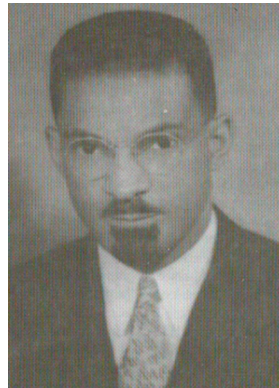


The African American Philosopher: The Missing Chapter in McCumber on McCarthyism

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My article is an essay/review of John McCumber's *Time in the Ditch: American Philosophy and the McCarthy Era* published by Northwestern University Press in 2001. I want to begin by saying that my article is not an essay/review in the customary sense of the term. It is more customary that an essay/review expands further than what is found with the short synopsis of the more classic form of book review, which numbers just a few pages in length. With the essay/review, attention is generally given to most of the major facets of the text and always with an eye to giving the reader a host of critical insights into the work. Such insights serve to inform the reader in a manner that if not exhaustive then they are at least considered in some way to act as a comprehensive account of the topic at hand.¹

¹ For critical essay/reviews of McCumber's text see David A. Hollinger, "Religion, Ethnicity, and Politics in American Philosophy: Reflections on McCumber's *Time in the Ditch*" *Philosophical Studies* V.108, n. 1-2 (March, 2002) pp. 173-181. Ted Cohen, *Philosophy in America: Remarks on John McCumber's Time in the Ditch: American Philosophy and the McCarthy Era* *Philosophical Studies* V.108, n. 1-2 (March, 2002) pp. 183-193. Sandra Harding, "American Philosophy as a Technototem" *Philosophical Studies* V.108, n. 1-2 (March, 2002) pp. 195-201. Dumain presents a critique in an electronic article, Ralph Dumain, "New Year's Resolution: Exploring Philosophical Cultures" <<http://www.autodidactproject.org/my/diary0401a.html>>.

In contrast, my review is neither exhaustive nor comprehensive; rather, it is a response to specific features and particular aspects of McCumber's text regarding the omission of African American philosophers and its relation to his central thesis about McCarthyism and the history of philosophy in the United States. With respect to the reality of African American philosophers and the history of philosophy in the United States, I am concerned with how McCumber's lack of attention to this matter has considerable impact on his notions about metaphilosophy and the future he proposes for professional philosophy.²

I think John McCumber's *Time in the Ditch: American Philosophy and the McCarthy Era* is a thoughtful inquiry and provocative look at professional philosophy in the United States. And I might add that his vision of the future comes about by addressing and accounting for the complexity of its history. In a nutshell McCumber thinks that a historical approach to philosophy will reveal why professional philosophy has the problems it faces and more importantly that the historical method can present solutions to such problems. Therefore, McCumber's vision of the future requires the critical historical reexamination of U. S. professional philosophy from its McCarthyist "Time in the Ditch" toward forging a newfound status which becomes "Philosophy Out of the Ditch."³

When I first read McCumber's book my memories returned to a lecture I gave at San Francisco State some years ago. Two points about that lecture became foremost in my mind. First, the lecture was part of a series in honor of V. J. McGill, one of the casualties of McCarthyism. I had the honor of meeting his delightful widow, Ms. Helen Ludwig, and discovered that she had managed to attend the lecture series throughout the years after his death. McGill was fired from Hunter College after 25 years of service and thereafter taught at the Adler's Institute for Philosophical Research before his eventual arrival at San Francisco State University. However, McGill never received tenure at San

² For an alternative treatment of the history of U.S. philosophy, metaphilosophy and racism read Lucius Outlaw, "The Deafening Silence of the Guiding Light: American Philosophy and the Problems of the Color Line," *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy* V.1, n.1 (1987) pp. 46-47.

³ John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch: American Philosophy and the McCarthy Era* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001) pp. 3-31.

Francisco State and remained on a year-to-year contractual basis to the very end of his career in 1973.⁴

Second, I remembered that the lecture I gave was on the history of African American philosophers at Howard University. Although little known to many in the audience, this history was a crucial part of McGill's legacy in conjunction with McCarthyism and its connection to the prospects of one African American philosopher at Howard. McGill helped start the Marxist journal, *Science and Society*, and was editor of the journal, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. During the McCarthy period, when there were limited publishing outlets for Marxist philosophers because of right-wing reaction and restrictions on African American philosophers (outside of African American scholarly journals) due to racism, these two journals presented fruitful opportunities for the Black Marxist philosopher Eugene C. Holmes. Holmes published two of his three key works on the dialectical materialist conception of space and time in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* and *Science and Society*, respectively. Despite his own personal difficulties in the profession, McGill was committed to providing others with scholarly alternatives to the repressive measures under McCarthyism. In effect McGill forged a critical left tradition for philosophers under the most adverse conditions.⁵

In the history of U.S. philosophy there is a critical tradition of left thought that in many ways provides an external (ideological) critique of professional (or bourgeois) philosophy. However, this leftist philosophical tradition is seldom taught in today's academy. The names of left philosophers such as Howard Selsam, George Novack, V. J. McGill, Dirk J. Struik, Harry K. Wells, David H. DeGrood, John Somerville, Howard L. Parsons, not to mention African American philosophers Eugene C. Holmes and Forrest

⁴ On McGill consult the electronic article by John McCumber, "The Honor Roll: American Philosophers Professionally Injured During the McCarthy Era," *Marxism Thaxis* <<http://www.mailarchive.com/Marxismthaxis@lists.econ.utah.edu/msg00679.html>>. Also see Peter E. Radcliff and James R. Royse, "V. J. McGill 1897-1977," Memorial Minutes, *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, Vol. 51, No. 5. (May, 1978), pp. 581-582.

⁵ Eugene C. Holmes, "The Kantian Views of Space and Time Reevaluated," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, V. 16, n. 2 (December, 1955) and Eugene C. Holmes, "Philosophical Problems of Space and Time" *Science & Society* V. 24, n. 3 (1960), pp. 207-227. Holmes published in *Science and Society* as early as 1937. See his review of "The Negro as Capitalist by Abram Harris" *Science and Society* (Winter 1937) V. 1, n.2, pp. 260-62.

O. Wiggins, rarely are included on the syllabus in courses on the history of U.S. philosophy or classes in political and social philosophy.

Although I think that McCumber's challenge to and critique of professional philosophy is provocative and insightful, it is not, in my estimation, in the same tradition of the previously cited philosophers. Their tradition constituted what I term an ideological (external) critique of bourgeois philosophy. By "ideological critique" I mean a critique that challenges the fundamental worldview that serves as the foundation of given philosophical perspectives. Hence, unlike the examples of Harry K. Wells' *Pragmatism: Philosophy of Imperialism* and George Novack's *Empiricism and Its Evolution: A Marxist View*, which call into question the very ideological grounds of pragmatism as bourgeois philosophy, McCumber's metaphilosophy is firmly situated within the orbit of bourgeois philosophy. Consequently his critique is an internal as opposed to an external critique.⁶

McCumber's critique aims to reform professional philosophy. It seems to me that McCumber's reformation is mainly concerned with the reconciliation (via dialectical *aufheben*) of professional philosophy's two major schools of thought, analytic and continental philosophy. Thus he endeavors to serve the future good of bourgeois philosophy in the U.S. through solving its "domestic" problems instead of confronting its basic character. McCumber wants to take professional philosophy away from its parochialism and isolationism, open it to a wider audience than just various specialists, and make it less inhospitable to having dialogue across the analytic/continental divide.⁷

McCumber's use of the trope "Time in the Ditch" reminds us of how the "timeless search for truth" has functioned for some, especially in the analytic school, as an essential characterization and defining feature of philosophy. In fact it constitutes a reoccurring self-conceit in the history of philosophy. This self-conceit was particularly prominent among professional philosophers in the United States throughout the highly

⁶ John H. McClendon III, "Black and White or Left and Right?: Ideological Critique in African American Studies," *American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience* (Fall 2002). Harry K. Wells, *Pragmatism, Philosophy of Imperialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1954) and George Novack, *Empiricism and Its Evolution: A Marxist View* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1963).

⁷ McCumber expands on his presentation of this issue (as found in the book) in John McCumber, "Just in Time: Toward a New American Philosophy," *Continental Philosophy Review* V. 36, n. 1 (March, 2003) pp. 61-80.

politicized McCarthy period. In this phrase, we have what constitutes a metaphilosophical principle constituted in this statement, “timeless search for truth.”⁸ Embodied in this metaphilosophical principle is a normative presumption: namely, philosophy ought to remain essentially apolitical in character. McCumber demonstrates that the combination of the “timeless search for truth” and the ostensible apolitical nature of philosophy actually helps to mask the political objectives of professional philosophy, and this was particularly so during the McCarthy era.⁹

McCumber asserts that the philosophical establishment in buying into this line of thought, during and after McCarthyism, relinquished what had been a long-held Western tradition, namely the ongoing process of self-critical reflection. McCumber writes,

The recent silence of philosophers concerning philosophy itself thus amounts to the professional abandonment of what for over two millennia, from Plato to Gottshalk, was central to them: that of *seeking critical, reflective self-understanding*. That the philosophical professional in America has so largely, and quietly, abandoned this task is certainly odd enough to call for an explanation.¹⁰ [italics added]

If philosophy’s aim is the timeless search for truth along with seeking critical, reflective self-understanding then one can have two possible alternatives. On the one hand, one can place an emphasis on the foundational supposition that philosophy stands above the material world and consequently eschews all forms of political involvement. On the other hand, the act of “seeking critical, reflective self-understanding” could involve assuming that the material, real, world is the ground and subject of philosophical inquiry and taking a philosophical stand about the issues of the world becomes paramount. If one exercises the first option then the search for truth becomes not only ongoing (timeless) but also one that considers truth itself (given its timeless nature) as transcendent and apolitical.

⁸ John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch*, pp 132-38, and McCumber, “Just in Time,” pp. 67-69.

⁹John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch*, pp. xv-xix. For a critique of McCumber’s treatment of the question of temporality see Ralph Dumain, “New Year’s Resolution: Exploring Philosophical Cultures” <<http://www.autodidactproject.org/my/diary0401a.html#mccrenew>>.

¹⁰ John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch*, p. 10.

Yet such presuppositions about philosophy's timelessness and the transcendent/nonpartisan – disinterested – nature of truth come at the considerable cost of our being in the world. We in fact are faced with a nagging dilemma. For the premise that philosophy's proper locus mandates transcending the material world ignores the proverbial fact that philosophers are material beings and thus are *in* and *of* the material world. Transcendent teleological presumptions, on the one hand, and the reality that philosophers are in and of the world, on the other hand, create a fundamental dilemma for the practice of philosophy.

