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**HEGELIAN THEMES IN BLACK AMERICAN THOUGHT:**  
**FROM FREDERICK DOUGLASS TO MALCOLM X**

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## Abstract

This thesis discusses the Hegelian themes in the works of six representative figures in Black American political thought: Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, William B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. It seeks to investigate the articulation of these themes with reference to the major works by George W. Frederick Hegel, namely the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *The Philosophy of Right* and *The Philosophy of History*. The working hypothesis at the basis of the research is that the quest for social recognition and freedom at the heart of a minority thought like that of the Black American thinkers can be fully grasped within a Hegelian theoretical framework. Taking its bearings from new historicism, cultural materialism and post-colonial theory, this research tries to show that the six Black thinkers under study have, each in his own manner, seized on the methodological tools and themes that Hegel supplied in his works to articulate their concerns for social recognition and freedom.

This study attempts to illustrate that each and every writer in the selected corpus has given emphasis to particular Hegelian themes depending on the historical and socio-cultural conditions in which he produced his work. For example, writing in the Abolitionist period of the first half of the nineteenth century, Douglass foregrounded the dialectic of the slave and master. The spirit of resistance remains the dominant feature of his autobiography. The case of Washington was different. Coming onto the post-Reconstruction stage of American history known as the Gilded Age, an age that witnessed the compromise over the ideals of racial freedom, Washington played down the spirit of overt resistance and played up that of accommodation. Washington took his cue from Douglass as regards the importance of industrial education and skilled labour for racial liberation and proceeded to elaborate a philosophy of rights similar to that of Hegel in its seeming abandonment of militancy for political rights. The age of the progressives at the beginning of the twentieth century was the age during which DuBois's political thought as regards the racial issue reached its full development. Just like the white progressives, DuBois was steeped in the German/Hegelian social thought of the period. Like them he sought to remedy the ills in the social fabric of the Ethical State by resorting to liberal education and cultural refinement. One of the arguments is that DuBois supplemented Hegel's the Philosophy of World History by including the Negro as one of its prime movers towards the Absolute. In the process of setting the Negro on the stage of World History alongside the likes of Shakespeare, DuBois made no elbow room for the Hegelian slave about whom his contemporary fellow Black man Washington had made such a big case.

Marcus Garvey took over the idea of racial separation from Booker T. Washington in the 1920s to elaborate the idea of a *nostos* or a return of the Black race to Africa. In this emphasis on the idea of a nation as a *sine qua non* condition for racial self-definition and the achievement of freedom, Garvey came close to Hegel's ethical state as an organic unity. Racial nationalism is related to the nativist thought of the "roaring twenties". With Garvey's deportation in 1925, the racial issue temporarily lulled up because of the Great Depression before surging up again with the reversal of the "separate but equal" doctrine by the Supreme Court decision of 1954. The international context marked by the start of the Cold War and the "blowing winds" of decolonisation as well as the assumption of world leadership by the United States allowed the emergence of Martin Luther King Jr who renewed the call for racial justice. Taking his cue from Hegel's aesthetics and dialectic method, King synthesized many philosophical ideas with which he came across during his educational career into a coherent social philosophy known as non-violent resistance. This militant philosophy, which led to the enactment of the Civil Rights Acts in the mid-1960s, showed its limits when King attempted to implement it in the North after riots in the black ghettos. With the idea of the black ghettos as "internal colonies", Malcolm's revolutionary call for a cultural nationalist politics laid the ground for the Black Power movement in the mid-1960s. Even King who idealised the right of the individual subscribed to such communitarian politics whose philosophical inspiration goes back to Hegel's conception of the ethical state.

## Abstract in French

Cette thèse de doctorat s'attèle à discuter des thèmes de Hegel développés dans les œuvres de six figures représentatives des courants de pensée politique de la communauté noire aux U.S.A. Il s'agit de Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, William B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King Jr, et Malcolm X. La thèse s'efforce de cerner l'articulation de ces thèmes autour des principales œuvres de G.F. Hegel, en particulier leur corrélation avec *La philosophie de l'esprit*, *La philosophie du droit*, et *La philosophie de l'histoire*. L'hypothèse de travail sur laquelle se fonde notre recherche consiste à postuler que la quête de la liberté de la reconnaissance sociale par un courant de pensée d'une minorité telle que celui des Noirs- Américains, ne peut être totalement appréhendé, qu'en rapport étroit avec la structure théorique de Hegel. S'imprégnant de la théorie nouvelle critique historique (new historicism), du matérialisme culturel et du post-colonialisme, elle tente de mettre en avant l'idée que les six penseurs noirs précités ont, chacun à sa façon, capitalisé les outils méthodologiques et les thèmes exposés par Hegel dans ses œuvres, et ce afin de plaider en faveur de leur quête de reconnaissance sociale et de liberté.

Nous avons essayé d'y mettre en exergue que chacun des auteurs dans le corpus choisi s'est focalisé sur des thèmes hégéliens particuliers en rapport avec les conditions historiques et socioculturelles prévalant alors. La période de l'abolitionnisme a déteint, par exemple, sur la dialectique du maître et de l'esclave chez Douglass, pendant la première moitié du 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle. L'esprit de résistance sourd de son autobiographie. Le cas de Washington est, lui, différent. Intervenant lors de phase de la post-reconstruction de l'histoire américaine, connue comme étant l'Age d'Or (Gilded Age), cette période a vu s'établir le compromis sur les idéaux de liberté raciale, Washington mit un bémol sur l'esprit de résistance trop manifeste, et s'ingénia à prôner la coexistence. Washington donna la réplique à Douglass quant à l'importance de l'éducation industrielle, d'une main-d'œuvre qualifiée, atouts indispensables pour tout affranchissement racial, et se mit à élaborer une philosophie de droits semblable à celles de Hegel dans ce qu'elle incarne comme renoncement à la lutte pour des droits politiques. La pensée politique de DuBois vis-à-vis de la question raciale a connu son apogée durant les premières années du 20<sup>ème</sup> siècle, siècle de progrès. Il fut propulsé dans la pensée sociale hégélienne dont vibrait alors l'Allemagne, tout comme le furent ses concitoyens progressistes de race blanche. Comme eux, DuBois y dénicha le remède aux maux qui rongent le tissu social de l'état moral : recours à l'éducation libérale et au raffinement culturel. Un des arguments est que DuBois a surimposé *La philosophie de l'histoire*, en y greffant le « Nègre » comme un des premiers tendant vers l'Absolu. En portant le Nègre sur la scène de l'Histoire Universelle à l'instar de Shakespeare, DuBois ne laissa guère les coudées franches à l'esclave de Hegel, dont son contemporain Washington, concitoyen et de même race que lui, avait fait une affaire très importante.

Dans les années 1920, Marcus Garvey reprit l'idée de séparation raciale de Booker T. Washington, et mit en avant l'idée de « nostos, » ou retour des Noirs en Afrique. Garvey se rapprocha de l'état moral comme unité organique de Hegel par sa focalisation sur l'idée que l'existence d'une nation était la condition sine qua non à l'auto-définition raciale et à l'accès aux libertés. Le nationalisme racial est lié au courant de pensée indigène (nativist) des années 1920 tumultueuses (Roaring Twenties) connut un répit avec la déportation, en 1927, de Garvey, et la Grande Dépression, avant de réapparaître dans le sillage de l'annulation par la Cour Suprême en 1954 de la doctrine « séparés mais égaux ». Le contexte international caractérisé par le début de la guerre froide, les signes avant-coureurs de décolonisation ainsi que le rôle de leader du monde des U.S.A, ont amené Martin Luther King Jr à renouveler l'appel pour la justice raciale. S'arc-boutant sur la méthode dialectique et esthétique de Hegel, King fit une synthèse de nombreux concepts philosophiques glanés tout au long de sa carrière

académique et en fit une philosophie sociale cohérente connu sous le nom de résistance non-violente. Cette philosophie, qui déboucha sur les lois des droits civiques au milieu des années 1960, montra ses limites au moment ou King essaya, au lendemain d'émeutes dans les ghettos noirs, de la faire respecter dans les états du nord. Partant de l'idée que les ghettos étaient des « colonies internes », l'appel révolutionnaire de Malcolm X pour une politique nationaliste culturelle a tracé la voie au mouvement Pouvoir Noir (Black Power) apparu à la même période. Même King, qui idéalisait le droit de l'individu, adhéra à une telle politique communautariste, dont l'inspiration philosophique vient en droite ligne de l'état moral de Hegel.

## General Introduction

The American is cast in a different play. In the United States, the Negro battles and is battled. There are laws that, little by little, are invalidated under the Constitution. There are other laws that forbid certain forms of discrimination. And we can be sure nothing is going to be given free. There is war; there are defeats, truces, victories. (1967:221)

Thus writes Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* when he compares the processes of liberation in French colonised territories and in the United States of America. The comparison between these two processes is carried out within a Hegelian framework, which emphasises the importance of struggle /combat for the slave/colonised in securing recognition and freedom. Freedom is not a gift to be bestowed by the master/coloniser on the slave/colonised, but something to be earned and fought for. Freedom is authentic to the extent that it involves the subject in the dialectic of struggle between the opposing forces of lordship and bondage. Whether the French Black man was outwitted by the French master or not in the process of negotiating his freedom, and whether the Black American really managed not to be short-changed in the same process are not the issues that I would like to raise in this research about Black American thought. What I would like to point out instead is the fact that Fanon's statement that the Black American historical process of liberation and thought about freedom is Hegelian seems not to have made much of a case in Black American studies.

It may be argued that if Fanon's categorisation of the Black American thought as Hegelian was not developed in Black American studies, it is because the book that carried the idea was published under the title of *Peau noires, masques blancs* in 1952, two years before the Supreme Court overturned the law of segregation. Admittedly, the question of language and prevalent socio-cultural conditions can stand as obstacles for the travelling of ideas and their diffusion or circulation from one cultural area to another. This is even truer when the balance of power between the cultural areas is not

the same. The stronger cultural area is more likely in this case to diffuse its ideas than the weaker ones. This is the case between the United States and France in the 1950s. But even so, contrary to Fanon's ideas, Jean Paul Sartre's and Simone de Beauvoir's existential ideas did not fall on barren ground.

Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952) and *Les damnés de la terre* (1961) appeared in English versions respectively in 1967 and 1968, i.e., at the height of what is called the Black Revolution. Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, two promoters of the Black Power Movement referred explicitly to *The Wretched of the Earth* in their *Black Power: the Politics of Liberation* published in 1967. Even if Fanon's ideas permeated deeply the Black Powerites thought about revolution in the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s, Black Studies did not seem to have accorded the same importance to Fanon and his Hegelian thought even after the enshrinement in most American Universities in the 1960s. For example, the 2004 *Black Studies Reader* edited by Jacqueline Bobo, Cynthia Hudley and Claudine Michel referred only once to Fanon and not at all to Hegel in a book that covers more than 450 pages. To all evidence the Black Studies specialists have relegated Fanon and Hegel to second rank in theorizing about a field of research defined as a "socially engaged field of scholarly inquiry, [which] is the progeny of centuries of research that seeks to redress long-standing misconceptions of Black inferiority, African heritage, and cultural significance." (Bobo Jacqueline *et al*, 2004: 1)

Accordingly, this research seeks to develop Fanon's idea about the Hegelian dimension in the Black American man's struggle for liberation from the shackles of slavery and racism. This Hegelian dimension in Black American thought has not received the attention that it deserves in Black or Slave Studies. It will be examined with reference to Frederick Douglass's *Autobiographies*, Booker T. Washington's *Up*

*From Slavery*, William DuBois's *The Soul of Black Folks*, Marcus Garvey's *Selected Writings and Speeches*, Martin Luther King Jr's *Autobiography* and *Malcolm X's Autobiography*. Each of these selected authors and works shaped and was in his/its turn shaped by the prevalent ideas of their times. But as a group their writings reflect both continuities and discontinuities in the historical process of the Black American's reflection about the means and ways of achieving recognition and freedom. The fight for recognition remains the most important issue regardless of whether they lived and wrote about slavery in *pre-bellum* America or about racism and segregation in *post bellum* America.

The works of each of the six writers have already generated a vast bulk of criticism. It will be both a loss of space and waste of time to devote a whole review of literature to each author separately. A quick look at the selected bibliography at the end of this research will be enough to have an idea about the major issues raised in relation to each and every author, and to realise that no book-length study has so far been devoted to the writers as a group sharing a concern with the Hegelian themes such as the dialectic of slave and master, a dialectic essential for the achievement of recognition and freedom.

The Fanonian idea that Hegel's dialectic acts as a catalyst in the Black American political thought, an idea that I intend to develop in this research with reference to writings by Douglass, Washington, DuBois, Garvey, King Jr and Malcolm receives support from LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, one of the most prominent Black American authors in the twentieth century. In an early poem entitled "Hegel" (1963), Baraka in his quest for an art that would be in tempo with the march of the World Spirit towards revolutionary progress, Baraka's "scream for help / a redeeming hand/ that would release me from this heavy contract/ of emptiness" is answered only by Hegel. Notwithstanding Hegel's derogatory view of Africa and, thus, of the Black man, Baraka

saw in him a kindred spirit in his quest for unity, for a home for the dispersed Black race. In spite of his racist ideas about Africa and the Black man, Hegel provides the methodological tools that allow, for example, Baraka to see the dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis at work in the art and life of what he calls the “blues people” (1963). For Hegel the evolution of art forms corresponds to the evolution of the Mind / the Spirit or the *Geist*. Possessed of this Hegelian aesthetic and philosophical idea of dialectics of history, Baraka proceeds to show how the history of the emergence of Afro-American musical forms corresponds with the re-emergence of the Afro-American spirit or mind even in the “house of American bondage.”

The appropriation that Baraka operates on Hegel is more or less similar to the one that Fanon has made in his *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. Baraka provides another clue as to the importance of Hegel for the analysis of texts by Black cultural figures who participated in the process of American history culminating in present-day recognition of a Black man by the name of Barack Obama, a Black man considered to be fit for holding the highest office that of presidency in the United States. Paraphrasing Hegel, Fanon writes that

The West saw itself as a spiritual adventure. It is in the name of the spirit, in the name of the spirit of Europe, that Europe has made her encroachments, that she has justified her crimes and legitimized the slavery in which she holds four-fifths of humanity. Yes, the European spirit has strange roots. (Fanon 1967:252)

The ironic turn that Fanon gives to Hegel’s idea of the *Geist* or spirit does not mean that he dismisses it completely. It is meant rather as a refutation of its European manifestation in the form of slavery and colonisation that undermined the humanist project. But Fanon, just like Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*, still believes in the Hegelian idea, in the historical movement of spirit as a force capable of transcending oppositions and bringing about a new humanism. Douglass, Washington, DuBois, Garvey, King and

Malcolm have retraced this journey towards the new humanism that made it possible for a Black man in the United States to be both Black and president.

The affiliation of Douglass, Washington, DuBois, Garvey, King and Malcolm with Hegelian thought is far from being fortuitous. It is hardly imaginable that the writings of Hegel about slavery and freedom could escape the attention of writers, who directly or indirectly through their ancestors, had experienced the hardships of the slavery system and later of racism. It is all the more unimaginable due to the influence that Hegel had exerted on the American philosophical scene since the establishment of German Hegelians in Saint Louis, Missouri in the 1840s. Elizabeth Flower and Murray G. Murphey, both historians of American philosophy, go so far as to affirm that “Hegelianism, in one or another of its varieties, did not need to wait for the St Louisians to find its way into America. [...] The Hegelian influence was geographically broader than St. Louis.” (1977: 471-472)

Since St Louis Hegelians stand out as the most important influential group, I will concentrate on their history as it is highlighted by Flower and Murphey in order to show to what extent Hegelianism shaped differently their view of American society throughout the nineteenth and even the twentieth centuries through their scholarly disciples. I hold the St Louisians’s appropriation of Hegel’s philosophy and social theory as being more or less similar to the appropriation that Douglass, Washington, DuBois, Garvey, King and Malcolm operated on Hegel each in his own way. This appropriation will be the central issue in the discussion part of this research. Who are the St-Louis Hegelians? What relations did they hold with the transcendentalist philosophers of their time like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Alcott, etc? What is the social and political philosophy that they derived from Hegel’s writings? Is this social and political philosophy close in

any way to the writers to have had any influence on them either directly or indirectly? These are some of the questions that I shall turn to below.

In the 1830s and the 1840s St-Louis was a frontier town that welcomed many of the German immigrants pouring into the Middle West in these two decades. These early German settlers were mostly farmers and craftsmen. They were joined in the late 1840s by what the St Louisians call the “forty-eighters”, refugees who fled Germany in the wake of the failure of the liberal revolution. Though few in number, these “forty-eighters” were predominantly intellectuals deeply committed to the social ideals of justice, freedom and equality that the French Revolution reverberated throughout Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century through the Napoleonic continental conquests. Among these German intellectuals who made St-Louis their home, Flower and Murphey mention Willich, Weitling and Weydemeyer. In the cultural baggage of these intellectuals figured “the young and revolutionary Hegel now tempered by the left-wing theorists and utilized by Feuerbach and Marx.” (1977: 470)

The case of Willich is illustrative of the intellectual calibre of the “forty-eighters” migrants to St-Louis. Willich enlisted in the Prussian army as an officer, but soon his idealism and his disgust with the prevailing caste system led him to fall out with the Prussian authorities and to join the revolutionaries, whose exile he shared after the collapse of republican aspirations in autumn 1848. This exile first took him to London where along with Marx and Engels he became identified with the Communist League. His separation from Marx, because of ideological disparities, pushed him to immigrate to the United States before settling in Cincinnati as left-wing Hegelian and editor of a liberal newspaper, *the Cincinnati Republikaner*.

The settlers in the St Louis of the 1830s and 1840s were not all German immigrants. As all frontier settlements, its population included sizeable proportions of Italians, Jews,

French, etc. This made of St Louis a cosmopolitan city whose tolerance of ethnic and racial differences made it stand alone as an uncompromisingly anti-slavery city in a slave state involved in what in American history is known as the Missouri Compromise (1850). It was to this city that second-generation German philosophers Harris, Brokemeyer, and Koffman made their way in the 1850s from the East to officially start Hegelian societies, which they looked at as extensions of the Transcendentalist Concord, Boston. It was to the harsh frontier beyond St. Louis that Koffman, like his fellow American transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau in the East, retired not in order to write *Walden* or *On Civil Disobedience*, but to translate Hegel's *Logic*. Hegelians like Kauffman, Harris and Brokemeyer were not only convinced abolitionists but also loyal to the Union and deeply committed, in the words of Flower and Murphy, to "preserving the larger Union as Hegel had been to making of Germany a nation." (Ibid, p.474)

The idea that St. Louis Hegelianism was an extension of Transcendentalism was not fortuitous. For one thing most of the St. Louis Hegelians had espoused Hegelianism through Transcendentalism, which they later blamed for its lack of social and political involvement and withdrawal from the affairs of public life. It has to be observed that Transcendentalism as a "system of philosophy" paid too much importance to moral salvation through inner light. What made the transcendentalists at first wary of Hegel was the fact that he was suspected of being a pantheist. Spared the agony of Hegel's pantheism, which they transcended by giving a spiritual dimension to nature, the St Louis Hegelians, most of them disaffected transcendentalists, laid out home-grown American versions of Hegelianism that looked like stronger versions of transcendentalism. That explains perhaps why Emerson and Alcott never broke their relations with the St Louis Hegelians, but on the contrary invited them right after the

Civil War to set up a philosophical school in Boston. When all things are considered, Emerson's rally to the abolitionist cause alongside Frederick Douglass in the early 1850s, after nearly a decade of its rejection as fanaticism, seemed to be touched off by his exposure to the influence of the Hegelian thought. (Cf. Gougeon Len and Len Myerson, Eds. 1995)

What tenets did the St Louis derive from Hegel that made them look different from the transcendentalists? As Flower and Murphy put it so well in the *Absolute Immigrates to America*, there is no single version of American Hegelianism as each and every American philosopher tried to adapt Hegel's philosophy to particular American needs at particular moments in American history. But on the whole, all of them believed in Hegel's view of history as a dialectic process in which good ultimately overturns evil through the perpetual improvement of social institutions as transmitters and moulders of values. This belief was so strong that they did not hesitate to outdo Hegel by appealing to human agency to quicken the same historical process that Hegel wanted to be impersonal. It is this commitment to social and political issues that set the American Hegelians in opposition to the transcendentalists' tenet that reform was a simple matter of individual change of heart.

The second tenet common to all American Hegelians is related to their commitment to an organic view of society and the state. It should be noted here that Hegel's organic view of society which American Hegelians had made their own departed from the contractual view of society defended by such political philosophers such as John Locke. Civil society, for Hegel was not a matter of contract among individuals that imposes duties and rights on them, but as a matter of an innate social organ liable, like all other natural organs, to growth and qualitative change rather than revolutions. With their espousal of Hegel's organic view of society, American Hegelians distinguished

themselves from New England academic *laissez-faire* atomism prevalent in their times and even today. This belief led the American Hegelians to work for an active state intervention in social and economic affairs in order to allow for a normal growth of society. In the hands of the American Hegelians, philosophy assumed a central role in understanding problems related to social growth and in proposing solutions through educational institutions perceived as the best means of state intervention for maintaining social harmony.

It follows from the above discussion that American Hegelians were relatively more committed to social and political reform. As such their writings, especially their journalistic ones, could not have escaped the attention of Black leaders like Douglass, Washington and DuBois in the nineteenth century, and Garvey, King Jr and Malcolm in the twentieth century. Even if they went unnoticed to them personally, their impact on the social fabric was so deep that its reverberations must to all evidence have reached them through impersonal channels like schools. In this regard, Flower and Murphy write that “their [American Hegelians] connections have left a profound impact on American education from kindergarten to graduate school and they had an important, perhaps decisive role in building the nation during and after the Civil War” (Ibid, p.463). Indeed, this influence was so profound and the changes in American education so decisive that Hegel had finished entering the precinct of Harvard University after the Civil War, and as late as the 1950s was still there for King Jr to derive the methodological tools that permitted him to synthesise the various sources of his non-violent but militant philosophy.

Since this research centres on the dialectical processes for the achievement of freedom as rendered in the writings of six black representative authors belonging to specific periods of American history, the approach will be basically historicist. What is

historicism? There are many definitions of this term, but I have decided to make my own Paul Hamilton's following definition: "Historicism is a critical movement insisting on the prime importance of historical context to the interpretation of texts of all kinds." (2003:2) This definition fits in well with the corpus of my study which include autobiographies, biographies, essays, speeches, newspaper articles as well as public addresses. Historicist criticism as defined by Hamilton emphasises the importance of contextual reading. It assumes that the meaning or meanings of texts can be restored if and only if the enabling conditions of their circulation, conditions reflecting both the interests and bias of the period in which they were produced, are taken into account. As far as historicists are concerned, reading texts without due care given to their contexts, a critical practice propounded by the New Critics, is simply a big fallacy.

Since texts, for historicists, are supposed both to represent, in the double sense of both reflecting a socio-cultural reality and defending specific interests, historicism adopts a suspicious attitude towards both the stories that the past tells about itself and the versions of the past that the present restores from them. Therefore, historicists are doubly careful about the possible ideological bias of the original texts and the critical/historicised versions elaborated from them. An example is necessary here to illustrate the importance of scrutinising ideology in historicist criticism. This example will be taken from the critical heritage of texts dealing with Black American slavery, and to which the following research is meant to be a tentative refutation. One of these texts is Stanley M. Elkins's *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*.

Elkins's book about slavery was published in 1959, just four years after segregation in schools was declared to be unconstitutional on the grounds of the psychological harm it inflicted on Black children. As might be expected in this historical context where

psychology held the place of choice for effecting social adjustment and change (The period it has to be noted is dominated by Freud.), Elkins gave his book a psychological orientation arguing that American slavery did not only take away the physical freedom of the Negro but also destroyed his personality. As a result of brainwashing undergone in the plantation, the Negro slave became a “Sambo”, a deviant type of slave personality popularised in Southern folklore. In the manner of historicists, Elkins, in his analysis of the personality of the Negro, relies on an important critical heritage of texts Gilberto Freire dealing with slavery, particularly the works by Frank Tannenbaum (1946) and , which put forward the idea that slavery in Latin countries was relatively milder than its counterpart in the United States. With this critical/comparative heritage about slavery in the New World in hand, Elkins went to draw parallels between the slave plantations in the South and the Nazi concentrations in Germany.

Once again, it has to be observed that it is the historical context (this time of white men enslaving other white men in the interwar period) that led to scholarly interest in American slavery after World II. But I suspect that Elkins’s superimposition of the picture of the Negro slave or the “infantile Sambo” as he calls him on that of the victims of the Nazi concentration camps smacks of a reactionary ideology. Elkins’s ideology i.e., his system of beliefs and myths of the Negro slave being an infant and a helpless dependent incapable of rebelling against his tormentors with whom he had learned to identify because of the supposedly closed system of slavery in the United States does not give a heroic picture of the past likely to help further the liberation of the Black man. Elkins’s picture of the American slave, even if it might appear as an indictment of slavery (black and white) at first sight participates in that denial of history denounced by Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*. The historicised version of American slavery rendered by Elkins reads as a fiction wherein the Negro emerges as a currency (black on

white paper) for the circulation of the ideas of what in Jewish literature is called the Holocaust. In other words, it was produced with the interests of the Jews rather than of the Black people in mind.

What Elkins's historicist version of American slavery shows is that the historical or historicist reading of texts is not solely contextual but also political. So much has recently been written about the pessimist character of new historicism as practised by Stephen Greenblatt and Louis A. Montrose. This pessimist character has much to do with the fact that Greenblatt's critical practice is not explicitly committed to social change since it contents itself to show how the containment of subversion whether in the critical practice itself or in the re-enactment/performed texts of the past in the present. There is no difference whatever between the Shakespeare of the Renaissance and the one we choose to make our contemporary since his plays are performed to contain the subversion of the capitalist system. Paul Hamilton demonstrates that this pessimism has much to do with the fact that Greenblatt takes his critical bearings from the works of the poststructuralist Michel Foucault, who claims that the interplay of knowledge and power is such that no one of us, historicist critics included, can escape its trappings. However, as Hamilton writes the "so called new historicism" is only one moment in the critical movement of historicism whose roots go as far back as the start of hermeneutics in its response to the scientific tradition of the Enlightenment. This moment in historicist criticism, (Hamilton refuses to speak of New Historicism.) is only one among many types of the "historicisms of the present" which in his scheme includes postcolonial theory.

"Postcolonial theory," in the words of Hamilton, "rehearses major questions raised by the rise of historicism, giving them a new edge and application." (p.153) Postcolonial theory will, therefore, be one of the extensions of the historicist framework of this

research. The fact that I have started this thesis with a quote by Fanon indicates the postcolonial perspective from which I wish to read Douglass, Washington, DuBois, Garvey, King Jr and Malcolm X. This perspective will no doubt reinforce the political reading of the texts under study in this dissertation. It is enough to compare Elkins's conclusions about the effects of American slavery on the Black man above with the focus that Fanon places on combat and the achievement of recognition and freedom in Black American history to realise the difference of political orientation that postcolonial theory, of which Fanon is one of the first founders, can give to a historicist rendering of the same phenomena, slavery and racism.

It is possible that Fanon had read neither Frank Tanenbaum's nor Gilberto Freire's comparative studies of American slavery with their counterparts in Latin countries. But in his discussion of "the negro and recognition" (1967), he seems to have held the same view as Tannenbaum and Freire as regards the comparatively lenient character of the Latin type of slavery. However, he developed a totally different view from that of Elkins with respect to the type of person that emerged from the two systems of slavery. Tannenbaum and Freire claimed that, because Latin American countries had customs and institutions recognising the slave as a person, the slave population did not endure the same hardships as the ones in English and American countries, which in the absence of such customs and institutions made of the slaves mere chattels in the hands of their slave owners. Slavery in Latin American countries was not perpetual as it was often the case in Anglo-Saxon territories since slaves could either buy their freedom or have access to it through voluntary manumission.

Fanon and Elkins seemed to have evaluated the outcome of the two systems of slavery differently. For Elkins, the Latin type of slavery did not destroy the humanity of the slave because the slave had never stayed completely outside the protection of the

church, the state and the courts. That was not the case of the American slave who was reduced to a thing or a chattel. Fanon seems to have come to a different conclusion on the same grounds. In his book, Fanon refers to the emancipation of the slaves in French territories by qualifying it as a hoax. Their freedom he says is not authentic, since “the negro knows nothing of the cost of freedom for he has not fought for it. From time to time he has fought for Liberty and Justice, but these were always white liberty, and white justice; that is values secreted by his masters.”(1967:221)What in Elkins’s historicist reading of American slavery is considered totally negative comes out as positive in Fanon’s view. For him, “The former slave needs a challenge to his humanity, he wants a conflict, a riot. (And this seems to be) too late (Ibid, 221),” for the former French slaves and their descendants but not to their American fellows living in what he calls the “lynchers’ land.” This is the Hegelian cast of mind that makes Fanon believe in man’s resilience that challenges the physical and spiritual constraints of slavery and racism to which Elkins seems to have given up so easily for interests that do not avow themselves.

This historicist approach will also be supplemented by an appeal to dialogism and cultural materialism. The dialogist and the cultural materialist dimensions with which my approach will be reinforced can be justified as follows. For one thing, according to Hamilton, the British brand of the “historicism of the present” as practised by Jonathan Dolimore, Alan Sinfield , Peter Stallybrass and the late Allen White owes as much to Greenblatt’s New Historicism as to Raymond Williams’s cultural materialism.(Cf.1979) The cultural materialist stance that the British “historicists of the present” accord to criticism stems from a strong British socialist tradition and a belief that history is “not literature’s background but an extension of the same plane of action on which literature makes sense.” (p.141). In proclaiming the cultural activism of literature, the British

historicists depart from American historicists' political ambivalence while sharing with them the view of the Renaissance and Romantic periods as preferred fields of historicist research.

As for dialogism it will allow me to go beyond the local cultural poetics of Greenblatt's New Historicism inspired from Geertz. The kind of local knowledge produced by the New Historicist close readings of specific cultures is not quite adequate on its own for the analysis of the texts in a corpus like my own, marked off as it by strong dialogism. "Blacks [meaning Black authors], as Henry Louis Gates Jr puts it so well "were intent on placing their individual and collective voices in the text of Western letters, but also that even the earliest writers of the Anglo-African tradition read each other's texts and grounded these texts in what soon became a tradition." (1989:131) If Douglass, Washington, DuBois, Garvey, King Jr and Malcolm X are put together for analysis in this research, it is simply because I consider that they are part and parcel of this tradition. These authors, as I shall try to demonstrate in the body of this thesis, did not only read each other's texts but also responded to Hegel and, to paraphrase Gates, placed their individual and collective voices in revised texts of this German master of philosophy. Thus, the appeal to dialogism as a supplement to the historicist approach is justified not solely by the nature of the corpus, but also because dialogism as practised by Mikhail Bakhtin, just like historicism as defined by Hamilton, belongs to a "historical poetics". (Cf. Keith Booker 1997: 6)

This is for the approach that I intend to adopt for the analysis of Hegelian themes in selected writings by Douglass, Washington, DuBois, Garvey, King Jr and Malcolm X. As for the methodological outline, my research is divided into six chapters, a whole chapter devoted to each author with particular emphasis on his most representative writings. Accordingly, the main concern in the first chapter will be the dialogic relation

that Douglass's *Autobiographies* hold with Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* especially the chapters dealing with the dialectics of the slave and the master. How did Douglass come into contact with Hegel's writings and thought? In what ways did Hegel revise and use Hegel's dialectic of the slave and master to participate in the political debate about the issue of slavery and freedom in the abolitionist period? How did Douglass muster Hegel's arguments to break the Aristotelian foundations of slavery prevailing in the South? Where did Douglass stand in the Hegelian interpretation of American history of the conflict between the North and the South? These are some of the questions that the first chapter will attempt to answer.

