of or talked about. The claim is that the Negro brings much of his troubles on himself by constantly "talking about" race prejudice, and thus helps to keep the white man ever conscious of the presence of the Negro. The assumption is that if the Negro did not project himself into the consciousness of the white man the latter would soon forget his prejudices and the race problem would wither away. In such groups discussion of race is taboo and there is scorn for race consciousness, racial enterprise and achievement. Such views are really founded upon an acceptance of Negro inferiority and a feeling of humiliation at identification with the inferior race. There are many Negroes who become especially uncomfortable whenever the question of race and the problems of the Negro are brought up in the presence of whites. I have known many Negro students at white universities who flatly refused to enroll in any social science course in which the Negro and race are discussed. They lay claim to a feeling of humiliation and extreme self-consciousness when such subjects are discussed before whites.

There is another conception which is a direct throw-back to the slave tradition. That is the view, commonly expressed, and more often enacted, that the white man has full responsibility for the welfare of the Negro. The white counterpart of this is the conception of paternalism, which is fairly typical of upper class whites, especially southern whites, in their relations with Negroes. The Negro approaches the white man with his hat in one hand and the other hand out, drooling with self-pity, and with no earthly argument for aid other than that he is a "poor Negro" and by tradition entitled to it. In places like Virginia, where the old aristocratic traditions persist, this conception remains strongly entrenched. Many Negroes will not support Negro organizations, for they toast paternalistic white "angels" who will look after them. The whites, on their part, resent it when Negroes, through organizations, present demands, but are flattered and sympathetic when Negroes make a goodnatured appeal to their generosity. "We look after our nigger" is a typical white attitude in the South and one that is readily accepted by a great many black folks, though resented by many others.

Thus those Negro conceptions of the Negro problem which are confined within the broad limits of the prevailing ideological framework run the entire gamut from alms to opportunity, from resigned acceptance of inferiority to militant demands for equality. All involve some sort of adjustment toward the end of minimizing or eliminating conflict. Some of these conceptions encourage a bold frontal attack upon the dominant mores; others try to outflank them in an effort to avert friction—the kind of approach typified by the action of Negroes in moving their gas and electric meters out on their back porches in order to avoid trouble with white meter readers who refuse to remove their hats in Negro homes.

Many Negroes agree with whites that time is the only solvent, and that it is only by

a slow, evolutionary process that the solution can be achieved. For the most part, however, this conception is a tactic of avoidance, since it evades incurring the risk of friction in the present by holding "time" solely responsible for the future.

(3) "Escapist" Ideologies

Much of Negro thinking on its problems has been escapist. Confronted with the seemingly impregnable walls of racial hostility, it has recoiled in despair at ever surmounting these barriers and has sought not adjustment but an outlet for escape. Such conceptions are both passive and dynamic, theoretical and realistic.

The American tradition of social optimism has not missed the Negro. Though the frontier was never a reality to the Negro and offered him little relief, he nevertheless absorbed the frontier psychology and patterned it after his own needs. Thus many Negroes hold to a conception of the Negro problem that can be described only as an "optimistic fatalism." The burdens of the present are lightened in the conviction of the inevitability of the "black man's day" when all will be reversed. Whereas the Lothrop Stoddards bombard the white man with warning that the dark tide is rising, the black man considers this an augury of that future day when the world will see the "bottom rail on top," when black men will rule and their past will be vindicated. The heroic struggle of the British Indians for independence is acclaimed; Japan's rise to power in the East—even her invasion of China—is regarded as a source of great encouragement; every instance of rebellion in Africa, the Dutch East Indies, the West Indies, is hailed as a victory. Ethiopia was championed against Italy, and Liberia is a source of great pride. Every outbreak in Europe is considered of utmost importance to the dark races of the world. The internecine conflicts, the conflagrations in the white world are all regarded as certain signs of the ultimate decline and fall from dominance of the white races, upon which the dark peoples will invest the chancelleries of the world. That all of this will transpire is never doubted; it is not a product of reason or cold calculation, but is based upon blind faith. It is foretold in the stars, the scriptures, by the prophets; it is written and must come to pass.