This dilemma, McCumber reports, has its origins with the apocryphal story about Thales, the venerable philosopher of Miletus, who in his preoccupation with philosophical wonder thus landed in a ditch. Nevertheless, McCumber's retelling of this apocryphal rendering of Thales is at root a telling critique of how speculative philosophical inquiry often loses track of its material grounds. Moreover, McCumber's use of the trope "Time in the Ditch" extends beyond just pointing in the general direction of the material groundings for philosophical inquiry. For it additionally challenges the very specific and particular notion that philosophy historically surpasses political context. Simply put, what we have with McCumber's root idea is the presupposition that philosophy *sans* political interests is not a creature of real history and this is what happened under McCarthyism.

McCumber points out there are a host of examples in European philosophy from the classical period of Plato and Aristotle and the modern era of Kant and the Young Hegelians to our contemporary times with Derrida, Foucault, and Habermas. In all of the previous instances, the saliently and ubiquitous presence of political interests and context was openly embraced and publicly expressed for all to confront.

Furthermore, this institutional context – where politics influences and even dominates over the scope and substance of philosophy – is particularly noteworthy in the case of the history of the United States. However, this politicization of philosophy, with respect to professional philosophy in this country, is often not afforded due acknowledgement and consideration and this leads to McCumber's major claim: namely, the political movement called "McCarthyism" created a formidable detour in the trajectory of professional philosophy, and its effects have lasted even right up until the

present. Therefore, although McCumber's text is ostensibly one within the bounds of a particular period in the history of philosophy, his thesis consumes more than the past developments associated with McCarthyism. For it also includes judgments about how McCarthyism's impact is vibrant and enduring as well as currently operating decisively within the confines of the academic philosophical establishment of the United States. McCumber suggests that academic philosophy not only lost the war with McCarthyism but this loss also had lasting effects which encumber what are today's notions about the practice of professional philosophy. Furthermore, there is an imperative to develop a view of professional philosophy that breaks away from the shackles of McCarthyism's legacy.

How McCumber links the history of philosophy to his vision of the future is accented in Chapter 5 of his text, "Philosophy Out of the Ditch: A Post-McCarthy Paradigm." There McCumber introduces us to the significance of his concept of philosophical narrative. He argues it is by means of narrative that we connect with the past. However, McCumber warns us, "There is a major difference between merely stating truths about the past and actually connecting such truths to the present."¹¹ Yet while this is true, I want to emphasize "stating truths about the past" – that is to say establishing the facts of the case or having a basic description of historical context – is of no small matter and this is especially important given the general neglect of the history of African American philosophers and philosophy. I contend that ignorance of this history remains one of the unstated dismal realities festering within the ranks of today's philosophy profession.¹²

Consequently, I submit the following questions as a brief sampling of possible interrogations (of an empirical sort) that McCumber could have made regarding the history of African American philosophers. Namely, they are: Who are the African American thinkers that grappled with questions and problems over the course of the intellectual history that constituted academic philosophy as professionally instituted in

¹¹ John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch*, p. 142.

¹² One of the rare instances in history of philosophy where a Euro-American philosopher openly addresses the issue of race and racism is the work of Josiah Royce. See Josiah Royce, *The American Race Problem, Provincialism and Other Questions* (New York: Macmillan, 1908). For a recent treatment of Royce on race read Jacquelyn Ann K. Kegley, "Is a Coherent Racial Identity Essential to Genuine Individuals and Communities? Josiah Royce on Race," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* V. 19, n. 3 (2005).

the United States? What type of training/education did they receive? What were the venues (institutional settings) available for their work? Were such outlets academic or nonacademic in makeup, or did both venues come into play? For the earlier generations of African American philosophers under the shadow of segregation, what mattered most in terms of philosophical work, teaching or research? What audience did they seek to address? And what means were at their disposal for reaching an audience? What subfields in philosophy did they explore and what schools of thought captured their allegiance? Lastly, how did institutional racism in professional philosophy influence their response to the previous questions?¹³

Right away the reader can see that the final question is the most decisive. Now by no means do I expect that McCumber should have broached all the above questions. Nevertheless, to the extent that any of these questions can shed light on his historical narrative and future vision for professional philosophy, a general glance and focus on at least some of these questions would have been helpful.

On review of McCumber's account, there is certainly a virtual silence with regard to African American philosophers and the impact of McCarthyism on the subsequent history of African American philosophers. In effect, I argue that that this lacuna concerning African American philosophers does not just impinge on our comprehension of African American philosophers, especially in light of their plight with McCarthyism, but it also considerably limits McCumber's overall analysis, thesis, and explanation of McCarthyism as well as its relationship to the status and substance of professional philosophy.¹⁴

When McCumber attempts to address the locus of African American philosophers in professional philosophy vis-à-vis the effects of McCarthyism, what actually results is misrepresentation of the facts. For instance when we examine Chapter 3, "Has It Stopped Yet?: The McCarthy Era's Lasting Effects on American Philosophy," McCumber highlights how there is a growing number of contemporary white men and women that

¹³ John H. McClendon III, "The African American Philosopher and Academic Philosophy: On the Problem of Historical Interpretation," *American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience* (Fall 2004), p. 1.

¹⁴ John H. McClendon III, "The Afro-American Philosopher and the Philosophy of the Black Experience: A Bibliographical Essay on a Neglected Topic in Both Philosophy and Black Studies," *Sage Race Relations Abstracts* Vol. 7, No. 4 (November 1982), pp. 1-51.

are dissatisfied with the profession and they have left philosophy departments for other disciplinary affiliations. In concert with this assertion, McCumber lumps one Black philosopher into this group with a singular reference to Lewis Gordon. Yet if McCumber had incorporated just some degree of research about the African American philosopher's history, general plight, and status in view of the history of institutional racism, then he would have discovered that this solitary example was insufficient representation for the general state of African American philosophers employed outside of philosophy departments.¹⁵

Rather than leaving philosophy for other disciplines, many African American philosophers are today outside of philosophy departments because they were not hired by such departments. This is even more pronounced when African American philosophers pursue the African American experience as an area of specialization or competency. The likelihood is that an opportunity in African American Studies (or other programs and departments) at white institutions or teaching at the Historically Black Colleges and Universities will become available long before a job in philosophy departments at a white institution. Can it be that McCarthyism is chiefly responsible for this state of affairs? I think not and there is an abundance of evidence to support my answer.¹⁶

Now on McCumber's part, he claims that McCarthyism brought in its wake an unequivocal propensity for anti-intellectualism, defensiveness, and isolationism. Subsequently these elements form the context for his main thesis about the effects of McCarthyism on the history of philosophy in the United States.¹⁷ McCumber then links racism to this context and what becomes our entrée into the influence of racism is only an implicit look into the racist plight of the African American philosopher. McCumber's historical viewpoint on racism only accents how it was conjoined with McCarthyism. This brief look comes via the statement, "In addition to anti-intellectualism and sexual obsession, another important component of McCarthyism was racism."¹⁸

¹⁵ John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch*, pp. 60, 64, 68.

¹⁶ Harding makes the point about African American "exiles" from philosophy departments in an endnote #3 in Sandra Harding, "American Philosophy as a Technototem," *Philosophical Studies* V.108, n. 1-2 (March, 2002), pp. 200-01. Also consult Leonard Harris, "'Believe it or Not' or The Ku Klux Klan and American Philosophy Exposed." *American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience* (Fall 1995).

¹⁷ John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch*, pp. 8-21.

¹⁸ John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch*, p. 22.

While it is true that racism was a cardinal aspect of McCarthyism it does not follow that the long history of racism in academic philosophy began within the context of McCarthyism or is rooted in this period. Long before McCarthyism, racism was alive and well within the ranks of professional philosophy in the United States and the effects of racism have continued to this day with long-term implications. In terms of academic substance, only a very few departments at this very time are concerned with the academic investigation of the history and problems of African American philosophers and philosophy.¹⁹

Philosophy students with an interest in this topic today are usually left on their own without course offerings, scholarly mentoring, or expert advisement. Additionally, presently the number of African Americans in the ranks of professional philosophy remains minuscule at best. Moreover from the professional and career aspects, African American philosophers with doctorates in philosophy and especially for those with specialization and competency in the area of Africana philosophy have very limited opportunities for employment in philosophy departments. I believe that McCumber's neglect of the history of racism in philosophy distorts his general understanding of the historical and present reality of professional philosophy.²⁰

Outside of the various efforts of African American philosophers to speak to the multitude of issues and problems issuing from racism, there has been very little concern or self-critical assessment on the part of white philosophers about this particular question of professional philosophy. This is all the more crucial in any assessment of *Time in the Ditch* because McCumber's pivotal thesis is that McCarthyism negatively influenced philosophers' self-critical understanding of the discipline. In my estimation, the key aspect of McCumber's central thesis is the particular argument "there is something important [McCarthyism] buried in American philosophy's not-so-distant past – something that many philosophers do not want to face, even though it explains much about the structure of their discipline."²¹

¹⁹ See John H. McClendon III, "The Afro-American Philosopher and the Philosophy of the Black Experience."

²⁰ Leonard Harris "Philosophy in Black and White," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, Vol. 51, No. 3. (Feb., 1978), p. 416.

²¹ John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch*, p. 13.

Nonetheless, the explanation that McCumber provides for us in turn says very little about how African American philosophers responded to this “something important buried in American philosophy’s not-so-distant past” or whether this “buried something” is something that many *African American* philosophers “do not want to face.” My research shows that the African American philosophers’ response was just as varied to McCarthyism as it was among other sectors of the Black community. However, racism persisted as a constant for all African American philosophers and this was regardless of one’s political outlook or ideology. Before I further address the issue of Black philosophers’ responses to McCarthyism, I want to return to McCumber’s previous thesis because I believe that it surreptitiously amplifies the centrality of racism in professional philosophy.

Actually we can with considerable justification and without modification employ McCumber’s statement and rather than focusing on McCarthyism, we can substitute racism as the pivotal proposition that is expressed by his statement. In other words, the argument would read the same but the presumption (referent) behind it would change. The notion “that there is something important buried in American philosophy’s not-so-distant past – something that many philosophers do not want to face, even though it explains much about the structure of their discipline” would shift to referencing the persistent racism that historically African American philosophers have faced and continue to confront in contemporary philosophy.