The second chapter will be devoted to the analysis of Booker T. Washington's *Up From Slavery* with reference to both Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit* and *Elements to the Philosophy of Rights*. Among the central questions that I shall try to answer are the following: What factors contributed to the emergence of what is known in Black American history as Washington's accommodationist philosophy? What form of freedom, if any, did it propose to the Black people of the Post-Reconstruction era and the Gilded Age? Where did Washington stand in this formulation of freedom in relation to Hegel and his Black precursor Douglass? And finally in what ways did his philosophy further or delay the completion of the process of freedom and recognition for the Black man in the U.S?

The third chapter deals with William DuBois's *The Souls of Black Folk*. Several issues will be raised in connection with DuBois's controversy with Washington's philosophy of accommodation. Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (especially the section dealing with Culture) and his *Philosophy of History* will be brought to bear on the analysis of the importance which DuBois thinks that liberal education and culture hold in the Black man's process of liberation. My reading of DuBois's work will be

placed in the context of American Progressivism whose promoters, among whom figured DuBois, were largely indebted to German social thought. One of my arguments will be that the difference between Douglass's and Washington's view of freedom on the one hand, and that between Washington's and DuBois's can be traced to the differences in the historical contexts in which their works were produced: the abolitionist period for Douglass, the post-Reconstruction period or the Gilded Age for Washington and the Progressive Age for DuBois.

Amy Jacques Garvey collected and published the speeches and writings of her husband in two volumes entitled *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*. The fourth chapter examines this philosophy and these opinions, always in relation to Hegel's philosophy and opinions about freedom. Apart from Amy Jacques Garvey's two volumes, I shall also use Bob Blaisdell's *Selected Writings and Speeches of Marcus Garvey*. Just as the three previous works in my corpus, Garvey's speeches and writings will be read in the socio-cultural context in which most of them were produced, i.e., that of the 1920s or the "Roaring Twenties" as the decade was often called in American history. Particular focus will be put on both the material conditions and the philosophical origins of Garvey's racial nationalism. One of the arguments will be that many ideas of Garvey echo those of Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, especially those developed in its last section 'Ethical Life' wherein Hegel speaks about the primordial importance of the existence of a nation state and national institutions for the complete realisation of freedom.

King Jr is arguably one of the most important cultural figures in twentieth-century Black political thought to recognise publicly the influence that Hegel exerted on his philosophy. How King Jr relates to Hegel will be the central focus of the fifth chapter. Since in his *Autobiography* King mentions the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the

*Philosophy of History* as having figured among assigned readings in his philosophical course at Harvard, I shall use these two works as props for interpreting his non-violent philosophy. Apart from these two works, I shall also appeal to *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* because King's approach to social change is commonly qualified as a moral approach, and the issue of "morality" and freedom received its best treatment not in the works of Hegel that King referred to but in those that he did not mention, works like the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* and *Aesthetics*. The discussion of the Hegelian dimension of King Jr's political thought will be carried out with reference to his *Autobiography* and other works like collections of his speeches and writings such *A Call to Conscience* and *Martin Luther King, JR, I Have a Dream*, edited respectively by Clayborne Carson and James Melvin Washington. One of the arguments in my discussion is that King Jr did not simply borrow Hegel's dialectic to synthesise his readings of conflicting thinkers but that he went so far as to complete the German master's unfinished thought about love as a possible alternative to war in the struggle for the achievement of freedom in the form of the "beloved community".

The sixth and last chapter is concerned with the possible affinities between Malcolm X's philosophy and that of Hegel. Unlike King, Malcolm did not mention in his *Autobiography* the fact that he read Hegel, but the resemblances between their philosophies, especially their equal emphasis on struggle for achieving recognition indicates a possible indirect influence. Moreover, Malcolm X referred to Kant as one of the German philosophers that he read in prison. So we wonder whether Malcolm did not simply forget to mention him by name. No matter what the truth is, Hegel's presence, as I shall try to demonstrate in the last chapter, is strong enough to justify the investigation of Malcolm X's spiritual quest for the Black man's freedom as a freedom articulated in Hegelian categories. The investigation will be carried out with reference to the

religious, social as well as the political contexts in which the autobiography was produced. Among other things, I shall argue that Malcolm X's *Autobiography* patterned as it is on the current discourses of the Puritan Jeremiad and conversion narrative appeals to notions of struggle and providential history central to Hegelian thought.

## Notes and references

Bobo Jacqueline, Cynthia Hudley and Claudine Michel, Eds, *The Black Studies Reader*, New York, London: Routledge, 2004. The editors of *The Black Studies Reader* define “Black studies as a socially engaged field of scholarly inquiry, [which] is a progeny of centuries of research that seeks to redress long-standing misconceptions of Black inferiority, African heritage, and cultural significance”. (p.1) Though the origins of Black Studies could be traced back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century when Black scholars like William B. DuBois were delivered degrees in Black history and sociology, it was in the mid-1960s that these studies started to be officially included in the curricula of university departments and colleges in the United States of America. **Please note that the terms “Negro”, “Afro-American,” “African American” and “Black” are used interchangeably in this thesis, though each of them has entered the English lexicon as positive terms at distinct historical periods.**

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Carmichael Stokely and Charles V. Hamilton (1967), *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, London: Penguin, 1969. In the preface to the Penguin edition of their book, the authors write the following: “There is only one place for black Americans in these struggles, and that is on the side of the Third World. Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, puts forth clearly the reasons for this and the relationship of this concept called Black Power to the concept of a new force force in the world.” (p.15) Another Black American author of the 1960s who retraced the origin the Black Power Movement to Fanon is Eldrige Cleaver who sojourned in Algeria for a short period of time in the mid-1960s. See his book, *Soul on Ice* (1968), New York: McGraw Hill, 1992.

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the image of the Black man as an “Uncle Tom” happy to live with his benevolent master in the plantation.

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Flower Elizabeth and Murray G. Murphey, *A History of Philosophy in America*, Vol.2, Washington D.C: Library Congress, 1977. Other studies which document the influence of German philosophy, particularly that of Hegel on American socio-political thought include the following classics, Henry A. Pochmann, *German Culture in America 1600-1900: Philosophical and Literary Influences*, Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press, 1961; Harvey G. Townsend, *Philosophical Ideas in the United States*, New York: American Book Co, 1934; Charles M Perry, *The St Louis Movement in Philosophy*, Norman, Okl: University of Oklahoma Press, 1930; William H. Goetzmann, ed., *The American Hegelians: An Intellectual Episode in the History of Western America*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973; Lloyd D. Easton, *Hegel's First American Followers: The Ohio Hegelians*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1966. The interest in Hegel's writings in America led to the foundation of the Hegelian Society in the 1950s.

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# Chapter One

## Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic and Douglass's Slave Narratives: An Essay in Relation

### Introduction

The following chapter deals with the way Frederick Douglass deployed and redeployed Hegelian themes and ideas in his combat against slavery and racism for at least three quarters of a century, from the late 1830s to the mid- 1890s. The discussion is conducted with reference to the three versions of his autobiography: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (1845), *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1893). Douglass wrote each of these versions from strikingly different historical perspectives and types of personal experience. Before moving to the analysis of the ways Douglass incorporates Hegel's themes like that of freedom in these autobiographical works, a few words to justify the start of this research on Douglass are more than necessary since Douglass was preceded by no less important cultural figures in the Black American political scene. Why link Frederick Douglass the Black American ex-slave to the German master of philosophy and namesake Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel? How did Douglass come into contact with Hegelianism? Such are some of the questions whose answers, I hope, will help me start this analysis on firmer grounds by settling the issue of whether the comparison of Hegel and Douglass is really feasible or not. At first sight, of course, a comparison of a master of philosophy of such a calibre as Hegel with a self-educated Black ex-slave may appear as being far-fetched, if not outrageous to some philosophy academics.

### **A. Douglass: Life, Times, Affinities and Influence**

One of the common ideas in comparative literature is that similarities in ideas as well as artistic forms in intellectual productions are due either to diffusion or evolution (Cf. Okpewho Isidore, 1983, 1992). The diffusionist theory holds that ideas travel from one cultural idea to another through various ways including wars, migration and trading. It is these agencies and their relays that connect cultures originally situated in separate geographical locations. For example, Greek culture owed so much to Ancient Egyptian culture with which Greek philosophers like Thales had come into contact. In turn, the Roman military conquest of Greece in 63 B.C paradoxically led to Greek cultural domination over the Roman Empire. With the decline of the Roman Empire, the Arabs through translation made the Greco-Roman heritage their own by enriching it and saving it from oblivion. This cultural heritage was re-appropriated later by Medieval Europe either through what is known in Spanish history as the Re-conquest or through the Crusades which allowed the European invaders to connect with the refinements of Arab culture and civilisation. Close to us is the modern imperial experience, which in spite of its unprecedented brutality, has brought peoples and cultures to the very cultural centres that desperately tried to set them apart in colonies in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries the better to exploit them. (Cf. Booker M. Keith, 2000)

As for the evolutionary theory, it seeks to justify the similarity of ideas and artistic forms in terms of the similarity of contexts including economic, political and social conditions. Contrary to the diffusionists, the evolutionists believe more in roots rather routes, i.e., in similar historical growth of ideas and forms rather than in their dissemination through the channels listed above. In terms of comparative cultural poetics, evolutionism, like the ethnological theory from which it derives its tools, puts much emphasis on the time lag in the evolution of cultures, an emphasis that has

resulted, for example, in the abusive comparison of modern African cultural productions with similar but dated Western cultural ones. A case in point is the persistent comparison of Chinua Achebe's early works with those of the Victorian novelist Thomas Hardy in our universities.

In the case of Douglass, I think that there is a convergence of both evolutionist and diffusionist factors that seem to have stood behind the Hegelian themes and forms in his autobiography in its three versions. For one thing, the early nineteenth-century Southern society that was the initial home of Douglass had come to a stage in its history wherein slavery was regarded as a "peculiar institution", an institution that distinguished the identity of the Southerners from that of the Northerners. The passage from tobacco and rice slavery, supposedly already in decline in the 1780s and 1790s, to more profitable cotton slavery in the early nineteenth century because of the demands of the Industrial Revolution in England and the invention of the cotton gin in the US to supply the pressing demand for cotton was accompanied by more stringent Slave Codes in the slave states (Cf. Martin Jean Pierre, 1988). Putting aside the fears of slave uprisings at home similar to the one that shook the Caribbean island of Saint-Domingue (as Haiti was known before independence) under the leadership of Toussaint l'Ouverture in the 1780s and 1790s, slave trade persisted in an underground form even after its official closing in 1808 to supply the greater demand for slave labour in the old and newly acquired territories of Louisiana. Louisiana, purchased from the French in 1803 arguably because of the weakening of the French position in the Caribbean region by the Black rebellion there, became an official state in 1812. Along with the state of Mississippi (1817) and that of Alabama (1819) it formed what John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss Jr call the "Cotton Kingdom."(1988:101)New slave fugitive laws were enacted to permit Southern slaveholders to recuperate the slaves fleeing to the North.

On the whole, the evolution in American history in relation to slavery took another turn than the one expected by the Founding Fathers at the drafting of the Constitution. Animated by the liberal belief in progress, the Founding Fathers compromised over the question of slavery predicting its natural demise with the historical evolution of society. Yet, paradoxical as it may seem at first sight, the machine, which in Hegel's view broadens the scope of freedom in the modern age, darkened further the prospects of access to freedom to the slave population in the South to which Douglass belonged. The invention of the cotton gin, along with the Industrial Revolution in England, the extension of slavery into Western territories wiped out the efforts put by individual Blacks like Benjamin Banneker into the enterprise of proving racial equality on both academic and economic grounds. They also helped to restore the Southern man's belief in the waning doctrine of the natural inferiority of the Blacks to the whites developed, among others, by Thomas Jefferson and David Hume, and this against all evidence as to the false claim about the insusceptibility of attainments in arts and sciences by the people of African descent.

In the scale of the historical evolution of freedom, Hegel distinguishes three stages. In the first stage, freedom was enjoyed by one and the many were enslaved. In the second stage, freedom was enjoyed by few whereas many others remained slaves. In the third stage corresponding to the modern age, all persons are free. (Cf. 1991:104) If this Hegelian scale is to be used to qualify the evolution of the American South in the first half of the nineteenth century, it can be said that it belonged both to the first and second stages in its treatment of the Black population. The plantation system made the slave-owners behave as despots in defiance of all the laws of the new republic. At the same time, the slaves were tools in the hands of the slave masters. As such, the peculiar institution of the American South takes us all the way back to the slave system of

Ancient Greece as recorded by Aristotle in his *Politics*. In a region whose poets like Edgar Allan Poe kept singing about retrieving the “glory” and “fame” of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome in the Renaissance age of American history, putting slavery at the foundation of a modern civilisation was far from being a social regression or moral degeneration.

Always, in terms of social evolution, the American South at the time of Douglass was not far removed from the Prussia at the time of Hegel. Prussia stayed behind most European countries like Britain in its social organisation which was still based on a medieval manorial system. Apart from difference of skin pigmentation, the Prussian serf was in no way better in social status than the Black slave in the South, and the manorial lord was not a whit different from the Southern planter. Like many romantics, Hegel hailed the French Revolution whose reverberations reached as far as the Caribbean islands to make the Black populations in Saint-Domingue (Now Haiti) take over the claims of the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. Prussia witnessed the revolutionary terror in the French metropolis just as distant America witnessed, though on a smaller-case basis, the terror at the periphery of the French Empire in the Caribbean, a terror which the slaves Gabriel Prosser and Jack Bowler brought home in Virginia in 1800.

Prussia and the American South are also comparable in terms of political agitation following respectively the American Revolution and the French Revolution. The Napoleonic conquest of Prussia spread the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity which Hegel seemed to have made his own in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which he finished writing on the eve of the French occupation of Jena in 1806. In the wake of the Napoleonic invasion, Hegel posited social equality as the basic condition for the realisation of freedom, making himself indirectly at least committed to the

eradication of the remains of feudalism in Prussia. In his vision of history, Napoleon stood as an embodiment of the world spirit. However, with the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 and even some time earlier, during the French occupation of the Prussian territory, allegiance to the old regime was renewed and considered as an act of patriotism. The patrician order that ensued was established against a background of renewed interest in Greek culture best represented by the gymnasium. Militancy for a new social order was met with stringent laws such as the Carlsbad decrees of 1819 that sent thousands and thousands of German refugees, most of them Hegelians, across the Atlantic to America in the late 1840s. Hegel, in the meantime had assumed a compromising attitude that many critics considered as a betrayal of ideals celebrated in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Similarly, many Americans, both black and white tried to capitalise on the liberal ideals of the American Revolution to put an end to slavery. Yet for reasons already detailed above this ideal was defeated giving rise to a militant form of abolitionism in the North during what in American history is known as the Jacksonian era (roughly from the mid-1820s to the mid-1840s). This era was also referred to as the era of the common man because of the many democratising reforms that brought out the participation of common people into the public sphere. The process of democratisation unleashed by President Jackson facilitated the rise of a militant form of abolitionism under the leadership of such people as Lloyd Garrison. Apart from using moral persuasion in their campaigns against slavery, the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society (1831) and its heir the American Anti-Slavery Society (1833) set up an Underground Railway to help slaves escape from the plantations. Just like Prussia, America had its own white refugees hailing from the South to the North as the controversy over slavery in the newly acquired territories in the Southwest became radicalised in the 1840s and

1850s. These two decades are crucial in the evolution of the country in general and that of Douglass's political outlook in particular. They witnessed among other things the passage of the Missouri Compromise (1850) and the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854), the appearance of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), and more importantly the formation of the Republican Party by the Northern Whigs, Free Soilers and some Democrats, all of them strongly opposed to the extension of slavery. The intersectional conflict between the South strongly committed to what Hegel would have called the Abstract Right (the right to own personal property) and the North which made Social Morality (the words are Hegel's) a principle of self-defence exploded into an armed conflict in 1860 with the election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency.

Like the early attitude of Hegel towards Napoleon, Douglass saw in the emergence of Abraham Lincoln an emergence of the world spirit ready to blast the feudal regime of the South and free the Black population there from the shackles of slavery. In front of the secession of the Southern states of the Confederacy, Lincoln assumed the role of guardian of the Union which Hegel would have referred to as the Ethical State, an Ethical State to which the slaves nominally gained admittance with the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, arguably because of the pressure of the Civil War.

The similarity in contexts in which Hegel and Douglass wrote their works explains in part the resemblances of their themes and artistic forms. It is true that Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* was primarily intended as a philosophical work while Douglass's life writing in its three versions is considered as an autobiography. But apart from the label attached to each work, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as Elizabeth Flower and Murray Murphey (1977) put it, can also be regarded as a collective autobiography, just as Douglass's autobiography can be considered as a philosophical work in process,

and which, to borrow William DuBois's terms, retraces the evolution of the collective spirit of the Black folks.

However, if the similarities between the enabling conditions presiding over Hegel's and Douglass's cultural productions justify the analogy drawn between their themes and forms, they do not hide their divergence in relation to their attitude to the social and political changes brought about respectively by the Napoleonic conquest of Prussia and the occupation of the South by North during the Reconstruction period (1865-1877). Douglass supported the Republican forces that refined the Ethical State through the 13th, the 14th and the 15th Amendments whereas Hegel compromised his early commitment to freedom and civil rights by justifying what seems to be a reactionary type of Ethical State. In this compromising attitude to the powers that be, Hegel was comparable to Douglass's successor to Black leadership Booker T. Washington. I shall turn to this issue in the second chapter of this thesis. But here I have to note that Douglass's attitude to slavery and racism, as the three versions of his autobiography show, grew less outspoken as the political climate of militancy that characterised the abolitionist period and the Reconstruction shifted to the conservative mood of the post-Reconstruction period (the 1880s and 1890s).

The comparison of Douglass and Hegel can be carried out on another ground than that of analogy due to similarity of contexts. In *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1994), Paul Gilroy affirms that though Douglass was a self-educated ex-slave, he was deeply knowledgeable in the German idealist philosophical tradition. In defence of this affirmation, Gilroy borrows his arguments from William S. Mcfeely, one of the most pertinent biographers of Douglass. Indeed, Mcfeely gives important details as to the possibility that Douglass came into contact with this tradition through Ottilia Assing, the first translator of the German edition of Douglass's second

version of his autobiography *My Bondage and My Freedom*. The two had first met in Rochester in 1848. Therefore, one can say that Otilia was one of the “forty-eighters” of whom I spoke in the introduction with reference to the St Louis Hegelians (See supra, pp.4-8). She settled in Hoboken, “a pleasant town with a sizable German American population, across the Hudson River from New York City.”(Mcfeely S. William, 1991:184) When Mcfeely evokes Otilia Assing’s idealism, he speaks of it in terms reminiscent of the idealism that animated her contemporary St Louis Hegelians. With reference to Otilia Assing’s enthusiasm for revolution, Mcfeely writes the following: “She came from a world that had fostered liberal revolution; their only flaw was that they had failed. She was eager to be party to a revolution that succeeded, and she thought the Americans were about to give her that opportunity.” (Ibid, p.186) Her first participation in the social revolution, then taking place in the United States, was the publication of a translated version of Douglass’s autobiography in Hamburg in 1860, that is to say right at the start of the Civil War (1860-1865).

Though Assing came from a cultured and intellectual milieu, she was deeply enamoured with Douglass. She provided assistance to Douglass at one of the crucial periods in his own life. On August 19, 1859 Douglass met John Brown in a quarry near Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. Brown let him know about his plan to seize the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia in order to arm slaves in the surrounding area. Douglass refused to join the plot and tried to dissuade Brown because he knew that the plot would be a complete failure. Douglass left Chambersburg on August 21, without having managed to persuade Brown to drop out the plot. On October 16-18, Brown and his followers occupied the Harpers Ferry arsenal before being captured by American federal troops. Among Brown’s paper was found a letter from Frederick Douglass that made of him a *defacto* accomplice to John Brown.

However, before a telegram from the Virginia authorities ordering Douglass's arrest in Philadelphia where he was lecturing reached destination, an anti-slavery telegraph operator warned Douglass, who fled to New York before moving into Hoboken, New Jersey to the home of Assing. Assing smuggled Douglass out of the United States first into Canada and from there sailed to England on November 1859 because he was afraid that he would be extradited. While touring in Great Britain lecturing, Douglass learned that Brown was hanged in Virginia on December 2, 1859. It is clear from the above episode in Douglass's life that Assing was an intimate friend of Douglass. Indeed, their relation was so intimate that Assing was said to **have read Goethe, Feuerbach and Hegel to Douglass.**(Cf. Gilroy Paul, 1994) On January 24, 1884, Douglass married Helen Pitts a white woman from New York. On hearing about Douglass's second marriage, Assing took her own life in the Bois de Boulogne in Paris leaving behind her statement of will for her Black sweetheart.

The inference that can be drawn from the information that Mcfeely, Gilroy and James Colaiaco (1976) provide us about the relationship between Douglass and Assing is as follows. Douglass might not have heard about Hegel before his encounter with Assing in 1848. Therefore, the Hegelian themes or ideas that pervade his first and second versions of his autobiography are arguably due to the similarity in historical contexts. On the other hand, there is strong evidence in the third version that Douglass had one of the sources of thematic inspiration in Hegel. That Douglass, for example, knew about Hegel's ideas about Africa and by extension about Africans and Afro-Americans was more than certain. In 1886, Douglass resigned from office of record at Cleveland's request, and on September the 15th of the same year sailed in the company of his new wife Helen Pitts for England from where he began an extensive tour of Europe which took him southward into Egypt. For Douglass,

the desire to visit Egypt rests on [...]an ethnological purpose in the pursuit of which I hoped to turn my visit to some account in combating American prejudice against the darker colored races of mankind, and at the same time to raise colored people somewhat in their own estimation and thus stimulate them to higher endeavors. I had a theory for which I wanted the support of facts in the range of my own knowledge. (p.1006)

Douglass gives indications about his ethnological theory and its real purpose earlier in the same text (*Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*) when he writes that “the more he has seen of modern civilisation in England, France, Italy, the more he will want to see the traces of that civilization which existed when these countries were inhabited by barbarians.” (p.1006)Any reader knowledgeable about Hegel’s *The Philosophy of History* can hear the echo that Douglass’s above quote sends back to Hegel’s text. In this text, Hegel turned back on what was supposed to be the “dark night of Africa.” For Hegel “the sun rises in the Orient [...] in all its majesty [...] and world history travels from east to west. [...] Europe is the absolute of history, just as Asia is the beginning.”(1991:103)Hegel is one of the European philosophers who believed that slavery was basically unjust and indefensible within civilised societies such as the United States. However, he did not depart from the French contemporary Arthur Comte de Gobineau in the case he made in support of a European enslavement of Africans on the grounds that it is the sole means available for bringing them into world history.

That Douglass was writing against Hegel’s Eurocentric view of world history shows in the following observations that he had made during his travel from Paris to Rome. “As the traveler moves between those two great cities, he will observe an increase of black hair, black eyes, full lips, and dark complexions. He will observe a Southern and Eastern style of Dress, gay colours, startling jewellery, and an outdoor free-and-easy movement of the people.” (p.990) For Douglass the gradual darkening of skin pigmentation that he noticed as he was travelling southward from Paris into Egypt gives ample evidence that Egypt had been and still was a cultural borderland and a centre of a

hybridised civilisation. Douglass turns Hegel's Euro-centric vision of Africa as marginal to history upon its head by giving evidence for a multicultural origin and development of civilisation in the West. As a mature Black gentleman traveller from the "Extreme Occident" i.e. America (Cf. Mathy Jean-Philippe, 1993) to the East, Douglass made his journey read as a reverse Black Columbiad. His attempt to re-appropriate Egypt as the original site of a hybridised Afro-European civilisation and culture reads part and parcel of his attempt to rehabilitate the African American people in the U.S. national imagery. The latter are viewed as partners in the teleological process that gave birth to America as a nation. Hegel's claim that "America is the land of the future" (1991: 86) whereas Africa was locked in the dark past was taken very seriously at the time Douglass wrote his *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. Through a fact-finding mission to Egypt, Douglass shows that the Americans of African origin, just like the white American counterparts, were heirs to the same hybridised civilisation. Therefore, they had the right to take part in the outward direction of the nascent American empire, no matter what shape (formal or informal) this empire would take. In his evocation of Egypt, Douglass's prose smacks of an indigenous Orientalism. (Cf. Sweeny Fionnghuala, 2007 and Waldo E. Martin, 1984)

#### **B. The Representation of Freedom in the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave**

"Give us the facts and we will take care of the philosophy," (1855:367) one white abolitionist told Douglass during one of the lecture circuits, when he sought to diverge from the factual agenda set to him by his white colleagues. To my mind, this is a testimony that Douglass was not afraid to tread the path of political philosophy in his writing of the three versions of his autobiography. In this section, I intend to develop the view that Douglass philosophised about the idea of freedom in the same manner as Hegel. Moreover, the meaning of freedom evolved in nearly the same manner in

Hegel's writings and as in those of Douglass because of the similarity in historical contexts and the influence that the former might have exerted on the latter especially in the second half of his political career.

Murphy claims that Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* was more or less a collective autobiography retracing the evolution of the German spirit from its beginnings to its culmination in the establishment of the Prussian state. The same claim can be made about Douglass's autobiography which delineates the ascent of the spirit of Black folks to freedom through the exemplary life of Douglass himself. In *The Philosophy of History*, Hegel did not expand a lot on the evolution of the world spirit in the New World. A small case was made about the American nation since for Hegel perfection in all fields was already reached by the Prussian State. Hegel's complacent attitude to America and Americans was quite representative of the view that Europeans in general showed to the young nation as a whole. America's position at the time was similar to the position of a post-colonial country suffering from psychological and intellectual disadvantages in its relation to West European countries. The country gained its political independence from Britain in 1783, but nearly 50 years later Ralph Waldo Emerson was still calling for literary/intellectual independence in *The American Scholar*.

Self-definition was then part and parcel of imagining the nation and securing full independence. No matter the urgency of Emerson's call for literary independence, the attempt at self-definition began with that question "What is an American?" asked by Jean Michel Hector de Crèvecoeur in his *Letters From an American Farmer* (1774-1781) in the colonial period. In the post- Revolutionary period, it was Benjamin Franklin, a post-colonial American par excellence, who, at the insistence of his friends, set out to write his life as a template of the American man for future generations. John

Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss Jr assert that Black people like Gustavus Vasa known as Ouloudah Equiano and Douglass participated in this “movement of Americans toward intellectual and economic self-sufficiency that was characteristic of the period.” (p.91) “Intellectual self-sufficiency”, it should be observed, is one of the characteristics of what Hegel calls self-consciousness or knowledge of one’s self. Always with reference to the American’s search for intellectual independence, Franklin and Moss add that “Negro Americans were, in a sense, leading the way since they overcame both the degraded position of their race and the psychological and intellectual disadvantage that all Americans of the period suffered.” (p.91)

It is obvious from the above that if Douglass had to borrow a template on which to pattern his life as an example for what a Black man is and should be, he had to look for it first in America before moving to distant Germany. This is all the more unnecessary as both Hegel’s and Franklin’s templates are similar in their emphasis on the quest for perfection for their respective peoples. Furthermore, Franklin’s template had the advantage to be familiar to the American readership and Douglass could not have been blind to this aspect of his work. So before focusing attention on parallels between Douglass’s text and that of Hegel, I think it logical to address the broader similarity between Douglass’s and Franklin’s autobiographies while keeping in mind Hegel as a common reference to both.

As I have already indicated above, the first version of Douglass’s autobiography *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* was published in 1845 at the peak of the abolitionist movement. The publishers of this edition were none else than the Boston Anti-Slavery Society. This first autobiography turned out to be an eminent success and was used as a rallying cry or appeal to the abolitionist cause. It

gave a first-hand account of the malevolence and dehumanisation of slavery. It starts with the following moving sentences:

I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot County, Maryland. I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far the larger part **of the slaves knows as little of their ages as horses know of theirs** and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant.” (p.15, Emphasis mine)

Douglass continues his slave narrative or autobiography by pointing out that he was a “cross-breed” of a Black American woman Harriet Baily and her white master Antony.

The spare details which Douglass supplies about his identity and his family contrast with the generous information and the full genealogy that Franklin provides in his *Autobiography*. Franklin goes as far as 300 years back to the village of Ecton in Northamptonshire, England to locate the roots of the Franklin family, giving information about its early conversion to Protestantism, and his father’s decision in 1682 to migrate to America in order to “enjoy [his] Mode of Religion with Freedom.” (1986:5) On his mother’s family side, Franklin writes that his “mother [...] was Abiah Folger, daughter of Peter Folger, one of the first Settlers of New England of whom honorable mention is made in Cotton Matter, in his Church History of that country, entitled *Magnalia Christi Americana* as a *godly learned Englishman*.”(p.5, Emphasis his) The contrast between the genealogical void of slavery that Douglass invites the reader to look into with the genealogical plenitude or fullness that Franklin shows indicates respectively the absence and the presence of parental figures essential for achieving the feeling of what Hegel names “permanence”.

The absence of a family line in Douglass’s life and the ignorance of the temporal/historical dimension of his identity places him in the domain of “impermanence” i.e., that is the existence of objects. Objects according to Hegel are impermanent in the sense that they are there to satisfy human desire temporarily but

cease to exist once they are consumed. To increase the pathos of his narrative further, Douglass informs the reader of another horror of chattel slavery. “My mother and I were separated when I was but an infant – before I knew her as my mother.” (p.15) A few pages later, Douglass lets the reader know that when his mother died in another plantation where she was hired he was not even given the opportunity to have a last look at her. The first chapters of Douglass’s autobiography are devoted to childhood reminiscences pointing to the erasure of filial, brotherly and sisterly relationships that endow human existence with meaning. Their function is to strike the conscience of the people in the North as to the immorality of a system that perverts the most sacred ethical element in human existence, which is that of family.