Another conception based upon wishful thinking and the desire for escape is that which holds that the problem of the Negro will dissolve as the result of the inevitable process of racial assimilation. It leans lightly on statistics and heavily on hope. It assumes that because there has been a considerable racial inter-mixture in the past, this is a process that will continue at even an accelerated pace, until there are no longer whites and Negroes, but only "whites." It points to the great number of Negroes who have already "passed over" and to the large number of so-called whites who obviously have Negro blood. This view is based on the questionable assumption that the two races cannot live side by side without widespread miscegenation and ultimate physical amalgamation. It fails, however, to take into consideration the possibility of decreasing mixed blood issue resulting from intercourse between the races, due to wider dissemination of knowledge about contraceptives. Likewise, it ignores the fact that today there may be less illicit intercourse in the South between white men and black women than formerly, because, as some white southerners put it, "there is less need for it as, since the War, white girls

Conceptions and Ideologies

107

have been easier to get." This conception cannot see the black forest from admiration for the "yaller" trees. The usual accompaniment to this ideology is a resigned attitude toward existing problems. Nothing can be done to adjust them so long as the two races exist contiguously; until the black race is absorbed the race problem will remain with us, and little can be done about it.

The logical corollary to this conception is that "passing" is not merely justified but should be encouraged and stimulated. All who can should pass over, and thus save themselves and their children from the rigors of race oppression.

Just how much thought the Negro devotes to the subject of "passing" is a matter of conjecture. Yet, the frequency with which the subject comes up in discussion groups of upper class Negroes suggests that there are certain fairly well-defined Negro thought patterns with regard to it. Considered in abstract, this form of escape is either fully condoned as a perfectly natural and justifiable effort by those who are in a position to do so by virtue of color, to throw off the intolerable burdens of race; or it is condemned as an evidence of lack of pride in one's origin and group, and affliction with the dread malady "wanting to be white," together with the warning that no Negro can "pass over" and be happy. This latter pattern of thought holds that the Negro who has "crossed the line" is always longing to return to his group and suffers nostalgia for his Negro associations. Passing or "part-time" passing is frequently justified on purely economic grounds, since all of the advantages in job holding are with whites. Thus there is much less tendency to criticize the earning a livelihood. Not long ago, in a social gathering of the Negro "elite," in a conversation about singing, a very upper-class Negro society matron remarked: "If I believed in reincarnation I would want to be only two things when I return to this earth—*white* and a great singer, and *in that order*."

There is stereotyped thinking too about the "etiquette" of passing. Thus it is generally assumed that the Negro who passes will ignore Negro acquaintances and even friends when these are encountered in public. The "ex"-Negro is thought to be so conscious of his tawny blood that he would recoil against being seen talking to another Negro in public for fear of being mistaken for one, even though it is not unusual for whites to talk to Negroes in public.

It is believed by many also that the fewer Negroes there are the less intense is the racial feeling. It is pointed out that in northern cities where the Negro population was very small before the migrations, Negroes had no serious problems and got along very well. But since the great numbers of Negroes flocked in from the South, the racial problems have become intensified, universal discrimination and race prejudice have ensued, and even race riots have occurred. Thus the fewer Negroes the better for all. Maury Maverick, stormy petrel and liberal Mayor of San Antonio, expressed this view congenitally as follows:

Race relations here in San Antonio are better than you will find elsewhere in Texas, or the South. Negroes are far better here because there are fewer of them. I wish Walter White, Ralph Bunche and Johnny Davis could see this and maybe develop a movement to break up the big Negro concentrations in the South and transplant them over the country. The colored people can't win

anywhere when they are in a majority. The Negro has a better chance economically and in terms of his civil liberties when he is in a minority. Look at the Negro in San Antonio and contrast it with the status of the Negro majority in Mississippi, of the economic plight of Negroes in Harlem. Where there are a whole lot of Negroes the whites consider it their business to supply the whites with jobs first . . .²²

Such views have been limited almost entirely to the upper class Negroes. It is noteworthy however, that no movement for racial suicide through the systematic restriction of Negro births has emanated from them. It is true that among upper class Negroes as among upper class white, birth rates are much lower in the masses.

Among the dynamic escape conceptions those embracing emigration or colonization and the creation of a Negro nation, are of most significance. The modern versions of the earlier colonization ideology revealed in the proposal for colonization in Africa advanced by Senator Bilbo of Mississippi and by the African emigration proposals of such Negro nationalist movements as Garveyism.

