

The art or propaganda debate between du bois and alain

[Philosophy](#)



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Teacher The Art or Propaganda debate between Du Bois and Alain The legendary Civil Rights activist Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King once proclaimed that ““ We’re going to let our children know that the only philosophers that lived were not Plato and Aristotle, but W. E. B. Du Bois and Alain Locke came through the universe” indicating how influential these two individuals not only in the political effort to emancipate the Negro from discrimination and racial injustices but also on function of the Harlem Renaissance of the Negro Arts.

It has to be pointed that both philosophers agreed on what constitute a good art only that they differ in their interpretation in the function of Negro Art. In essence, Locke treated the Arts based on its aesthetic value as a Negro’s expression of its identity which would constitute beauty. Du Bois disagreed to this and pointed out that Negro Art has to have a function especially in the midst of struggle. He called on the Negro Art to help in the effort to emancipate the Negro to be equal and therefore, for art to have value, it has to be used for Propaganda.

Between the two, Locke can be considered as the “ romanticist” because he took art for its real value of expression of beauty of the Negro race. In a way this was the essence of art which is to express individuality that is universal among men. Perhaps this could be attributed to Locke’s philosophical leaning who saw race more as matter of social and cultural influences rather than biological and heredity which explains why he stresses more on individuality in the expression of the arts rather than advancing a cause of a particular race such as the Negro.

Du Bois on the other hand is a “ pragmatist” in the treatment of art seeing it

as a tool to advance the cause of the Negro. He is also a philosophical equal to Locke only that he was more practical and realistic in the treatment of the arts. He encouraged the Negro artists, writers, musicians, performers to look at Africa as a source of inspiration and to dig deep into their Negro character as a representation of art to be shown to the world. He would like to release the enormous emotional wealth of the Negro experience in arts that would make the Negro to be recognized by the world both as a subject and the artist. He also strongly advocated art as a means to Propaganda.

Between the two philosophers, it was Du Bois who was more popular among their contemporaries in the treatment of Harlem Renaissance albeit Locke was considered as the philosophical architect or the Dean of the Harlem art movement. But their contemporaries found much use in the treatment of Du Bois about the art that they could not only relate but also found meanings in their struggle to be equal and to be free and not to be inferior among the whites in Du Bois Propaganda of the art, to present and represent the Negro before the world.