Given the empirical evidence concerning African American philosophers (and students of philosophy) along with racism as our reference, the truth of the proposition would stand without any substantial loss regarding its meaning and import. Here my method employs the linguistic distinction between sentences (or statements) and the proposition expressed by them. Simply put, the same sentences McCumber employs to give expression to his proposition about McCarthyism can equally with warrant be used to express my proposition about racism.²²

In all frankness, I must say that racism was entwined in the very emergence of modern Western philosophy. However to say any more than that is beyond the scope of

²² Leonard Harris, “‘Believe it or Not’ or The Ku Klux Klan and American Philosophy Exposed,” *American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience* (Fall 1995).

this article and I leave to the reader to consult my endnote references.²³ More directly I tender that McCarthyism simply embraced an immediately available practice and long-standing tradition of racism in the United States. This tradition of racism is a reality that encompasses U.S. life in more general terms as well as specifically in professional philosophy. Just as national security, patriotism, nativism, and nationalism were already existing and available ideological tools for McCarthyism, so therefore racism in a similar manner functioned as another ideological weapon that McCarthyism embraced in its battle against the putative threat of Communism. The uses of such weapons including racism are not new to the history of United States' governmental repression. They were employed at several prior historical junctures such as during and after World War I in addition to immediately before McCarthyism in the course of World War II.²⁴

What must be understood is that racism was already so ingrained in the social fabric of this country that it was easily enlisted on behalf of McCarthyist repression. One person that was an active defender of victims of McCarthyism had this to say: "Typical was the advice one lawyer gave his government employee client who had to undergo a loyalty hearing and wished to avoid a second one: '*Drop your Negro friends* and express no views whatsoever on any programs which are not a generally accepted it as conservative'" [italics added].²⁵

This statement, by one white commentator on McCarthyism, is one that I believe succinctly encapsulates and demonstrates how racism was crucially a part of most white people's world outlook in the United States before and during McCarthyism. Clearly McCarthyism found racism as a valuable weapon in the war against Communism. Now

²³ See Andrew Valls, ed., *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005). Also consult, Robert Bernasconi, "Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Racism" in J. K. Ward and T. Lott, eds., *Philosophers On Race: Critical Essays* (Malden: Blackwell, 2002), and Emanuel Eze, "The Color of Reason: The Idea of 'Race' Kant's Anthropology" in Emanuel Eze ed., *Postcolonial African Philosophy* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1997).

²⁴ Barbara Foley, *Class and Nation in the Making of the New Negro* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003). Theodore Kornweibel, *Investigate Everything: Federal Efforts to Compel Black Loyalty During World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002). Theodore Kornweibel, *Seeing Red: Federal Campaigns against Black Militancy, 1919-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998). William Preston, *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903-1933* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994). Jeffrey Hummel, "Not Just Japanese Americans: The Untold Story of U.S. Repression During 'The Good War,'" *The Journal for Historical Review* V. 7, n. 3 (Fall 1987).

²⁵ John J. Abt with Michael Myerson, *Advocate and Activist: Memoirs of an American Communist Lawyer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), p. ix.

the question before us becomes, to what degree does McCumber's history of philosophy under McCarthyism accurately depict the role of racism?

In order to answer this question, it is imperative that I examine McCumber's more broadly based assessment of the history of philosophy when utilizing his concept of philosophical narrative. I think his perspective on philosophical narrative will shed considerable light on the pitfalls of his actual depiction of the history of U.S. philosophy. McCumber astutely declares:

A philosophical narrative may include only true statements but failed to be comprehensive because there are not a lot of facts available for it to comprehend. . . . Other times, and often more seriously, facts are available that should be connected by a given narrative, but they are left out of it. In that case, though not stating or relying on any untruths, the narrative is less Noble than would otherwise be.²⁶

McCumber seems to direct us toward comprehending philosophical narrative with ethical considerations in mind; "Noble" is not the philosopher that evades the facts. For the most part, my criticism of McCumber does not hinge on any untruths that he presents; rather, it is based on his less than "Noble" presentation of African American philosophers in terms of the facts of the case and their particular relationship to the narrative that McCumber provides on the history of United States philosophy. *Time in the Ditch* remains in the ditch of denied recognition and perpetual silence about racism and the actual plight of African American philosophers.

Furthermore, as a result of his sin of omission, we also must be cognizant of how McCumber's philosophical narrative is a less than "Noble" undertaking and this becomes transparent when examined in light of his views concerning U.S. philosophy and its wider implications. I maintain that with McCumber's essential omission of racism, and its ancillary influence on the status of African American philosophers, a pivotal aspect in the makeup of professional philosophy as it entered into the McCarthy era is effectively removed from serious consideration.

²⁶ John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch*, p. 147.

Now in all fairness to McCumber, he openly admits that he is not qualified to present the story of “minorities and American philosophy” and that this is something that “can be better told by others.”²⁷ However for a scholar that emphasizes the centrality of history as a means to understanding the current problems of as well as the prospects for the future of professional philosophy, McCumber’s claim of lacking expertise as the reason for his silence about “minorities and American philosophy” I think is a less than “Noble” reason for opting out of at least providing us with a general outline of how racism is part of the fabric of professional philosophy and hence telling us about how its history relates to McCarthyism.

Therefore when McCumber speaks of the future of philosophy, rather than addressing matters surrounding the implications of racism in the profession, he seems to believe that the biggest hurdle is the apparently intractable wall that separates analytic and continental philosophy. With this basic presupposition, what results is a text that not only lacks an understanding of why racism easily became a tool of McCarthyism, but also has nothing to say about how the very character and substance of professional philosophy, given its divisions concerning analytic and continental philosophy, has developed with respect to racism.

For instance, McCumber devotes two chapters (chapters three and five) to the problem of the antagonism holding between analytic and continental philosophy. McCumber firmly upholds the view that such differences are crucial outcomes from the inheritance of McCarthyism. In fact, McCumber aims to provide an “antidote” to the problem of the nagging disunity in academic philosophy fostered by the analytic/continental divide.²⁸

Yet despite the real differences of a philosophical and professional sort between analytic and continental philosophy, McCumber overlooks important commonalities that bind them together. Without going into all the various common denominators, one of the central binding threads is racism. The implicit assumption in McCumber’s presentation

²⁷ John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch*, p. 60.

²⁸ John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch*, pp. xxi, 76-87, 166. The reference to antidote is made on page xxi. For a critique of the limits of McCumber’s approach to the analytic/continental divide see Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “Toward a Critique of Continental Reason” in Lewis Gordon and Jane Anna Gordon, eds., *Not Only the Masters Tools: African-American Studies in Theory and Practice* (Boulder: Paradigms Publishers, 2006), pp. 78-79.

is that analytic philosophy should be held accountable for fostering racism in the profession and that McCarthyism encouraged this tendency on the part of analytic philosophers. However, McCumber neglects to show how continental philosophy is equally a culprit in the matter of racism among professional philosophers.²⁹

Yet even if we grant that he genuinely lacks expertise about minorities in philosophy, what is problematic about McCumber's willingness to leave it to others to provide the narrative about racism and its impact on African American philosophers (in addition to other minorities) in professional philosophy is that we have none other than the de facto replication of a long-held racist tradition with respect to the question of minority invisibility. This racist tradition of neglect and omission, which I will demonstrate precedes McCarthyism by several decades, critically shapes the course of professional philosophy after McCarthyism.

I do want to make it clear that McCumber does in fact mention the case of Forrest Oran Wiggins. However, Wiggins is the only African American philosopher treated in McCumber's text. On a charitable reading, perhaps his attention to just one African American philosopher is justified since McCumber acknowledges he has limited understanding of the history of African American philosophers. Unfortunately, however, Wiggins' dismissal from the University of Minnesota receives from McCumber only the meager attention of a single sentence. This lack of commentary is not justified and surely denotes that his philosophical narrative is less than "Noble" in stature. This is because there is considerable documentation on Wiggins that McCumber could have employed.

For example, there are primary sources on the Wiggins' case in the Forrest O. Wiggins Papers, which are available at the University of Minnesota archives. Additionally, there is a folder on Wiggins at the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Minnesota Branch Records; there are also the ACLU archives and the Paul D. Tillett, Jr. Papers, which have documents on Wiggins, and both collections are housed

²⁹ For a penetrating analysis on the commonality, racism notwithstanding, see H. B. Veatch and M. S. Gram, "Philosophy and Ethics" in *The Great Ideas Today* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1970). On racism and continental philosophy see Robert Bernasconi and Sybol Cook, eds., *Race and Racism in Continental Philosophy* (Bloomington, University of Indiana Press, 2003).

at the Mudd Library, Princeton University. Moreover, Wiggins' firing even made the pages of popular media such as *The Nation*.³⁰

The only instance of an African American philosopher fired due to McCarthyism, Wiggins' experience stands as a unique historical example to explore the connection between racism and McCarthyism. After receiving his Ph.D. from University of Wisconsin in 1938, Forrest Oran Wiggins was able to cross the "Color Line" by entering the philosophy department at the University of Minnesota in 1946. Therefore, Wiggins actually came to Minnesota some eight years after earning the terminal degree and this time span would have been the approximate time frame for tenure, that is to say if he had had a tenure-track appointment. Wiggins arrived at Minnesota highly recommended and was already a mature scholar with considerable teaching experience. He had taught for 13 years at the HBCUs Morehouse College, Howard University, Johnson C. Smith, North Carolina Central, and Louisville Municipal College. Nevertheless in spite of his credentials and experience, Wiggins was hired at the rank of (an untenured) instructor. Therefore it is important to acknowledge that while Wiggins broke the "Color Line," he was nonetheless not completely removed from institutional racism.³¹

In fact Dean T. R. McConnell of the School of Liberal Arts and President Morrill of the University of Minnesota initially thought,

Dr. Wiggins was *not* as outstanding a candidate for the position as they wished to obtain. President Morrill from the outset gave the matter of Dr. Wiggins'

³⁰ Consult the Forrest O. Wiggins Papers, University of Minnesota Archives. Also see the ACLU, General Correspondence, 1952, V. 3, and General Correspondence, 1953, V. 6 and V. 8. The Paul D. Tillett Papers at Princeton contain research on Tillett's unpublished project, entitled "Social Costs of the Loyalty Program." The papers include an interview questionnaire on Wiggins; see Paul D. Tillett, Jr. Papers; Box 3, folder n. 7 Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Forrest O. Wiggins, Location 149.E.7.1B, Box 29 of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Minnesota Branch Records, Minnesota Historical Society. See Dick Bruner, "Around the U.S.A., The Wiggins Case." *The Nation* (March 22, 1952), p. 2. For an additional treatment of Wiggins read Ellen W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) p. 289 and Gary Paul Henrickson, "Minnesota in the McCarthy Period: 1946-1954" (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1981), pp. 45-47.

³¹ On Wiggins there is a biographical sketch compiled by Clark Johnson (November 2003) in the Forrest O. Wiggins Papers, University of Minnesota Archives. I want to thank Ms. Karen Klinkenberg the Archivist at the University of Minnesota for her assistance in providing this information on Dr. Wiggins. Hereafter this document will be cited as the Wiggins' Bio in the Forrest O. Wiggins Papers, University of Minnesota Archives.

appointment considerably more attention than he normally gives to instructorship appointments. This was occasioned by the fact primarily that since Dr. Wiggins was a Negro and would be one of relatively few Negroes teaching in American Universities, it was evident that he would be subject to proportionately closer observation and criticism, and it was correspondingly desirable that an outstanding person be appointed.³² [italics added]

I propose that Wiggins' status in the world of professional philosophy, during the McCarthy era, is a window into how racism merged with McCarthyism. It also gives us great insight into how the McCarthyist attack on the Black left was facilitated by the strategy of trading away the civil liberties of the African American left and granting restricted civil rights for others not disposed toward leftist views.