The development of race consciousness and a sense of nationalism among American Negroes has become the chief motivation behind Negro thinking. The growth of race consciousness and a spirit of nationalism has been a gradual development dating from the Civil War. In essence this new tendency has its roots in the same factors that are responsible for the growth in modern times of a similar group consciousness among other minority and oppressed groups throughout the world.

Race consciousness is one type of group consciousness. It is expressed in the tendency of members of a race to identify their interests, status and destiny with that of their racial group. The race conscious individual identifies himself ideologically and emotionally with his racial group, to which loyalty, devotion and pride are extended.²³ Race consciousness develops when members of the group discover certain characteristics of fact or feeling which they all have in common and of which they may be identified, such as oppression, segregation and desire for status. The tendency is for the race-conscious group to develop a common sense of oppression, to exalt and exaggerate the achievements of members of the race, and of the race itself, both in history and today; to eulogize members of other groups who are sympathetic to the race; to acquire an extreme sensitivity; to cultivate a philosophy of "manifest destiny" for the race; to nurture a sense of fellow feeling and solidarity toward other oppresses race conscious groups, and to harbor an attitude of prejudice toward other races with which the race is in conflict.²⁴

Enforced segregation has tended to make the Negro increasingly dependent upon himself and his own devices. Yet due to the fact that the race has been economically and culturally dependent upon the white, the growth of race-consciousness had been slow. The growth of an economically independent and proud Negro middle class gave a filip to the expression of racial solidarity. The Negro church, as an independent and racially separatist organization, was also an important factor, as were the Negro lodges and burial societies, and later, the Negro press and reform organizations. The greatest impetus to Negro race consciousness, however, resulted from the migrations. A new note of

Conceptions and Ideologies

111

Negro origin. Threats of the ultimate use of force to win justice for the lack man throughout the world could be inferred from the frequently repeated utterance that the dark-skinned peoples constitute the preponderant factor in the earth's population. The tricks of older nationalistic movements were borrowed, and even God became "a creature of imaginary semblance to the black race." Christ and the Madonna were displayed with a healthy sun-tan.²⁷

The one real home for the American Negro was said to be in the creation of an independent Negro nation. Negro leaders who sought adjustment of the Negro's status here were just fiddling while Rome burned. The obvious location of this nation must be Africa, since Africa is the true home of the Negro, is inhabited by an overwhelmingly Negro population, and is not yet completely subjugated to white political control.

This new Negro nationalism won widespread acclaim from Negroes in all sections of the country. The great bulk of its recruits, however, were from the recent Negro migrants to the northern urban areas. Its chief appeal was an emotional one, since these confused, unsophisticated people, floundering about in their strange surroundings, were eager to grasp at anything that offer relief. Garveyism, with its glamorous nationalism, its elaborate ritual, its resplendent if gaudy uniforms, its parades and stirring meetings, offered them an emotional escape from their burdens. It gave them a psychological "lift" similar to that which they had been accustomed to get in their revival meetings "down home."

There was also an element of Pan-Africanism in the Garvey nationalism. It advocated international unity among all Negroes and their "blending into one strong race." The black man's universal declaration of independence was drawn up in the form of the "Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World." Though rejecting as impracticable the Garvey vision of an independent Negro state in Africa, the Pan-African Congress in the twenties continued to think within the framework of world unity among Negroes, and to struggle against the universal disabilities of Negroes.

A milder form of the Negro nationalist ideology is that advanced by those who also seek escape from the oppression of black people in America by emigrating to a section of this continent to be set aside for the purpose, where an independent black state will be established under the protective wing of the American flag.