One point should be made clear here as to the social framework in which Douglass’s narrative was inscribed. The elocutionary space from which Douglass was writing/speaking was the Northern abolitionist platform. The *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* as Douglass makes clear in the “Appendix” is but an extension of the lecture platform to which he mounted in 1841 at the suggestion of Llyod Garrison and John Collins in Nantucket, Massachusetts. The written narrative came after a period of anti-slavery lecturing when people started to doubt about his story as a slave. It was then that he decided to deliver his story in writing in order to “give names of persons, places, and dates – thus putting it in the power of any who doubted, to ascertain the truth or falsehood of my story being a fugitive slave.” (p.68)It follows that the writing of the autobiography was at once a defiant act, and an authentication of a story supported by two prefaces one by Garrison and another by Wendell Phillips both of them abolitionists, the purpose of which was to rekindle the interest of the public. The final aim was to strike the conscience of public opinion in the North as to the moral evil of

slavery in the South whose holders wanted to reduce the controversy over the issue of slavery to a mere political question between the states.

In Hegelian terms, at the heart of the controversy between the North and the South in which Douglass participated was a conflict of rights. The Southern slaveholders held strongly to the right of personal proprietorship i.e., Abstract Right, while the Northern abolitionists demonstrated Social Morality, the non-acceptance by conscience of slavery because it was thought to be a moral evil to possess human beings. It was obvious that Douglass adopted and sided with the abolitionists, and thus can be considered at this stage to be a defender of the Social Morality against the Abstract right to human property. This shows in the rest of the autobiography when at the age of 7 or 8 he was removed from the home of his grandmother Betsy Bailey to the home plantation of Col. Edward Lloyd where his master was working as the chief clerk and butler. The socialisation process to slavery began, and Douglass did not mince his words in the description of the cruelty that attended the “breaking” of the slaves to their roles as tools at the disposition of the slave masters.

The picture that Douglass gives of his early life on the plantation is far removed from the one that Franklin proffers to the reader in his *Autobiography*. Contrary to Douglass, at the age of 8 Franklin was put in a Grammar school, his father intending to “devote me as the Tithe of his Sons to the service of the Church.” (p.6) Even his uncle Benjamin an intellectual of calibre, after whom he was named, supported the father’s move. But for the large expense that such an academic career would involve, the father would have continued to send his son to Grammar school and through College. Unable to incur the expense because of his large family, the father decided to take his son home to assist in “his business, which was that of a Tallow Chandler and Soap-Boiler.” (p.6) When Franklin showed lack of interest in the proposed trade, his father took him on a

tour of the trades available in the locality with the hope that by watching tradesmen at work, one of the trades would be 'agreeable' to his son, and thus save him from the "Hankering for the Sea." (p.10) Finally, after a short stint at a "Cutler's Trade," at the age of 12 he was "bound to my brother" as an indentured servant to be apprenticed as a printer until the age of 21. It follows that the prospects that opened for Franklin at the age of 8 were quite different from the closed and dark prospects of Douglass who realised at the same age that he was "born a slave ...selected as a meet offering to the fearful and inexorable *demi-god*, whose huge image on so many occasions haunted my childhood's imagination." (p.147)

The moral cord struck by Douglass's words in comparing his biological father to a blood-thirsty god could only accentuate the moral outrage at slavery by the suggested parallels that he draws between Franklin's early childhood and that of his own. If Franklin shows that he owed much to his parents to whom he later dedicated an epitaph "in filial regard to their Memory," Douglass had no such parental props to help him start his life. "His mother's grave," he says, "is, as the grave of the dead at sea, unmarked, and without stone or stake." (p.157) In regard to this contrast between the familial and social environments in which Franklin and Douglass grew up, divine providence assumes a more prominent role in the life of the latter than that of the former. Indeed, soon after his removal to Col. Llyod's plantation, divine providence changed the course of his life because his "old master [Antony] had determined to let me go to Baltimore, to live with Mr. Hugh Auld, brother to my old master's son-in-law, Captain Thomas Auld." (p.33) The religious tone with which Douglass relates this episode of his life makes of him one of the Elect saved by the hands of divine providence from slavery which might otherwise have blasted his moral growth if he had stayed in the plantation. "Going to live in Baltimore," he writes, "laid the foundation, and opened the gateway,

to all my subsequent prosperity. I have ever regarded it as the first plain manifestation of that kind providence which has ever since attended me, and marked my life with so many favours.” (p.36)

In Baltimore, Douglass remained a slave providing company to his “little master Thomas” at Mr. Hugh Auld’s household. However, Douglass reminds the reader that urban slavery as it was then practised in Baltimore was comparatively better than plantation slavery. The reason that Douglass adduces for this difference is that in urban areas, there was moral restraint on passions, which in the plantation were given full vent because of the absence of moral judgement. The case of Hugh Auld’s household was even more exceptional presided as it was by a “mistress [...], a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings. She had never had a slave under her control previous to myself. [...]The crouching servility, usually so acceptable a quality in a slave, did not answer when manifested toward her.” (pp.36-37) Douglass’s mistress suggestively was named Sophia (Wisdom in Greek), and it was under her tutorship that Douglass started to learn the basics of reading.

Franklin’s autobiography is often rightly categorized as an “American Pilgrim’s Progress.” According to Sanford, “it is a great moral fable pursuing on a secular level the theme of John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*.”(Sanford L. Charles, 1954: 309) Douglass’s 1845 narrative, more than that of Franklin deserves the qualification of a pilgrim’s progress since the theme of John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* is, as made clear above, is not secularised but maintained at the religious level. Writing from the point of view of what Hegel calls Social Morality, Douglass was hard pressed to delineate the plantation as a place of sin to which Baltimore provisionally stood as the city of light wherein divine providence chose to land him. Douglass informs the reader

that it was during the seven years that he spent in Baltimore that he learned to read and write, and consequently to hate slavery.

Unlike Franklin, Douglass did not go to a Grammar school, but divine providence placed on his way Sophia who gave him the rudiments of reading. When Sophia ceased to teach him, Douglass became well aware of the importance of education to end his condition as a slave. He overheard Mr. Hugh Auld warning his wife about the dangers of teaching a slave to learn to read and write. Providence willed Douglass to overhear this household discussion, thus compelling him to continue his education by himself. He shrewdly made neighbourhood school children to teach him by challenging them to spell and write better the letters of the alphabet that he observed on the hulls of ships in the nearby shipyard and also by “spending time in writing in the spaces left in Master Thomas’s copy-book, copying what he had written” (p.45) during the absence of his mistress. Douglass’s access to education might have stopped because barely three years after his arrival to Baltimore his formal master Captain Antony died and he was recalled to the plantation in order to be comprised in “the valuation” of property before its division among its heirs. For a second time in the narrative Douglass thanks providence for falling to the portion of Mrs Lucretia who immediately sent him back to “Baltimore to live in the family of Master Hugh.”(p.47)

It was in this way that providence intervened to make him not only knowledgeable about letters but also about abolitionist literature. This shows that the slave’s idea of freedom did not develop in a vacuum. Abolitionist ideas about freedom penetrated the plantation world in the Jacksonian period when common people were invited to voice their own opinions. At the age of 12, the age when Franklin was bonded to his brother in whose printing shop he got access to much literature, Douglass got hold of a book entitled *The Columbian Orator*. “Every opportunity I got,” he says, “I used to read this

book.” (p.41)As in pre-figuration of what would happen later in his life, Douglass was particularly impressed by an included dialogue between a master and his slave. The summary that Douglass supplies to the reader deserves to be quoted in full:

The slave was represented as having run away from the master three times. The dialogue represented the conversation which took place between them, [...] when the slave was retaken the third time. In this dialogue, the whole argument in behalf of slavery was brought by the master, all of which was disposed of by the slave. The slave was made to say some very smart as well as impressive things in reply to his master – things which had the desired though unexpected effect ; for the conversation resulted in the voluntary emancipation of the slave on the part of the master. (pp. 41-42)

Douglass’s 1845 narrative is similar to the summary of the Socratic Dialogue in the quote above. It stands as a public form wherein Douglass stages his self in verbal combat with the slave masters down South. While the dialogue is meant as an introverted comment on what he was doing, it also announces the physical combat between the slave breaker Covey and Douglass soon after being recalled to the plantation. The members of Capt. Antony’s family, as if the sins of the father were visited on them, died one after the other leaving Douglass as an inheritance in the hands of a “stranger” Master Thomas. The latter was Lucretia’s husband. Already harsh by nature, Master Thomas turned out to be the cruellest master and the most careless about a human property simply because he “had nothing to do with accumulating it.” (p.47) Fresh from the town and not yet fully accommodated to the rural hard regime of slavery, Master Thomas did not long support what he regarded as Douglass’s insubordination before handing him to the slave breaker Covey.

At this stage, Douglass makes his 1845 autobiography read as if divine providence had plunged him into the “infernal world of slavery” the better to reveal and expose its cruelties marked on his back by the master’s whip. It was only when he reached the bottom of the inferno inhabited by Pharisees of all sorts that God’s saving grace descended upon him and decided to lift him up by his bootstraps as it were by opposing

resistance to Covey. The slave's verbal combat with the slave master that Douglass had waged so far gives place to a physical combat reminiscent of the dialectic of the slave and master in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. (More will be said about this in the next section of this chapter.) For the moment it is more convenient to resume the parallel that has already been set between Douglass's work and that of Franklin, a parallel that Douglass seemed to have purposely dropped out to emphasize the uniqueness of his harrowing experience as a slave in a plantation. It has to be reminded here that Franklin was bonded to his brother until the age of 21. Being temporarily bonded to a brother was not comparable to the perpetual slavery to which Douglass was doomed.

The combat between Covey and Douglass is similar to the combat between Franklin and his brother. Yet they differ in the degree of ferocity they involved, a difference due to the wide gap between temporary indenture to a brother and perpetual slavery to a stranger. Both Franklin and Douglass escaped their more or less comparable servitude by going to New York at the age of 17. But Douglass's escape was more difficult than that of Franklin. It was enough for the latter to have a friend of his called Collins invent a story about his getting "a naughty girl with Child to secure passage in a New York Sloop. (p.17) Douglass tried several times to escape without success, and once came close to being sold out to slave traders after his recapture. It was only when Master Thomas handed him back to Mr. Hugh Auld in Baltimore, because he thought him irredeemable as a slave, that the prospects of escaping to the North became brighter.

At this point of his life, Douglass's narrative comes closer to Franklin's *Autobiography*. Like Franklin, Douglass entered an apprenticeship as carpenter (Caulker), skilled slaves being more profitable for slave masters like Mr. Hugh Auld. Soon after the end of his apprenticeship, Douglass's master started to hire him in Mr

Gardner's shipyard. A significant incident during his work there illustrates how far Douglass had travelled on his route to freedom and how far he had to go before fully realising it. While working in Gardiner's shipyard, Douglass's white workmates nearly lynched him. The workers did not accept the fact that a "slave nigger" had taken white man's work out of their hands. Battered and bleeding, Douglass fled to his master. This episode recalls a similar early episode when after being whipped by Covey, Douglass fled to complain to his late Master Antony. However, the reactions to maltreatment on the part of Master Antony and Mr Hugh Auld are quite different. Master Antony sent back Douglass to Covey because he was afraid that he would lose the hiring fee while Mr. Hugh Auld was furious with such treatment. Mr. Hugh Auld not only had his wife clean Douglass's wound but went to "pour curses on the heads of the whole ship yard company, and swore that he would have satisfaction for the outrage." (p.334)

In a language reminiscent of the one that Hegel used in *The Philosophy of Right*, Douglass qualifies Mr Hugh Auld's behaviour in order not to mistake it for a purely human and humane action on the part of a slaveholder. This is the comment that Douglass appended in the wake of Mr. Hugh Auld's defence of his slave:

His [Master Hugh Auld's] indignation was really strong and healthy; but unfortunately, it resulted from the thought that his rights of property, in my person had not been respected, more than from any sense of the outrage committed on me as a man. (p.334)

Douglass's phrases "rights of property, in my person" and "sense of the outrage committed on me as a man" are barely hidden terms for Hegel's concept Abstract Right and Social Morality. Not only did Douglass dismiss Mr. Hugh Auld's attitude as being driven by profit, but he went on to attack him for not abiding even to the full terms Abstract Right to property that he seemed to defend.

Mr. Douglass describes himself as a skilled slave "who was able to command the highest wages given to the most experienced caulkers," sometimes amounting to \$ 1.50

a day. After a short period of time, he made a contract with Mr. Hugh Auld wherein the latter agreed to let him contract himself as he thought fit in return for an agreed weekly amount of money. Douglass was free to work extra-time and keep the money for himself, money that would serve to buy his freedom. But soon Mr. Hugh Auld abusively broke the contract degrading Douglass from the status that resembled that of an indentured servant to that of a slave. Even so, Mr. Hugh Auld expected Douglass to contract with other businesses and to bring him money without taking any responsibility. This constituted a breach of what Hegel calls Abstract Right which Mr. Hugh Auld seemed to uphold. For Douglass the money “was rightfully my own. I contracted for it; it was paid to me. However, every week he took it away from him. “And why? Not because he earned it, - not because he had any hand in earning it, - not because he possessed the slightest shadow of right to it; but solely because he had the power to compel me to give it up.” (p.65) This rhetoric seems to be directed at turning upside down the Abstract Right in the name of which the Southern slaveholders based their claims to personal property.

Douglass laid a better case for the final break with slavery than the one that Franklin had made for his breakaway from his indenture. Resentment at arbitrary power is expressed in both cases, but while in the latter it was Franklin who breached his contract with his brother in the former it was Douglass’s master who in the manner of a “robber”, “a grim-visage pirate” arbitrarily proceeded to break it. Such rhetoric recalls the revolutionary rhetoric of the *Declaration of Independence* that justified the decision of the Thirteen Colonies to rebel against the arbitrary power of England to tax people without representation. It puts Douglass in the position of a Black Revolutionary/rebel (Douglass compares himself to Patrick Henry) who after having appealed to the reader’s

respect for contract ran away to the North first to Boston, then to New Bedford wherein this most fundamental right of personal freedom was still observed.

Unlike Franklin, Douglass did not emphasise so much the thrill of escape in his narrative at least in its first two versions, departing in this respect from other slave narratives like Moses Grandy's *Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy* (1843), Lunsford Lane's *The Narrative of Lumsford Lane* (1842) or for that matter from the romances of James Fennimore Cooper and William Gilmore Simms. Apart for the justifications that Douglass adduced for having trimmed off the thrill of the chase, it seems that Douglass did it simply because he was not so much interested in sensationalism as in what he did to deserve his freedom in the North. Douglass ended his denunciation of the immorality of slavery on economic grounds (Abstract Right for Hegel) and it was on the same basis that he wanted to claim his freedom in the North. Like Franklin the destitute "runaway servant" (p.19) in Philadelphia, Douglass the runaway slave in New Bedford soon "bent myself to the work of making money." (p.67) Having already made "a step toward freedom [for having been] allowed to bear the responsibilities of free man" when still a slave in Baltimore, Douglass wrote that on reaching New Bedford and on "Finding my trade of no immediate benefit, I threw off my caulking habiliments and prepared myself to do any kind of work I could get to do." (p.74) Racial discrimination in New Bedford notwithstanding, Douglass succeeded barely three years after his arrival to the North to impose himself as a *homo economicus* i.e., a person in Hegel's terms. He grew so respectable that he was solicited to take the floor during the Nantucket convention of the anti-slavery society in 1841, thus realising his cherished childhood dream of becoming an orator of the same stature as the ones mentioned in *The Columbian Orator*, the first book that had fallen into his hands in Baltimore.

Douglass closes the first version of his autobiography with his assumption of the role of a lecturer/ orator, which at the time of the publication of the work in 1845 he had already played for more than 4 years. As it has already been said above, the 1845 narrative came as a result of an authentication process of Douglass as a slave orator for the abolitionist cause. While putting an end to doubts as to his true identity, this authentication of the narrative caused his flight to England for fear of being recaptured by his former master. In the second version of his autobiography *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) Douglass while refining the episodes of his first version supplemented it with life material covering the years from 1845 (the year of publication of the first version) up to 1855. The differences between the first and second versions of Douglass's narrative are most apparent in form. Whereas the message of the 1845 narrative comes in some sort of "white envelop" because of the somewhat condescending prefaces by the white abolitionists Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips, the 1855 narrative dispenses with this "white envelop" by having it prefaced by the black abolitionist James McCune Smith. Moreover, while the 1845 narrative was published and circulated by the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society the 1855 narrative was published by Douglass himself. More importantly, the 1845 narrative was written while Douglass was still legally a fugitive slave. When he wrote *My Bondage and My Freedom* he had become free for at least 7 years. Contrary to the 1845 narrative, the 1855 narrative was written from the standpoint of a freed man. As the title suggests, the book comprises two parts, one of them devoted to his life as a slave and the other to that of his life as a freed man. As I shall try to show below, Douglass's reflection on freedom is more complex and elaborate in this second version of his autobiography than in the first which he wrote from the perspective of a slave.

What should be noted in this first version is that already in 1845 Douglass had come to the crossroads in his involvement with the Abolitionist Movement. For nearly twenty-six months, Douglass toured “Great Britain and Ireland” speaking on behalf of the abolitionist cause. The first divergence with the Garrisonian abolitionist branch came when Douglass, tired of his exile in England, decided to accept money from English philanthropists to buy his freedom from his master Thomas Auld. This was interpreted by Llyod Garrison as a breach of one of the principles of the Abolitionist Movement which denounced the right of slaveholders not only to own personal property but to trade with it.

However, this breach of principle seemed to hold a secondary place in relation to another factor that brought the real separation. Indeed this second factor seemed to be behind Douglass’s decision to accept participation in what looked like a “domestic slave trade.” After all, Douglass had already attempted to buy his freedom from his master before his escape to the North. The second factor related to the fact that Douglass was not satisfied to be reduced to an “exhibit”, one of Lloyd’s “Texts” each time ordered by the white fellow lecturers whom he accompanied on his anti-slavery tours to tell his story showing his whip-scarred back to the audience. It has to be noted that in the nineteenth century, lecturing was a form of entertainment and theatre. As such a Black man on a lecturing platform was liable to look like an entertaining curiosity on a par with the Jim Crow figures in what then was known as the minstrel shows. Cf. Alvin M. Joseph Jr, 1978) Fionnghuala Sweeny reports that Douglass expressed strong opposition to blackface minstrelsy. A fine example of this opposition is the following quote from Douglass wherein he described the blackface imitators as “the filthy scum of white society, who have stolen from us a complexion denied to them by nature, in which to make money, and pander to the corrupt tastes of their white fellow citizens.” (Quoted in

Sweeny Fionnghuala, 2007:100) As long as Douglass remained technically a slave, he could only feel himself a captive of the abolitionists who exploited him in their own manner. Apart from the demeaning remarks to stick to the facts and to show his scarred back, he received less pay than white agents though he drew the largest audience and the greatest attention to the abolitionist cause. As a consequence of all these factors, he came to the conclusion that only as a free man could strike his own blow for freedom. Soon after the realisation that his life and career as a circuit agent of the white abolitionist looked like a new slavery, he broke with his northern “master” Llyod Garrison by accepting the expediency of allowing British philanthropists to buy him from his former master.

It is not fortuitous that when Douglass was about to leave England for America, he preferred a printing press to any other testimonial as a gift from his English friends. The way that Douglass narrates this episode evokes a similar episode in Franklin’s autobiography. Like Franklin, Douglass met strong difficulty in setting up a printing house and publishing his own newspaper that he called the *North Star*. Garrison, who was the publisher of the *Liberator*, warned him that similar ventures on the part of more experienced Black people had already lamentably failed. However, just as Franklin, Douglass did not heed the calls to caution. With Franklin as an “American Representative/archetypal Man” arguably in mind, Douglass proceeded with the publication arguing that it would help to

change the estimation in which colored people in the United States were held; to remove prejudice which depreciated and depressed them; to prove them worthy of a higher consideration; to disprove their alleged inferiority, and demonstrate their capacity for a more exalted civilization than slavery.” (p.386)

The publication of the journal marked a shift in Douglass’s philosophical beliefs. Until then, Douglass had written in what sounded like an apologetic tone, faithfully following the principles of the Garrisonian abolitionist movement. These principles were related

to the “doctrine touching the proslavery character of the Constitution of the United States, and the non-voting principle [...] and the duty of the non-slaveholding states to dissolve the union with the slaveholding states.”(p.391) Douglass reconsidered his position coming to the conclusion that

to seek the dissolution of the United States was not part of my duty as an abolitionist; that to abstain from voting was to refuse to exercise a legitimate and powerful means for abolishing slavery ; and that the Constitution of the United States [...] is in its spirit an anti-slavery instrument, demanding the abolition of slavery as a condition of its existence, as the supreme law of the land.”(pp.391-392)

It is in such statements of belief that we see the evolution of Douglass’s idea of freedom. In the 1845 narrative, freedom is as freedom from coercion and the arbitrary power of the “slavocracy.” This freedom implies the choice to do whatever one likes without restraint. Hegel calls this form of freedom, subjective, formal, or abstract freedom. Douglass, just like Hegel before him, considers this freedom to be incomplete and harmful to the body politic because of its anarchical impulses. Douglass’s shift in the political agenda towards what Hegel calls objective freedom allies him to the St Louis Hegelian’s belief in the Ethical State. Douglass, like the St. Louis Hegelians and Hegel’s himself believed in the Constitution as the fundamental basis of the Ethical State and objective freedom. Objective freedom is freedom within the limits of the laws of the land which one obeys as part and parcel of his duty as a citizen.

In upholding objective freedom, Douglass knocked the Southerner’s belief in Abstract Right against the Social Morality in the name of which both sides advocated secession. As a founding father of the Radical Abolitionist party (1855), a militant offshoot of the Liberty party, he embraced the immediate abolition of slavery, suffrage for all Americans regardless of sex and race, the equal redistribution of land to put an end to poverty, and a violent intervention against the growing belligerence of the pro-slavery advocates. Still under the influence of the Second Awakening, Douglass and his

party relied on “pentacostal visitations” i.e., messages from God to help them in their fight against slavery. Two or three points need to be added in retracing the evolution of Douglass’s thought about freedom. First, we note that while in the 1845 narrative, Douglass put emphasis on the heroic individual slave, in the 1855 narrative he laid as much stress on the individual as on the community. Now the owner of a printing press, he tried in the manner of Franklin to use his journal to “do good” to the community by invoking the ideal of freedom. Douglass’s use of print culture (anti-slavery speeches are often reproduced in newspapers) in the Jacksonian era and the American renaissance period anticipated the shrewd use of television by Martin Luther King Jr nearly a century later.

The second point is related to the date of publication of *My Bondage and My Freedom*. The year of “1855”, it should be recalled, saw the publication of Walt Whitman *Leaves of Grass*. Arguably, this can be only a historical coincidence, but there is a sense that both works are celebrations of self-mastery and freedom. What distinguishes the 1845 from 1855 narrative is Douglass’s declared intention to have his work alongside classic white literature. The book reads as a mosaic of quotation, in addition to many quotes from the Bible, he cites William Coleridge, Sir Walter Scott (from whom he borrows his name Douglass), William Shakespeare, Lord Byron, Aristotle, John Milton, Martin Luther, William Cowper, and John Greenleaf Whittier. Within the context of Black American thought about freedom, this highlights not only the upgrading of Douglass’s intellectual powers and that of his race but also an attempt to break the colour line in the manner of William B. DuBois who wanted to be “a co-worker in the kingdom of culture.” More about this will be said in the third chapter.

### C. Douglass's Version of the Hegelian Dialectic of the Slave and Master

I have not included Hegel in the list of writers to whom Douglass referred or alluded to in his 1855 narrative. The reason is that Douglass came into contact with Hegel's thought through Ottilia Assing after the publication of this second narrative. Therefore, I consider that it is the third version of his autobiography, the *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, which is more likely to give clues as to Douglass's re-tooling of Hegel's social and political thought. This third version, it should be recalled, was published in 1893, that is 48 years after the publication of his first narrative. Its major difference from the 1845 and 1855 narrative is that Douglass did not write in the same context. The first two versions were written during the abolitionist period. Since then America had known a Civil War, had emancipated its slaves, and had gone through the Reconstruction period before selling out, for a second time, its ideals of freedom to the materialist forces of the Gilded Age. Using Hegel's terms, one can say that the Ethical state won at the expense of a Civil War was degraded to the Abstract Right of new merchant and industrial princes. Consequently, though written in 1893, the *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* tells as much about freedom as about "slavery" in freedom's time. Moreover, this third life narrative gives an overview not only about the evolution of the situation of the American society in its treatment of the racial question but also about the development of Douglass from a radical abolitionist to a more or less conservative Black intellectual. Arguably the most prominent irony of this Black intellectual figure was his marriage to a white woman and his acquisition of General Lee's (General Lee is the most famous general of the Southern Confederacy.) home on Cedar Hill. These gestures of defiance at a time when confrontation with racism (a new slavery) was at its lowest cannot fail to take us back to Frantz Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks* and Malcolm X's *Autobiography*. Both of these authors underlined the

perversion of the Hegelian dialectic of the slave and master into some sort of a ritual show wherein Black men advertise white women as trophies and means of entry into white culture and civilisation.

I shall not dwell any further on this symbolic aspect of Douglass's life. Instead, I shall discuss the first part of his life as a slave in confrontation with his masters. This heroic phase in his career receives the greatest attention of critics even when their study is carried on the first or second versions of his autobiography. My choice to discuss Hegel's dialectic of the master and the slave with reference with the *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* is due to the fact that it is in this version that Douglass refines the most this dialectic, one can say, as another symbolic move to meet the needs of the time for heroism. At a time when heroism and open defiance on the part of the black population could lead to the lynching rope, recalling the heroic times of the past could be construed as one way to maintain psychological balance.

I shall start by explaining very briefly Hegel's theory of self-consciousness, self-knowledge before applying it to Douglass' variation on the same theory in his 1893 autobiography. In the first section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel tries to demonstrate how previous philosophers failed to articulate consciousness in terms of a knowledge which has the form of a subject's knowledge of an object which is distinct from the subject. The lesson that he draws from his critique of previous theories of consciousness is that consciousness had better turn in upon itself in the quest of knowledge of itself (self-certainty) through an examination of self-consciousness. For Hegel self-knowledge starts at the moment we begin to identify an object as other because of our desire for it. At this first stage in the process of self-knowledge, "self-consciousness is Desire". (Hegel Frederick, 1977: 67) In other words, we first encounter ourselves as objects of self-knowledge when we detach ourselves from the

immediate life, that is to say the objects we desire. When we consume objects we prove the permanence of our existence through the disappearance the impermanence or evanescence of the consumed objects. In this formulation of the permanence of human existence, Hegel reverses Descartes' Cogito into something like "I consume objects therefore I am."

However, the sense of self-consciousness achieved through the consumption of desired objects remains incomplete or transitory. We cannot build a permanent self-consciousness on desired objects which vanish as soon as they are consumed. Therefore, we need a more permanent "Other", an "Other" which is not consumed just as soon as its reality affords us a glimpse of who we are. In other words, what we need are kindred spirits living in a community. The relation bind this human "Other" is not desire but mutual recognition.

Hegel tells us that one of the uniquely human characteristics is the quest for detachment from immediate life and the natural processes that sustain it. One way to show this elevation above the immediacy of life is to declare our detachment from any specific life and our spiritual insouciance towards death. To get recognition of another self-consciousness we need to show that we are up to standards in terms of risks to life. Self-consciousness of freedom comes as a result of a combat which Hegel summarises as follows:

Thus the relationship of the two self-conscious individuals is that they prove themselves and each other through a life-and-death struggle.[...] It is only through staking one's life that freedom is won; only thus is it proved that for self-consciousness, its essential being is not just being, not the immediate form in which it appears. (1977:114-115)

True recognition, Hegel tells us, is mutual. So the achievement of self-knowledge and freedom through a life-and-death-struggle is ultimately as evanescent as the one achieved through the consumption of objects. Neither self-knowledge nor freedom can accrue to the winner if it is displayed in front of a corpse. That is why Hegel imagines

that this dialectic is played out between a master and a slave obeying different imperatives: freedom and continued life. The winner comes out the life-and-death struggle with a sense of independence and freedom whereas the vanquished whom Hegel associates with the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another. The former is the master, the other is the slave.

Before expanding further on this Hegelian dialectic of the slave and master, I shall try to show how Douglass revises it in his *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* with particular reference to Chapter XV. Among all the chapters common to Frederick Douglass's autobiographies, this chapter knew the most refinement, hence, what I consider its centrality in Douglass's thought about the slave and master dialectic. The narrative of this chapter starts with Douglass being handed by his master Thomas Auld to a "negro breaker" Edward Covey. The master's decision is due to Douglass's breaking up the Sabbath school he has organised for his fellow slaves. Auld wanted his slave to be "broken" lest he turns into a rebel like "Nat Turner". That is why Douglass heads to the Covey plantation on the morning of January 1, 1834.

Covey has a farm of "three or four hundred" acres and all the work force that he has at his disposal are three Negroes: Bill Smith, Bill Hughes and Frederick Douglass. So he is a comparatively poor farmer among the plantation owners. Just three days after Douglass's arrival at his farm, he starts "taming" Douglass because the latter is leased out for a year and "the sooner he began the better." Douglass recounts how on one of the coldest mornings of the month of January, 1834, Covey plays on him a trick by ordering him at daybreak to get a load of wood from a forest about two miles away from the house on a cart drawn by a pair of "half-broken [untamed] horned oxen." With reference to this episode in his life, Douglass writes that "I saw in my own situation several points of similarity with that of the oxen. They were property; so was I. Covey

was to break me – I was to break them. Break and be broken was the order.” (p.567)The self-irony in this quote comes out just a few lines later in the narrative. Douglass has realised that the oxen are half-tamed; he for a moment thought that he had broken them on his way out to the forest. However, anxious to go back to Covey’s home on time, he inadvertently “let go the end of the rope on the horns of the in-hand oxen” in order to open the gate to Covey’s plantation house. Off the oxen went crashing the cart against the gate.

Douglass went to Covey to explain that it was not his fault if the oxen had damaged the gate. Tricky as he was, Covey went to check if what his slave is saying about the oxen is true. As can be expected from oxen which have had their spree they have become the gentlest creatures that can be imagined. It is in this way that Covey had the first opportunity to try out his skill of “Negro breaker” on Douglass. This is how Douglass reports the first flogging at the hands of Covey: “he rushed at me with something of the savage fierceness of a wolf , tore off the few and thinly worn clothes I had on, and proceeded to wear out on my back the heavy goads which he had cut from the gum tree. This flogging was the first of a series of floggings.” (p.569)

Douglass goes on recounting the harrowing details of his chastisement, but it is not necessary to go into them here. It is enough to deliver the reader the following reflection which summarises the effect that Covey’s brutality had on Douglass:

A few months of his discipline tamed me. Mr Covey succeeded in breaking me. I was broken in body, soul and spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed; my intellect languished; the disposition to read departed; the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died; the dark night of slavery closed in upon me; and **behold a man transformed into a brute**, (Ibid. Emphasis mine)

Douglass is reduced to a mere object in the hands of Covey, but even so Covey has not ceased looking for opportunities to beat him. It is after one such severe beating that Douglass fled to his master Thomas Auld to display the cruel treatment that he had

received at the hands of Covey just because he had stopped working in order to take a rest because of a severe headache. Douglass knows that it is pointless to appeal to his master's human emotions, so he thought of reminding him that Mr Covey was endangering a valuable property of his, namely Douglass himself. However, Auld Thomas found excuses for Covey's brutality and ordered him to return to Covey immediately.