Against the charge that the firing of Wiggins was motivated by racism; the administration presented the counter-argument that racism was not involved in the decision and this was especially born out since they had another African American on the Minnesota faculty. Hence, if racism were a factor in Wiggins' dismissal, then both Black faculty members at Minnesota would have been fired. The other faculty person under consideration was Ruby B. Pernell.

Two years after Wiggins, Pernell arrived at Minnesota in 1948 as an instructor of sociology and social work. Even though she had only an MS in Social Administration from the University of Pittsburgh, Pernell was promoted to assistant professor in 1951. Furthermore, after Wiggins' firing in 1952, Pernell was advanced to associate professor in 1953, sans the terminal degree. It was in 1959 that Pernell received her Ph.D. from the London School of Economics and Political Science and she was immediately promoted to full professor in 1960. After leaving Minnesota, Pernell was the Grace Longwell Coyle Chair, the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University. From all appearances the trade-off was operative in the case of Wiggins and Pernell. Where Pernell advanced to associate professor without the doctorate, Wiggins with a Ph.D. and teaching experience was never promoted to assistant professor and, even

³² See the "Report of Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure, University of Minnesota chapter American Association of University Professors in the matter of Dr. Forrest O. Wiggins, January 14, 1952" in the Forrest O. Wiggins Papers, University of Minnesota Archives (Box 1, folder 2), p. 5.

worse, was ultimately fired. And this treatment came despite the fact that the philosophy department on more than one occasion recommended his promotion to the Dean of the School of Liberal Arts.³³

I am sure that McCumber did not begin his book without doing substantial research on all of the white philosophers he discusses in the text. And even if we grant that McCumber is ignorant about the general circumstances surrounding the history of African American philosophers, he could have explored the available resources relating to a singular case. Whether the determinate case had Wiggins as the subject, I think is of no consequence. McCumber's lack of attention to any African American philosopher, whatsoever, demonstrates a certain kind of generalized benign neglect. This is all the more disturbing since he provides rather extensive documentation for several white philosophers in his narrative. It is obvious that the same kind of "Noble" considerations for white philosophers were not afforded to at least one African American philosopher.³⁴

In my estimation, the "Noble" route, in view of McCumber's limited knowledge, would minimally entail a general outline of racism and some empirical documentation on at least one African American philosopher. The remainder of my critical reaction will primarily center on providing a singular case study of Charles Leander Hill during the McCarthy era. Significant to any historical evaluation is the fact that Hill received his doctorates in 1938 and embarked on an academic career immediately thereafter. Hence at the advent of McCarthyism, Hill was not just beginning his career, but, instead, he was an experienced scholar and reputable philosopher working in the segregated context of a Historically Black University.

In order to establish the historical foundation for Hill's case, I reconstruct the history of African American philosophers before and during McCarthyism. Here, I

³³ On the counter-argument about another Black faculty member, consult the "Statement of the Negro Labor Council for the Committee for the Reinstatement of Dr. Forrest Wiggins, March 14, 1952" in the Forrest O. Wiggins Papers, University of Minnesota Archives (Box 1, folder 2), p. 3. Ms. Karen Klinkenberg the Archivist at the University of Minnesota provided the information on Dr. Pernell to the author via correspondence on October 3, 2006. On the request for promotions see the "Statement of the Department of Philosophy to be submitted in case the Board of Regents Wishes to Consider the Matter of the Appointment of Instructor Forrest O. Wiggins, January, 1952" in the Forrest O. Wiggins Papers, University of Minnesota Archives (Box 1, folder 2).

³⁴ John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch*, pp. 22, 35, 175.

address the manner in which prior racism in the professional establishment of philosophy is dialectically anterior to and yet connected with the emergence of McCarthyism. This approach accents how McCumber's emphasis on the history of philosophy is in principle a correct notion. However, given the missing commentary on racism and the African American philosopher, it is inadequate as an interpretation of philosophy in the United States.

The African American Philosopher, Racism, and Professional Philosophy

In a 1973 report to the American Philosophical Association, African American philosopher William R. Jones outlined the legacy of racism and its effect on the status of African Americans in the philosophy profession. Jones demonstrates that racism and professional philosophy in the white academy were joined hand and glove many years before McCarthyism. One result of that history is the paucity of African American intellectuals in the ranks of professional philosophy. Jones collected data during the early 1970s, for the Committee on Blacks in Philosophy, which indicated that there were only 23 African American professional philosophers at that time. Charles W. Mills subsequently pointed out that about one hundred or about 1% of philosophers in North America were Black in the late 1990s. The history of institutional racism in professional philosophy weighs heavily in the explanation of these numbers.³⁵

In the antebellum period, nineteenth century political/legal powers openly restricted the right of African Americans to an education. Therefore, prior to 1840, approximately no more than fifteen Black students attended white colleges. Given the racist obstacles to acquiring an education, African Americans, in some instances, were forced to leave the United States to study and teach abroad. For example, Alexander Crummell, one of the first African American academic philosophers and founder of the American Negro Academy, went to England and studied with the Cambridge Platonist

³⁵ Consult, William R. Jones, "Crisis in Philosophy: The Black Presence" Report of the Subcommittee on the Participation of Blacks in Philosophy, *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* (1973). Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 2.

William Whewell. Crummell graduated from Cambridge University in 1853 and became Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy in Monrovia, Liberia.³⁶

The “Color Line,” as W. E. B. Du Bois so aptly called Jim Crow, destined that in the late 19th and on through most of the 20th centuries African Americans were afforded little opportunity to pursue either undergraduate or graduate study in philosophy at white colleges. And for the vast majority of African American philosophers that had in fact completed graduate work at white institutions, the Color Line of segregation also meant that they were either excluded from or had limited participation in the white academy and its ancillary professional organizations. Thus before the 1970s it was a fact of life that in the United States most African American philosophers taught and worked in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (hereafter HBCUs).³⁷

By 1903, Patrick Healy and Thomas Nelson Baker were the only two African Americans that held earned doctorates in philosophy. Furthermore, only four African Americans had earned the Ph.D. in fields that were (at that time) considered appropriately suited for teaching philosophy in a post-secondary setting. Before the full-scale professionalization of philosophy – as a discipline – a number of people in both classics and theology taught philosophy courses on college campuses. This is because the degree of Ph.D. in philosophy, at that juncture, was not considered a mandatory academic certification. Philosophy faculty sans doctorate degrees in philosophy were quite

³⁶ On the issue of 15 Black students at white colleges before 1840 see John E. Fleming, *The Lengthening Shadow of Slavery* (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974), p. 30. Also consult, “The Earliest Black Graduates of the Nation’s Highest-Ranked Liberal Arts Colleges.” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 38. (Winter, 2002-2003). Wilson J. Moses, *Alexander Crummell: A Study of Civilization and Discontent* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

³⁷ For a comprehensive treatment of the racist nature of white academy and its professional ancillary groups read Michael R. Winston, “Through the Back Door: Academic Racism and the American Negro in Historical Perspective,” *DÉDALUS* (Summer 1971). The African American philosopher Cornelius Golightly examines some of the problems faced by Black higher educational institutions due to racism in, “Negro Higher Education and Democratic Negro Morale,” *The Journal of Negro Education*, V. 11, n. 3, July, 1942), pp. 322-328, and Wiggins deals with the challenging question of the integration of white students into African American institutional. See Forest Oran Wiggins, “Why Integrate White Students into The Negro College?” *The Allen University Bulletin* V. 20, n. 1 (February, 1956). Several African American philosophers served as presidents of HBCUs including: Joseph C. Price at Livingston College (North Carolina), and John Wesley Edward Bowen and Willis Jefferson King at Gammon Theological Seminary (Georgia). King was also president at Samuel Huston College (Texas), Richard I. McKinney at Storer College (West Virginia), Marquis L. Harris at Philander Smith (Arkansas), William Stuart Nelson at Shaw University (North Carolina), and Dillard University (Louisiana); also Broadus Butler was president at Dillard University as well as Texas Southern, Gilbert Haven Jones and Charles Leander Hill both presided at Wilberforce University (Ohio).

prevalent and this was especially the case at HBCUs, where there were fewer scholars holding doctorates. Consequently in 1903, the African Americans who held doctorates in philosophy, or had the Ph.D. in some field and taught philosophy, were limited to Patrick Francis Healy, Thomas Nelson Baker, John Wesley Edward Bowen, and Lewis Baxter Moore. Unfortunately, African American academic excellence at the highest institutional level still could not override the entrenchment of academic racism. While Thomas Nelson Baker did not pursue an academic career, John Wesley Edward Bowen and Lewis Baxter Moore were restricted to teaching at HBCUs.³⁸

In the nineteenth century there were only two African American philosophers, namely, Patrick Francis Healy and Richard T. Greener, who taught at white institutions. Moreover, Healy and Greener were among a handful of African American scholars that during the nineteenth century were able to teach at predominantly white or all-white institutions. However, the presence of both men on white campuses was less a matter of crossing and overcoming the Color Line than the anomaly of subverting it. Healy passed as a white man and Greener taught at the University of South Carolina, which had an African American majority, due to white flight from the campus during Reconstruction.³⁹

As we move further into the 20th century, one indicator of the status of African American scholars is that by 1936 there were only three Black Ph.D.'s serving on the

³⁸ For insight into the professionalization of philosophy and academic certification read, chapters 3 and 4, "Graduate Schools and Professionalization" and "The Personnel of American Philosophy" in C. Wright Mills, *Sociology and Pragmatism: The Higher Learning in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966). For information on Patrick Healy read James O'Toole, *Passing for White: Race, Religion, and the Healy Family, 1820-1920* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002). On Baker read George Yancy, "On the Power of Black Aesthetic Ideals: Thomas Nelson Baker as Teacher and Philosopher," *A.M.E. Church Review* (October-December 2001). For information on Bowen see Rufus Burrow Jr., "The Personalism of John Wesley Edward Bowen," *The Journal of Negro History* V. 82, n. 2 (Spring, 1997). For Lewis Baxter Moore, see the University Archives and Records Center/University of Pennsylvania. This is a good biographical account with the title, "Lewis Baxter Moore (1866-1928), Ph.D. 1896 First African-American to Earn the Doctor of Philosophy Degree from Penn" <<http://www.archives.upenn.edu/histy/features/aframer/moorelb.html>>.