It is significant that the Communist Party in America, which has proselyted vigorously among Negroes on the assumption that the most oppressed people should be the most disaffected, had also catered to the spirit of Negro nationalism. As a revolutionary party its basic dogma has had to be within the purview of the class struggle and the solidarity of the working class. Class unity would necessarily cut across racial lines. However, it saw the anomalous position of the Negro in the United States, and especially in the black belt of the South, and considered it strategic to develop a special policy to cover that situation.²⁸ The position of the party on the Negro wavered between two views. One view saw the Negro in the deep South as a "colonial" population which must be freed from the dominance of the white "imperialists." The other view regarded the Negro as a "national minority" population in the same sense that there are national minorities in the Soviet Union and in other countries of Europe. At the same time, however, it was recognized that the collapse of capitalism in the U.S. was not imminent,

and that a temporary policy would have to be devised. The solution for this black population was to be worked out in terms of "self-determination for the Negro in the Black Belt," i.e. on the assumption that there is a strong nationalistic spirit among the Negroes of the South, and that the exercise of the right of "self-determination" would lead them to set up an independent black republic. This black republic would comprise theoretically those several hundred more or less contiguous southern counties in which the Negro population is in the majority, and would include a number of important southern cities, whose population ratio of white to black in 1930 was almost two to one.²⁹ Moreover, this "black belt" area in which the black republic would be set up, is an area within the sections of which the Negro population is settled in varying proportions: in the sections contiguous to the area prescribed for the Negro state, the black population varies from one-half to one quarter or less of the population. These sections containing the large white populations as well as the sections with preponderant Negro population, are all integrated into the unified southern economy. It was realized by the Communist Party that the large Negro population North of the Mason and Dixon Line, does not constitute a "colonial population," nor can it be included in the black republic. But the northern Negroes are regarded as an oppressed national minority, however; though they cannot exercise the right of self-determination, and must be given full equality, they will continue to suffer oppression until their black comrades of the South are liberated.

This is essentially an escape conception, in that it would solve the Negro's problem by severance from the American society. In a sense it is more fanciful than the Garveyist proposal. The American Negro in the South is not a "colonial" population, unless the southern poor white population is also a colonial population. They came to the South together, and have suffered poverty and exploitation together, the black somewhat more than the other. The black belt is not suffering from white "imperialist" domination, but from the traditional ruling class which oppresses both white and black, each at the expense of the other. Moreover, it cannot be shown yet that the Negro here is a "national minority" population in the sense that the minority populations of Russia are. The Negro has been thoroughly assimilated into the American culture and has contributed to it. He cannot be differentiated from the white population by language, religion or cultural heritage, but only by race and the incidence of racial oppression. While the transient appeal of the Garvey movement might seem to indicate that there may be a latent spirit of nationalism among Negroes that is capable of being aroused, this is far from certain. Nor did the Garvey appeal offer a sound test, except for the Negro's eagerness to find escape, even though it is only emotional and fleeting. It is very certain, however, that the Communist proposal for the black Jim Crow republic failed utterly to strike the imagination of Negroes. It is much more likely that not many Negroes could be led so far afield from their more orthodox insistence upon full political, economic and social equality with their white fellow-citizens, in this, their native country.

lacked distinctive and integrating culture symbols about which to rally. Moreover, a dark skin has been widely regarded and accepted as a cause for shame, there has been an illusion of hope for ultimate physical and social assimilation, and the Negro too readily has accommodated himself to the patterns of American relationships.

The early ante-bellum colonization and emigration schemes, even those led by Negroes, were less an expression of Negro nationalism than a desire to run away from intolerable conditions. After the Civil War, however, the Negro showed a tendency toward segregation that was not entirely involuntary.²⁶ In 1890 a party of Negroes led by Montgomery settled the all Negro town now known as Mound Bayou. The developments since then have aroused that type of group consciousness upon which nationalistic movements thrive. Negro organizations of all kinds have developed, a large and militant Negro press has arisen, outspoken, group-conscious and militant leadership has appeared, a Negro literature has been created, Negro history has been first acquitted and then glorified, Negro art and music have become sources of great pride, and valiant effort have been exerted to rediscover for the Negro a "homeland" in Africa. This latter is especially important, since for many years Africa meant the same to the Negro that it meant to whites—a dark, forbidding jungle, inhabited by primitive blacks and wild animals. Now Africa is taking on new meaning for Negroes, a symbolic meaning, and is conceived of as the "mother country," the cradle of a great race, and indeed, the birthplace of civilization. Africa thus comes to be to the Negro what Palestine is to the Jews, ideologically speaking.