It has to be observed here that Douglass plays a variation on Hegel's dialectic of the slave and the master in at least two ways. In Hegel's story of the master and slave, the master is portrayed as being careful not to reduce the slave to a thing or an object because if the slave falls below the threshold of respectability as in the case of Douglass, the recognition that s/he will get from the slave will be diminished. In other words, it is as unsatisfactory as the one s/he will get from the consumption of objects. True recognition requires both of the parties to be of equal standing, that is persons. This imperative set by Hegel for the achievement of self-ownership and, therefore, access to freedom from the surrounding objective world is described as missing in the relationship that the white American master holds with his black slaves. The slave as Douglass describes himself is reduced to less than the 'philosophical' slave in Hegel's work. He is transformed into a mere "brute". It follows that the slave master Covey is not up to the standards that Hegel has set for his master. Blinded by passion he remains in similar bondage to the objective world as his slave Douglass.

The other variation that Douglass plays on Hegel's dialectic of the slave and master resides in the status accorded to work. In Hegel's dialectic, the slave enhances the master's sense of freedom from the outside world. The slave does the work for the master, so the latter no longer needs to be active in pursuit of the objects of his desires. The master still has desires, but he no longer needs to engage with the physical world to

satisfy them, once he has imposed his domination over the slave. It is left to the slave to cater to the needs of the master. The master concentrates on the enjoyments of the goods that the former produces. Therefore, in his relation to immediate life he is free.

This notion of the slave's work as an enhancing factor in the sense of consciousness that the master has of himself is absent in the dialectic as rendered in *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. Douglass has become a very obedient and conscientious field hand just after six months' stay with Covey. Yet this does not save him from Covey's passion for cruelty. Covey the slave master has nearly killed him while working in his "three or hundred acres farm" just in order to assuage his sense of cruelty.

I shall now turn to the discussion of how Hegel's master compares with Douglass's master Auld Thomas. I have already quoted Douglass saying to his master Auld that Covey is in the process of damaging his property, which is his own person. Auld has remained deaf and blind to this economic reasoning. I regard Auld's neglect of private property, even if private property here is a human being, as an indication that the relation that obtains between masters and slaves in the American slavery system is far below that philosophical ideal that Hegel describes in his dialectic. One of Hegel's arguments in *The Philosophy of Right* is that freedom or self-consciousness is closely connected with private property. More about this connection between freedom and private property will be said later when I deal with how Douglass sets out to get his freedom. Thomas Auld in his *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* renounces to his property. From here it follows that the Hegelian slave dialectic in Douglass's autobiography is completely askew. Private property which enhances freedom since it allows persons to achieve mutual recognition of each other's status as discrete moral beings. Recognition is achieved when respect is granted to the authority of the persons concerning the property at their disposal. No need to state here that the slave in

Douglass' autobiography represents one such property. But the fact that the person who owns him does not seek to protect him indicates that in the American slave system, property rights do not operate when it comes to slaves. Slaves have no legal status whatever; they are just nothing. In front of the cruelty and the passion of their masters, black slaves are not up to the status of human tools assigned to slaves in Aristotle's *Politics*.

Before I continue my discussion of the variation that Douglass plays on the Hegelian dialectic of the slave and master I shall take over the summary of Douglass's narrative where I have dropped it out above. This will help the reader follow the argument I want to develop at this point. I have stopped the summary of Douglass's narrative at the point wherein Douglass flees to his master Thomas Auld because of cruel treatment and the order that the latter gives to his slave Douglass to go back to Edward Covey the "Negro Breaker". Thomas Auld is afraid that "he could not take me from him [Covey]; that should he do so, he would lose the whole year's wages." (p.585) Though he is desperate, Douglass does not go back to Covey's custody immediately. He spends sometimes in the woods praying God for deliverance from slavery in general and from the cruel Covey in particular.

It is while Douglass is in the woods praying that another slave by the name of Sandy Jenkins is going through that portion of the woods at nightfall to spend the Sabbath with his wife living in a neighbouring plantation, "about four miles from Mr Covey's." (Ibid) Sandy is famous among local slaves for his good nature and his good sense. If Douglass comes out of his hiding when Sandy comes in sight, it is because Sandy "was not only a religious man, but he professed to believe in a system for which I have no name. He was a genuine African, and had inherited some of the so-called magical powers, said to be possessed by African and Eastern nations." (Ibid) Douglass's belief in

Sandy comes at a moment when he seems to have lost faith in the Christian God, the white man's God because of His failure to "let him and his people go." (A reference to the Bible)

Sandy is true to his reputation among slaves since he takes Douglass home to his black free wife's house. As Douglass is pouring his grief to Sandy, the latter assistance in the form of a "certain [magic] root, which, worn "always on the right side would render it impossible for Mr Covey or any other white man" to whip the slave. Hence, armed with this root, Douglass goes back to Covey's farm confident that he is now immune against surprise attacks from the "Negro Breaker". Douglass returns to Covey's household on a Sunday as Covey and his wife are going to Church. Covey is in his Sunday best and wearing angelic countenance. For some time, Douglass thought that Sandy's magic root that he is carrying in his right hand has rendered him invulnerable to Covey's attacks. He even blames himself for having doubted about "the virtue in the root" out of "pride."

Little does Douglass suspect that if Covey has not beaten him on a Sunday, it is because of that hypocrisy that makes false Christians like Covey observe a pause in his cruelty during religious occasions. Hence, all goes well until Monday when Covey is freed from religious observance of the Sabbath. Covey returns to his customary brutality towards Douglass, and the latter having realised that there is no magic way out of his dire state, resolves to make a stand against the Covey's cruel treatment. It is at this crucial episode of the narrative that Douglass gives us his version of Hegelian dialectic of the slave and the master.

This is how Douglass recounts how he started his fight with Covey. He recalls that he has held his tormentor by the throat, knowing well that beating any white man in the South meant a death sentence. Douglass the slave emerges on centre stage. Unlike the

slave in Hegel who gives up the struggle with the master because of his fear of death, Douglass “held [Covey] so firmly by the throat that his blood flowed through my nails”. To Covey’s/master’s question “Are you going to resist you scoundrel,” he replies politely but firmly “Yes Sir.” (p.588)What is important to note about Douglass’s Hegelian dialectic is that no one gives up the fight. When the master/Covey realises that Douglass/the slave is determined to carry out the fight and that he is equal to him in terms of strength, he tries to enlist the help of other people from his household, both slave and free.

What ensues after Douglass’ insubordination is worthy of note. Apart from Covey’s cousin Hughes who has tried to help subdue Douglass, and whom the latter has beaten off, the other people at hand have not interfered in the struggle. They have remained mere witnesses to the fight even when Covey tries to enlist their help. Bill the hired man affects ignorance of what Covey wishes him to do, and Caroline the female slave at Covey’s home bravely refuses her master’s instructions to hold Douglass. It follows from here that in Douglass’ version of the Hegelian dialectic the slave comes out as the equal of the master. Douglass trims it off of what is supposed to be the metaphysical fear of death that makes a slave a slave, and tones off the bravery that makes of the master a master. The cowardice that Hegel has made the major trait of the slave in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* sheds off on the master himself.

After a two-hour struggle, Covey gives up the contest and let Douglass go. Douglass tells us that since that fight with the master he has metamorphosed from an object “nothing” into a “man”:

I was **nothing** before; I was a **man** now. It (the fight) recalled to life my crushed self-respect and my self-confidence, and inspired me with renewed determination to be a **free man**. A man without force is without the essential dignity of humanity.... I was no longer a **servile coward, trembling** under the frown of a brother worm of the dust, but my **long-cowed spirit** was roused to an attitude of **manly**

**independence.** I had reached a point at which I was not **afraid to die.**  
(p.591, Emphasis mine)

In the quote above, there is that ebullience of spirit and that unique sense of freedom which Hegel considers as characteristic of people/masters who voluntarily put their life at risk. What makes Douglass's version of the dialectic of the slave and master different from that of Hegel is that the principle of reciprocity in recognition is not twisted. Douglass the slave does not trade off a subordinate life for work. He physically struggles for Covey's recognition of him as a man.

However, Douglass's life-and-death struggle with the master has not made Douglass refuse to continue his work at Covey's farm. I will quote Frantz Fanon to make my argument clear. In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* dragoons his slave the dependent consciousness to work as soon as he establishes his domination over him. The slave accepts to do the necessary work to save his life. Fanon writes in *Black Skin, White Masks* that the role which labour performs for the servant in the Hegelian dialect does not apply to the historical experience of the blacks. "I hope I have shown", writes Fanon that here [that's the case of slaves in the United States] the master differs basically from the master described by Hegel." (1967: 64)

My analysis of the representation of the master in Douglass' autobiography seems to be in line with that of Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*. But Fanon's representation of the slave seems to be quite different from that of Douglass. I will quote again Fanon to illustrate his view of the slave (in the colonial context) and then I will compare it with that of Douglass:

For Hegel there is reciprocity, here, the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work. In the same way, the slave here is in no way identifiable with the slave who loses himself in the object himself and finds in his work the source of his liberation. The Negro wants to be like the master. Therefore he is less independent than the Hegelian slave. In Hegel the slave turns away from the master and turns toward

the object. Here the slave turns toward the master and abandons the object. (Ibid)

I must qualify a little Fanon's view of the Black slave because Douglass does not consider himself free from work the moment that Covey lets go of his throat. In other words, the "man" that the Negro slave has become has not tried to be like his master. He does not turn his back on work. I mean here that Douglass considers that the Hegelian paradigm of the slave and master remains valid as regards the importance of work for the achievement of self-liberation and self-possession.

To say that Douglass does not depart from Hegel in his concept of labour as a necessary imperative for the achievement of self-consciousness does not mean that Douglass agrees with Hegel on the conditions in which this labour has to be accomplished. In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the superior power of the master exists for the slave as objectively as the sword over the slave's head. This is exactly the relation that prevails between Covey and Douglass before his decision to affirm himself in front of Covey. What saves Douglass and his philosophical counterpart is the labour that each of them accomplishes for the master.

According to Hegel, labour saves the slave on other counts as well. He writes that "through his service [to the master] he rids himself of his attachment to natural existence in every single detail; and he gets rid of it by working on it." (1977:117) This means that Hegel believes that the slave becomes absorbed in his labour for the master. He does not simply consume the world by pursuing his desires. Hegel defines work as "desire held in check, fleetingness staved off; in other words, work forms and shapes the thing." (Ibid, p.118) The slave is not a dumb creature; he experiences his freedom in a different way from that of his master. This freedom is experienced in the identification of the products of his labour as his own fashioning, in spite of the fact that he has made

these products in obedience to the master's orders. Hegel closes his argument by saying that the slave rehabilitates himself through creative work.

In talking about the slave's achievement of freedom through work, Hegel does not take into account the legal status or standing of his two protagonists. This is just another important matter that he discusses in *The Philosophy of Right* in terms of the connection between property and freedom. So Hegel seems to be well aware that the slave remains not totally free even if he works for the master. The freedom he earns through work is formal, subjective, abstract not concrete.

The case is different with the master who just exchanges one dependency for another one. In other words, whereas formerly he was dependent on the external world for his sustenance, now that he has established domination over the slave, he has become dependent on the slave. Ultimately then, it is the labour which metaphysically and socially saves the slave from bondage. Douglass seems to have realised that Hegel's dialectic remains valid with reference to the notion of the saving power of labour. Douglass does not quit work in Covey's farm after the expiration of his term of service on Christmas Day 1834. Douglass's explicit view of work comes just before his lease to another plantation owner William Freeland. "The days between Christmas day and New Year's were allowed the slaves as holidays." (p.594) Douglass observes that slaves spend their times in different manners to which the slaveholders react differently. Douglass observes that

A slave who would work during the holidays was thought by his master undeserving of holidays. There was in the simple of continued work an accusation against slaves, and a slave could not help thinking that he dollars during the holidays he might make three hundred during the year. Not to be drunk during the holidays was disgraceful. (p.594)

Douglass continues his observation that if the masters encourage their slaves to spend their holidays frolicking it is in order to make the slaves "feel glad to go from that which our masters had artfully deceived us into the belief was freedom, back again into

the arms of slavery.” (p.594)The parallel that Douglass draws between freedom and work is very evident, since he sees work as the means by which the slave can avoid being slave to whisky and rum which at that time were regarded as the basest desires.

Douglass resumes his narrative by telling of another episode in his own life as a slave in Mr William Freeland’s plantation. In the chapter suggestively entitled “New Relations and Duties” in which he recounts this episode of his life, he emphasises the intellectual aspect of his work, which is education. This work is no less liberating for the slave than the manual work that he does for Mr Freeland. Douglass recounts how the leniency of Mr Freeland has permitted him to “exercise my gifts and to impart to my brother-slaves the little knowledge I possessed [...]under the shade of an old oak tree.” (p.599)

It is necessary at this point to go back to Hegel’s dialectic of the slave and master in *Phenomenology of Spirit* to understand Douglass’s association of freedom and literacy for which the slave/Douglass has worked/struggled hard. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel does not hesitate to set linkages between the dialectic of the master and the slave and the mindset of the Greek and Roman worlds up to the modern man through the appeal to myth. Similarly, Douglass does not hesitate to work out a usable myth to explain how the slave that he was has taken consciousness of his condition as a slave. One of these myths as Houston A. Baker, Jr suggests is the fall of man in the Bible.

Baker Jr has singled out all the aspects of the myth of the Fall with reference to two prominent chapters in Douglass’s autobiography, Chapter IX and chapter X entitled respectively, “Change of Location” and “Learning to read”. For one thing, Baker Jr compares Douglass’s “change of location” from Col. Llyod’s plantation to Mr Hugh Auld’s household in Baltimore as a positive change. An idyllic calm prevails over the new setting that contrasts sharply with the hell in which Douglass lived while Col.

Llyod's plantation. Ruling over this edenic calm is Mrs Auld/Eve whom Douglass calls "Miss Sophia". It is from her own hands that Douglass receives literacy. Douglass recalls that

the frequent hearing of my mistress reading the Bible aloud, for she often read aloud when her husband was absent, awakened my curiosity in respect to this **mystery** of reading, and roused in me the desire to learn. Up to this time I had known nothing whatever of this wonderful art, and my ignorance and inexperience of what it could do for me, as well as my confidence in my mistress emboldened me to ask her to teach me to read." (p.526)

If Miss Sophia stands for Eve, Douglass, Baker Jr, suggests, is a surrogate for an "ironical Adam." To complete the cast, Baker Jr associates Mr Auld to the serpent. This association of Mr Auld to the serpent is due to the fact that it is he who breaks the innocence existing between Miss "Sophia" and Douglass. The latter describes how one day Mr Auld

proceeded to unfold to his wife (Miss Sophia) the true philosophy of the slave system and the peculiar rules necessary in the nature of the case to be observed in the management of human chattels... He forbade her to give me any further instruction. For if he learns to read the Bible it will forever unfit him [the slave] to be a slave." (p.527)

Just as in the Bible, the Tree of Knowledge is forbidden to Douglass the slave, and the way Mr Auld (the serpent) explains how education is antithetic to slavery has made this Tree of Knowledge more than desirable. Douglass writes that "the effect of his [Mr Auld's] words on me was neither slight nor transitory. His iron sentences, cold and harsh, sunk like weights deep into my heart, and stirred within me a rebellion not soon to be allayed. (Ibid, Emphasis mine) Douglass closes the chapter "Learning to read" with the following resolution: "Very well", thought I, "Knowledge unfits a child to be a slave". I instinctively assented to the proposition, and from that moment I understood the direct pathway from slavery to freedom."(Ibid)

In Chapter XI, entitled “Growing in Knowledge” Douglass goes on explaining on how he worked hard to increase his knowledge after Miss Sophia stopped teaching him. In this chapter Douglass becomes some sort of trickster/Prometheus figure. Mr Douglass hits upon the idea of “using as teachers my young white playmates with whom I met on the streets.” Since his white playmates are not yet fully socialised into the slavery system he easily cheats them out of some little knowledge. Douglass tells the reader how at the age of thirteen, he gets hold of a popular school book, *The Columbus Orator*. It is at this stage that he delivers what I consider an important piece of information as the philosophical interest that Douglass gives to the Hegelian dialectic of the slave and master.

Douglass writes that “Among much other interesting matter [in *Columbus Orator*], that which I read again and again with unflagging satisfaction was a short dialogue between a master and slave.” (p.532) Douglass develops extensively the polemics in which the master and the slave engaged in the *Columbus Orator* and how “the master was vanquished at every turn in the argument, and appreciating the fact, he generously and meekly emancipates the slave, with his best wishes for his prosperity.” (p.533) I consider that the dialogue that Douglass engages with Hegel about the dialectic of the master and the slave is of a similar nature. It aims to turn upside down the arguments of pro-slavery masters among whom figures Hegel himself.

#### **D. The Hegelian Journey to Self-Consciousness in Douglass’s *Life and Times***

I shall continue the discussion of the importance of education as a path to freedom by looking at it from the point of view of what Hegel calls the “journey to freedom”. This journey to freedom starts at the moment when the slave-labourer realises that he has achieved a subjective kind of freedom (freedom of self-consciousness) independently of the reality of oppression. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel

describes four stages which the “bonded” self, i.e., the slave must ideally encounter in the journey of self-discovery and freedom. (Cf.1977, pp.119-138) In the first stage, s/he must experience **stoicism** and resist being crushed by the dominance that is directed towards him. In the second stage, s/he must experience **scepticism** as he doubts the right of the dominating party to relegate him to inferiority; in the third stage, the scepticism s/he has directed outwards at his/her master/mistress must be directed inward while s/he **introspects his/her own urges**. In himself/herself s/he finds all the urges of the master/mistress and the servant. Finally, in the fourth stage, the hero/ine must strive **for transcendence of negative urges “false consciousness”**, towards Hegel’s “rational consciousness”.

All four stages of the Hegelian journey are present in *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. The first stage starts the moment that he quits his grandmother’s hut to live in Colonel Llyod’s plantation where his old master Captain Aaron Anthony worked as a butler. It is in the second chapter entitled “Removal from Grandmother’s” that Douglass describes his first journey to consciousness. He writes that the twelve miles from Tuckahoe, the whereabouts of his grandmother’s hut, to Colonel Llyod’s plantation “was quite a severe test of the endurance for my young legs.” (p.481) But the pangs of consciousness start when the grandmother leaves him in Colonel Lloyd’s plantation with his black brothers and sisters in slavery. Douglass ends this chapter by the following remark “this was my first introduction to the realities of the slave system.” (Ibid)

Until then, Douglass had lived with his maternal grandparents Bestsy and Isaac Bailey “whose kindness and love stood in place of my mother’s.” His life with his grandparents was a relatively cosy one because his grandmother enjoyed a “reputation of being born

to good luck... a reputation ...full of advantage to her and her grandchildren, for a good crop, after her planting for the neighbour, brought her a share of the harvest.” (p.476)

In the home plantation of Col. Llyod, he loses the “false consciousness” that his log-house belongs to his grandmother. He becomes aware that not only the log-house but also his grandparents and he really belong to Capt. Aaron Anthony the head overseer in Col. Llyod’s plantation. Douglass’s stoicism shows itself in the “troubles of childhood” that he narrates in the second chapter devoted to his life as a slave boy in Col. Llyod’s plantation. He recounts that a slave woman by the name of Aunt Katy in whose care he is put is very harsh and cruel with him. Aunt Katy, who contrary to all other slave mothers is allowed to keep her children with her, has the favours of the master. Consequently, she is prone to starve with the children in her care so that her own will eat to satisfaction. No matter how much cruel Aunt Katy is, Douglass resists being emotionally crushed by the dominance that she imposes on him. Aunt Katy has made him go without food for a whole day for an offence that he does not really manage to name. However, instead of weeping and imploring pity as any other child would have done in his place, he has cared more about “his dignity” and has gone “behind the kitchen wall and cried like a fine fellow.” (p.484)

At the end of this excruciating experience, his mother appears on the scene. Aunty Katy has caught him roasting an ear of Indian corn. Without the mother’s arrival, Aunt could have starved or beaten the life out of him because of his refusal to submit to her. “The mother took the corn from me and gave in its stead a large ginger-cake and she read Aunty Katy a lecture which was never forgotten.” It has to be reminded here that his mother was sold to another slave master some twelve miles away from Col. Lloyd’s plantation. She “had walked twelve miles to see me, and had the same distance to travel over again before the morning sunrise.” The mother’s presence boosts him up just at the

moment that Aunt Katy is about to break his resistance. Douglass writes that “that night I learned as I had never learned before, that I was not only a child, but somebody’s child. I was grander upon my mother’s knee than a king upon his throne.” (Ibid)

Douglass’s stoic attitude to life has been kept all through his life as a slave. It is needless to repeat here his refusal to be “broken” at the hands of the “Negro breaker” Covey. There are other experiences in his life that he recounts which are even more excruciating. One of them happens when he moves to Baltimore to Master Hugh’s house. Master Hugh has hired Douglass to Mr William Gardiner, an extensive ship builder on Fell’s Point. He reminisces how the white carpenters in the shipyard where he works as a hired apprentice kept him running him all day long in order to “make it impossible for me to stay.” (p.629) Not only has Douglass managed to bear stoically all their insults but he has refused to be crushed even physically. As many as four carpenters –“Ned North, Ned Hayes, Bill Stewart, and Tom Humphreys “have tried to bring him down to his knees without success. He tells the reader how after being on the ground with one of his eyes popping out of its socket, he “picked up the hand-spike as soon as (he) gathered strength and madly enough attempted to pursue them.” (p.630)

Much more evidence can be given for the stoicism that Douglass evinces while he is experiencing the hardships of slavery. However, I will content myself with the illustrations I have already given because they are quite representative of this stage of the Hegelian journey to self-consciousness and freedom. I will now move to the next stage which is that of scepticism. Just as with stoicism, Douglass starts to be sceptic of the right of his different masters to relegate him to inferiority even when he was a child. He dismisses one by one the ideas that slaveholders advance for the reduction of human beings to chattel slavery.

It is in Chapter VI entitled “A Child’s Reasoning” that Douglass expresses his scepticism towards the natural condition of the slave. This chapter is preceded by a chapter devoted to the “Slaveholder’s Character”, which needless to say, is made in unfavourable terms. He writes that the “incidents related in the foregoing chapter (V) led me thus early to enquire into the origin and nature of slavery.” To the question “Why am I a slave” Douglass is given the answer that “God up in the sky “had made all black people to be slaves and white people to be masters.” (p.498) He is sceptical about this explanation because it stands against the notion of God’s “goodness”. That black people were not born slave shows in the stories Douglass has heard about some slaves who have fled to the North to be free. There are also the stories of those “slaves on Mr Lloyd’s place who remembered being brought from Africa. There were others who told me their fathers and mothers were stolen from Africa.” (Ibid)

Douglass’s scepticism about slavery increases gradually as he grows older. One of the turning points in this sceptical attitude is the “change of location”. Douglass, as I have already indicated above, quits Col. Lloyd’s plantation for Baltimore to live with “Mr Hugh Auld, a brother to Mr Thomas Auld, Miss Lucretia’s husband.”(p.521)It is in Hugh Auld’s house that he learns to read and write. I have discussed in the previous pages the circumstances in which Douglass has managed to have access to reading in Sophia’s home. It is enough to remind the reader here that the capacity to read has made it possible for Douglass to be acquainted with the anti-slavery literature of his time, and of course his scepticism towards slavery has become more militant. This is what Douglass writes about reading Sheridan, Lord Chatham, and William Pitt, all of them British opponents to slavery:

Here was indeed a noble acquisition. If I had ever wavered under the consideration that the Almighty, in some way, had ordained slavery and willed my enslavement for His own glory, I wavered no longer. I had now penetrated to the secret of all slavery and of all oppression, and had ascertained the foundation to be in pride, the power and avarice of man.

With a book in my hand so redolent of the principles of liberty, and with a perception of my own human nature and of the facts of my past and present experience, I was equal to a contest with the religious advocates of slavery. (p.533)

Douglass comes back to the South twice: the first time at the death of his master Aron Antony to be reckoned in the “valuation” of property to be apportioned among the two remaining inheritors: Lucretia and Andrew. Douglass considers himself fortunate because it is Lucretia who inherits him. He goes back to live in Mr Hugh Auld’s household in Baltimore. It has to be observed here that Douglass is passed to Mr Hugh Auld to keep company to his son “Tommy”.

The second time that Douglass comes back to the South is made under a less auspicious sign. Lucretia, Douglass’s real mistress and Andrew, Lucretia’s brother, died in the same year. Hence he becomes the slave of Thomas Auld, Lucretia’s husband. An unhappy incident between Thomas Auld and Hugh Auld leads the former to ask the latter back to his plantation in St Michaels, Maryland. Back from Baltimore in the North to Thomas Auld’s plantation further in the South, armed with “Growing knowledge” about the nature of slavery, and converted to the Episcopal Methodist church, Douglass becomes more than ever sceptical of the slavery system.

As soon as he arrives at his new home in St Michaels, he tries to organise a clandestine Sabbath school for Negroes. Catching him red-handed in what is considered a subversive activity, Thomas Auld sends him to the Negro Breaker in order to learn slave manners. I have already detailed the experience that Douglass had in Covey’s farm. I will add here that his resistance to Covey could not have happened if Douglass has not grown definitely sceptical of the right of a man, be he white, to hold power over another man, be he black.

Scepticism in Douglass just as scepticism in Hegel’s slave is not directed solely outward at his master but inward at himself as well. Several times in the autobiography

he falls into introspection about his condition as a slave. At such moments, he comes close to forgetting about the several masters who hold them in bondage to concentrate on the system of slavery that makes of both slave and master victims and bonded men. It is in the transcendence of the negative urge to dominate that Douglass reaches what Hegel calls the “rational consciousness”. For example, even at the moment when he has overpowered Covey, he refuses to put on the hat of the oppressor because he manages to control his urge to dominance.

### **Conclusion**

I end this chapter with the realisation that Douglass influenced and was in his turned influenced by the social and political thought of his time. The 1845 narrative participated in the debate over slavery and freedom as a result of the expanding process of democratisation of the public sphere in the Jacksonian Era. In spite of his slave status, Douglass was a “common man”. As such he had the right to air his opinion in the public space in favour of freedom for the slaves in both a spoken and written mode. It was all the more so because Douglass spoke from experience about a highly sensitive issue during that time. If I have compared this narrative with Franklin, it is in order to show to which extent this narrative re-appropriates the revolutionary ideals of freedom. Among other things, I have showed how Douglass opposed freedom from coercion (subjective freedom) to arbitrary power, southern hypocrisy, the corruption of family values, passion, etc. At this stage of his life, Douglass was involved in an abolitionist circuit lecture that defended the ideal of social morality against the Southern abstract right to the possession of human beings. I know well that the 1845 narrative could be placed within the context of the literary market place of the time dominated by what is called sentimental literature. I did not do it because other critics have already proceeded with the task. (Cf. Fisch, Audrey, 2007)

As for the 1855 narrative, it was written from the perspective of freed man during the period when the issue really threatened to explode the nation. It witnessed, among other things, the voting of a fugitive slave act that permitted the South to recuperate fugitive slaves from the Northern states. Secession was in the air on both sides of Dixie-Line, and Douglass refused to be carried out in the prevailing passion by cutting his ideological links with Llyod Garrison who was one of the defenders of the secession from the South. Freedom in this 1855 narrative ceases to be associated with the choice of doing what one wants to do. It affirms, instead, the ethical state as a necessary dimension for the achievement of objective freedom in the form of an assertion as to the anti-slavery and democratic nature of the Constitution. *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) sheds off the “white envelop” of the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) and carries the message announcing that the black slaves cannot only be “hewers of wood” but also “co-workers in the field of culture.” (The words are DuBois’s) The great number of quotes in the text destroys the white man’s prejudice about the black man’s cultural deficiency and his inability to integrate into the body politic. (This theme is developed in details in the third chapter.) I have also pointed out that Douglass’s use of print culture to defend the cause of freedom was similar to the use of the visual media (especially Television) by Martin Luther King Jr during the period of the Civil Rights movement in the late 1950s and the 1960s.

I have started the discussion of the third version of Douglass’s autobiography by relating it to the historical context wherein the black population was divested of the Civil Rights that it won during the Reconstruction period. This 1893 autobiography is comparatively conservative in its outlook. Instead of dealing with this conservative strain, I have preferred to concentrate instead on the one chapter of it which recalls the combative nature of Douglass. The chapter is the one concerned with the master-slave

relation (Covey and Douglass) that I have treated with reference to Hegel's dialectic of master and slave and the journey to self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Similarities and differences are highlighted in terms of the relation of slave and master, their respective relation to objects and work. On the whole the evolution of Douglass's social and political thought is the same as that of Hegel due to the similarity of their contexts. In the next chapter, I shall highlight the way Douglass's conservative thought finds its best expression in Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* (1901).

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## Chapter Two

### **Up from Douglass's Slave Narrative: Booker T. Washington, Georg W.F. Hegel and the American School of Slavery**

#### **Introduction**

The only essential connection that has existed and continued to exist between Negroes and the Europeans is slavery. [...] slavery is itself a phase of advance from the merely isolated sensual existence – a phase of education – a mode of becoming participant in a higher morality and the culture connected with it.

This is what Hegel (1971:98-99) writes when he comes to speak of the role of the Negroes in world history. He considers as inevitable the condition of slavery for the Black man when he comes into contact with the white man. Hegel finds the idea unjust and hateful, but when it concerns the Black man it is necessary because it is the sole way to detach him from sensuality and put him on the path of reason and freedom. For him, the Black man cannot escape passing through the school of slavery before becoming mature and having a right to participate in civilisation. These are the major Hegelian ideas of slavery that found their way into the revisionist school of American history that viewed slavery from a so-called “pragmatic” perspective in the Gilded Age, which in Afro-American history is called the Jim Crow Era. Booker T. Washington is one of the most prominent Black American thinkers of this period, who tried in his own way to move “up from the slave narrative” (of the kind that Douglass had written in the antebellum period) and to give a “pragmatic” account of the “American school of slavery.” This intellectual move resulted in the philosophy of accommodation.

This chapter is concerned with the way Washington handles Hegelian themes and ideas of freedom and slavery to give philosophical props to the accommodationist approach to the interracial problem in the Gilded Age/Jim Crow Era. The analysis is based on Washington's *Up From Slavery* (1901) and two lectures/essays of his the

“Industrial Education for the Negro” and “The Economic Development of the Negro Race Since its Emancipation.” These three works are illustrative of the way Washington recounts the story of freedom and slavery in “Freedom’s” time. The frame of reference for the thematic discussion of these works is constituted mainly of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *The Philosophy of Right*. In this chapter, I put particular emphasis on the peculiar manner of Washington’s redeployment of the Hegelian notions of freedom and slavery from these works in order to highlight his contribution to his Black American political thought.