³⁹ Among African Americans teaching at predominantly white higher educational institutions in the 19th century, the historical record indicates that Charles L. Reason was the first to do so. When New York Central College opened in 1849, we see that it not only admitted Black students and women but Reason was hired to serve on the faculty. Moreover in the next year (1850) two other Black men George B. Vashon and William Allen joined Reason on the faculty at Central College. Even before Central College's open admission of Black students, Oberlin College had previously admitted African Americans and in fact Vashon was Oberlin's first Black graduate. However, unlike Central's policy on faculty, Oberlin did not have Black faculty for over 100 years after its founding. See James Oliver Horton, "Black Education at Oberlin College: A Controversial Commitment," *The Journal of Negro Education* V. 54, n. 4. (Autumn, 1985), p. 483.

faculties of white colleges.⁴⁰ Resistance to Black philosophers (and Black scholars more generally) as teachers of white students has a rather long history. Additionally, there was considerable opposition to Black student enrollment at white colleges. It was not uncommon for top white administrators, at the most prestigious institutions, to openly practice racial discrimination. In 1945, for instance, Provost Edgar S. Furniss of Yale admitted in a letter to Yale's President Charles Seymour that racist exclusion of qualified Black applicants had willfully taken place for a number of years.⁴¹

Thus it is no accident that after Thomas Nelson Baker earned his doctorate in 1903 there would not be another Ph.D. (formerly granted) in philosophy from Yale to an African American until George Kelsey received his degree in 1946. It would be nearly twenty years before another philosophy Ph.D. was granted to an African American when Joyce Mitchell Cook earned her degree in 1965. Thereby Cook also became the very first African American woman to earn the Ph.D. in philosophy.⁴²

One obvious example of the racist situation that African American philosophers confronted comes with the set of circumstances Albert M. Dunham faced. After having previously studied at Harvard with Alfred North Whitehead and George Herbert Mead, Dunham received his doctorate from the University of Chicago in 1933. Among his published works is the co-edited book, *George Herbert Mead: The Philosophy of the Act*. Many, at that time, considered Dunham to be one of the most promising among African American philosophers to rise in the profession.⁴³

In due course he was even assigned to teach a summer class in the philosophy department of his alma mater. The appointment was to be a gateway to becoming a full-

⁴⁰ Michael R. Winston, "Through the Back Door: Academic Racism and the American Negro in Historical Perspective," *DÆDALUS* (Summer 1971), p. 695.

⁴¹ Garry L. Reeder, "The History of Blacks at Yale University," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 26. (Winter, 1999-2000), p. 125.

⁴² While was not formally granted a Ph.D. in philosophy, Richard I. McKinney became a professional philosopher; he received his doctorate degree in 1942 from Yale in Religious Education; see John H. McClendon III, "Dr. Richard Ishmael McKinney: Historical Summation on the Life of a Pioneering African American Philosopher," *American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience* (Spring 2006). Kelsey taught at Morehouse and was mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr. For biographical information on Kelsey consult, "Biography of George D. Kelsey" in the George D. Kelsey Papers 1932-1996, Finding Aid, Drew University Archives. (I want to thank Drew University archivist Ms. Cheryl Oestreicher for her assistance.) On Cook consult chapter 13, "Joyce Mitchell Cook" in George Yancy, ed., *African American Philosophers* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

⁴³ W. Morris with John M. Brewster, Albert M. Dunham and David Miller, eds., *The Philosophy of the Act* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1938).

fledged member of the philosophy faculty. However, over half of the students dropped the class when they discovered that their professor was a Black person. Although the administration managed to gather enough students to continue the class, the idea of Dunham joining the Chicago faculty, in light of student response, was quickly abandoned. Later Alain Locke recruited Dunham to teach at Howard University. Those that knew him, including his sister Katherine (the renowned dancer), believed that the racial restrictions that were imposed on him as a Black philosopher, especially with regard to the possibility of teaching at white institutions, caused Dunham's long-term affliction with depression. Sadly, we discover that by 1949 (after many years of mental illness) Dunham died in a psychiatric institution. If we take 1949 as the approximate beginning of what McCumber describes as McCarthyism's "intellectual purge" on the campuses in the United States, then Dunham's death is a useful marker into the historical context of racism and its connection to the McCarthy era.⁴⁴

After the nineteenth century African American philosophers, we ascertain that there were just seven African American philosophers that had the opportunity to teach at white universities/colleges either before or by the year 1949. Cornelius Golightly led the way among those holding regular appointments when he was hired at Olivet College in 1945. After Golightly's hiring, the following philosophers gained teaching positions with white colleges or universities: Forrest Oran Wiggins at Minnesota in 1946, Francis M. Hammond at Seton Hall in 1946, and William T. Fontaine at the University of Pennsylvania in 1947. There were also three others, Alain Locke of Howard (who started teaching at white schools in 1944), George D. Kelsey of Morehouse (in 1944), and Eugene C. Holmes of Howard (in 1945); however, they merely held visiting positions, rather than regular appointments, at various white institutions.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ On Dunham's racist treatment at the University of Chicago, see chapter 2 of Joyce Aschenbrenner, *Katherine Dunham: Dancing a Life* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2002). On Locke's hiring Dunham, consult Eugene C. Holmes, "Alain Leroy Locke: A Sketch," *The Phylon Quarterly*, V. 20, n.1 (1ST Quarter, 1959), p. 83. McCumber, *Time in the Ditch*, p. 18.

⁴⁵ For Golightly at Olivet, see A. Gilbert Belles, "The College Faculty, the Negro Scholar, and the Julius Rosenwald Fund," *The Journal of Negro History*, V. 54, n. 4. (Oct., 1969), p. 387, and Richard B. Angell, "Cornelius L. Golightly 1917-1976," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, V. 49, (1975-1976), pp. 158-159. On African American philosophers on white campuses read R. B. Atwood, H. S. Smith, and Catherine O. Vaughan, "Negro Teachers in Northern Colleges and Universities in the United States," *The Journal of Negro Education*, V.18, n. 4. (Autumn, 1949), p. 566.

With the one exception of Wiggins, African American philosophers were so effectively shut out from white universities and colleges that most of them never even reached the point of being “purged” from the white academy. There is a considerable disparity holding between the threat of being purged from the academy based on the pretext of promoting Marxist/Communist ideas and of not being in the academy from the very start due to institutional racism. Long before McCarthyism, racism made its indelible mark on African American scholarly opportunity at white institutions. Its effects lasted right up until and through McCarthyism. Now let us examine one instance of this disparity.

McCumber indicates that when Stanley Moore (a white philosopher) applied for a philosophy job in Brooklyn College he was turned down because one of his letters of reference indicated that he was “a fanatical Marxist, in both theory and practice.”⁴⁶ Apparently Moore’s Marxism was a sufficient reason for not getting the job. Conceivably if Moore’s political ideology would have been different, he would have had at least the necessary eligibility for employment. Although his racial status could not override his political ideology, it is transparent that his racial status was not a factor in whether he would be considered for the job. Moore was a casualty of McCarthyism, clear and simple.

To illustrate the contrast with how racism operated in relationship to an African American philosopher during the same period and where the circumstances centered on how a letter of reference, we will now turn to the case of Broadus N. Butler. Butler completed his Ph.D. in philosophy in 1952 at the University of Michigan. A World War II veteran and former Tuskegee Airman, Butler gained his doctorate through the GI Bill. When Butler finished his dissertation, he then applied for a job with a philosophy department at a white college. In the application process, Butler’s University of Michigan professor’s letter of reference included the remark, “. . . a good philosopher but

While Atwood et. al. identify seven people as philosophers, they incorrectly include John Lovell, from Howard University, for the academic year of 1948-1949 at Pasadena City College as a philosopher. Lovell, however, was in English and earned his doctorate in that discipline. They in turn placed the philosopher George D. Kelsey under Religion since he taught in a visiting position at Andover Newton Theological Seminary in 1944. Yet Kelsey earned his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Yale (1946) and was Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Morehouse at the time of his visiting appointment. See “Biography of George D. Kelsey” in the George D. Kelsey Papers 1932-1996, Finding Aid, Drew University Archives.

⁴⁶ McCumber, *Time in the Ditch*, pp. 26-27.

of course a Negro.” In response to Butler’s inquiry about the job at this white school, he was told in a rather emphatic manner, “Why don’t you go where you will be among your own kind?”⁴⁷

Obviously, while we cannot ascertain from this correspondence if Butler’s advisor and the respondent to the letter of reference and application were committed McCarthyists in 1952, what we do know is that in no uncertain terms both men were racists. Butler was far from “a fanatical Marxist” yet the fact that he was Black was a sufficient condition for his exclusion from the white academy. In direct contrast to Moore and with respect to eligibility for employment, Butler’s racial status could not override his political ideology. While Moore could choose not to be Marxist, Butler could not choose whether he was an African American or Black.

More broadly I argue that the fate of African American philosophers during the 1950s was immeasurably fraught with the influence of racist practices as a day-to-day norm in the profession. With only four of the eighteen African Americans with doctorates in philosophy, and related fields, teaching at white colleges in 1950, and just three throughout the 1950s after Wiggins’ dismissal in 1952, we can reasonably conclude that McCarthyism had very little to do with the virtual absence of African American philosophers on white campuses. In fact for the complete decade of the 1950s, besides Broadus Butler, only two Black academic philosophers received the Ph.D. in philosophy or a related discipline.⁴⁸

McCumber does cite how under McCarthyism notable African Americans leaders (but also non-academic philosophers) W. E. B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson experienced various kinds of government harassment including the revocation of their passports. Du Bois and Robeson are no doubt important figures in the history of McCarthyist repression of African Americans. Yet McCumber fails to connect either Du Bois or Robeson into the equation about African American professional philosophers and their plight with

⁴⁷ Leonard Harris, ed., *Philosophy Born of Struggle: An Anthology of Afro-American Philosophy from 1917* (Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co. 1983), p. ix.

