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W.E.B Du Bois and Method of Knowing

Of all the 'pillars' found in *A Passion for Learning*, W.E.B Du Bois' "method of knowing" was the most instrumental in his educational inquiry of Black America. His method was in education, writing and travel, in knowing who he is and using this knowledge to further his own and the worlds understanding regarding the plight of Black America. In *Individualism Old and New*, Dewey says, "The solution of the crisis in culture is identical with the recovery of composed, effective and creative individuality." As Gardner claimed his, "intellectual descent from Dewey," so could Dewey claim intellectual descent from Du Bois. In 1903 Du Bois wrote, "wander among men and nations...nothing new, no time-saving devices, simply old time learning...delving for Truth, and searching out the hidden beauties of life, and learning the good of living," With that profound statement we find a link to Gardner's truth, beauty and goodness as a method of knowing and forming a triad of progressive educational inquiry.

According to *Du Bois: The Activist Life* from the University of Massachusetts Library, his journey and method of knowing began at Atlanta University and his study of Sociology, where he "planned a long-range series of studies dealing with the issues and problems that faced black Americans." As a reflection of Dewey, Du Bois' cultural crisis was the core of his journey into recovery of his identity and life's purpose. *The Activist Life* explains how Du Bois was hopeful that his scientific study of Black America would bring world focus on the racial prejudices permeating American society. Du Bois' method of knowing into the plight of Black America also found voice with his NAACP involvement and in creation of The Crisis magazine in order to "stimulate the development of a distinct Afro-American culture." Through The Crisis, Du Bois' gives voice to the culture so long suppressed by white America. While Du Bois has traveled extensively, it is his work at Atlanta University that most developed his method of knowing. According to W.E.B Du Bois Learning Center online, Du Bois wrote in *Dusk of Dawn*, he "believed in the higher education of a "Talented Tenth" who through their knowledge of modern culture could guide the American Negro into a higher civilization."

Du Bois' method of knowing Black America and, in essence, his own identity, was grounded in his travels, his writing and his inquiry into the heart and souls of what it meant to be black in America. His curriculum studies at Fisk became a reflection on his beliefs regarding schooling for black students that "stressed American notions of individual rights and democracy, social progress, and freedom." By resolving his own

identity as a black American, by educating himself in the classics, language, physics, music etc., then utilizing his education as a tool to combat racial prejudice, to lift the hopes of countless black Americans, Du Bois method of knowing contributed significantly to racial equality and the Civil Rights Movement.

“One thing alone I charge you. As you live, believe in Life! Always human beings will live and progress to greater, broader and fuller life. The only possible death is to lose belief in this truth simply because the great end comes slowly, because time is long.”

--*W.E.B. Du Bois in his last statement to the world, 1963*

Found online at University of Massachusetts Library under *Du Bois: The Activist Life*.