#### **A. Booker T. Washington: Life, Times and the Quest for Legitimacy as Leader**

It goes without saying that Washington, like any other thinker, influenced and was influenced by the major events of his time. In compliance with the historicist perspective of this research, I begin by setting Washington and his work in context. Booker T. Washington was born Booker Taliaferro, a slave, in rural Virginia. As he indicates in his autobiography *Up From Slavery* (1901), he was not sure as to the exact date of his birth, which he situated around 1858 or 1859. His mother, Jane, was the plantation's cook and his father was a white man whose identity he never knew.

"Of my ancestry I know almost nothing," Washington writes in his autobiography. It is with this sentence that he began the short paragraph that he had devoted to the history of his maternal and paternal families. If Washington’s family history did not extend beyond a short paragraph it is because he "has been unsuccessful in securing any information that would throw any accurate light upon the history of my family beyond my mother." (p.29) Washington explains the dearth of genealogical information by the fact the "slave family attracted about as much information as the purchase of a new horse or a cow." (Ibid) However, in accordance with the spirit of conciliation, Washington does not blame his white father for the lack of courage to recognise him as

his son. He sees him as “simply another unfortunate victim of the institution which the Nation unhappily had engrafted upon it at the time.”(p.30)

The rest of his autobiography deals, therefore, with his own experiences both before and after the Civil War. During his boyhood, Washington worked as a servant in the plantation house until he was liberated by Union troops near the end of the Civil War. In a brief evocation of his life as a “Slave among Slaves,” Washington writes about the “regretful” passage through “the cruelty and moral wrong of slavery” concluding that he never saw one “who did not want to be free, or one who would return to slavery.”(p.298) However, Washington does not indulge in *ad hominem* attacks on the white masters. Hence, he recalls that a "stranger", whom he presumes to be a United States officer, came to the plantation and read to the slaves "a rather long paper - the Emancipation Proclamation" and told them after the reading that they were all free. At this point, there comes a striking tableau of emancipation meant to redeem the old slave planters and to some extent the regime slavery for which they stand. Washington delivers us the spectacle of the sorrow that invaded the whites as a result not of losing human property but of “parting with those whom they had reared and who were in many ways very close to them.” (p.39)Initially, the newly freed men were ecstatic about their free condition of movement, but “stealthily at first,” returned later to the “big house” to ask their old white masters for future directions. The implication is that a historical chance for collaboration between the old white patriarchs and the Black freedmen was lost as a result of the unfortunate interference of external disintegrative forces in the newly born South.

After the war, Washington's family moved to Malden, West Virginia, where they joined Washington Ferguson, also a former slave, whom Jane had married during the war. To help support his family Washington worked first in a salt furnace, then in a coal

mine, and later as a house-boy in the home of Gen. Lewis Ruffner, owner of the mines. Here Washington came under the influence of Viola Ruffner, the general's wife, whom in spite of her severity, he grew to admire for her principles of cleanliness, order, diligence in work, frankness and honesty. It was in Malden that Washington "found [himself] at school for the first time." (46) Washington recounted in moving terms how he overcame the opposition from his step-father by continuing to work in the mines and then at Gen. Ruffner's home while attending a school for Blacks. At school he gave himself the name of Washington. In this regard, he wrote that

[f]rom the time when I could remember anything, I had been called simply "Booker". Before going to school it had never occurred to me that it was needful or appropriate to have an additional name. When I heard the school-roll called [...]. By the time the occasion came for the enrolling of my name, an idea occurred to me which I thought would make me equal to the situation; and so, when the teacher asked me what my full name was, I calmly told him "Booker Washington", as I had been called by that name all my life.( p.47)

Washington's resolution to be an educated man was such that in 1872, he left Malden, travelling a distance of about five hundred miles on foot, sleeping under sidewalks for days, to join Virginia's Hampton Institute, a normal school for Blacks. The latter opened its doors in 1868 with the financial support of Northern philanthropists and religious groups. Its first principal was Gen. Samuel Chapman Armstrong, who was a son of missionaries to Hawaii and a commander of black Union troops during the Civil War. Armstrong founded the school on an educational philosophy that emphasised the cultivation of practical skills, character building, and a strong work ethic. Washington reached Hampton Institute dirty and penniless, a state that made him suspicious in the eyes of the head teacher at that time, Mary F. Mackie, who had admitted him to a class only after he had proved his worth by sweeping the recitation room. Washington concluded his reminiscences about this episode in Hampton's Institute by telling the reader that when "she [Mary F. Mackie] was unable to find one bit of dirt on the floor,

or a particle of dust on any of the furniture, she quietly remarked, "I guess you will do to enter this institution." (p.57) This experience also won him a position as a janitor, where he worked out the cost of his board. With the support of Armstrong, Washington ended securing the sponsorship of a philanthropist who paid for his tuition.

After Washington had graduated in 1875, he returned to West Virginia to teach, fully steeped in Armstrong's philosophy. Three years later he attended Wayland Seminary in Washington D.C. It was during his sojourn there that he became fully convinced of the rightness of the Hampton Idea. He had had the opportunity to compare the conventional type of education based on training in liberal arts that Wayland Seminary offered with that of Hampton Institute based on industrial training. He realised that unlike the latter, the former made Blacks shy away from manual labour and turn away from their kith and kin in the South.

However, Washington's stay in Wayland Seminary was not a complete waste of time. It allowed him to return to Hampton as a teacher in charge of Indian students in a night-school. It also drew him closer to Armstrong, who did not hesitate to suggest his protégé when he received a "letter from some gentlemen in Alabama asking him to recommend some one to take charge of what was to be a normal school for the coloured people in the little town of Tuskegee in that state." (Ibid) The date was May, 1881, and Washington recognised that this date constituted a watershed in both his professional and life careers. Armstrong's decision to recommend Washington to head Tuskegee institute paved the way for Washington to position himself as one of the most prominent leaders and spokesmen of his people till his death from overwork in 1915. The prestige of the man grew in parallel with the prestige that Tuskegee Institute achieved in the America of the post-Reconstruction period. His fame grew to such an extent that he was called by some critics as the "builder of a civilisation" in the new South. <sup>2</sup>

However, with time his leadership came to be contested and Washington had to look for ways and means to so far to legitimize both his social and economic project and his succession to Douglass as a Black leader. The title of his autobiography (*Up from Slavery*) indicates his ambition to move its concerns beyond those of Douglass's slave narrative. Washington lived under a slave regime for a very short time. So his childhood reminiscences in his life writing resemble more or less those of a poor boy living in dire straits, independently of the question of race. This may in part explain the skipping of details related to the horror of living under a slave system in the first two chapters. What is emphasized instead are details of destitution and poverty which are employed to illustrate the achievements of man who made his own the doctrine of self-help. The racial distinctions that Douglass established between the life of a slave boy and that of a poor white boy (Benjamin Franklin) are erased to let place to an economic model of ascent in the social ladder among other Blacks and whites.

. Washington was open to more than one influence in the economic direction that he gave to his narrative. At his time the high tides of social Darwinism hit the American shore. Indeed, the latter were so high that, according to Hofstadter, the United States "during the last three decades of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century was the Darwinian country." (Hofstadter Richard, 1992: 4-5) Hofstadter's qualification of the America of the second half of the nineteenth and the opening years of the twentieth century as the land wherein Darwinism reigned supreme finds confirmation in Henry Adams's autobiography *The Education of Henry Adams*. (1918)

Adams, in a chapter of the above mentioned autobiography, entitled "Darwinism (1867-1868), wrote that "For the young men whose lives were cast in the generation between 1867 and 1900, Law should be Evolution from lower to higher, aggregation of the atom in the mass, concentration of multiplicity in unity, compulsion of anarchy in

order; and he would force himself to follow where it led."(Adams Henry, 1918: 232). It has to be remarked that Adams was Washington's contemporary and that even though his autobiography was published posthumously in 1918, he had finished writing it in 1901, i.e., the year Washington published his *Up From Slavery*. It follows that Adams's statement that "Law should be Evolution" could well have been written by Washington himself. According to John T. McCartney, Washington did not resist the pull of the Darwinian high tides that had swept over the America of his time. He writes that Washington's "educational philosophy, his social and political thought has social Darwinist Roots." (McCartney John T. 1992:60) McCartney is to the point when he affirms the influence that social Darwinist thought exerted on Washington, but that influence comes out more clearly in the economic field rather than in other domains. For Washington, the measure of fitness for survival is primarily economic. Men and races rise or fall according to economic achievement, and he presents his narrative as an illustration of this lesson of life.

Apart from the influence of social Darwinism, one can also mention economic narratives of success developed on both sides of the Atlantic. In his introduction to Washington's life story, John Hope Franklin writes the following pertinent words: "it [*Up From Slavery*] is a great success story, the kind that appealed to millions of Americans. The fact that its subject was a Negro increased its appeal, and his almost unbecoming modesty won Washington and Tuskegee many new friends." (1965: XVIII) Franklin does not go into the philosophical figures behind the rise of success stories like Washington's. Among these figures, one can mention Thomas Hughes and Samuel Smiles in England and Horatio Alger and Andrew Carnegie in America. If Smiles and Hughes are considered as possible sources of Washington thought it is because it is one of the common consents in Washington's criticism that *Up from Slavery* is a success

story defending the idea of self-help. Samuel Smiles was one of the major cultural figures who formulised the doctrine of self-help for his times during Washington's time in a book that bears the name of the very doctrine that it seeks to propound. With regard to Hughes, he was the famous writer of *Tom Brown's School Days*, which like Washington's autobiography recounts the success of a school boy in his studies. The similarity between these two success stories rests on other evidence like the importance that the two authors accord to their respective mentors: Gen. Armstrong for Washington and Arnold for Hughes. In both works, education is associated with the building of Christian, gentlemanly character.

This extensive quote from Asa Briggs' *Victorian People: A Reassessment of Persons and Themes 1851-67* brings extra-textual evidence as a possible literary and intellectual kinship between Washington and Hughes. Briggs writes:

The passing of the Reform Bill of 1867 had created a new world in which Hughes had a minor part to play. [...]And so he turned back from the greater community to the smaller, and pitched his hopes in a pioneer community in the great new world overseas. He planned a settlement in Tennessee, where grown-up Tom Browns could prove that they were no anachronisms and could work with their hands to create a new society. (Briggs Asa, 1990: 173-74)

It is assumed here that Washington could not have been ignorant of either Hughes's book or of his project of establishing a community based on manual labour. All in all, then, we can say that Washington was like a swimmer on the high tides of social Darwinism that hit the America of the late nineteenth and of the early twentieth centuries, buoyed up by the philosophy of Smiles's self-help and Hughes's philosophy of education.

However, the acceptance of this influence from the British side of the Atlantic was not unique to Washington, since America as a whole made its own in what Mark twain called the Gilded Age, or the Age of Robber Barons. It was during this age that Horatio

Alger's rags-to-riches story arose to reach the dimensions of a myth in popular imagination. The Horatio-Alger myth became the economic or material side of what is called the American dream. Thomas Inge writes the following about the hold that this material version of the American dream had on people's imagination: "The American success story gained currency – an American dream that anyone, with sufficient pluck and luck can succeed in life and become, better than president, a millionaire." (1993:424) The success story gained ever-increasing currency as a result of the many cheap auto/biographies that the millionaires, captains of industry and lords of finance, such as Russel H. Conwell and Andrew Carnegie circulated in the popular market literature in order to let the readers of the time pry into their respective secret recipes for success.

At a man of his age, Washington did not escape for the craze for reading life writings of great man. "Fiction," he writes, "I care little for. Frequently I have to almost force myself to read a novel that is on every one's lips. The kind of reading that I have the greatest fondness for is biography." (p.172) Washington's fondness for life writing in general led him to try his hand at it, several times in his long careers. Under his pen or that of his ghost writers, as some critics claim, came out the following auto/biographies books, *Story of My Life and Work* (1899) followed by *Up From Slavery* (1901), *Frederick Douglass* (1906) and *My Larger Education* (1911). In all of these life writings, and in the manner of Franklin in *Poor Richards' Almanac* and *Autobiography* and white contemporary avatars like P.T.Barnum, Washington advertised to the Black man his own recipe for economic success in practical commandments like self-help, thrift, the ethic work, cleanliness (which he calls the Gospel of the Brush) and accommodation with the regime of racial segregation. In accordance with the spirit of the times, Washington made practically a clean sweep of

all the social and political injustices such as the Black Codes, the lynching of Black people and disenfranchisement in the Post-Reconstruction era, carrying in this way his narrative beyond the political concerns of Douglass's slave narrative.

Douglass first published the third version of his autobiography *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* in 1881, a version which appeared in a revised and updated edition in 1893. Washington tells us that at a child he had wished to go to school just in order to be able to read his predecessor's writings. He finished not only reading him but also misreading him by writing a biography of this formidable precursor to legitimate his succession to race leadership. "Misreading or misprision," as Harold Bloom (1980, 1975) tells us, involves some sort of literary family romance wherein belated poets are involved in a Hegelian struggle or battle with their precursors in an attempt to affirm their proper identities. What Freud calls the Oedipal complex finds expression in the literary field in the form of an "anxiety of influence" that pushes the belated critic or writer to turn reading into "a miswriting" and writing into "a misreading." (1980:3) For Bloom, the belated critic and writer is primarily a "revisionist, who wishes to find his original relation to truth, whether in texts or in reality (which he treats as texts anyway), but also wishes to open received texts to his own sufferings, or what he wants to call the sufferings of history." (Ibid, pp.34)

In his relation to Douglass, Washington appears in the light of a revisionist in all his life writings, and particularly in *Up From Slavery* and *Frederick Douglass*. Until his death in February 2 1895, Douglass had continued to be the uncontested race leader. In September 1895 of the same, Washington read his famous Atlanta Compromise at the Cotton States Exposition. This Atlanta Address and the positive response that it received across the country occupy a quite substantial part of the last chapters of *Up From Slavery*. The implication is that Washington was publicly hailed as the new

leader of the race, a leader with an economic agenda more truthful to the historical changes of the time than that of Douglass. However, in spite of public recognition as a race leader at home and abroad, Washington continued to live in the shadow of Douglass. With the ensuing criticism of his philosophy of accommodation from some Black cultural figures like William Trotter and DuBois, Washington wrote his own version of Douglass's biography to assuage both his anxiety of influence and to legitimate the economic road map to freedom that he proposed to the Black people of his generation.

The revisionist strategy that he employed in misreading/miswriting of Douglass's *Life and Times* (1893) is that of "Daemonisation or the Countersublime," the fourth in the list of six critical strategies that Bloom detailed in *The Anxiety of Influence*. This strategy consists of a double process of poetic afflatus and deflation of the precursor, which in terms of content indicates the continuity and discontinuity in thoughts. Washington patterned *Frederick Douglass* on Douglass's *Life and Times* (1893). The biography starts by giving epic proportions to the precursor's life: "The life of Frederick Douglass is the history of American slavery epitomised in a single human experience. He saw it all, lived it all, and overcame it all." (1906: 15) The same praise recurs as a motif throughout the work. In keeping with the tradition of epic writing, Washington adds that "tradition says he was of noble lineage" through the line of his father whom Douglass never managed to identify. His mother and grandmother were exceptional for the caste of slaves at that time. The former was highly cultivated while the latter was a medicine woman, who won the respect of even the white masters. In terms of character and physical stature, Douglass is portrayed as standing out above all the other slaves. Born into slavery, Douglass used both his physical and moral qualities to gain or rather regain a heroic stature among his community.

It is not indispensable here to go over all the profusion of eulogising words that Washington heaps on his predecessor. The important point to make is to note that while praising his predecessor, he selects those details of his heroic life that put him in a favourable light as successor. The reader is invited to view Douglass from Washington's spectacles to see to what extent the latter measures up to the standards of precursor's leadership and achievements. In other words, the biography is an exercise in self-comparison. He lets us learn that Douglass carries the middle name of Washington, which is another way of saying that Douglass was his namesake and model from the beginning. We also learn that both of them were mulattoes from the South, and that they were raised by equally strong and generous mothers. Such similarities are too many to be listed. Moreover, they are not as important as the resemblances in character and achievements that Washington highlights in order to legitimate his policy of accommodation.

In order to make Douglass's life and career square up with his own, Washington resorts to the misreading of Douglass's *Life and Times*. It is worth noting that this last version of Douglass's autobiography was not written from the same perspective as *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845) and *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855). Douglass wrote these first two works from the radical perspective of an abolitionist and *The Life and Times* from the social position of a Post-Reconstruction conservative elderly statesman, grown more attached to the reminiscences of his heroic past than contemporary challenges. It is obvious that if Washington chose *The Life and Times* as a basis for writing Douglass's biography, it is because it was of recent publication and more amenable to selective reading. The lessons that he would draw from Douglass's life and times were therefore more easily

noticed by the readers of his time, who still had a fresh memory of the main facts of Douglass's life.

In trimming off the horrible details of slavery from *Douglass's Life and Times*, Washington, assures his readers that slavery, just as he describes it in *Up From Slavery*, was bad but it also had its silver lining. He informs the reader that "Until the age of seven years, young Fred felt few of the privations of slavery." (1906:18) Washington lived under slavery for nearly the same number of years. So what follows up this declarative statement is meant to stand as an echo to his life as a slave child: "In these childhood days, he [Douglass] probably was as happy and carefree as the white children in the 'big house'." (Ibid) Washington did not deny that Douglass had real experience in slavery after seven, but even then this experience was described as both intermittent and short. Looking at Douglass's life as a slave through the economic lenses of his time, Washington shows how through luck and pluck Douglass passed through slavery as through a school that tested the strength of his character and made him a self-made man in Black politics for nearly three quarters of a century, from 1845 to 1895.

As he goes through Douglass's long politic career, Washington increasingly links up his life with that of his predecessor. Hence, we learn from him that Douglass became less confrontational in his position towards the Post-Reconstruction disenfranchisement of the Black population. As evidence of this non-adversarial position, Washington quotes a large chunk of the speech that Douglass made on the occasion of the Supreme Court's declaration of the Fifteenth Amendment, known as the Civil Rights Bill, as unconstitutional in 1883. In this quote or rather misquote, Washington makes Douglass sound doubtful with regard to his previous confrontational politics by putting this rhetorical question in his mouth: "What does it matter to the coloured citizen that a state may not insult him if the citizen of the state may." (p.319) Earlier in his account,

Washington included information which shows that Douglass did not oppose the Hayes-Tylden Compromise that led to the withdrawal of federal troops of the South in 1876, which to some historians like DuBois was a sell-out to the old regime of the slave Planters. Douglass accepted his nomination as Marshall of the District of Columbia from the compromising Republican President Rutherford B. Hayes though he was well aware that under public pressure, this post of “Lord High Chamberlain” was divested of its ceremonial duties such as formal attendance to functions in the White House and introduction of guests to the President. This implies that Douglass accepted segregation even at a higher federal echelon like that of Marshall of District of Columbia. Washington demonstrates that even in his quotidian life as a citizen his predecessor tried as much as possible to avoid direct confrontation with segregation. In his usual anecdotic style, Washington recalls “a conversation which once I had with the Hon. Frederick Douglass.” (1901:80) Speaking as one of Douglass’s fellow travellers in the Post-Reconstruction period, Washington recounts that

At one time, Mr. Douglass was travelling in the state of Pennsylvania, and was forced on account of his colour, to ride in the baggage-car, in spite of the fact that he had paid the same price for his passage that the other passengers had paid. When some of the white passengers went into the baggage-car to console Mr. Douglass, and one of them said to him. “I am sorry, Mr. Douglass, that you have been degraded in this manner,” Mr. Douglass straightened himself up on the box upon which he was sitting, and replied: “They cannot degrade Frederick Douglass. The soul is within me no man can degrade. I am not the one that is being degraded on account of this treatment, but those who are inflicting it upon me [sic].” (Ibid, pp.81-82)

Moreover, Washington does not fail to point out to Douglass’s attachment to the South and his reconciliatory attitude towards his ex-masters. He recounts how just after nomination to the Post of Marshall of the District of Columbia, Douglass returned to Talbot County, MD., his birthplace to find that his master Thomas Auld “lay[ing] on a bed of sickness with little hope of recovery.” (1906: 327) In a tearful scene that reminds us of the story of the prodigal son, Washington describes how master and ex-slave-cum-

Marshall of the District of Columbia met after a fifty-year separation, ready to forget and forgive the wrongs that they were “impelled to commit against each other” (Ibid) during the fateful times of the anti-slavery agitation. Washington holds up the reconciliation of Douglass and his ex-master as the best expression of the political mood of his time in the New South. For him, it stands as a symbol of the farewell to arms and a confession of mutual goodwill between white masters and Black Freedmen.

Washington also enlists Douglass in the defence of such important points as industrial education and the stabilisation of the Black population in the South. These points are debated in the section below. Now, it has to be remarked that Washington’s adulation and glorification of his predecessor is accompanied by a reverse process which punctures, deflates the poetic afflatus, and swings the pendulum in his favour. Accordingly, by the end of the biography Washington announces that Douglass was out of key with the times of the Post-Reconstruction which demanded a new type of race leadership. “Frederick Douglass’s life,” he tells us, “fell in the period of war, of controversy, and of fierce party strife.” (p.349) He continues with the reminder that “The task which was assigned to him [Douglass then] was, on the whole, one of destruction and liberation, rather construction and reconciliation.” (Ibid) We understand that the latter task was Washington’s self-assigned duty. The flaws that Douglass detects in the character of Douglass as a leader of the Post-Reconstruction are too many to be enumerated, but two of them stand out in Washington’s list of charges that disqualifies Douglass as a leader. One of them is his persistence of political partisanship. Washington reports that though his precursor recognised that he “had small faith in my aptitude as a politician, and could not cope with rival aspirants,” (p.272) in the South, Douglass supported the Radical Republicans out of mere partisanship. “The Negroes during the Reconstruction were always amenable to wise

direction,” but Douglass failed to provide it, preferring to follow the Republic party line in spite of the fact that he knew that “the freedmen would have followed the leadership of the best elements in the South as willing, if not more willingly, than which they did accept.” (p.254) The implication of all this is that contrary to Douglass, Washington was a man of principles, more in tune with the spirit of his times and that of his people, and therefore, more qualified to lead them. Washington opened the way for Black non-partisanship in politics by publicly supporting the Democratic candidate Cleveland at a time when the Democratic Party was still viewed as the “slave Party” from the South.

The second most serious flaw that Washington assigns to Douglass is the provocation of public sentiment against miscegenation. After the death of his first wife Douglass married Helen Pitts, one of the teachers of Washington at Hampton in January 1884. The couple lived on Cedar Hill, a 15-acre estate with a 20-room Victorian house in the District of Columbia, which had once been the property of General Robert E. Lee, and which Douglass purchased in 1878. The Fanonian implications of Douglass’s double action cannot escape the attention of the modern reader. The problem is that Douglass’s second wife is white, and Washington expressed the same revulsion that people felt throughout the entire country.”(p.307)Accordingly, he approves his race when it condemned this provocative act as being “the most serious mistake of his life.” (p.306) He further declares that “The resentment felt by the people because of his [Douglass’s] disregard of its unwritten law never entirely died out in his life time.” (p.307)This shows that though he was from the South, Douglass ignored the most important rules of the region. To the Blacks the marriage was perceived as an insult to Black womanhood especially from a Black man and leader who supported the white feminist movement of the time. To the whites it was a racial taboo. Washington did not waste the opportunity to sacrifice his precursor on the altar of public outrage.

It is with such faultfinding in the last of his biography that Washington punctures the inflated image of Douglass that appeared at the beginning and in the middle. The strategy of poetic afflatus and that of deflation are complementary. The former serves to legitimate his policy of accommodation by capitalising on his predecessor's credentials while the latter exposes the shortcomings of the predecessor to justify the change for a new type of leadership. In what resembles a Christian tragedy, Washington closes his biography with the symbolic evocation of the funeral ceremonies at Douglass's death and his burial on Mount Hope as a prophetic announcement of his own advent as the new Christ for the Black race. Two symbolic gestures can be mentioned as attempts to consign Douglass to the past: Washington's transformation of Douglass's home into a museum and his contribution to the erection of a monument in his memory in Rochester. It is in this way that Washington resolves his family romance, a romance which Bloom regards as the psychological equivalent of the Hegelian dialectic of slave and master. With the symbolic burial of Douglass, the stage was cleared and Washington stepped on to announce his new strategy for obtaining freedom.

In *American Slavery*, Peter Kolchin develops the idea that the central problem in the America of the post Civil War period was that people across the racial line had "different understandings of freedom." (1993:228) Kolchin devotes a whole chapter to "The End of Slavery" wherein he shows how the newly liberated freedmen resisted dependent relations which reminded them of their previous bondage. For many the way out of this former bondage consisted mainly in not being ordered around, in seceding from white churches, in building separate schools staffed with Black teachers, and in voting differently from the white Southern people. According to Kolchin this *de facto* racial separation "presaged the Jim Crow system that would make its appearance a

generation later” (ibid), and which culminated at the federal level with the “separate but equal” doctrine set forth in *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

*Plessy v. Ferguson* is an 1896 United States Supreme Court case that reconciled the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment with the system of state-imposed racial segregation that had started as early as 1870 when Tennessee enacted the first Jim Crow law forbidding intermarriage of the races. Plessy was a thirty-year old shoemaker who broke one of the Jim Crow laws by refusing to leave his seat on a New Orleans train in 1892. This transgression of racial law triggered a case that reached the Supreme Court. Its decision upheld the right of the states to establish racial segregation in public accommodations if they guaranteed equal protection to all citizens. It would take the Supreme Court more than 50 years to reverse this decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), and to overturn racial segregation in public facilities.

As the title of his book *Up from Slavery* indicates clearly, Washington did not try to escape dealing with the issue of freedom that characterised his age. Furthermore, his understanding of freedom fell in line with the "separate but equal" doctrine that he espoused publicly in his "Atlanta Address "of 1895 included in *Up From Slavery*. In this address, he affirmed in front of representatives of both races that "in all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the five fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." (p.148)It follows that Washington's understanding of freedom did not depart from the major understanding that people of both races in the South had of it then.

However, Washington's understanding of freedom poses a problem for the reader. His support of freedom actualised on "a separate but equal" doctrine of life cannot be explained away easily by reference to the process of historical legitimacy that he gave it when he linked up his life and career with that of his precursor Douglass. I would argue

that this doctrine had its roots in Hegel's social and economic thought. Washington boasted of a very solid background of knowledge. It has to be recalled that he was the first Black man to be honoured with an MA degree in his age. His adoption of a notion of freedom so close to the one that prevailed in his time could by no means be understood solely in terms of the influence of the public opinion that he had himself contributed to shape. The "enabling conditions" for his understanding of freedom have, therefore, to be sought out on the grounds of philosophy wherein freedom stands out as the dominant theme of discussion.

I assume that if Washington acquiesced to an understanding of freedom that sanctioned the "separate but equal" doctrine it is because he had found legitimacy for it in Philosophy. This philosophy is basically Hegelian. The rapprochement between Washington and Hegel that the hypothesis makes finds some pertinence in the following extensive note from Dudley Knowles, one of the best contemporary critics of Hegel:

Hegel espouses a doctrine of separate but equal roles. Difference need not compromise ethical standing. I use the terminology of 'separate but equal doctrine' deliberately because we have heard it before, notoriously in defence of unjust and discriminating practices in the United States prior to the Civil Rights legislation and the reforming Supreme Court decisions of the late 1950s and 1960s. I use the terms pejoratively because at the end of the day, I judge that Hegel was not true to the demands for mutual recognition so strikingly and so eloquently in his earlier work. But this is to prejudge the issues. We still have to see what mutual recognition entails in Abstract Right. (Knowles Dudley 2002:106)

The above quote makes it clear that Washington's philosophy might well have had one of its sources of inspiration in Hegel's philosophy since both authors had developed notions of freedom that accommodated themselves with "separate but equal" doctrines of life.

The idea that Washington might have found in the person of Hegel a fellow philosophical spirit to solve the issue of freedom in post-Reconstruction America is not

as farfetched as it might look at first sight. First the post-Reconstruction period saw the appearance of a reader of Hegel's works under the title of *Hegel's Philosophy of the State and of History* (1887). This work reads as some sort of philosophical primer by a St-Louis Hegelian whose name is George Sylvester Morris. (Flower E. and Murray G. Murphey, 1977: 503) Furthermore, as shown above, there are elements in the contexts wherein the two thinkers developed their philosophies that could help explain the parallel between them. One of the elements is Kolchin's comparison of the post-Reconstruction South to Post-Napoleon Germany and Prussia. In this regard, Kolchin writes that

The overwhelming majority of blacks continued to work for whites as agricultural laborers, and a substantial degree of coercion continued to characterize relations between planters and laborers; indeed scholars such as Jonathan Wiener have maintained that planter dominance of society remained so great that the South should be seen as deviating from the mainstream of American development and following a distinctive "Prussian road" to capitalism instead. (Colchin Peter, 1993:224, Emphasis mine)

The parallel drawn between Post-Napoleonic Prussia and the Post-Reconstruction South sustains the hypothesis made above because it is within similar contexts of disenfranchisement that Hegel and Washington wrote respectively *The Philosophy of Right* and *Up From Slavery*.

The comparison that Kolchin makes between the South and Prussia can be strengthened further as follows. In Prussia, serfdom, i.e., slavery was abolished only after the defeat by Napoleon in 1803. Similarly, slaves in the South were delivered from their bondage by Abraham Lincoln's military men with the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. In both cases emancipation was imposed on recalcitrant big conservative landholders from the outside. The Napoleonic era in Prussia was similar to the Reconstruction era in the South in the sense that both had been set on the track of

reform. Moreover, in both Prussia and the South ancient privileges were swept away in the service of administrative and economic efficiency. In Prussia just as in the South, new constitutions were adopted which were more respectful of the rights of the citizens. Following the retreat of the Union Army from the South in the United States in 1877 and that of Napoleon from Prussia after his final defeat in 1815, the programmes of reform engaged in both countries slowed down before the old particular interests of ancient regimes were finally re-established.

However, the most important point in the comparison of Prussia and the American South in relation to this research is the way schools in both countries were looked at. In both countries, the schools/universities were viewed as crucial sites of instability. The following words by J.K.Vardaman, a Mississippi Representative, illustrate well the reactions of the white people in the post-Reconstruction South towards the education of the black people: "What the North is sending South is not money but dynamite; this education is ruining our Negroes. They are demanding equality." (Quoted in Franklin John Hope, 1988:246)

The same view was held about education in Prussia after March 1819 when a radical student, Karl Sand, assassinated the reactionary playwright August von Kotzebue. That Sand was a student, that "Jacobin" students were organising their subversive entities in Burschenschaften (student societies in German) drew the attention of the political authorities on the universities and schools as the sources of political turmoil. There followed very swiftly the Carlsbad decrees of 1819, inspired by Metternich and agreed upon by the King of Prussia, that struck directly at the universities considered as the sources of subversion. Among other things, they provided for the dismissal of teachers involved in subversive activities.