⁴⁸ The two philosophers were Carleton L. Lee (University of Chicago Divinity School in 1951) and Wayman B. McLaughlin Sr. at Boston University in 1958. Ann Anderson, “Local Man’s Legacy Began as Classmate of King,” *Danville Register Bee* (January 18, 2005). I want to thank Dr. Stephen Ferguson of North Carolina A & T for bringing to my attention this important article.

respect to McCarthyism. Shortly, we will observe how Robeson was linked to Wilberforce University.⁴⁹

As for Du Bois, the Division of Social Science at Howard University fearlessly challenged the forces of McCarthyism and invited Du Bois to give a lecture there in 1958. For almost four years prior to 1958, the federal government hounded Howard University officials about the prospects of their inviting Du Bois to present an address. Directly relevant to our discussion on African American philosophers, Marxist philosopher Eugene C. Holmes, who was chair of Howard's Philosophy Department, played a leading role in bringing Du Bois to Howard. Furthermore in defiance of McCarthyist scare tactics (before the 1958 invitation to Du Bois) Howard's Division of Social Science of which Holmes played a leading part audaciously sponsored a conference in 1953 on "Academic Freedom in the United States." The unfaltering support of Howard University President Mordecai Johnson was crucial to both campaigns as well as for Holmes' continued presence at Howard and no less than in a leadership capacity during this period of McCarthyist hysteria.⁵⁰

At the time of both the Academic Freedom conference and the later invitation to Dr. Du Bois, Holmes was the solitary African American Marxist philosopher in professional philosophy. Granted McCarthyism was surely a political/ideological force that made it difficult for Marxist philosophers to find jobs whether they were African American or white; however, I contend that Eugene Holmes' placement behind the Color

⁴⁹ John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch*, pp. 22, 35. On Du Bois and McCarthyism see W.E.B. Du Bois, *I Take My Stand for Peace* (New York: Masses and Mainstream, 1951), and Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944-1963* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986). For Robeson consult Paul Robeson, *The Negro People and the Soviet Union* (New York: New Century Publishers, 1950) and Gerald Horne, "Comrades and Friends: The Personal and Political World of Paul Robeson" in Jeffrey Stewart, ed., *Paul Robeson: Artist and Citizen* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

⁵⁰ For a biographical treatment on Holmes consult, John H. McClendon, "Eugene Clay Holmes: A Commentary on a Black Marxist Philosopher" in Leonard Harris, ed., *Philosophy Born of Struggle: An Anthology of Afro-American Philosophy from 1917* (Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co. 1983) and Alan Wald, *Exiles from a Future Time* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), pp. 83, 85-86, 263-66. On Johnson's stand for academic freedom see Richard McKinney, *Mordecai – The Man and His Message. The Story of Mordecai Wyatt Johnson* (Washington: Howard University Press, 1998), Chas. H. Thompson, "Editorial Comment: Howard University Changes Leadership" *The Journal of Negro Education*, V. 29, n. 4. (Autumn, 1960), pp. 409-411 and Rayford W. Logan, *Howard University, The First Hundred Years* (New York: York University Press, 1969), pp. 408-409. Consult Rayford W. Logan, *Howard University*, p. 541. John H. McClendon, "Eugene Clay Holmes," p. 39 and Eugene C. Holmes, "W. E. B. Du Bois – Philosopher," *Freedomways* V. 5, n. 1 (Winter 1965). Also see Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944-1963*.

Line was due to the legacy of racism and on its own power racism restricted employment opportunities for him.⁵¹ With the exception of a short visiting position at the City College of New York in 1945, Holmes remained at Howard University throughout his entire career. A number of years later, then-Communist Party member Angela Davis would enter the white academy, however under considerable difficulty due to the Cold War mentality and policy of Ronald Reagan, among others.⁵²

Although McCumber has penetrating insights about what amounts to professional philosophy's abandonment of the historical quest for self-critical (metaphilosophical) understanding, again he says nothing concerning the fashion in which African American philosophers may have contributed to "seeking critical, reflective self-understanding" or even if they might have failed at doing so. McCumber's attempt to address the locus of African American philosophers in the context of professional philosophy vis-à-vis the assaults of McCarthyism is actually marginal at best and virtually non-existent at worst.

I assert that our overriding questions should be: in what manner does the merger of McCarthyism and racism manifest itself and what is its import for understanding the plight of African American philosophers under the yoke of McCarthyism? The answer is that, on the one hand, McCarthyism fostered the notion among African Americans that there could be a trade-off between acquiring civil rights and relinquishing civil liberties. On the other hand, racist segregationists who were McCarthyist often labeled the fight for civil rights as a Communist threat.

The first option served as a vehicle for the attack on the African American left by restricting their civil liberties. Such restrictions effectively led to the removal of leftists from leadership roles in the civil rights movement. Thus, the carrot of granting civil rights was put before those African Americans that would eschew more radical means to obtain their ends. Gerald Horne astutely notes,

⁵¹ Some of the Marxist scholars at Howard such as Doxey Wilkerson (he in fact was a member of the Communist Party) left the institution before the advent of McCarthyism; however, he was subject to McCarthyist repression. See the McCarthy hearings, Executive Sessions of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Government Operations State Department Information Service – Information Centers, July 1 1953, Testimony of Richard O. Boyer; Rockwell Kent; Edwin B. Burgum; Joseph Freeman; George Seldes; and Doxey Wilkerson V. 1 (83rd Congress, First Session 1953) made public January 2003.

⁵² On Holmes at the City College of New York see R. B. Atwood, H. S. Smith, and Catherine O. Vaughan, "Negro Teachers in Northern Colleges and Universities in the United States," *The Journal of Negro Education*, V.18, n. 4. (Autumn, 1949), p. 566.

In the pre-World War II era, the devastating racism visited upon African Americans . . . created favorable conditions for Communist advance in the Harlems of this land. . . . However, after the war the rulers decided to ease the horrors of Jim Crow, partly because of the need to be able to charge Moscow with human rights violations. Yet this civil rights victory had to be carried out while ousting black Communists. . . . The trick was to open democratic space for blacks while closing it down for their traditional allies – in other words, *black liberation/red scare*. This would guarantee that the civil rights movement could only advance so far. Thus, *Brown v. Board of Education* and its progeny came in 1954 in the midst of the Cold War and the Red Scare.⁵³

The second option, conflation of civil rights and Communism, worked hand in glove with the first. This form of McCarthyist anti-Communism directly facilitated the segregationist (racist Color Line) strategy as an impediment to the civil rights movement. The segregationists’-qua-McCarthyist charge of Communist affiliation (or the allegation of serving as a Communist sympathizer) was purposely indiscriminate and thus made regardless of one’s actual position on the ideological spectrum. Donna Langston correctly notes, “Regardless of their political association, organizations challenging white supremacy were possible suspects of McCarthyism. Even the NAACP came under attack, particularly in the South, where segregationists passed state laws to outlaw this Communist-labeled organization.”⁵⁴

Governmental agencies such as the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, a pro-segregationist force, used the tactic of conflating Communism with civil rights way beyond the McCarthy era. Jo Freeman reports in her essay entitled, “The Berkeley Free Speech Movement and the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission,” that “Since the Civil Rights Movement arose in the South when the Cold War and its crusade against domestic Communism was in full swing, Southern segregationists were particularly anxious to hang the Communist albatross around the movement’s neck. Southerners maintained that

⁵³ Gerald Horne, *Black Liberation/Red Scare: Ben Davis and the Communist Party* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), p. 13.

⁵⁴ Donna Langston, “The Legacy of Claudia Jones” *Nature, Society and Thought* V.2, n.1, (1989), p. 77.

Communists ran the Civil Rights Movement behind the scenes and raised money to support its workers in order to promote violence, racial hatred and disorder.”⁵⁵

Not only were some African American philosophers red-baited, but also Black scholars and civil rights proponents in general were subject to the segregationist charge of Communism. This reaction came despite the fact that many of these civil rights leaders and scholars were politically conservative and even displayed a general propensity toward espousing patriotism as well as anti-Communism.

Although openly opposed to Communism, A. Philip Randolph stated, “Unfortunately, that is the trouble with many of the [white] people who have become hysterical over Communists and Communism. They are ready to brand everybody as a Communist who is militant and stands up and fights for civil rights or any other kind of right.”⁵⁶ Brenda Gayle Plummer further establishes Randolph’s charge by citing how the FBI employed certain tactics concerning African Americans conservatives. Plummer writes,

Rarely did FBI monitoring result in prosecutions. Its [the FBI’s] purpose was not to deter subversion but to discredit blacks deemed too independent, unconventional, or influential. In 1949, for example, the Bureau tagged conservative Chicago publisher Claude Barnett as a Communist. The FBI was clearly responding to the power of Barnett, a Republican, in the community rather than any of radicalism on his part.⁵⁷

There are also several examples of conflating Black liberalism with Communism in the academic arena. A note-worthy text is William A. Nolan’s *Communism versus the Negro*. Published in 1951, Nolan outlined how Communism was allegedly entwined with

⁵⁵ Jo Freeman, “The Berkeley Free Speech Movement and the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission,” *Left History*, V. 8, n. 2 (Spring 2003), pp. 135-144. On conflating Communism and civil rights during and after the McCarthy era, read Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2004) and Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁵⁶ A. Philip Randolph is cited in Yvette Richards, *Maida Springer: Pan-Africanist and International Labor Leader* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), p. 6. A more recent conflation of a civil rights activist as Communist is see the essay of Henry Makow, “‘Red’ Rosa Parks: Fabricating an American Icon” (11-5-05) <<http://www.rense.com/general68/rosa.htm>>.

⁵⁷ Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 195.

African American intellectual thought and academic practices. He even went so far as to claim that the *Journal of Negro History* was marked by Communist influences. Founded by Carter G. Woodson in 1916, the *Journal of Negro History* is today the oldest among African American academic journals.⁵⁸

While it is true that Communists and Marxists were not excluded from publishing in the *Journal*, it was not and never has been exclusively geared to Communists or the Left more generally. When the *Journal* published what amounted to a scholarly refutation to Nolan (July 1952) the editor was so scared of appearing to have any links to Communism that the very discussion about Nolan's allegations so influenced the editor that he ironically gave a public disclaimer of Vaughn D. Bornet's article, "Historical Scholarship, Communism and the Negro." Bornet's review was actually critical of Nolan's book and a defense of the *Journal* with special regard to the Communist allegations.⁵⁹

Given the climate of Cold War terror and McCarthyist hysteria, we discover that the option of trading civil liberties for civil rights effectively pushed the mainstream civil right leadership on a more conciliatory path with ruling-class political interests. David F. Krugler develops an excellent demonstration of this trade-off: "The NAACP's approval of anti-communist policies constituted a quid pro quo for both the Truman administration, which desired broad-based support for these policies, and the NAACP, which sought a stronger dedication to civil rights on the part of the President. . . . In November 1951, the NAACP responded positively to the State Department's request to rebut *We Charge Genocide*, the report of the Civil Rights Congress. . . ."⁶⁰

The "We Charge Genocide" petition was an effort to put the oppressive plight of African Americans before the United Nations and to garner world opinion to condemn

⁵⁸ William A. Nolan, *Communism versus the Negro* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951), pp. 113-114.

⁵⁹ Vaughn D. Bornet, "Historical Scholarship, Communism and the Negro," *The Journal of Negro History*, V. 37, n. 3. (July, 1952), pp. 311-317. One example, in intellectual terms, of the display of African American political conservatism and patriotism is Walter White's favorable review of Wilson Record's anti-Communist tract, *The Negro and the Communist Party* in *The American Historical Review*, V. 57, n. 1. (October, 1951), pp. 193-194.