Until the period of the migrations all of the important post-emancipation ideologies of the Negro were postulated on the assumption that a way of life could be worked out which would make it possible for black men and white to live together in this country in some degree of harmony. With the influx of Negroes in the northern centers, however, economic competition and race friction increased, the racial barriers were ever more high, and many Negroes began to despair of the future offered them in America. This feeling, together with the intensified race consciousness among Negroes, constitutes the ideological foundation upon which the one real nationalist movement among American Negroes took shape. Garveyism began to be preached to American Negroes about 1914 [1917-ed.]. It advocated the complete repudiation of the standards fixed by white society, and urged the development of a distinctly Negro and independent cultural and social system. It warned Negroes that America is a white man's country, and that black men could never hope for decent treatment here. Justice and equality for the Negro in America were out of the question, nor could black men anywhere in the world expect to receive such treatment from white men in control. The Negro can get along in America only so long as he is willing to accept the inferior status in which the white man has traditionally kept him.

This form of Negro nationalism exploited to the utmost that quality of the Negro which had been habitually worn as a badge of shame—his black skin. Garvey exalted things black. The Negro's color became a symbol of strength and superiority. All sorts of extravagant claims were made on behalf of the heroic black men of the past. The earliest civilizations in the world, including the Egyptian, were alleged to have been of

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

¹ And, indeed, Bunche himself remains an obscure figure today, despite Benjamin Rivlin's recent anthology, *Ralph Bunche: The Man and His Times* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1990). For a brief assessment of Bunche, see Ben Keppel, "Ralph Bunche: From Intellectual to Icon," *The CAAS Report* [UCLA], 14: 1 & 2 (1990-1992): 24-27. Historian August Meier owed much to Bunche's formulations in his work, "The Emergence of Negro Nationalism: A Study in Ideologies from the American Revolution to the First World War," M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, 1949, the core of which was printed as "The Emergence of Negro Nationalism (A Study in Ideologies)," *Midwest Journal*, IV:1 (Winter 1951-1952): 96-104; IV:2 (Summer 1952): 95-110.

² Ralph J. Bunche, "Memorandum on Conceptions and Ideologies of the Negro Problem"; "Extended Memorandum on the Programs, Ideologies, Tactics, and Achievements of Negro Betterment and Interracial Organizations"; "A Brief and Tentative Analysis of Negro Leadership"; and "The Political Status of the Negro."

³ Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944).

⁴ Ralph J. Bunche, *The Political Status of the Negro in the Age of FDR* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973). See also Bunche, "The Negro in the Political Life of the United States," *Journal of Negro Education*, 10:3 (July 1941): 567-84. For work completed prior to the Carnegie-Myrdal study, see also Bunche, "A Critical Analysis of the Tactics and Programs of Minority Groups," *Journal of Negro Education*, 4:3 (July 1935): 308-320; and "The Programs of Organizations Devoted to the Improvement of the Status of the American Negro," *The Journal of Negro Education*, VIII:3 (July, 1939): 539-50.

⁵ Comprised of five sub-sections: 1. Negro, General; 2. Negro, Early Slavery; 3. Negro, Slave Revolt; 4. Free Negro, Ante-bellum; and 5. Negro, Colonization and Deportation.

⁶ Comprised of five sub-sections: 1. White, Anti-Slavery; 2. White, Rationalization of Slavery; 3. White, Slave Influence On; and 4. White, Conception of the Negro.

⁷ Comprised of three sub-sections: 1. General; 2. "Accommodation" Ideologies; 3. "Escapist" Ideologies.

⁸ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1936), 40.

⁹ "Conceptions and Ideologies of the Negro Problem," 79 [above]; Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 52.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 93 [above].

¹¹ Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, 39.

¹² *Ibid.*, 41, 42.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁴ Ralph J. Bunche, "Extended Memorandum on the Programs, Ideologies, Tactics, and Achievements of Negro Betterment and Interracial Organizations" (Unpublished manuscript prepared for the Carnegie-Myrdal Study, June, 1940), Vol. I: 12-14.

¹⁵ Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 231-36.

¹⁶ This formulation modifies that of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1966, 1967), 18. For Berger and Luckmann the central question of sociological theory was: "How is it possible that subjective meanings become objective facticities?" Concerns raised from my own perspective shift the principal problematic: What are the relations between subjective meanings derived from intersubjective and structured action on the one hand, objective facticity on the other?; second, how are the relations between the representations of intersubjective and structured action within ideology?