Therefore, it is more or less safe to advance the idea that faced with the same state repression Washington could only follow the lead of Hegel in toning down his statements about the relation between freedom and the state in the post-Reconstruction South. Washington and Hegel were teachers, and as such their jobs were at stake if they did not nuance their positions on the burning political issue of freedom. Whether this nuance assumes the form of ambiguous statement as in Washington's *Up From Slavery* or the technical jargon of philosophy as in Hegel's *The Philosophy of Right*, critics have made short shrift of it. Many readers of *The Philosophy of Right*, writes Dudley Knowles, "denounce it as a reactionary tract, serving the private ends of its author and the public policy of a reactionary." (2002:8-9) *Up From Slavery* was condemned in nearly the same terms by critics like Trotter and DuBois at the time of its publication in 1901. (I shall come this point in the next chapter.) In his review of the spread of Hegelianism in the nineteenth century, Knowles writes that "Neither empiricist Britain nor robust, pragmatist America have been immune to the tides of Hegelianism." (Ibid, p.21) As suggested above that Washington could not have remained immune to the tides of Hegelianism because of their similar concerns with freedom. The section that follows will demonstrate the linkage thus established by looking at the relation that Hegel and Washington drew between property and freedom.

### **B. Property and Freedom in *Up From Slavery***

My attempt to reach a new understanding of Washington's *Up From Slavery* will be made within a framework that is basically philosophical. Such a philosophical approach can be justified on the grounds of the content of this chapter which, as its title indicates, seeks to identify the sources of Washington's philosophy of right; and on the methodological premise that as an "autobiography," *Up From Slavery* belongs to that category of literature "frequently thought of as a form of philosophy, as ideas wrapped

in form; and it is analysed to yield leading ideas.” (Wellek René and Austin Warren, 1942:110) It is appropriate to add here that critics of Washington have already more or less treated his autobiography as a document in the history of Black American thought and philosophy.

However, the philosophical approach claimed in this research differs significantly from the ones that have already been adapted to the analysis of Washington's work. One of these differences is that this approach, unlike the previous ones, is mostly inspired from Hegel, one of the most representative Western philosophers. The approach is, therefore, called philosophical not only in the broader sense of a research concerned with general ideas but also in the narrower sense of an analysis dealing with the influence of Hegel's philosophical ideas of freedom on that of Washington in *Up From Slavery*.

In this second chapter I shall continue to discuss the influence of Hegel's ideas on Booker T. Washington. Hegel's ideas of freedom and rights developed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *The Philosophy of Right* will be brought to bear on *Up From Slavery*. The purpose of this chapter is to show that Washington's ideas of freedom and rights have much in common with those of Hegel. The discussion will try to illustrate that it is from Hegel's philosophy that Washington drew the main ideas of his accommodationist philosophy. The argumentation will turn around the legitimacy that Hegel gave to Washington's advocacy of a "separate but equal" doctrine of life in the post-Reconstruction American South.

Much has been said about Booker T. Washington's disengagement from post-Reconstruction politics because he had never tried to hold a political position whatsoever. In his autobiography he severally points out that he renounced to the political game even though he had been approached by several Black political figures to

convince him to represent Black constituencies in the South. On these several occasions, Washington explains that he refused because he was convinced that the black man's cause could be advanced by other means than those of political representation. Indeed, Washington is critical even of those Black people who hold political office. This is how he dismisses the temptation for a political career just after his graduation from Tuskegee in the fall of 1878:

The temptation to enter political life were so alluring that I came very near yielding to them at one time, but I was kept from doing so by the feeling that I would be helping in a more substantial way by assisting in the laying of the foundation of the race through a generous education of the hand, head, and heart. I saw coloured men who were members of the state legislatures, and county officers, who, in more cases, could not read or write, whose morals were as weak as their education. (p.74)

Booker T. Washington was a graduate. So he could have embraced a political career without incurring the criticism that he had levelled against the illiterate Black politicians of his time.

I consider that his "refusal" to venture into the area of politics has much more to do with the political context in which he was obliged to "accommodate" himself than with personal choice. The evidence is that he comes back to the game of politics through the back entry of education. At that time, it was virtually impossible for a black educated man like him to be elected into office in the Post-Reconstruction South because even those who were already in office lost their positions. The Post-Reconstruction period that started with the Hayes-Tilden compromise of the North with the South is a period which saw the disenfranchisement of the Black man for a second time in the history of the United States. It is the period of the Ku Klux Klan and Jim Crow Laws which barred the Black man's participation in the political process through such tricks as the grandfather's clause making it impossible for a black person to vote unless he could prove that his grandfather was literate.

It follows that Washington's refusal "to enter political life" (p.78) was a question of expediency. Contrary to Washington's affirmation that it "appeared to me to be reasonably certain that I could succeed in political life," (p.78) prospects for building a political career were rather nil. The idea of altruism, that "I had a feeling that it would be a rather selfish kind a (political) success – individual success at the cost of failing to do my duty in assisting in laying a foundation for the masses" (p.78) is similarly not a tenable argument for his renunciation of politics.

However, I can affirm that Booker T. Washington was playing at the political game while refusing to label himself as a politician. He was doing politics in the sense that he circulated ideas that could not fail to appeal to the Southern white men of the period. Through such claims, for example, that literacy should be a prerequisite for casting the vote; that the black man's interest lies in the renunciation of holding political office and the acceptance of Jim Crow laws. Such claims made of Booker T. Washington virtually the spokesman for the white people in the South.

While renouncing political rights, Booker T. Washington makes claims for economic rights. Paradoxically, this claim for economic rights, i.e., the right for private property led him to enter the political life to which he publicly renounced. What is in private property rights that make them ultimately so potentially political? Washington is one of the best educated Black men of his time (he held an honorary master's degree from the University of Harvard), so I do not think that he ignores the major theories of property of his time. One of these theories is the one developed by Thomas Hobbes. According to Hobbes, in the state of nature, "there is no property, no Dominion, no Mine and Thine distinct." If persons contract with each other, it is in order to establish a Sovereign power assigned "the whole power of prescribing the Rules, whereby every man may know what Goods he may enjoy [...] Rules of Property." (Hobbes Thomas,

1985:234) In this quote, private property justifies the imposition of a sovereign power which citizens, i.e., those who hold property authorise. Having property is, therefore, synonymous with having a political existence.

John Locke is another political scientist to deal with the issue of private property in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and *Two Treatises of Government*. Locke's theory of political/civil society propounded to defend the change of political regime from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy brought out by the Glorious Revolution in 1688 starts with the tenet that persons own their bodies in the first place. Secondly, they own the powers of their bodies, i.e., their labour power. The acquisition of private property is a fair reward for investment of effort. Locke holds the same view as Hobbes as regards the whys and wherefores for the establishment of civil society, i.e., the protection of private property including the life of the property holder. However, Locke disagrees with Hobbes because the real sovereignty resides in the property holders who delegate their powers to representatives whom they can topple the moment they have breached their trust.

Jean Jacques Rousseau in his *Social Contract* holds the same argument as Thomas Hobbes. He develops the idea that if persons contract with each other, it is because they believe that their lives and possessions are at risk. To procure security and stability of life and property, they contract with each other to establish a sovereign who devises and enacts laws expressing the general will. Once again, in Rousseau's argument, I feel that private property is at the basis of civil society. In another essay entitled *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* that "the first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying 'This is mine, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society.'" (Rousseau Jean Jacques, 1973:76)

There is no further space in this chapter to be devoted to the centrality that thinkers other than Hobbes, Rousseau, and Locke accord to private property as the prime mover for the establishment of civil society. However, I consider that we cannot do without Hegel's idea of the relation holding between property and its owner for the analysis of the issue of freedom in Washington's *Up From Slavery*. For Hegel private property does not simply justify the establishment of political power; the concept of property has a metaphysical dimension which requires philosophical exploration. In his philosophical exploration of this concept, Hegel draws linkages between the possession of private property and freedom. Private property is a publicly accessible medium through which we get social recognition and recognise ourselves as persons. Hegel puts private property, or what he calls Abstract Right, at the basis of other rights.

This Hegelian "bottom-up" approach to freedom is one of the fundamental traits in *Up From Slavery*. In his adoption of this approach for reasons already explained, Washington drops out the top-down approach for accession to freedom followed until the end of the Reconstruction period (1878) by Black American political thinkers like Frederick Douglass. One of the great possessions that Washington put emphasis on is industrial education as an avenue to private property. He describes his access to education as a "struggle" which started while working in a salt mine with his stepfather in Western Virginia. Washington reminisces that

Each salt-packer had his barrels marked with a certain Number. The number allotted to my stepfather was '18'. At the close of the day's work the boss of the packers would come around and put '18' on each of our barrels, and I soon learned to recognize that figure wherever I saw it, and after a while got to the point where I could make that figure, though I know nothing about any other figures or letters. (p.43)

Washington's desire to get hold of an education is such that he pushes his mother to procure him an "old copy of Webster's 'blue book' spelling book" from which he learned the alphabet. Washington takes care to underline the fact that he shares this

desire for an education with his fellow Black Americans: “Few were too young, and none too old, to make the attempt to learn.” So, when an itinerant teacher from Ohio came to settle in Malden where Washington lived, the people of the locality decide to hire him. Unfortunately for Washington, his family was too poor to spare his work at the salt time. However, his desire to learn was so keen that he ultimately comes to a compromise with his step-mother: work in the salt mines in the morning and go to night school in the evening.

Washington underlines the importance of education through anecdotes like the one relating how he got his last name Washington:

From the time when I could remember anything, I had been called simply ‘Booker’. Before going to school it had never occurred to me that it was needful or appropriate to have an additional name. When I heard the school-roll called, I noticed that all of the children had at least two names, and some of them indulged in what seemed to me the extravagance of having three. [...] I knew that the teacher would demand of me at least two names, and I had only one. By the time the occasion for the enrolling of my name, an idea occurred to me which I thought would make me equal to the situation ; and so, when the teacher asked me what my full name was, I calmly told him ‘Booker Washington’, as if I had been called by that name all my life. (p.47)

The above anecdote and other similar ones in Washington’s autobiography show that industrial education is a valuable property. It signifies self-ownership. The simple process of going to school endows the person with a name, even if naming in Washington’s process is self-willed. Possessing a name is part and parcel of that process of objectifying oneself as a recognisable person i.e., self-identification. It is worth underlying here that some ex-slaves had even “unnamed” themselves because their names were given to them by slave masters.

Washington works his way out of the “darkness of the coalmines” by deciding to go to the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. He has heard about Hampton while he is working at General Lewis Ruffner's house as a servant. He recounts his quest for the golden fleece of knowledge at Hampton in Chapter Three of his autobiography.

Washington's experience is as harrowing as that of the Argonauts in Greek mythology. The distance from Malden to Hampton is "about five hundred miles", a distance that Washington travels by stage-coach, train, and even foot, working in harbours unloading cargo from ships to earn what to eat and drink, sleeping under sidewalks to economize for the rest of the journey into Malden.

Once in Malden, he looks so dirty and shabby that the principal a certain Miss F. Mackie does not want at first to admit him to school because he looks like a tramp. His admission to the school is recounted in the manner of traditional heroic tales. Miss Mackie puts him to test to prove his worth by asking to clean the 'adjoining recitation-room', a task that he accomplishes perfectly since he has received preparation for it while working at General Ruffner's house as a servant.

In short Washington gets entrance into Hampton Institute from where he graduated two years later in June 1875. It is needless to dwell lengthily on his experience during his stay at Hampton. So I shall mention only the value that Washington accords to the type of education he received. Apart from the contact with men and women who have impressed him, Washington underlines that he has learned the value of manual labour.

He writes that:

Before going there [Hampton Institute] I had a good deal of the then rather prevalent idea among our people that to secure an education meant to have a good, easy time, free from all necessity for manual labour. At Hampton I not only learned that it was not a disgrace to labour, but learned to love labour, not alone for its financial value, but for labour's own sake and for the independence and self-reliance which the ability to do something which the world wants done brings.(p.68)

In the quote above, Washington comes to the celebration of the protestant ethic of work and self-reliance.

The Hegelian equation of property with freedom comes in Washington's reflection over what he should do after graduation from Hampton. He dismisses one by one the vocations opened for Black educated black men of his time: ministering, teaching and

going into politics. Writing about the latter vocations he writes that I “had a strong feeling that our people most needed was to get a **foundation in education, industry, and property**, and for this I felt that they could better afford to strive than for political preferment.” (p.78, Emphasis mine) Washington set out to apply this agenda when the opportunity came across his way in the application from white Alabama representatives to General Armstrong the founder of the Hampton Institute for sending a teacher to supervise a school in Tuskegee. General Armstrong recommends Booker T. Washington, his Black trustee for taking it in charge.

Before taking duty in Tuskegee, Washington carried out a sort of sociological analysis to see what the Black people needed most in terms of education. He delivers these insights in a peculiarly anecdotal style. One of these insights related to the issue of property and freedom comes in the following extensive quote:

In the cabin homes I often found sewing-machines which had been bought, or were bought, on instalments, frequently at a cost of as much as sixty dollars, or showy clocks for which the occupants of the cabins had paid twelve or fourteen dollars, when I sat down to the table for a meal with the four members of the family, I noticed that, while there were five of us at the table, there was but one fork for the five of us to use. Naturally there was an awkward pause on my part. In the opposite corner of the same cabin was an organ for which the people told me they were paying sixty dollars in monthly instalments. One fork and a sixty-dollar organ. (p.89)

What Washington wants to underline in the above quote is that *Post-bellum* Black Americans lost the sense of social priorities. The idea of thrift and accumulation of wealth was absent from their minds. The process of the Black man’s liberation started with the Emancipation proclamation was incomplete because of the incapacity of the ex-slaves to detach themselves from the imperatives of immediacy - whether these are the demands of a society with which individual members unreflectively identify or desires which they must master in the course of self-determination.

Washington tells another anecdote to illustrate the Black people's need for education to improve their ways of life. This anecdote goes as follows:

I [Washington] met some very interesting characters during my travels. As illustrating the peculiar mental processes of the country people, I remember that I asked one coloured man, who was about sixty years old, to tell me something of his history. He said that he had been born in Virginia, and sold into Alabama in 1845. I asked him how many were sold at the same time. He said, 'There were five of us; myself and brother and three mules'. (p.91)

No wonder that men who so flagrantly lack self-knowledge do not care a whit to get a "bank account" even if they keep talking about arithmetic; to vary their diet of "fat pork and corn bread" bought at a high price at a store in town instead of cultivating the land all about their cabins to grow vegetables; to have family reunions at meal times because "frequently the husband would take his bread and meat in his hand and start for the field, eating as he walked." (p.90) Realising the ignorance of such basics of civilised life as self-reliance, thrift, cleanliness among the Black people, Washington decided to open an industrial school in order to instil in the necessity of acquiring the predominant values of the time at whose basis lies the ethic of work.

The portrait of Post-Reconstruction life in the South that Washington draws is so bleak that it compares unfavourably with life in the plantation during slavery times. It is not necessary to explain again here the Hegelian dialectic of the slave and the master that I have already detailed in the first chapter. It is enough to remind the reader that, according to Hegel, the slave owes his salvation through the hard work that he provides for his master. Through immersion in work he saves his skin and liberates himself from the fleshpots of desire and the chains of dependency. The portrait that Washington draws of the ex-slaves is not the same as that of their namesake in Hegel. Unlike the latter, the former have become dependent on what the federal government can do for them. In Washington's description, the ex-slaves emerge as people trying by all means to escape hard labour. If they go to school, it is in order to have an easy life later

working as teachers and ministers. They are mimic and fetishist men in the sense that they imitate their ex-masters by buying objects they cannot really afford just in order to display them, and have the illusion that they are like the white Jones next door.

Booker T. Washington considers that the ex-slaves of the Post-Reconstruction era can't acquire a "mind of their own" if they do not keep away from trying to be like their ex-masters and try instead to turn their eyes to the work at hand just as the slave in Hegel does. Paradoxical as it may seem, the cultural and economic model that Washington suggests for his racial contemporaries is nothing else than that of the hard working slave of the plantation times. One of these models Lewis Adams from Alabama, an ex-slave who together with George W. Campbell a white man and ex-slave holder wrote to "General Armstrong for a teacher." It is to these two men to whom Booker T. Washington owes his school. Washington writes that Lewis Adams "was a mechanic, and had learned the trades of shoemaking, harness-making, and tin-smithing during the days of slavery. He had never been to school, but in some way he had learned to read and write while a slave." (p.93) Washington continues his portrait of Lewis Adams echoing Hegel and throwing out into bold relief the pettiness of his Black contemporaries in comparison with the moral and economic stature of the former slaves. He writes that:

I have always felt that Mr Adams, in a large degree, derived his unnatural power of mind from the training given his hands in the process of mastering well three trades during the days of slavery. If one goes today into any Southern town, and asks for the leading and most reliable colored man in the community, I believe that in five cases out of ten he will be directed to a Negro who learned a trade during the days of slavery. (p.93)

Washington carries on his discussion by saying that if at first the Southern white people were sceptical about the school that he is about to start in a 'hen house' at Tuskegee it is because of the bad impressions that they had of Black educated people. The picture of the educated Negro that comes uppermost in their minds, he writes, is that of a mimic

man with a “high hat, imitation gold, eye glasses, a showy walking-stick, kid gloves, fancy boots, and what not –in a word, a man who was determined to live by his wits.”(p.92)Against this picture, Washington sets an economic view of the Black man. This ideal man would seek to realise himself within the permitted economic bounds of the time, principally through the re-acquisition of manual skills and the selling of useful services to his white fellows.

### **C. Providential History and the American School of Slavery**

In exploring further the place of the Hegelian dialectic of the master and the slave in Washington’s thought, I shall refer in parallel to *Up From Slavery* to two essays published by Washington in 1902, and which I consider as being quite representative of the Hegelian cast of his mind. These essays or lectures are “Industrial Education for the Negro” and “The Economic Development of the Negro Race Since its Emancipation”. Both essays appeared alongside two other essays by DuBois in a book entitled *The Negro Problem: Booker T. Washington* (1969). What draws the attention to these essays is that Washington seemed to participate in the “revisionist” school of the history of Southern slavery that idealised plantation life and dismissed the Reconstruction period as a period of ‘negro rule’. In the first lecture “Industrial Education for the Negro,” Washington gives an account of the achievements of his policy and claims that it was able to reconcile the black people with the “secrets of civilization” by teaching them “a few simple, cardinal principles” that put that civilization upon “its upward course.”(p.9)Among other things in Washington’s agenda of achievement, he mentioned the difference between “being worked and working” that he taught to students in Tuskegee, and the realisation that most of the civilisations that flourished had done so because they were started on an “economic foundation [...] beginning in a

proper cultivation and ownership of the soil.” (p.10) These words echo the wish that he made in *Up From Slavery*, a wish that

by some power of magic I might remove the great bulk of these people into the country districts and plant them upon the soil, upon the solid and never deceptive foundation of Mother Nature, where all nations and races that have ever succeeded have gotten their start.” (p.77)

On the whole, Washington viewed his policy as a corrective of the Reconstruction educational policy by saying that “the Negro race began development at the wrong end.”(p.10) By this Washington meant that the Reconstruction advantaged civil rights over the building of an economic base on which to claim those rights.

In criticising the Reconstruction policy, Washington went back to the ante-bellum slavery period, which in his view favourably compares with the former. In what seems a regretful tone, Washington writes that “For two hundred and fifty years, the way for the redemption of the Negro was being prepared through industrial development. Through all those years the Southern white man did business with the Negro in a way that no one else has done business with him.” (p.10) This view of slavery is similar to the view developed by such revisionist historians of American slavery as Ulrich B. Phillips, a Georgia-born historian. Writing in the racist period after World War I, Phillips regarded the plantation as “a school constantly training and controlling pupils who were in a backward state of civilization. [...] On the whole the plantations were the best schools yet invented for the mass training of that sort of inert and backward people which the bulk of the American Negroes represented.” (Quoted in Kenneth M. Stamp, 1969, p.159) In holding such a positive view of slavery, Washington departed from Douglass’s stand against slavery as an inhuman system and came close to the historical sentimentalism at the basis of the revisionist histories of the Civil War. These revisionist histories were mostly prevalent in the racist post-Reconstruction period and the Consensus period of the 1950s. The main point behind the revisionist histories was that

the Civil War was a mistake. Leading historians like Charles Beard, James G. Randall, Avery Craven, Allan Nevins argued that this mistake could have been avoided if “fanatics on both sides had not inflamed public opinion over the issue of slavery and its defense, and if political leadership on both sides had been less blundering.” (Melvin Drimmer, 1969:221) Washington, like the revisionist historians mentioned above, seems to share the same position about the Civil War in his suggestion that slavery could have come to a close if the economic progress of the Negro had not be interfered with.

Washington presents the economic struggle between the Black slaves and their masters as being on the point of resolution in favour of the former just before the Civil War. He does not only affirm that “in a certain way every slave plantation was an industrial school,” he also emphasised the point that

In most cases if a Southern white man wanted a house built he consulted a Negro mechanic about the plan and about the actual building of the structure. If he wanted a suit of clothes made he went to a Negro tailor, and for shoes he went to a shoemaker of the same race.(pp.10-11)

Apart from foregrounding the usefulness of the Negro in the *ante-bellum* period, Washington also points to the dependence of the whites on their slaves. In his essay entitled “The Historian and Southern Negro Slave,” Kenneth M. Stamp quotes Stanley M. Elkins to the effect that “How a person thinks about Negro slavery historically... makes a great deal of difference here and now; it tends to locate him morally in relation to a whole range of very immediate political, social, and philosophical issues which in some way refer back to slavery.” (p.147) Though Elkins’s historical lesson is not applicable to him personally in his propagation of the representation of the Negro as a “Sambo,” it holds true for Washington. Indeed, Washington’s historical view of slavery made a great deal of difference at the time of the propagation of his accommodationist philosophy. As Elkins suggests it locates him morally in relation to a whole range of

very immediate political, social and philosophical issues prevalent at his time. There is no need to mention again that Washington's history of slavery seems to put aside the issues of political and civil rights emphasising instead the need to resume the struggle for recognition by going back to the basics which is economy.

Washington's view of slavery developed in his two essays "Industrial Education" and "The Economic Development of the Negro Race since Its Emancipation" also locates him in relation to the philosophical issue raised by Hegel in his *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. Like Hegel, Washington regarded servitude as a preparation for the exercise of freedom. It is necessary to recall the terms of the Hegelian dialectic of the slave and the master to better understand the parallels that Washington established between American slavery and the philosophical concepts of bondage and lordship in Hegel's work. The dialectic of the slave and master is part and parcel of a historical process of spiritualization and self- recognition. It involves a triadic relation involving the master and the slave on the one hand and their relation to objects on the other. The relation of the master towards the slave is that of domination and one-sided recognition that the master wrests from the slave. The relation of master towards objects is one of consumption whereas the relation that the slave develops towards the object is that of creation and production. This difference in relation towards objects of desire reverses, in Hegel's words, the terms of dependence so that the master becomes the slave of the slave and the slave the master of the master. Washington makes the same point as Hegel when he foregrounds the dependence of the Southern planters on their slaves for the material development of their economy and their civilisation.

Washington goes as far back as the beginning of American history to illustrate this Hegelian theme of servitude as a preparation for freedom. One of the first points that he underlines is that slavery started on economic grounds. It was the need for labour that

brought the Black people to the shores of Virginia. At the arrival on the American soil, Washington tells, the “woods of Virginia were swarming with thousands of another dark-skinned race.”(p.10) He asks the rhetorical question why the white settlers went thousands of miles to the shores of Africa looking for a “dark-skinned people” as a labour force while Indians were very close to them in America. The answer to the question is evident and Washington gives it to us by saying that the “Indian was tried and found wanting in the commercial qualities which the Negro seemed to possess.” (p.11) In what may seem at first sight racial derogative terms, Washington adds that the “Indian, as a race, would not submit to slavery and in those instances where he was tried, as a slave, his labor was not profitable and he was found unable to stand the physical strain of slavery.” (Ibid) In such statements Washington seems to support the slaveholders and historians like Phillips who claimed that Negroes were naturally fit for slavery and could work only under compulsion.

Washington is at the best of his ambiguous discourse when he speaks about slavery. To those who might read in his pronouncement a defence of the “peculiar institution” he takes care to remind them that it was “a curse” while to those who saw in it a badge of humiliation he urged them to undo their prejudices and reclaim its positive sides. In its positive side, as I would like to argue here, Washington comes close to Hegel. So in his comparison of the Negro who accepted slavery with the Indian who refused it, it was the former who managed to survive while the latter was nearly wiped out. Among the darker races, Washington reminds us, the “Negro seems to be about the only race that has been able to look the white man in the face during the long period of years and live – not only live, but multiply.” (p.15) This is the Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest through which Washington tries to turn upside down the racial theory that inferior races should give up to the advance of the superior races. “The Negro,” Washington

adds as if to emphasise this Darwinian theory, “has not only done this, but he has had the good sense to get something from the white man at every point where he has touched him – something that has made him a stronger and a better race.” (Ibid)

To the theory that the Black man’s slavery was a consequence of his inferiority, Washington opposes the Hegelian theory that slavery was accidental, and that any individual as well as any nation are liable to fall into it. Hegel posits the fact that individuals or for that matter nations and races are animated by two psychological impulses, one of them related to lordship and the other to servitude. The outside social master-slave relation is a reflection of this internal dialectic. The subjection of the servant is unfortunate, but it is also as necessary for the education of every individual during her/his lifetime as the bondage and tyranny in the history of peoples. It is so because slavery is before anything else a will-breaking discipline that allows individuals and nations to take command. This Hegelian theory of slavery props up the theory of slavery that Washington develops in “The Economic Development of the Negro in Slavery.” This theory permitted Washington to salvage the positive side of slavery in defence of his policy of industrial education without giving up to the racism which taxed the Black man as an internal inferior and slave. In this regard, he makes it clear that “I have been a slave once in my life – a slave in body. But I long since resolved that no inducement and no influence would ever make me a slave in soul, in my love for humanity, and in my search for truth.” (p.10) Like Hegel, Washington views slavery not as an eternal but also as a temporary and necessary phenomenon. The assumption is that they who learn to serve command best.

In *The Philosophy of History*, Hegel excludes Africa from the fold of civilisation. For him, the Negro did not participate in the advance of civilisation and the only condition that can help him to civilise is slavery. The case of the Negro, as Hegel

describes it, was not hopeless since he tells us that the same Negro is a good imitator. (1991: 98) He is capable of seizing the inventions of the white man and imitating them for the better. Washington seems to have made his own the possibility that Hegel had left open for the Negro to enter civilisation. As if in response to Hegel, Washington writes that “It is often said of the Negro that he is an imitative race. That, in a large degree, is true. That element has its advantages and it also has its disadvantages.”(pp.11-12)The advantages and disadvantages of this tendency to imitate are a matter of the human environment wherein the Negroes evolve. Sticking to the belief that the Negro should “cast his bucket where you are” that is remain in the South close to the soil, Washington compares favourably the South to the North. According to him, “one of the unfortunate conditions of the Negro in the North is that, because of the large proportion of our people who are in menial service, their duties bring them in contact with the worst [white men to imitate].” (p.12) In other words, the Black people in their duties as servants in bars, in clubs and in households came in contact with the white man, when the latter “was at work in his factory, in his counting room, in his bank [but when] he lays aside his working dress, takes matters easy, and gets his cigar and perhaps champagne.” (pp.12-13) On the contrary, in the South the Black man had the opportunity to imitate the best rather than the worst, and this during both the period of slavery and after.

Washington closes the comparison between the conditions in the North and those in the South by drawing a parallel between the former and the unfavourable conditions that prevailed on the West African coast where the Black man came in contact only with the degenerate types of white men. To all evidence, Washington was conversant with the literature of the American Colonization Society which underlined the degeneration of Africans living on the West Coast, in comparison with the healthier African of the

interior, because of their imitation of the worst elements of Western civilisation like drinking gin. By discriminating against the Negro and keeping him to menial jobs instead of offering opportunities to exercise skilled vocations, Washington condemned the North as some sort of Babylon whose racism turned out to be more emasculating than Southern slavery itself. On this point, Washington seems to be using Douglass's implicit condemnation of the racism of the North that did not allow him to use the skills that he acquired during his enslavement in the South (Baltimore) against his Northern opponent DuBois who in painting a rather rosy picture of the North encouraged his fellow black men to migrate there.

Washington emphasises the point that it is economy that brought out the enslavement and it was through economy, and economy alone that he could liberate himself. He subscribed to Hegel's view of slavery when he wrote that "American slavery was the beginning of real growth" for the Black man. (p.20) Borrowing the rhetoric of Black nationalist adversaries like Wilmot Bylden (1888), Washington relies on the relative social and economic advancement of the Black American community to lay the claim that "Providence so often uses men and institutions to accomplish a purpose." (1901:37) The institution here stands for that of Black slavery which Washington, in the manner of Hegel and Blyden, regards as a historical necessity for entering into civilisation. Dismissing the general public opinion that the Negro was naturally inferior, he showed that climatic conditions in Africa explain to a large extent his relatively undeveloped faculties. When slavery removed him from his original environment where his "few simple and crude wants" (p.20) were attended to by nature to the more demanding environment of America the Negro was obliged to work to satisfy his needs. In his peculiarly anecdotic style demeaning to the Black man, Washington recounts how "in certain portions of Africa... the native simply lies down

on his back under a banana-tree and falls asleep with his mouth open. The banana falls into his mouth while he is asleep and when he wakes he finds that all he has to do is to chew it- he has his meal already served.” (p.20) On the contrary, in America the Negro found himself under the compulsion of both the climate and the slave master to labour. Slavery is a “fortunate fall.” In a characteristically Hegelian fashion, Washington tells us that labour, even if accomplished under a slave regime, redeemed the Black slave from nature and elevated him to Christian culture. Washington mentions three signs of this Christian culture: clothes, houses and work.

Washington continues to develop the dialectic of the slave and the master by giving details of its unfolding in both the *antebellum* and *post-bellum* South. He tells us that the labour demanded of and performed by the slave “in the early days of slavery was ... of a crude and primitive kind. ... [But] with the growth of civilization came a demand for a higher kind of labor, hence the Negro slave was soon demanded as a skilled labourer.” (p.21) With his gradual acquirement of skills, the Negro slave enlarged the scope of his movement as he was allowed to hire himself and contract for wages with the full consent of his master. Contrary to Douglass who showed that the economic road to freedom was blocked because of the slaveholders’ violation of contracts with their slaves, Washington gave us examples of Negroes who had managed to topple the unstable relation of slaves and masters. On the eve of the Civil War, he reminded the reader, the masters were practically dependent on the skilled labour of the slaves foreshadowing in this way the end of slavery and the establishment of friendly relations between the races. Even after the Civil War with all the racial antagonisms that it whipped up, Washington showed that the ex-slaves who managed to develop their business acumen got more readily the Southerners’ social recognition. He mentions in support of this argument the case of a “colored merchant ... who said that for thirty-five

years his customers had been among the best white families of the county.” He also quotes the ex-master of the same coloured man “expressing himself as more than pleased that his former slave had attained the honor of being the most successful grocery dealer in the town of Tuskegee.”(p.27)

As mentioned above, when Washington talked about “the industrial training while in slavery in the development of his [the Negro’s] moral and religious life,” it was in order to thrust at the elitist education in liberal arts then prevalent in the South. In this attack, Washington appealed to the case of Liberia to show that if it failed to make progress it was simply because it paid more attention to liberal arts than to “economic and industrial development.” (p.38)In support to industrial training, Washington referred extensively to Douglass whom he quotes as follows:

Every blow of the sledge hammer wielded by a sable arm is powerful blow in support of our cause. Every colored mechanic is by virtue of circumstances an elevator of race. Every house built by a black man is a strong tower against the allied hosts of prejudice. It is impossible for us to attach too much importance to this aspect of the subject. Without industrial development there can be no wealth; without wealth there can be no leisure; without leisure no opportunity for thoughtful reflection and the cultivation of the higher arts. (pp. 18-19)

Douglass, it should be observed here, was as wary about higher education for Blacks as Washington. Both of them came to this conclusion that higher education made those who followed it incapable of countenancing the minimum of racial prejudice becoming in due process advocates of emigration to Africa or migrants to the Northern urban areas. The case of the “Russwurms, the Garnetts, the Wards, the Crummells and others, all men of superior ability”(Op.cit Douglass 1893: 285) acquired in colleges were perfect examples of social restlessness. Both of them convinced that the South was the natural home of the Negro, Douglass and Washington opposed very strongly the “Exodus Movement” to the North in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Washington asked the Negroes to “cast the bucket where you are” and planted the Tuskegee Machine in the Southern Garden.