⁶⁰ David F. Krugler, "Erasing the Color Line: The Voice of America and African Americans, 1947-1953," A paper presented at Annual Meeting, Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (June 1999), Princeton University. Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

the United States government's failure to defend Black victims from numerous kinds of violence. Among the leaders of the Civil Rights Congress, along with African American lawyer William Patterson, there was the presence of no other than Paul Robeson. Later we will observe how the philosopher Charles Leander Hill at Wilberforce University confronted and challenged the countrywide effort to block Robeson from appearing on any college campus. In turn, the NAACP won the favor of the State Department, while Hill's defense of Robeson, and more generally of civil liberties and peace, led Hill into the thicket of being red-baited.⁶¹

In 1948 Attorney General Tom Clark listed the Civil Rights Congress as a subversive and Communist organization. In contrast to Hill and Robeson's response to the Cold War and McCarthyism, the theologian and philosopher of religion Benjamin Mays resigned his position as honorary Co-Chair of the Civil Rights Congress. Mays had been assured that even though there were members in the group that were Communists, it was, nevertheless, not a Communist organization. In spite of this clarification, Mays still resigned. Furthermore, Mays left the organization although he actually agreed with its agenda for fighting various forms of racism because this fight was the very reason that he assumed the honorary Co-Chair from the start.⁶²

This trade-off option particularly served as a vehicle for the attack on the civil liberties of the African American left. The direct outcome was the removal of significant numbers of the left from leadership in the civil rights movement. Donna Langston's remarks are most appropriate here: "The purge of leftists shaped many movements including Black struggles. During the 1950s, the ascendancy of moderate leaders and tactics in the civil rights movement resulted from such factors as the persecution of Black leaders like W.E.B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson and Claudia Jones."⁶³

⁶¹ See William L. Patterson, *The Man who Cried Genocide; An Autobiography* (New York, International Publishers, 1971). John H. McClendon, "Dr. Charles Leander Hill: Philosopher and Theologian," *The AME Church Review* V. CXIX, n. 390 (April-June 2003).

⁶² Gerald Horne, *Communist Front?: The Civil Rights Congress, 1946-1956* (Rutherford, Farleigh Dickerson Press, 1988), pp. 31-32. Also consult, *Report on Civil Rights Congress as a communist front organization. Investigations of un-American activities in the United States, committee on un-American activities*, House of Representatives, Eightieth Congress, first session. Public Law 601 (section 121, subsection Q. (2)) (1947) and Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

⁶³ Donna Langston, "The Legacy of Claudia Jones" *Nature, Society and Thought* V.2, n.1, (1989), p. 77. The Trinidadian born Jones was a Black leader in Harlem and a member of the Communist Party. Under

McCarthyism and the African American Philosopher: Charles Leander Hill at the “Flagship”

Charles Leander Hill was the holder of a doctorate in philosophy from The Ohio State University. Only the second African American to receive a Ph.D. in philosophy from OSU, Hill became the 13th president at Wilberforce University (an African American institution) and served in that capacity from 1947 until his untimely death in 1956. Although Hill was not a radical on the left of the political/ideological spectrum, he was a consistent advocate of civil rights, civil liberties, academic freedom, and world peace. I contend that Hill was subject to red-baiting because of his commitment to these aforementioned causes.⁶⁴

Charles Leader Hill was an African Methodist Episcopal (A. M. E.) minister and the president of Wilberforce University, an A. M. E. Church-affiliated institution. In his quest for civil rights, Hill was a consistent liberal that did not allow for the trade-off of civil liberties for civil rights, regardless of one’s political ideology. Subsequently, Hill was red-baited for his staunch advocacy of civil liberties, academic freedom, and his defense of the African American left as in the case of Paul Robeson’s appearance on Wilberforce University’s campus. I think that Hill’s case provides us with insight into how the trade-off of civil liberties for civil rights and the conflation of civil rights with Communism was an instrument for red-baiting.

A native of Urbana, Ohio, Charles Leander Hill graduated magna cum laude with the B.A. from Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio (1928), and he earned the Bachelor of Divinity from Hamma Divinity School in 1931. Hill secured a fellowship and did graduate work at the University of Berlin before earning his doctorate in philosophy from The Ohio State University in 1938. It was in 1947 that Charles Leander

McCarthyist political repression, she was incarcerated in federal prison then ultimately deported to Britain. Read Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008) and John H. McClendon III, “Claudia Jones (Political Activist, Black Nationalist, Feminist, Journalist)” in Jessie Carney Smith, ed., *Notable Black American Women, Book II*, Gale Research Inc., 1996.

⁶⁴ John H. McClendon III, “Dr. Charles Leander Hill: Philosopher and Theologian,” *The AME Church Review* V. CXIX, n. 390 (April-June 2003). Arthur P. Stokes, “Charles Leander Hill: Profile of a Scholar” *The A.M.E. Church Review*, V. CXVII, n.379/380 (Fall 2000).

Hill was inaugurated as thirteenth President of Wilberforce University. This was unquestionably a meaningful achievement given the historic magnitude of Wilberforce as the first African American post-secondary educational institution under Black management.⁶⁵

Founded in 1856, Wilberforce was also the place where Gilbert Haven Jones, one of the early twentieth century African American philosophers, served as a faculty member and also as an administrator. Jones earned his Ph.D. from the University of Jena in Germany in 1909 with a doctoral dissertation entitled, *Lotze and Bowne Eline Vergeichunng ihren Philosophsehen Arbeit*. Jones' accomplishment as an African American philosopher places him in a significant historical position because he was just the third to ever receive the Ph.D. in philosophy, although he never had the opportunity, as with Hill, to teach at a white institution.⁶⁶

When Hill began his tenure as president of Wilberforce, it was precisely during the advent of what was to become the Cold War. Therefore, along with the financial burdens, organizational chaos, and looming survival issues for the university, the politically reactionary climate associated with the Cold War and McCarthyism was ever present. As David L. Lewis notes, "The attorney general's List of Subversive Organizations had been unveiled at the end of 1947 and the trek of suspect individuals to HUAC sessions and Fifth Amendment obloquy had begun in earnest that spring."⁶⁷

Although Hill was liberal in terms of his political philosophy, he nonetheless consistently spoke out against political reaction as well as racism. Hill was not willing to sacrifice civil liberties for civil rights. Therefore, he stood firmly for principles such as the right to free speech, academic freedom, and world peace, along with the pivotal question of civil rights for African Americans. Hill's philosophical principles were rooted in an ethical outlook that was grounded on the moral commitment to justice and a

⁶⁵ John E. Fleming, *The Lengthening Shadow of Slavery*, pp. 30-31.

⁶⁶ Frederick McGinnis, *A History and Interpretation of Wilberforce University* (Blanchester: Brown Publishing Co., 1941). Also read George Yancy, "Gilbert Haven Jones as an Early Black Philosopher and Educator," *American Philosophical Association Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience* (Fall 2003).

⁶⁷ David L. Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 2000), p. 536. For a comprehensive treatment of McCarthyism and university life, see Ellen W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and Universities*.

political perspective of consistent liberalism; it inevitably followed that he would defend the right of Paul Robeson, the African American left activist, to speak out on behalf of peace and civil rights on Wilberforce's campus.⁶⁸

What made this appearance so politically charged is that Robeson came to Wilberforce in his role as a representative of the Progressive Party. The Progressive Party along with its Henry Wallace presidential campaign of 1948 was politically left of the Democratic Party and was a radical alternative to both of the major parties as the Cold War increasingly gained momentum. Robeson and the Progressive Party challenged The Truman Doctrine, which ushered in the policy of Loyalty Oaths and required that U.S. citizens declare if they were members of the Communist Party or any of its affiliated organizations.⁶⁹

Due to the Cold War hysteria around Robeson's involvement with the Progressive Party in 1948, many concert and speaking engagements, all across the country, were either canceled or denied him. Hill's decision to invite Robeson was a bold choice because, under the influence of the Cold War and McCarthyism, most Black College presidents were inclined to surrender their moral principles. Moreover with regard to civil liberties, with few exceptions such as Mordecai Johnson and Hill, Black College presidents generally gave way to right-wing reaction.⁷⁰

This surrender was designed to gain some degree of political and financial favor or at the very least to minimize the possibility of academic curtailments and political/ideological repression. Consequently, the real crucial litmus test for measuring the allegiance of African American scholars to the cause of democratic principles and civil liberties could only come by gauging their response to the federal government's

⁶⁸ See Folder 38 in the Charles Leander Hill Papers at Wilberforce University Archives.

⁶⁹ John Vernon, "Paul Robeson, the Cold War, and the Question of African-American Loyalties," *Negro History Bulletin* V. 62, n.2-3 (April-September, 1999).

⁷⁰ For a view on Robeson's concert career and cancellations due to his Progressive Party commitments see Paul Robeson, "For Freedom and Peace" in Philip S. Foner, *Paul Robeson Speaks*, ed. (New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers, 1978), pp. 204-206. An instance of a HBCU president capitulating to McCarthyism was when Charles S. Johnson, the president of Fisk University, hired Giovanni Rossi Lomanitz. Lomanitz previously worked for the Berkeley Radiation Laboratory and when it became public that he had attended Communist Party meetings, HUAC demanded he give testimony. Lomanitz refused to go before HUAC; subsequently he stayed at Fisk for just one semester. Lomanitz left Fisk because Johnson would not award him a contract until matters concerning HUAC were cleared up. See Ellen W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 135-147.

tyrannical handling (under McCarthyism) of leftist Black scholar/activists such as Paul Robeson and W. E. B. Du Bois.⁷¹

Hill saw to it that Robeson came to Wilberforce University in conjunction with the Progressive Party campaign of 1948. The *Wilberforce University Yearbook of 1948* contains a photo of this event and has the summary statement, “A short but stirring address in support of democracy’s fight against fascism and the struggle of the common man concluded Robeson’s program.”⁷²

Among African American intellectuals, Robeson was not alone in having an affiliation with the Progressive Party and there were in fact philosophers among this group. In addition to Wiggins’ membership with the Progressive Party, African American philosopher Samuel W. Williams of Morehouse was a member of the Progressive Party in Georgia. An important mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr., Williams left the Progressive Party on the grounds it was too leftist and eventually became an anti-Communist liberal. Given the differences between Hill, Holmes, Wiggins, and Williams, it is clear that the response of African American philosophers to McCarthyism was far from monolithic. Unfortunately we get none of this complex texture about African American philosophers in McCumber’s general treatment of professional philosophers and their responses to McCarthyism.⁷³

Charles Leander Hill was a foe of fascism and he welcomed Robeson on grounds of solidarity. Actually all of the institutions in the immediate vicinity of Wilberforce, including Central State and Antioch College in Yellow Springs, the latter publicly acclaimed for its progressive leanings, refused to invite Robeson to their campuses.

⁷¹ Gerald Horne, “Comrades and Friends: The Personal and Political World of Paul Robeson.” Also consult, John Vernon, “Paul Robeson, the Cold War, and the Question of African-American Loyalties,” *Negro History Bulletin* V. 62, n.2-3 (April-September, 1999).

⁷² The 1948 Yearbook can be found in the Wilberforce University archives. I also want to thank Ms. Jacqueline Brown, the archivist at Wilberforce, for bringing this yearbook to my attention.