¹⁷ This formulation owes its origin to a modified version of "ideological universe" suggested by Göran Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (London: Verso Books, 1980), 22-27. Therborn postulated that ideologies operate through the constitution of human subjectivity: that of being-in-the-world. Analytically speaking, the universe of ideologies could be divided into two spheres: subjectivities of "being" and subjectivities of "in-the-world." Following this, a second, analytical division was possible within each. Subjectivities of "being" could be separated into their Existential and Historical components; subjectivities of "in-the-world" could be subdivided into Inclusive and Positional elements. Without delving into further detail here, thus far I have found Therborn's Existential/Historical categories to be infinitely more useful in my own work than his Inclusive/Positional ones, and have subsequently dropped the latter from my

theoretical toolbox. As for the Existential/Historical couple, I have redesignated the Historical as Social-Historical for reasons of clarity.

¹⁸ The ideological spheres of social identity and of perceived social structure, though relatively autonomous and which, at times, may interact in mutually reinforcing or negating ways, are intimately related: who I am (better: who I am considered by others to be) determines, in large part, my place in society—that is to say, how I make my livelihood, what my access to material resources may be, etc. On the other hand, my assigned place externally determines, again in large part, who I am, socially considered. Existential ideologies (bearing on social identities) selectively draw upon socio-historical contexts and in turn hold important implications for social structuring; conversely, social-historical ideologies (bearing on social place) hold equally important implications for one's lived existence. Under conditions of domination imposed social identities tend, in an *a priori* manner, to fix, to justify one's place within the social order; conversely, one's actual place within that order constitutes *a posteriori* proof of one's social identity.

CONCEPTIONS AND IDEOLOGIES

¹ Lewis C. Copleland, ed. "The Negro as a Contrast Conception," in Edgar T. Thompson, *Race Relations and the Race Problem*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1939), Chap. VI, 152 ff.

² *Ibid.*, p. 153

³ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1936), xxiii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁷ Interview with Purdom, Atlanta, Georgia, November 1939.

⁸ Louis Hacker, *American Problems of Today* (New York: F. S. Crofts and Company, 1938).

⁹ Cf. Robert R. Moton, *What The Negro Thinks* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1929), 18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 19.

¹³ Cf. Howard H. Long, "The Position of the Negro in the American Social Order; A Forecast," *Journal of Negro Education*, VIII:3 (July, 1939): 603-16.

¹⁴ Cf. Ralph J. Bunche, "Education in Black and White," *Journal of Negro Education*, V:3 (July 1936): 351-58.

¹⁵ Cf. Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (1901); *Future of the American Negro* (1899), *passim*.

¹⁶ Cf. R. J. Bunche, "The Programs of Organizations Devoted to the Improvement of the Status of the American Negro," *The Journal of Negro Education*, VIII:3 (July, 1939): 539-50.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Cf. R. J. Bunche, "Triumph? or Fiasco?," *Race*, 1:2 (Summer 1936): 93-96.

¹⁹ For a critical appraisal of Negro Business, cf. Abram L. Harris, *The Negro As Capitalist* (1936), *passim*.

²⁰ Cf. R. J. Bunche, "The Programs of Organizations."

²¹ Cf. *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: 1903).

²² Interview with field worker Dr. James Jackson, San Antonio, February, 1940.

²³ Cf. W. O. Brown, "The Nature of Race Consciousness," *Social Forces*, IX:1 (October, 1931): 90-97.

²⁴ Cf. H. A. Miller, *Races, Nations and Classes* (1924), 32-38; also W. O. Brown, "Emergence of Race Consciousness," *Sociology and Social Research*, XV:5 (May-June 1931): 428-36.

²⁵ Cf. Alain Locke, *The New Negro* (1925), *passim*.

²⁶ Edward Byron Reuter, *The American Race Problem* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1927), 396.

²⁷ *New York Times* (August 6, 1924).

²⁸ James Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1936).

²⁹ [For example,] Richmond, Norfolk, Memphis Vicksburg, New Orleans, and Savannah, with a total 1930 population of some 754,000 whites and 374,000 blacks.