Having come to leadership at a time of terror, Washington could not defend publicly the values associated with the master-principle such as the idealism of DuBois. Yet implied in the dialectic of the slave and the master that he developed in the context of the post-Civil War is the Hegelian idea that “the future belongs to the slave.” “Moral and religious strength, habits of thrift, love of work, economy, ownership of property, bank accounts.”(p.18) can be derived from submission to voluntary servitude. Writing in a period when American democracy was shifting from a democracy of land to a democracy of goods, and from a society of producers to a society of consumers, Washington saw the Black people as the possible heirs to those values that contributed to the making of the American society and that white people seemed to be giving up. It is understood that these values that Washington wanted to shore up for the race would ultimately allow it to make a qualitative jump in culture that would give a share in American politics. Washington, himself, holds himself as this qualitative transformation of an ex-slave into a representative for the Black race, who in spite of the racial segregation prevailing during his time socialised with the best white personalities at the command of the political Establishment in the United States and Britain. President Roosevelt and Queen Victoria were cases in point.

Critics of Hegel like John Plamenatz and those of Washington such as DuBois have taken them to task for having regarded manual toil as the exclusively dignified form of labour. For example, Plamenatz mentions why the absence of reference to managerial labour in Hegel. (Quoted in Kelly George Armstrong, 1993: 164) Many other critics have pointed out the fact that Hegel could not have had in mind such toil since his *Phenomenology of Spirit* was based on the pre-industrial model of serf and master.

Similarly, DuBois, Washington's contemporary, and historians such as John Hope Franklin have attacked Washington for having put too much emphasis on manual labour and outdated skills. However, recent research shows that Washington's industrial policy can not be confined to small outdated trades like plumbing and masonry. According to Harold Cruse, Washington participated in the economic struggles dominated at the time by the fierce competition between big business corporations. The affirmations of DuBois notwithstanding, Washington, Harold Cruse informs us, led a very aggressive and assertive economic policy through the creation of the National Negro Business League in 1900. Washington's economic nationalism finds its best expression in the policy of Afro-American Realty Company, affiliated to the National Negro Business League. This company managed by a group of Negro leaders, among whom figured Philip A. Payton, a real estate man, and Charles W. Anderson, a Republican Party stalwart, appointed collector of Internal Revenue in New York by Roosevelt in 1905 at the recommendation of Washington. Practising what today comes to be known as "economic patriotism," these Black men under the leadership of Washington 'spearheaded the growth of Harlem by either leasing or buying apartment dwellings.'"(Cruse Harold, 1984:19)

Washington emphasised the idea of property, especially the ownership of a home of one's own as the ideal way to get recognition. But this idea of possessing a home goes beyond the individual cases of Negroes toiling to acquire it. Cruse shows that looked at in historical perspective Washington's economic policy was not wrongheaded in its affirmation that an economic foundation like owning homes could eventually lead to the "enjoyment of literature and fine arts." (p.18) Quoting James Weldon Johnson, Cruse writes that:

The move to Harlem, in the beginning and for a long time, was fathered and engineered by Philip A. Payton [Washington's disciple]. But this was more a

matter of mere business with Mr Payton; the matter of better and still better housing for colored people in New York became the dominating idea of his life, and he worked on it as long as he lived. When Negro New Yorkers evaluate their benefactors in their own race, they must find that not many have done more than Phil Payton; for much of what has made Harlem the intellectual and artistic capital of the Negro world is in good part due to this fundamental advantage. (p.21)

This historical perspective shows that carried on to completion, Washington's dialectic of the slave and master found its culmination in an economic struggle whose assertive and aggressive nature compensates for his conservative attitude to politics at an age characterised by terror and lynching. This Washingtonian economic nationalism became important in more ways than one during the period of the Civil Rights Movement, that of the Black Power Movement and even today. Economic boycotts and buying Black are two of the offshoots of Washingtonism that have permitted Black people in America to regain part of their manhood and recognition.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Booker T. Washington played practically no variation on the Hegelian themes that he borrowed from the conservative elements from *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *The Philosophy of Right* and *The History of History*. Writing in what is commonly called the Gilded Age, Washington developed a view of man that was basically economic. This economic view of man made him overlook other dimensions of freedom than the one that could be earned through the acquisition and accumulation of private property. In other words, Washington was content to claim what Hegel in *The Philosophy of Right* called the Abstract Right thinking that the other social and political forms of freedom would naturally follow the material success and achievements of the Black race. For him, competition in the economic field implied the compliance with the main ethos of the time which called for the purification of desires through thrift, self-help and hard work. Political agitation if there was any on his part was played behind

the scenes preferring instead to evoke economy as the crucible wherein racial antagonisms would eventually melt away.

Washington dramatised the fight for economic freedom or abstract right by an appeal to Hegel's dialectic of the slave and master. However, instead of giving us the full scenario of this dialectic, as his predecessor Douglass had done in his autobiography, he trimmed it down to an economic contest to suit the status quo of the post-Reconstruction period. In doing so, Washington went so far as to join the revisionist school of historians who claimed that after all slavery and plantation life were a school, and that the Reconstruction had de-skilled the Black man turning his political freedom into a mere sham. To turn back the clock, Washington called for an industrial education that would give the ex-slaves an economic edge. I have come to the conclusion that Washington, contrary to Frederick Douglass, does not question Hegel on the binding value of work for the slave and master. The main drive of his argument is that the ex-slave will experience their freedom to the extent that they identify the products of their labour. Washington's materialist view of Black history did not lead him to a Marxist kind of historical materialism. Both Marx and Washington inspired their theories of labour from Hegel, and both underlined the importance of industrial labour as an element in raising consciousness. However, while the former emphasised alienation from the masters and the rise of class consciousness, the latter stressed the rehabilitating value of labour and this in accordance with the Protestant ethic of work of his time.

For Booker T. Washington, the exhibition of industrial and agricultural products produced at Tuskegee Institute, at the Atlanta Exposition at the turn of the century was evidence that personal and collective social recognition can be achieved through other means than "agitation of questions of social equality." Like Hegel in *The Philosophy of Right* Washington does not care if the slave is still a slave in respect of the legal

determination of his status if he manages to gain the recognition from the white Southerners through the exhibition of the products of his own labour.

Finally, like Hegel, Washington projects a vision of the ex-slave as that of a master chef who keeps his appetite in control as he directs his attention to the preparation of exquisite dishes for others to consume. Contrary to his master who merely consumes, this slave learns what he is because he sees what he does. Ultimately he will acquire the necessary skills and the property through which the master will recognise him. It follows that the inter-textual relation between *Up From Slavery* and the *Philosophy of Right* is of the order of imitation. Washington follows so closely in the footsteps of Hegel that his autobiography reads as a carbon copy of Hegel's philosophical essays. I have tried to explain this tendency of Washington to imitate Hegel by the similarity of contexts in which both of them produced their works.

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## Chapter Three

### The Slave Narrative Revisited: W. E. B DuBois as Historicist and Cultural Critic

#### Introduction

W.E. DuBois is one of the most influential intellectual figures in Black American political thought. On the list of thinkers under study in this research, no one has his academic standing. Douglass was a self-educated ex-slave. Washington went to an industrial school and got an honorary master's degree only late in his life. Garvey spent only a short time at school before entering an apprenticeship as a printer. Martin Luther King Jr earned a Ph D in divinity, but he chose to become a pastor. As for Malcolm X, he dropped out of school at an early age, at grade 8 to continue what he calls an "informal education" in the streets of Roxbury in Boston and Harlem in New York. In light of these profiles, DuBois academic career was quite exceptional for a Black man of his time. It took him all the way from a little provincial town in Massachusetts to the University of Berlin earning degrees often with distinctions. His comparatively superior intellectual calibre shows in the refined prose or rather poetry of *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), to which he still owes most of his popularity.

In the second chapter, I have written that Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom* anticipates the philosophical turn of mind with which DuBois authored his book. I have referred to Douglass's mosaic of quotes from classical literature and the Bible as a thrust to the colour line that is often drawn on the basis of the white man's prejudice about the Black man's intellectual and moral inferiority. The list of the classical authors to which Douglass refers in order to lay his claim to a cultured status is quite lengthy. I have mentioned the most prominent ones without including Hegel because there is no explicit allusion to him in Douglass's slave narrative. By the time DuBois had written

his book in 1903, “the color line” in the South as well as in the North was more tightly controlled and policed for reasons detailed below. In the manner foreshadowed by his precursor, DuBois proposes to use culture as a strategic means to cross and dissolve that invisible but powerful social divide structured to separate the races. DuBois, just like Douglass, but in a more obtrusive way shows the deployment of this strategy in the highly allusive form of his book.

It is needless here to detail all the complex web of references with which DuBois weaves his message of freedom. It is all the more so, because many other critics have already tackled this task. However, here I have to mention at least two of DuBois’s allusions to Hegel contained in the title of the book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, and that of the first chapter “Of our Spiritual Strivings,” in order to provide a justification for the treatment of the Hegelian themes in DuBois’s work. These titles refer to *The Philosophy of History* wherein Hegel documents the “spiritual striving” (the words are Hegel’s) of humankind to freedom. For Hegel, the essence of the soul or souls is freedom and the main activity of world historical peoples is towards the realisation of a perfect form of this freedom. In this chapter I am concerned with the way DuBois retools some Hegelian themes and ideas in the Progressive Age following in this DuBois’s invitation to the reader.

#### **A. DuBois’s Life, Times and Influence**

A short biography of the author and a brief outline of his times are indeed more in order here than in the first two chapters because, as his allusions to Hegel’s work on world history, attest DuBois is a historicist of a kind. For this short account of his life, I rely on *The Autobiography of W.E. DuBois* published posthumously in 1968, emphasising those aspects of his life most relevant to the task at hand. William Edward Burghardt DuBois was born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts on February 1868, i.e.,

three years after the end of the Civil War. He was the only child of Alfred DuBois and Mary Silvina Burghardt. At a very early age, the father deserted the household. So Mother and child were obliged to move to the family farm owned by Othello Burghardt, Mary Silvina's father, in Egremont plain. With the death of the latter in 1872, this one-parent family moved back to Great Barrington, where the mother worked as a domestic servant, even after having suffered from a stroke, in order to supply the necessities of life. DuBois continued to live with his heart-stricken mother until she died in 1884. DuBois tells us that his mother warned him against the evils of alcohol, instilled in him Victorian values like thrift, hard work and respectability, and taught him that the "secret of life and loosing of the color ... lay in excellence, in accomplishment." (p. 75)

What we learn from DuBois's life writing is the important role that women played in shaping his ideas. Among other women in the family circle that he mentions are his cousin Inez, his aunt Minerva, and his paternal grandfather's third wife, Anne Green. In the absence of the father whom he never knew, each of these women contributed a block for the construction of his character. Putting into practice the pieces of advice that he learned from these women, DuBois worked at odd jobs (Newspaper reporter, timekeeper in a construction site, etc) earning a scholarship to attend Fisk University in Nashville after his graduation from Great Barrington High school in 1884. It is his move to the South that brought him into firsthand contact with the "color line" and to recognise the existence of racial prejudice. Until then he had considered the white New Englanders as his natural companions and shared in their prejudice against the poor Irishmen thinking that prejudice had nothing to do with colour or ignorance but with lack of thrift. DuBois received a B.A from Fisk in 1888 and was granted a Price-Greenleaf to complete his education in Harvard College and Harvard Graduate School in social science. From these schools he earned respectively a B.A in philosophy in

1890 and an M.A in history in 1891. While studying in Harvard and with the experience of racial prejudice hard pressed in his mind, he realised the extent to which racialism had pervaded even academic sanctuaries. He was “struck to find that the “nigger” jokes of Tennessee were replaced in Harvard by tales of the “two Irishmen.”

The turning point in DuBois’s life and educational career came in 1892 when he was awarded a scholarship by Slater Fund to study social sciences at Friedrich Wilhem University, Berlin, i.e., in Hegel’s homeland and University. This episode in his life and education left a deep imprint on his conception of race relations and his elaboration of a solution to what he called the “color line.” It is universally acknowledged that travelling broadens the mind. DuBois joins his voice to this claim when he writes that his stay in Germany made him feel “exceptionally free, more liberated in these years [1892-1893] than he would ever feel again.” (pp.59-60) Liberated from some of the constraints of American provincialism and racism, DuBois felt for the first time in his adult life what it meant to be treated as a peer and an equal. In Germany he had the impression that he was “home” at last because “university training and German home-making left no room for American color prejudice.” (p.156) He further admitted that until then he “had not regarded white folk as human quite in the same way [as he was. He] had reached the habit of expecting color prejudice so universally, that [he] found it even when it was not there.” (Ibid) DuBois’s experience in Germany, living, studying and travelling, liberated him from “the extremes of my racial provincialism” and taught him to cease to “hate or suspect people simply because they belonged to one race or color.” (p.59) With his early attraction to classical arts (e.g., his singing with Mozart Society at Fisk in 1886-1887), DuBois refined further this taste in Germany by indulging himself in Romantic ideas like Truth, Beauty and Goodness, attending Ludwig Van Beethoven’s symphonies and Richard Wagner’s *Ring* and appreciating the colours of Rembrandt and Gothic

architectural remnants of Bismarck's Germany. In the process he turned into what he called a "devotee of white cultural expression." (p.171)

As an American national, DuBois did not experience racism in Germany. However, he noted that even *fin-de-siècle* Germany was not at all immune to racism. The Germans simply directed theirs against other scapegoats, Eastern Europeans. DuBois knew about it when he responded to an invitation for a tour across Central and Eastern Europe that a German fellow student launched to him. Travelling *incognito*, he was discriminated several times during this visiting tour because he was often mistaken for a Jew or a Gipsy. The observations of racism in the region led him to qualify it as "an old story, tyranny in school and work; insult in home and on the street." (p.140) However, he did not fail to remark a significant difference in the two racist situations, which he described as follows:

Of course in contrast to America, there were the privileged Poles who escaped personal insult; there was the aristocracy who had some recognized rights. The whole mass of the oppressed were not reduced to one level; nevertheless the degradation was only too familiar.(pp.140-141)

DuBois also knew that ten years before his German visit, Berlin hosted the conference during which the European imperial powers partitioned Africa into zones of influence. This explains why he wrote that in Germany "I began to see the race problem in America, the problem of the peoples of Africa and Asia, and the political development of Europe as one." (p.156) With this statement, DuBois comes very close to Fanon in his association of domestic racism with colonialism. In other words, what the white supremacists in America at this time period were doing to the Blacks was a reflection of what colonising Western powers including America were doing in Africa and Asia.

It is with these new perspectives on racism and colonialism that DuBois returned to the "'Nigger'-hating America" (p.183) in June 1894. In his intellectual baggage were the new historicist ideas on political economy that he learned from Gustav Schmoller,

one of the leading figures of what is known as the German historical school of economics whose main philosophical foundations are Hegelian. Hegel was one of the founders of Historicism. Briefly, these ideas centred on beliefs that ran counter to the main tenets of liberalism and *laissez-faire* economics. Economic laws such as that of supply and demand, competition, minimum intervention of the state in public and private affairs were questioned on the basis that these laws are historical and sanction rights of a particular class that of the bourgeoisie at a particular period of history. Similarly, philosophical ideas like the natural rights doctrine, the atomistic conception of the individuation and the contract view of society are qualified in the same manner and challenged with an organic view of community emphasising social interaction and social ethics. These are some of the Hegelian ideas that DuBois brought with him from the Germany of the Kaiser, then deeply involved in reform in its attempt to meet the challenges of the industrial revolution.

Germany, in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, knew what Eric Hobsbawm in *Industry and Empire* calls, the Second Industrial Revolution, based mainly on chemical industry. It also witnessed a revolution in social sciences, whose illustrious figures comprise names like Gustav Schmoller (one of DuBois's teachers), Adolph Wagner, Johannes Conrad, Max Sering, Wilhelm Roscher, Karl Bucher and later Max Weber. With the historicist philosophical thought of Hegel in the background, these social scientists proposed another vision of society than the liberal one for healing the ills brought about by the rapid and excessive industrialisation and urbanisation in Germany. Therefore, it is not surprising that Germany became the favourite European destination for budding American social scientists whose homeland was at the time suffering from the same ills as their host country. Among the white fellow country men who accompanied DuBois to Germany, we can mention Richard T. Telly, Edward T. Devine,

Benjamin Marsh, Frederick C. Howe and Albert Shaw. Most of these scholars returned to their home country with the deeply formative German experience in the 1890s, a decade marked by “the collapse of nineteenth-century American culture.”(Carroll N. Peter and Noble W. David, 1997: 231-256) In 1893, Jackson T. Turner proclaimed the end of the Frontier and the impending disappearance of the Jeffersonian ideal of the yeoman farmer, the Frontier, Jacksonian democracy and other nineteenth-century American ideals. These lay dead and buried in the social crumbling of the Gilded Age, a crumbling brought about by corruption at all levels of society, cut-throat competition, a materialist ethos and an uncontrolled urbanisation. It is to these social, economic, political and cultural flaws of the Gilded Age that the returned German-educated American scholars and their old kith and kin the Saint-Louis Hegelians responded by proposing a Progressive agenda, whose main point was economic and social reform.

Historians of all boards often retrace the origin of the Progressive Era back to local roots like the Populist movement of the 1890s denying implicitly at least the important role that the German-educated scholars played in the Progressive reforms that swept the country from approximately 1900 to 1917. According to them, Populism came to the fore with the severe economic depression of 1893 when

southern cotton farmers and wheat farmers of the plains, hurt by declining prices in the 1880s, became conscious of the explosive development of the corporations [...] began to seek government assistance, first from state government and then from the federal government. (Ibid, p. 290-291)

This is a way of saying that the reforms of the liberal system in the Progressive Era like the intervention of the government at all levels to regulate business corporations, to legislate on urban expansion, to guarantee sanitation, healthy housing and a good education to children, to stop the corruption of political bosses, in brief to ensure a healthy social interaction by introducing ethics in politics and business had their sole origin in an American tradition of reform. Therefore, Progressive reforms were viewed

more as a matter of simple evolution in thought and culture than a diffusion and transfer of Hegelian ideas by the American social scholars who had a first-hand experience of similar reforms in Germany. The St-Louis Hegelians and their contribution to the American tradition of reform was also ignored in rendering the history of the Progressive Era. (For information about the contribution of the St-Louis Hegelians to reform particularly in education, see supra pp. 5-10 of the introduction to this thesis.)

However, to say that most historians ignored the role that German-educated American scholars and the long-established St-Louis Hegelians had played in Progressive reform does not diminish the important impulse for social change that Progressives had derived from the American tradition of reform in general and that of the Populist movement in particular. For example, there is at least one aspect of reform in the agenda of the Populist movement well in advance of the social and economic reforms pushed forward by the Progressives. This is related to the interracial alliance between Black voters with low-income Southern whites that challenged the power-holders in the state Democratic Party in the 1880s and 1890s. According to Peter N. Carroll and David W. Noble, “low income southern whites had struggled until 1896 to maintain coalitions with black voters,” because both the Republican Party and the Democratic one ignored the interests of farmers in their defence of prince merchants and industry captains.

The Populist Party or the People’s Party was formed in 1891 through the efforts of the Farmers’ Alliances both in the North and the South. James B. Weaver ran for the Presidency on the Populist ticket in 1892 and won a million popular votes. During the electoral campaign, Tom Watson, one the leaders of the Populists attempted an alliance between black and white Georgian farmers by addressing them as follows:

You are kept apart that you may be separately fleeced from your earnings. You are made to hate each other because upon that hatred is

rested the keystone of the arch of financial despotism which enslaves both. You are deceived and blinded that you may not see how the race antagonism perpetuates a monetary system which beggars both. (Quoted in Carroll and Noble, 1984: 293-294)

Instead of adhering to its grassroots politics based partly on interracial alliance, most Populist leaders threw their support to the Democratic Party in the presidential election of 1896. This strategy of entry to party politics turned out to be counterproductive and suicidal to the Populists as careers of a viable political and social project. One of its consequences is the re-establishment of the one-party system in the South, a one-party system dominated by the Democrats. The second consequence is the radicalisation in the game of the two-party politics. Democrats who had absorbed the Populist Party and its Platform of ideas known as the Omaha Platform were accused by the Northern-based Republicans of being un-American because they had, among other things, called for government intervention in social and economic matters. The South-based Democrats returned the accusation by reminding their Republican adversaries that their support of corrupt urban financiers had made rural America carry the “Cross of Gold” and the American nation as a whole renege Jefferson’s and Jackson’s democratic and agrarian ideals.

In racial terms, the major consequence of the Populist Party’s alliance with the Democratic Party is the exclusion of Blacks from politics. This exclusion reached national proportion when the Republicans and Democrats tried to exorcise their demons after the 1896 presidential election. Politicians across regional and partisan boards resorted to a rewriting of the history of the Reconstruction era that definitely buried deeply the interracial alliances that had made the heydays of the Populist Party. In its stead came a representation of the Reconstruction as a “record of massive and hideous rape, murder, and arson by blacks against whites.” (Op. cit, Carroll and Noble, p.293) To avoid returning to the “Negro rule” of the Reconstruction Era and to preserve order

and racial purity, the politicians warned against the danger of placing economic self-interest over matters of racial purity. Class divisions among whites had temporarily returned Blacks to politics and if they were allowed to continue the white population would soon experience a “repetition of the horror of the Reconstruction,” they threatened. (Ibid, p.293) The ground was thus prepared for the disenfranchisement of the Black population with the complicity of the federal institutions. The spread of the Jim Crow laws could at last go on unhampered by the Populists. One of the greatest ironies in the history of the Populist Party is illustrated in the career of Tom Watson. After the defeat of his party in the 1896 elections, he turned from an enthusiastic supporter for interracial alliance to an unabashed proponent of the anti-negro crusade.

Morris Gall and McGeehan claim that the “Populist platform continued to be pushed by Progressives for a generation.” (Op. Cit. p, 196) What these historians forgot to mention is that Progressives enforced this platform in a selective manner, especially with regard to the memory of interracial alliance that had characterised the Populist movement. One of the paradoxes of the majority of white Progressives is that they saw progressivism as being reversed for whites only. In proposing a Progressive agenda that included the solution to the plight of the Black man living in the Jim Crow Era, DuBois emerged as the sole black sheep among the Progressives. The Hegelian historicist principles and the German social thought that led the white Progressives and DuBois to adhere to and refine the Populist reforms were the same, but their implementation differed significantly. DuBois’s implementation was racially inclusive whereas that of the white Progressives was racially exclusive. This divergence in the deployment of a shared philosophical and social thought and its consequences on the development of DuBois’s political thought are detailed in the last section of this chapter.

For the moment, two observations are most in order with reference to DuBois's "life, times and influence." First, DuBois grew up mostly among women during his childhood and adolescence. The positive influence of women led him to develop an opposition to patriarchy. Both at the level of the household and at that of the nation, fathers across the racial board emerge as irresponsible patriarchs and masters in his writings. Second, the absorption of German social thought in general and Hegelian philosophy in particular made him a convinced historicist and cultural critic. This historicism made him a strong defender of the position that "neo-slavery" of the Jim Crow age in America could not resist long against the irreversible march of freedom. The next section discusses this historicist dimension of *The Souls of Black Folk* with reference to Hegel's historicist ideas in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *The History of Philosophy*.

#### **B. DuBois and the Hegelian View of World History**

Though *The Philosophy of History* is the one work of Hegel to be published posthumously by his son, it had the most profound influence, for better or worse, on later philosophers, notably Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. These Marxist thinkers appreciated most the serious dimension that Hegel accorded to the notion of change and dialectic development throughout history. In the preface to the second edition of *Das Capital*, Marx called himself "a pupil of that might thinker," and in recognition of Hegel's importance to the Marxist thought, Engels wrote that "what distinguished Hegel's mode of thinking was the exceptional historical sense underlying it." (Quoted in Singer Pinter, 2001: 13) Many decades later, T. S. Eliot had the same praise for Hegel's historical sense when he wrote his critical essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent." We know that Left and Right Hegelians differed significantly in their retooling of the German master's ideas. There is no need to detail the major controversies in their debate since this is not the relevant here. However, there is a relevant point to be drawn

from their agreement about the importance of Hegel as both a historicist and cultural critic. This agreement among Hegelian thinkers across ideological boards rests on the basis of Hegel's strong belief that world history has a meaning and that development in culture brings out a concomitant development of freedom. These are the two main Hegelian principles that DuBois made his own in writing *The Souls of Black Folk*.

History, for Hegel, is not that Shakespearean or rather Macbethian "tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." On the contrary, he lets us know that the world is not abandoned to chance and external contingent courses. Things happen with a purpose. Without completely doing away the religious or divine understanding of this purpose, Hegel claims that the meaning of history reveals itself most through our reflection on or philosophising about our past as human beings. This reflection indicates the direction history is taking and the destination it will ultimately reach. Hegel clearly states the direction and destination of human history by defining world or Universal History as "the exhibition of spirit in the process of working the knowledge of that which it is potentially." (1991: 17-18) For him the essence of spirit or the mind is freedom. What distinguishes humankind from his natural environment is the capacity to activate that potential for freedom. Therefore, Hegel concludes by postulating that "The History of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom."(Ibid, p.19)

On the basis of this postulate, Hegel distinguishes three different stages in the development of freedom. In stage one, only one man is free and that is the oriental despot. In stage two, some people are free and some other others are not. This was the case in the Ancient Greek world. In stage three that corresponds to the modern era all people are free. The dialectical progress in freedom happens as a result of contact between what he calls "world historical peoples." For him, the "Negroes" in Africa have

a degree zero of consciousness of freedom. So, he skips over Africa's role in history and moves on to the discussion of the oriental world. Even here, Hegel differentiates between Chinese and Indian cultures on the one hand, and Persian and Egyptian ones on the other. The former two "cultures" have no credentials of freedom whatever to show on the historical board in order to admit their peoples among world historical peoples. The Chinese "culture" organises the government and the state on the principle of the family whereas the Indian one does so on the principle of castes. In both cases, the concept of individual freedom is missing. In the Chinese society, the Emperor stands in the position of father to whom all others owe natural obedience as children and wards of the state. In India, by contrast, people's occupations and behaviours are externally determined by caste.

Hegel comes to the conclusion that the birth place of the consciousness of freedom has to be located elsewhere in the oriental world than in China and India. It is in Persia that he identifies the germ destined to flower into the Idea of freedom. The basis of the Persian Empire is not merely natural obedience to family and caste, but a higher principle derived from the religion of Zoroaster, which involves the worship of light. As an Enlightenment thinker, it is not surprising that Hegel makes much of this intellectual and spiritual principle by declaring the Persian culture and society as the first starting point in the growth of the consciousness of freedom. However, this potential of freedom could not be realised in Persia because of the despotic nature of its regime. Therefore, when the latter collapsed in its confrontation with the Greek city-states in Salamis in 480 B.C, the second stage in the dialectical development in the consciousness of freedom could at last start. As world historical peoples, the Greeks and the Romans expanded the limits of freedom before handing the torch to the Germanic

people who inaugurated the third stage in the development of the consciousness of freedom with the Reformation.

Hegel sees “simplicity” and “heart” as the two main principles in the character of the German nation and people, which “predestined them to be the bearers of the Christian principles, and to carry out the Idea as the Absolutely Rational aim.” (Ibid, p.354) In other words, if Reformation took root in the German world and not elsewhere it is because its character provided a congenial ground for the growth of the ideas of that simple German monk Luther. One of these ideas is that people do not need the church or any outside authority to tell them how to interpret the scripture. Each individual human being has, in his/her own heart, a direct spiritual relationship with Christ. Hegel saw the Reformation as more than an “attack on the old Church and the replacement of Roman Catholicism by Protestantism.” (Op. Cit. Peter Singer, p.26) Its political and social consequences were also tremendous. It started German people on the path of striving for creating a world fit for spiritual beings, a democratic and rational world where all men feel at home at last because its laws are in harmony with their rational nature. Hegel does not say it explicitly, but the drift of his arguments suggests that the Germany of his time was representative of what an Ethical state based on freedom ought to be.

However, he also seems to admit a possible future development in the consciousness of freedom when he refers to America as “the land of the future, where in the ages that lie before us, the burden of the World’s History shall reveal itself.” (Op. cit. Hegel, p.86) Hegel devotes only five pages to America as another possible site or stage in the development of the Idea of freedom, because “What is taken place in the New World up to the present time is only an echo of the Old World – the expression of a foreign life.” (Ibid, p. 87) As a land of the future, Hegel adds that as land of the future America “has

no interest for us here [The Philosophy of History], for as regards History, our concern must be with that which has been and that which is.” (Ibid) When Hegel made this claim, America was still in the infant stages of national existence. With **The Declaration of Independence, The Articles of Confederation** and **The Constitution** in mind, Hegel suggests that America was at that stage a civil society operating on a mere liberal and contractual basis. As long as the safety-valve of the Frontier was open, he prophesied, a loose liberal government would be enough and the necessity for a firm combination would not be felt. In anticipation of the historical development of America in the late nineteenth century, he wrote the following:

A real State [meaning an Ethical and rational state that goes beyond the principles of liberalism] arises only after a distinction of classes has arisen, when wealthy and poverty become extreme, and when such a condition of things presents itself that a large proportion of the people can no longer satisfy its necessities in the way in which it has been accustomed so to do. But America is hitherto exempt from this pressure, for it has the outlet of colonization constantly and widely open, and multitudes are continually streaming into the plains of the Mississippi. (Ibid, pp.85-86)

What Hegel said about world history in general and America in particular could have hardly failed to resound strongly in the ears of the Progressives at the end of the nineteenth century. This was particularly true for DuBois in *The Souls of Black Folk*.