⁷³ Consult Samuel W. Williams, “The People’s Progressive Party of Georgia,” *Phylon* V. 10, n. 3 (3rd Quarter, 1949), pp. 226-230. Williams submitted his letter resignation to Larkin Marshall, Chairman of the People’s Progressive Party of Georgia on June 20th 1949. Williams wrote another letter explaining his resignation to the Atlanta Committee of which he was chair on July 3, 1949. See Samuel W. Williams to The Atlanta Committee July 3, 1949 in the Samuel W. Williams Collection, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center, Archives/Special Collection (Box 11, folder 19). As an example of Williams anti-Communism, in 1954 he gave a lecture on the topic “Communist Infiltration of Intellectual, Professional and Cultural Groups”; see “A. U. Summer School Convocation, July 27, 1954 Clark College Auditorium, Address delivered by Samuel W. Williams” in the Samuel W. Williams Collection, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University Center, Archives/Special Collection (Box 12, folder 12).

Thus, Wilberforce was the only higher educational institution in the Miami Valley to open its doors to one of the most important African American leaders for justice, peace, and civil rights.

Even The Ohio State University, Hill's alma mater, which had enormously greater resources and clout in the state of Ohio, than the impoverished Wilberforce, refused Robeson the use of its facilities for the Progressive Party's campaign. In this respect, OSU in banning Robeson from its campus was quite in line with other Big Ten schools such as the University of Minnesota. In 1952, Robeson was banned from the University of Minnesota campus, which was in the same year that Wiggins (after being fired in December 1951) would finish out his stay at Minnesota for his leftist political views.⁷⁴ Schrecker reports,

When the University of Minnesota . . . refused to let Paul Robeson give a concert on campus in 1952, the University's president, J. L. Morrill, insisted that he was not trying to censor the singer. Had Robeson been willing to submit his ideas to 'the rigorous test of scholarly discussion,' the University would certainly have let him appear. It was Robeson's 'one-sided musically overtone propaganda from a concert platform' that Morrill claimed he was objecting to, as well as the fact that the proceeds of the concert will go to a program opposed to every Democratic principle we are fighting to preserve.⁷⁵

In 1952 Robeson's concerts were actually in conjunction with campaigning, as they were in 1948, for the Progressive Party. To the credit of the Progressive Party, it had at this time, and for first time in U.S. history, an African American woman, Ms. Charlotta Bass, as the Vice Presidential candidate. Perhaps just as Morrill had found Wiggins to be an unacceptable professor according to Minnesota's "academic standards," so it was that Bass, as a Black woman, was not within the bounds of true democratic

⁷⁴ Paul Robeson, Box 727, ACLU Cases-Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University. Martin B. Duberman, *Paul Robeson, A Biography* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), p. 327. Ellen W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, p. 387.

⁷⁵ Ellen W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, p. 92.

principles in the United States. I should point out that McCarthy actually gave a speech at Minnesota in the same year.⁷⁶

No less than one year after Robeson's appearance at Wilberforce, many prominent African Americans would attack him for a statement he made at the World Congress of the Partisans of Peace in Paris. Robeson argued that the fight was a fight for peace and not war against anyone and that included the Soviet Union. Shortly thereafter, the government would strip him of his passport and an all-out effort was made to render Robeson *persona non-gratis*. The African Americans civil rights "leaders" that condemned Robeson included Jackie Robinson, William Hastie, Adam Clayton Powell, Mary McCloud Bethune, Channing Tobias, Walter White, Charles H. Houston, Roy Wilkins, and Max Yergan.⁷⁷

Hill's commitment to fight against reaction and for peace became even more pronounced after Robeson's appearance on campus. Hill supported the repeal of the Subversive Act of 1950. The Subversive (or McCarran) Act was the legal foundation for the McCarthyist witch-hunt. Subsequently, all those in support of the repeal were in turn viewed with suspicion and cast as fellow travelers of the Communist Party. Hill's point of view on the McCarran Act thus agitated certain elements in the Greater Miami Valley. These right-wing forces resorted to red-baiting Hill. Hill's active and open declaration against the McCarran Act required that he challenge such charges.

In a letter, dated October 10, 1955, Hill responded to the red-baiting of attorney Henry Hoppe of the law firm of Hoppe, Day and Ford. Hill stridently made his opinion transparent. Hill wrote, "I have been informed that you have inquired into the fact that I have signed a legal brief along with some 365 other persons throughout the nation, touching on the Subversive Act of 1950. This is true, but the implications [are] that I believe many innocent non-communists including myself have suffered because of present law."⁷⁸

⁷⁶ On Bass see Martin B. Duberman, *Paul Robeson, A Biography* and Gerald Gill, "'Win or Lose – We Win': The 1952 Vice Presidential Campaign of Charlotta A. Bass" in Sharon Hartley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, eds., *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1997).

⁷⁷ See "Paris Peace Conference," News Release, Council on African Affairs, May 11, 1949 in Philip S. Foner, *Paul Robeson Speaks*, ed. (New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers, 1978), pp. 197-198. Martin B. Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, pp. 342, 244.

⁷⁸ Folder 38 in the Charles Leander Hill Papers at Wilberforce University Archives.

Later we observe that Hill in 1956 joined with some 100 concern citizens, scholars and clergy calling for world peace and opposition to the nuclear arms build up. This four-point program was an open letter to the 84th Congress, Dwight D. Eisenhower, (President of the United States), Richard M. Nixon (Vice President) and John Foster Dulles (Secretary of State). Among the co-signers were Dr. Henry F. Brady, former Assistant Secretary of State and former Ambassador to India; Emily Greene Balch, Nobel Peace Prize recipient; E. Raymond Wilson, Executive Director Friends Committee on National Legislation; and Dr. Mordecai Johnson, President of Howard University. This specific action resulted in Hill facing another red-baiting assault.⁷⁹

This time the charge was from the nearby Dayton local newspaper. Hill wrote a rather passionate reply to Dwight Young, editor of the *Dayton Journal Herald*.

In Tuesday's issue of the *Journal Herald* an article was carried in which you reported a fact and I, along with others, had signed an instrument setting forth political observations on world affairs. The other day a representative of your newspaper called my office to confirm the fact of my signature of the document. This I freely gave. I did sign the document. Now on Tuesday your article reported the matter for public consumption, but in such a way as to let the reader deduced by inference and implication, the fact that I am a Communist.⁸⁰

Hill continued to state to Young,

I do not know what your ultimate objective really is, but one thing I do know is that your paper is trying hard by implication, by inference, by the psychology of suggestion, and by a process of guilt by association, to identify and locate me as either a communist or a fellow traveler. I address this letter to you personally in order to clarify the atmosphere and simultaneously to make a statement of my

⁷⁹ Press release from Rev. Clarence V. Howell, dated February 26, 1956, "Educators and Clergymen Urge Bold Initiative in Foreign Policy: Congress Ask to Support Four Point Program." Hill is included in the list of names endorsing the statement. A copy of letter is in possession of the author.

⁸⁰ "Letter from Charles Leander Hill, Wilberforce University, to Mr. Dwight Young, Journal Herald Publishing Company, Dayton, Ohio (n.d.)," p.1. A copy of letter is in possession of the author.

intentions toward you and your associates unless you cease from further innuendoes as relate to my possible political affiliations.⁸¹

Hill was by no means a Communist and indicated that his philosophical perspective did not involve adherence to materialism and its corresponding atheism. This disavowal did not suggest that Hill was unwilling to exercise his right to free speech and commitment to critical judgment in the public sphere. Hill's posture was no small matter, given the climate of McCarthyism and its particular impact on HBCUs. Astoundingly, for example, Hill and Mordecai Johnson (Howard University) were the only presidents from Black Colleges to sign the above-mentioned peace petition. In part the HBCUs' political conservatism and accommodation to racism, and by the 1950s to McCarthyism, was a pragmatic move to maintain philanthropic foundational aid as well as governmental support.⁸²

Therefore it comes as no surprised that the A.M.E. Church in its governing role over Wilberforce University, via the Board of Trustees, was not as willing to challenge McCarthyism as Hill was in his position as chief administrator. One example of the differences holding between Hill and the Wilberforce Board, as Schrecker reports, centered on the hiring and subsequent firing the physicist Hans Freistadt. Freistadt was a former Communist that had lost his fellowship with the Atomic Energy Commission. Hill hired Freistadt with full knowledge of his past political allegiances and controversial firing by the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic energy. It was precisely due to Freistadt's previous membership in the Communist Party that was the basis for his prior dismissal from the government agency. Nonetheless, despite Hill's agreement to a

⁸¹ "Letter from Charles Leander Hill, Wilberforce University, to Mr. Dwight Young," p. 1.

⁸² Benjamin Mays of Morehouse is a prime example of a HBCU president intimidated by the Cold War, see endnote 56. Another instance of a HBCU president capitulating to McCarthyism was when Charles S. Johnson, the president of Fisk University, hired Giovanni Rossi Lomanitz. Lomanitz previously worked for the Berkeley Radiation Laboratory and when it became public that he had attended Communist Party meetings, HUAC demanded he give testimony. Lomanitz refused to go before HUAC; subsequently he stayed at Fisk for just one semester. Lomanitz left Fisk because Johnson would not award him a contract until matters concerning HUAC were cleared up. See Ellen W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 135-147. Ernest Kaiser, "Blacks and American Foundations: A Historical Survey" in Mabel M. Smyth, ed., *The Black American Reference Book* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1976). Ralph Bunche, "Education in Black and White," *The Journal of Negro Education*, V. 5, n. 3, (Jul., 1936), p. 356. Also see John H. Stanfield, *Philanthropy and Jim Crow in American Social Science* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985).

contract and Freistadt's open disclosure of his past activities, the Wilberforce Board rescinded the appointment of Freistadt just three months after signing a contract of employment.⁸³

Hill's premature death at the age of fifty (in 1956) abruptly called to a halt the voice and presence of this African American philosopher and educator. Yet, his stand against the wave of McCarthyist reaction is an important chapter in uncovering how one person in the African American philosophical community responded to the threat of the revocation of civil liberties and academic freedom as well as the racist denial of African American civil rights. All the more noteworthy since the general trend among HBCUs was to buy into the trade-off of the Black left's civil liberties for the promise of civil rights to the African American community.

I have presented a rather extensive account of the history of African American philosophers and of the particular case of Charles Leander Hill to demonstrate how McCumber's failure to at least consider the general outline of racism and at least one instance of the African American philosopher's circumstances under McCarthyism are crucial to understanding the general picture that he paints of the profession as a whole. The specific dialectical relationship of McCarthyism and racism, given the context of segregation, meant that Hill and Johnson as presidents of Wilberforce and Howard Universities utilized the institutional power they had in the Black community to challenge McCarthyism. In contrast, other college presidents and philosophers, such as Samuel Williams, Benjamin Mays and Charles S. Johnson, capitulated to McCarthyist pressure. Despite their varied responses, it is apparent that they all remained in the grip of institutional racism and the shadow of segregation – both in the academy generally and in the profession of philosophy specifically.

⁸³ Ellen W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, pp. 289-290.