DuBois echoes Hegel’s historicist ideas throughout his work, but he makes them more vibrant in the first three chapters (“Of our Spiritual Strivings,” “Of the Dawn of Freedom,” and “Of Mr Booker T. Washington”) than the other eleven chapters of the book. The first chapter establishes the African American people as a world historical people. The author starts with autobiographical details related to his first experience of racism as a schoolchild in New England and his response to that experience in negative as well as positive forms, but soon the elements of personal life are enlarged to include all African Americans in a broader world historical framework. In a poetic flight reminiscent of Hegel in *The Philosophy of History*, he tells the reader that

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, -- a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p.215)

The sequential alignment in the quote makes it clear that DuBois takes Hegel's word for it. For Hegel as well as for DuBois America is the land of the future. But swerving from the former the latter affirms that because of historical circumstances it is the Negro who was destined to take over the world historical role for expanding the consciousness of freedom further in the land of the future.

A return to Hegel's text is necessary to grasp the full meaning of DuBois's reversal of the march of world history. Hegel dismissed Africa as being unworthy of consideration in a study of history like his. The main reason for this dismissal is that "It is the "land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night."(Ibid, p. 91) To exclude Africa from the scene of world history, Hegel appealed to the ethnographic writings of his time for evidence. The worship of fetishes, the weakness of character and moral sentiments (e.g., parents selling their children to slavery) and the absence of government are some of the elements from ethnography that Hegel held against Negroes in his declaration that freedom in the sense of self-consciousness is totally unknown to them. DuBois makes a clean sweep of these racial prejudices first by investing the term "Negro" with a positive sense and then making him the potential carrier of that future human project that Hegel set in America. The author's qualification of the Negro as "the seventh son" of the human family is meant to add force to the Negro's destiny to lead history in the direction of an expanded freedom. African American tradition invests "the seventh son

born with a veil” with visionary powers. “The last will be the first,” says the Bible, and DuBois prophesies the same for the Negro when he reviews the progress of world history.

DuBois’s reversal of the Hegelian schema for the dialectical advance seems to rest on some ambiguities in Hegel’s historical text that recent critics like Caroline Rooney have detected. For example, the latter affirms that there are many ambiguous elements in Hegel’s statements about Africa and the Negro which suggest that for him the cultural Other for the West is not Africa but the Orient. (Cf. Rooney Caroline, 2000: 162) There is no space to debate this point here. However, DuBois seems to have exploited the German master’s ambiguities, contradictions and other textual weaknesses to weave out his own version of world history. For instance, one sees no striking difference in Hegel’s qualification of Africa as a “land of childhood” and America as “the land of the future”. Moreover, the cultural contradictions that he detects in the two regions are more or less similar. They are even more striking in the case of the latter. Though he affirms that America is “the land of the future,” he nips the idea in the bud when he makes America look as an imitation of old Europe, and particularly Britain. The implication is easy to draw for DuBois particularly in the context of the materialist America of his period. Throughout the book, DuBois reminds us of the seamy sides of American materialism while pointing to the spiritual dimension of Black American life even when lived within the “veil” or what Hegel calls the “mantle of darkness.”

This is one of the ironic variations that DuBois plays on Hegel’s conception of the progress of world history. Hegel believes that slavery to be unjust and indefensible in civilised societies, except for the Negro for whom slavery is a school of freedom. The European or rather American enslavement of the Negro constitutes the ideal way of bringing him into world history. (See *supra*, introduction to the second chapter.) The

irony in DuBois's text is that it is the Negro, the man unjustly declared to be outside history, who had the spiritual wherewithal to make Americans indistinctly of race enter world history. DuBois reverses the direction of the progress of world history as laid down by Hegel. It is the Negro (the term is appropriated by DuBois in its positive sense) who is regarded as the culminating point of world history. The Negro as portrayed by DuBois represents the Hegelian dialectic man *par excellence*. It is worth observing here that apart from the sociological interpretation, the Hegelian dialectic of the slave and the master has received a socio-psychological interpretation which makes the struggle of the bondsman with the master as an internal dialectic that influences and is influenced by the social dialectic outside. According to Hegel, the ego is "we", i.e., a plurality of Ego, just as "we" is a single ego. The following interpretation of Hegel's dialectic by George Armstrong Kelly captures the complexity of DuBois's Double Consciousness as an operational concept for self-definition:

Lordship and bondage is properly seen from three angles that are equally valid and interpenetrable. One of these angles is necessarily the social, of which Kojève has given such a dazzling reading. Another regards the shifting pattern of psychological domination and servitude within the individual. The third then becomes a fusion of the other two processes: the interior consequences wrought by the external confrontation of the Self and the Other, the Other and the Self, which has commenced in the struggle for recognition. (Kelly George Armstrong, 1993:165)

I would argue that Armstrong's triangular vision of Hegel's dialectic, and particularly the third angle, highlights DuBois's double consciousness as a fusion, a synthesis of social/historical and psychological processes.

DuBois represents the Negro as a man who has traversed the fourth stage of the Hegelian journey towards self-consciousness: stoicism, scepticism, introspection and transcendence of negative urges. The last stage for Hegel is reached once the "self sees itself in the other." It is probably what DuBois means when he refers to that "peculiar sensation of seeing oneself through the ideas of the other." (p.215) DuBois takes care to

underline that “the history of the American Negro is the history of this strife – this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self.” Therefore, while Bruce D. Dickson (1999) and Arnold Rampersad (1999) are arguably right to claim that DuBois borrowed the concept of “double consciousness” from literary and medical sources (European Romanticism, American transcendentalism and nineteenth-century medical literature related to cases of split personality), they seem to be mistaken in relating the synthesis that DuBois made between the two-halves of personality to guidelines from William James, DuBois’s philosophy at Harvard University. As the following message to his brother the famous novelist Henry James indicates, William James himself seems to have been surprised at DuBois’s pulling together of two dissociated selves into a harmonious entity: “I am sending you a decidedly moving book by a mulatto ex-student of mine, DuBois, professor of history at Atlanta (Georgia) Negro college. Read Chapters VII to XI for local color, etc.(June 6, 1903).” (Quoted in Gates Henry Louis Jr and Terry Hume Oliver, Eds. 1999:227) William James was too much involved in the medical literature of his time to be able to provide his ex-student with any guidance on how to reconcile a racially divided self. Moreover, knowing William James’s strong objection to Hegel’s dialectic method, one wonders how he could have raised in his writings suggestions of this kind to DuBois. (Cf. Gale M. Richard, 1999:2998 and James William, 1977:43-62) Therefore, if one has to look into the source of inspiration behind DuBois’s synthesis, it is not in James’s pragmatic philosophy that one can find it but in Hegel’s idealist philosophy.

For DuBois the Negro is not a negative starting point, ground zero, as Hegel may call it, but the end point of Western history in its contact with Africa. The African slave becomes a Negro on the American soil, a Negro who takes consciousness of himself

and stands in an antithetical position to the one that Hegel portrays in *The Philosophy of World History*. The Negro, as DuBois portrays him, is “gifted with second-sight in this American world.” He is no a mere biological entity, but a man with a spiritual message, an Idea to transmit to human kind. Without going into detail, DuBois locates the original source of the Negro’s spirituality to that African part of the world, which Hegel had excluded from world history. DuBois tells us that African priests catered to the spiritual needs of their folks in the African forests. Like other Africans, these African priests were reduced to slavery. However, they never ceased to provide a spiritual direction for their people even in the house of bondage. Christianity shaped them, but they also shaped it by creating Churches built on African forms of worship.

The “Negro” in DuBois’s sense of the word has both a singular and generic meaning. In its generic sense, it stands for the black race. In an essay entitled “On the Conservation,” DuBois writes that

The American Negro has always felt an intense personal in discussions as to the origins and destinies of races: primarily because of most discussions of race with which he is familiar have lurked certain assumptions as to to his natural abilities, as to his political, intellectual and moral status, which he [the Negro] felt were wrong.” (Dubois, 1897: 815)

Indeed, the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries were marked by a resurgence of theories of race. If DuBois uses the term race to speak about the Negro, he often uses it not in its biological and anthropological sense, but as a socio-historical notion. For him, what matters most are not the “grosser physical differences of color, hair and bone” of the Negro, but the “differences –subtle, delicate and elusive, though they may be –which have silently but definitely separated men into groups.” (Ibid, p.816) Following Hegel, DuBois claims that the “history of the world is the history not of individuals, but of groups, not of nations, but of race.” (Ibid, 817) Accordingly, he distinguishes “eight distinctively differentiated races, in the sense in

which History tells us the word must be used.” (Ibid, p.817) He names them as follows: the Slavs, the Teutons, the English, the Negroes, the Romance race, the Semites, the Hindus and the Mongolians.

There is no need here to discuss the basis on which DuBois has differentiated between the races. The interest is rather in his statement that each of the various races is “striving [...] in its own way, to develop for civilization its particular message, its particular ideal, which shall help to guide the world nearer and nearer that perfection of human life for which we all long, that “one far off Divine event.” (Ibid, 819) It has to be observed that, for Hegel, the history of mankind is the history of the spirit. The spirit realises itself in history through particular racial groups. For him, world history, he suggests, seems to have reached its consummation or end in his own times, i.e., modern Germany. Dubois’s *The Souls of Black Folk* opens with a chapter (Of Our Spiritual Strivings) with the rejection of this Hegelian contention that history has completed its testing of human groups, and it closes with the denunciation of human arrogance in its announcement of the end of history. While DuBois accepts the Hegelian notion of spirit as a clearly definable measure of human advancement and backwardness, he castigates

the silently growing assumption of this age[...] that the probation of races is past, and that the backward races of today are of proven inefficiency and not worth the saving. Such an assumption is the arrogance of peoples irreverent toward Time and the deeds of men.” (p.386)

In this quote DuBois comes back to the idea of the historical necessity for the conservation of races to which the Anglo-Saxon school of history like Josiah Strong were firmly opposed. The latter advocated the dispossession, assimilation and molding of the so-called weaker races as a primary condition for the success of any reform movement. (Cf. Strong Josiah, 1885) To the Anglo-Saxon historians, who were sceptical of the efficiency (This is one of the favourite terms for the Progressives.) and

necessity for saving the black race for the progress of civilisation, DuBois resorts to a contrapuntal reading of Anglo-Saxon history:

A thousand years ago such an assumption, easily possible would have made it difficult for the Teuton to prove the right to life. Two thousand years ago such dogmatism, readily welcome, would have scouted the idea of blond races ever leading civilization. So woefully unorganised is sociological knowledge that the meaning of progress of “swift” and “slow” in human doing, and the limits of human perfectibility are veiled, unanswered sphinxes on the shores of science.

The finale of Dubois’s argument is that like other races, the Negro race must be given an opportunity to perform on the stage of American history and that of the world invoking historical precedence of the Blacks to the American land and evidence of economic and spiritual of their contributions to American civilisation:

Your country ? How came it yours? Before the Pilgrims landed we were here. Here we have brought our three gifts and mingled them with yours: a gift of story and song [...]; the gift of sweat and brawn to beat back the wilderness, conquer the soil and lay the foundations of this vast economic empire [...]; the third, **a gift of the Spirit**. Around us the history of the land has centred for thrice a hundred years; out of the nation’s heart we have called all that was best to throttle and subdue all that was worst [...] Nor has our gift of the Spirit been merely passive. Actively we have woven ourselves with the warp and woof of this nation. [...] Are not these gifts worth the giving? Is not this work and striving? Would America have been America without her Negro people? (p.387)

The problem for the Negro, as DuBois sees it, is to discover and deliver the message of his/her race. It is a problem because “the full, complete Negro message of the whole Negro race has not yet been given to the world”. In *The Souls of Black Folk.*, DuBois gives some indications as to the nature of this message. To the question as to how the message will be developed, DuBois answers that it will be done by the “development of these race groups, not as individuals, but as races,” races understood in socio-cultural rather than in biological terms. At a time when nineteenth and early twentieth centuries America had officially adopted the Zangwillian idea of melting pot, DuBois advocates a **cultural pluralism** under the guise of race. (Cf. O’Callaghan, 2007) He affirms that the destiny of the Negroes is not assimilation of “servile imitation of Anglo-Saxon culture,

but a stalwart originality which shall unswervingly follow Negro ideals.” He also writes that “in this merging [the Negro] wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanise America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a **message** for the world”. (p.215)

As a historicist, DuBois does not confine himself by setting the history of the American Negro within the context of the grand narrative that Hegel calls world history. He also reflects on short periods of Negro history like the Civil War and the Reconstruction. For example, in the second part of the first chapter (Of Our Spiritual Strivings) and the second chapter “Of the Dawn of Freedom”, considers the Hegelian journey of the Negro toward self-consciousness over a period of forty years that changed the Negro all the way “from the child of emancipation to the youth of dawning consciousness” (p. 218) characterised by the quest for the ballot and political power during the Reconstruction. The next stage of growth was marked by the race’s adolescent desire for book-learning especially during the Post-Reconstruction period which climaxes with the black man’s coming to age as “a co-worker in the kingdom of culture.” As one of the co-workers in the kingdom of culture, DuBois emerges basically as a cultural critic and theorist.

### **C. DuBois and Hegel: Cultural Critics Both**

Education and culture are two interrelated motifs in *The Souls of Black Folk*. One might ask in what ways Hegel influenced Du Bois in this respect. Before answering the question, it has to be underlined that Hegel did not write any treatise or philosophical essay on education in the manner of Jean Jacques Rousseau or John Locke. In itself this may seem incongruous especially if we know that that he was an educationalist all his life. As stated earlier in this thesis, Hegel was a tutor in Berne and Frankfurt,

schoolmaster in Nuremberg, a university teacher in Jena. As a close friend and colleague of Altenstein, Hegel also explored the theory and experimented with the practice of secondary and higher education.

More importantly, Hegel avails himself of every opportunity to underline the centrality of education for his project of freedom. He holds strongly to the belief that rationality in institutions, themselves reflections of the mind/spirit, demand that members think along the right tracks, and that “knowledge and volition” are closely interconnected. Without denying the importance of practical education, Hegel often comes in defence of the cultivation of the universality of thought as the absolute value of education. It might be surmised in this case that Hegel has in view an ambitious system of education designed to equip all citizens for their role as able agents, able to get command of subjective freedom and to make it see the rationality of the ethical state and its duty towards it. For him, a good system of education would be the one which accords a privileged place to philosophical studies and liberal arts in general. This explains his interest in Greek and Roman classics and his elaboration of an aesthetic theory that served as a launching ground for many literary critics who came after him. In this regard, Karl Marx, George Lukacs, and more significantly Mathew Arnold come easily to mind.

Writing about Hegel with reference to education, Dudley Knowles says the following:

Given his [Hegel’s] view of the philosophical importance of sound education as a contribution to freedom at all levels, from its most basic to its most exalted, it is incredible that he did not say more about its place in Civil Society. Hegel’s *Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* must be one of the greatest imaginary, unwritten books of philosophy. (Knowles Dudley, 2002: 265)

What is considered as “incredible” by Knowles finds explanation in the context in which Hegel wrote his works. It has been pointed out in the second chapter that Hegel wrote in an age of transition and revolution in Europe in general and in Prussia in

particular. More exactly, he wrote in an age which climaxed with the re-assertion of old particular interests which in Prussia were championed by Metternich. Always in the second chapter, it has also been underlined that by the time Hegel had arrived to Berlin in 1819, universities were highly suspicious in the eyes of the Prussian state. For the latter, they were nothing less than crucial sites of social instability because a radical student by the name of Karl Sand assassinated the reactionary playwright August von Kotzebue in March 1819. This triggered the fear of revolutionary anarchy spearheaded by the Jacobin *Burschenschaften* (student societies) to which Sand belonged. This focused attention of the Prussian political authorities on the universities as the source of political turmoil. Following Sand's assassination of Von Kotzebue, Metternich devised the Carlsbad decrees of 1819 identifying universities as sources of subversion and making provisions, among other things, for dismissing any university teacher suspected of being engaged in subversive activities. It follows from the above that Hegel could by no means write explicitly about higher or cultural education when academic freedom at his time was not protected.

Moreover, Hegel was not what we may call today an educationist, so it was not his role as a philosopher- teacher to elaborate a full-fledged educational theory. Naturally, this does not mean that Hegel had no educational ambition. Indeed, apart from his role of teacher of philosophy, all his books are in, one way or another, deeply steeped in a philosophical of education centred on the interrelatedness of cultural development at various stages of history and the degrees of freedom that might be achieved. Thus, Terry Pinkard is to the point when he writes that the *Phenomenology of Spirit*

serves the task of educating the modern European community into comprehending that its form of life is "spirit"; that the European spirit has the shape it does only by virtue of the accounts that it has historically given itself of what it has taken to be authoritative for itself, that the kind of historicized account it must now give of itself is possible only because the historical insufficiencies of its previous accounts have

themselves exhibited a kind of retrospectively understood teleology within its history .”(Pinkard Terry, 1994:16-17)

John Edward Toews (1980), another critic of Hegel, is even more to the point when he makes the Hegelian project read as a cultural project based on the aesthetic and critical cultivation of man. Toews demonstrated that Hegel wrote his works at a moment of cultural crisis in Germany and Europe and that his thinking over cultural, religious and artistic matters in classical Greece, for example, were deeply linked to cultural criticism, the aim of which is to the restoration of social harmony. What Pinkard and Toews say about Hegel is equally valid to DuBois. Just like Hegel, DuBois did not write as an educationist. However, he wrote his work in a *fin-de-siècle* period of cultural crisis marked, among other things, by racial hysteria and the assassination of President McKinley by an anarchist in 1901. In the same manner as Hegel, DuBois also proceeded to investigate through his writing the American way of life and the various aspects of American culture with reference to the racial problem in order to heal the “dissociated sensibility” (the words are Eliot’s) of his time, at whose basis lies the exclusion of the Negro from the realm of culture.

It is art, especially painting, literature and drama, which comes most to the mind when Hegel talks about culture. Apart from the incursions into the world of art and religion in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel also ventured into the world of aesthetics and cultural criticism in his *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*. It is not necessary here to go into detail into his theory. A few words will be enough to seize the importance that Hegel accords to art and the influence that he exerted on DuBois. Hegel regards art as the portrayal of the human spirit, at first in a bodily form (sculpture) and latter in a more spiritual form (literature). His history of art is more or less the same as the history of the growth of the self-consciousness of freedom in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel starts the historical account by imagining a stage of history wherein men

had no art, religion, or conceptual thought. At this stage, men were mere sensuous creatures whose relation to the world of objects was that of desire. They were no more than a constellation of desires to be satisfied by reducing the world into a collection of consumable objects. However, men as thinking entities could not remain in this immediate relation to the world. Their thinking potential being limited at the infancy stage of humanity, men started thinking about the world and themselves by shaping material objects into images. This liberated them from the immediate sensuous life in several respects. For one thing, they were no longer satisfied by consuming objects like wood, for example. They shaped it into artistic representations of those animals he chased and offered them to other men for contemplation. Thus the world ceases to be a world of objects to be consumed and became an essence for artistic meditation. In carving objects, men were no longer interested in particular objects as such, but in their universal qualities. This Hegelian view of art and its historical evolution could not but appeal to DuBois who wrote at a period of time known for its tendency to reduce the world into a collection of consumables. (Cf. Hegel, 2004)

However, when DuBois tried his hand at cultural criticism in *The Souls of Black Folk* he did not turn directly to Hegel, but to Mathew Arnold, one of the most prominent disciples of Hegel in England. According to Robert J.C. Young, Arnold implemented the sketchy introduction of Hegel on aesthetics into a full theory of cultural education that finds its best expression in *Culture and Anarchy*. For Arnold, culture refers to the knowledge of “the best that has been thought and said in the world”. Arnold used the concept of culture with reference to such other concepts as education, improvement, progress and perfection.

*The Souls of Black Folk* shares many points with Mathew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy*. One of these common points is the context of writing. Arnold published his

book in 1869, i.e., just three years after the Education Act that created the national primary school system. With this state apparatus, it became possible to institutionalise culture at the level of the whole country by assigning the reading of the best that is written and thought. *Culture and Anarchy* was written with one aim in mind. In an age that was losing religious faith, high arts in general and literature in particular could act as substitutes for strengthening the moral fibre of the nation bedevilled by industrialisation and urbanisation. Likewise, the writing of *The Souls of Black Folk* took place in a period when America emerged from its Industrial Revolution. It was a period which witnessed the rise of Robber Barons such as J.D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie into the position of trustees for the wealth of the nation. “The problem of our age,” Carnegie writes, “is the proper administration of wealth, so that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship”. (Carnegie Andrew quoted in Lane Jack and Maurice O’Sullivan, Eds.1993: 488) It is the age when the American dream, defined generations earlier in terms of morality, was redefined in terms of material success. It was during this age that the American success stories of Horatio Alger gained currency that anyone with enough pluck and luck could raise from “rags to riches”. It was also an age of excess rightly qualified by Mark Twain as the Gilded Age. Many American writers rose against this crass materialism, what William Jennings Bryan calls the “Cross of Gold”.

One of these writers to rise against Mammonism is of course William Edward Burghardt DuBois who, just like Matthew Arnold in England, advocated institutions of cultural/racial uplift to restore cultural harmony, rent by racial rifts in the South. DuBois had similar notions of culture as Arnold. He saw it as the best that is thought and written. It is the sole human domain which admits no ‘colour line’ i.e., racism. DuBois

writes the following about Western cultural figures who produced what Arnold considered as culture:

I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the color line I move arm in arm with Balzac and Dumas, where smiling men and welcoming women in gilded halls. From out the caves of evening that swing between the strong-limbed earth and the tracery of the stars, I summon Aristotle and Aurelius and what soul I will, and they come all graciously with no scorn, no condescension. So, wed with Truth, I dwell above the Veil [of race]. Is this the life you grudge us, O knightly America? (p. 284)

The world of intellectual or high culture, as DuBois imagines it in the quote above, is different from the Jim Crow world of the South, or the world within the “racial veil”. Contrary to the prejudiced world of the Jim Crow laws, what counts in the world of high culture is the search for Truth wherein any man or woman regardless of his/her skin pigmentation can carve himself or herself a place in the hall of cultural fame if he shows enough intellect and genius.

Like Arnold, DuBois regards education in the liberal arts as one of the enabling conditions of culture. The creation of a primary school system in the South after the Civil War is one of the achievements for which he praises the Freedmen’s Bureau. This is what he writes in this regard:

The greatest success of the Freedmen’s Bureau lay in the planting of the free school among Negroes, and the idea of free elementary education among all classes in the south. It not only called the school mistresses through the benevolent agencies and built them school houses, but it helped discover and support such apostles of human culture as Edmund Ware, Samuel Armstrong and Erasmus Carvath.” (p.234)

Culture, for DuBois, as the quote above shows, is a harmonising factor of the social and racial fabric of the nation. The idea of free education was short-lived because it was questioned just after the Reconstruction period when the North and the South signed the Hayes-Tilden compromise of 1877. After this compromise, there was no Freedmen’s bureau to enforce the laws of the nation as to the education of the Negro. Instead the South enacted the Jim Crow laws instituting racial separation. These Jim Crow laws

resembled the Carlsbad decrees of 1819 in Germany in at least two ways. Both were enacted after revolutionary periods, the Napoleonic invasion of Prussia for the latter and the Northern occupation of the South for the former. Above all, both came as a result of the reactionary view that schools, especially the university are crucial sites of social instability and political turmoil. No wonder, then, that DuBois, for a short time at least, rallied to the Washingtonian policy of accommodation that compromised over the issue of liberal education for the Negroes. In this compromise, DuBois resembles Hegel who stayed silent and sometimes even supported the repression of the Carlsbad decrees of Metternich.

How can one explain that DuBois became outspoken about the right of the Negro for a liberal education at the turn of the twentieth centuries? Some critics like John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss Jr explain that DuBois's change of view about the issue of education may have been due to envy that DuBois could have felt towards Washington's ascent to the leadership of the Negro population. There is no relevance to enter into the polemics about this point at this stage, but it is worth recalling that throughout the book, DuBois reminds the reader that he made his own the Arnoldian principle of "disinterestedness," or what is called commonly called objectivity. According to Arnold, one can achieve "disinterestedness" by "keeping aloof from practical things [and] by resolutely following the law of criticism's own nature [and giving] free play [to] the mind on all subjects which it touches." (1993: 138) DuBois's Arnoldian approach to cultural criticism may be explained in terms of the historical condition that made it possible. Michel Foucault and Mikhail Bakhtin teach us that the circulation of discourse needs enabling conditions. A discourse can be timely or not. So, it was simply impossible for DuBois to hold the discourse about the importance of liberal education earlier than he did because it would have probably fallen on deaf ears

both in the South and the North after their entente cordiale at the end of the 1870s. DuBois published *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903 i.e. that is in a period of American history called the Progressive Age. “Between 1900 and 1917 a new spirit, the Progressive spirit,” write Jack Lane and Maurice O’Sullivan,” came to provide the nation’s life and to establish outlooks and attitudes that laid the foundation for modern America and the modernist cultural perspective”. (1999: 1)

On the progressive agenda of DuBois figures the issue of cultural education, the **sine qua non** condition for racial uplift. In the first chapter of his book, he writes the following: “The training of the schools, we need today more than ever, the training of deft hands, quick eyes and ears, and above all the broader, deeper, higher culture of gifted minds and hearts.”(p.220)In response to the accommodationist philosophy recommended by Washington and to which he has subscribed for some time, DuBois claims that

Work, culture, liberty, all these we need, not singly but together, not successively but together, each growing and aiding each, and all striving toward that vaster ideal that swims before the Negro people, the ideal of human brotherhood... the ideal of fostering and developing the traits and talents of the Negro, not in opposition to, or contempt of other races, but rather in large conformity to the greater ideals of the American Republic. (Ibid)

DuBoi does not define the word culture in his book, but he invokes two recognisable literary conventions of his time that tells us something about his orientation. The “Afterthought”, for example, is addressed to the “gentle reader” asking for indulgence. This announces the genteel manners that he manages to observe through the fourteen chapters of the book. However, DuBois’s appeal to the “genteel tradition,” is only a mask submissiveness which he reaps apart through the inclusion of contents peculiar to muckraking journalism. Just like muckraker journalists, DuBois exposes the evils of the racial state established in the South to trigger off a socio-political reform that would make America live up to its democratic promises. This manipulation of the language of

the dominant culture has a double-fold objective. First, the cultivation of his prose to the level of what has already been best thought and written in Western literary tradition is meant to make the work achieve the status of a classic. And indeed, John Daniels, a critical reviewer, conferred it such a status at its appearance in 1903 when he urged the readers to “give the book its highest place; not that of polemic, a transient thing, but that of a poem, a thing permanent.” (Quoted in Op.Cit. Gates Jr, p.235) Second, by positing himself as a respectful man of Western culture with a recognisable individual talent, DuBois affirms his equal status in Western literary tradition to whom blacks like him are denied access. Aside from asserting spiritual equality, DuBois’s polite entry to the Western literary tradition undermines the main stream society’s claim of cultural retardation as a means for racial domination.

This double-fold use of culture brings us back to *Culture and Anarchy*. Arnold considers culture as a stabilising and harmonising social and political force. It does this through the cultivation of the best that was thought and written. However, culture does not stop at this. It is also a negative force in that culture also “subverts” (Arnold’s word) through the critique that it throws on “received ideas”. All through his book, Arnold describes culture as being essentially iconoclastic. Above all, culture allows for that critical detachment and perspective which men and women of culture can use to withstand what he calls “fetishism”, i.e., the worship of material things. The men and women of culture stand above class considerations and personal interests to involve themselves in what he calls “disinterestedness”. DuBois uses the Western literary tradition not only to affirm the spiritual equality of the Blacks towards their white counterparts, but also to level a cultural critique against those of his race like Washington who collaborated to maintain them in an inferior position.

DuBois's cultural criticism of Washington's programme of racial uplift is formulated mainly in the third chapter of *The Souls of Black Folk*, but in some respects all the book is geared to the same end. "Mr Washington," as DuBois calls him, stands as a Black representative of those in the South who assimilate human perfection to mechanical materialism. DuBois reminds the reader that the "ascendancy" of Washington in Negro politics came about in 1877 i.e. in the year when the North forgot all about the ideals propagated during the Civil War and the Reconstruction period and compromised with the South. The newly freed Negroes, DuBois (calls them "the wards of the nation") were simply sold out again to their previous masters, and their interests were sacrificed at the altar of the Dollar. DuBois puts side by side the Hayes-Tilden Compromise of 1877 and the "Atlanta Exposition Address" that Washington delivered nearly 18 years later. He dismisses the Atlanta Exposition Address as the Atlanta Compromise signed by a kinsman namely "Mr Washington" who traded off Negro freedom for purely material interests.

In his criticism against Washingtonism, DuBois concentrates mainly on the old-fashioned character of its educational aspect. He underlines the fact that the industrial education through which Washington intends to rehabilitate and save the Southern Negro is not as new as Washington makes it. He writes that "the free Negroes from 1830 up to war time had striven to build industrial schools, and the American Missionary Society had from the first taught various trades." (p. 240) DuBois underlines the unusual character of Washington's Negro leadership by describing it as one of betrayal to the democratic and spiritual ideals defended by earlier Negro leaders like Nat Turner and Denmark Vesey. Its vision of man is essentially economic in that it seeks to demote the "high demands of Negroes as men and American citizens," demands he summarises in three points: "First, political power, -Second, insistence on

civil rights, - Third, higher education of Negro youth.” (p.246) These points in DuBois’s agenda are points over which Washington compromised with the white Southerners. DuBois knows well that the blame for the disenfranchisement of the Negro, the withdrawal of aid from institutions for his higher training, and the Jim Crow laws that give “a distinct status of civil inferiority for the Negro” cannot be laid only on Booker T.W. Washington, but he writes that the latter’s propaganda “helped their speedier accomplishment.” (p.247)

DuBois sorts out three main paradoxes in Washington’s programme for racial uplift. First, he observes that his striving to make of Negroes artisans, business men and property-owners is certainly noble. However, this striving will certainly meet with self-defeat since they can be achieved and guaranteed only if the Negro has the right to defend these rights by being given the right of suffrage and full citizenship. The second paradox, i.e., Washington’s insistence on thrift and self-respect, is in contradiction with his acceptance of civic inferiority and his counsel for the Negro to remain in his place and to turn the other cheek. The third paradox is that Washington depreciates institutions of higher education not knowing that neither the “Negro common-schools, nor Tuskegee itself could remain open a day were it not for teachers trained in Negro colleges, or trained by their graduates.” (p.247) DuBois ends his criticism of Washington’s educational policy by qualifying it as “an industrial slavery”. He further adds that Washington’s policy of accommodation has made the white South shift the “burden of the Negro problem to the Negro’s shoulders and stand aside as critical and rather pessimistic spectators.” (p. 251) Instead of this conciliatory stance, DuBois recommends criticism. He states that “the South ought to be led, by candid and honest criticism, to assert her better self and do her full duty to the race she has cruelly

wronged and is still wronging. The North – her co-partner in guilt – cannot solve her conscience by plastering it with gold.” (p.251)

However, as a cultural critic, DuBois is not content to make explicit pronouncement about his refusal of Washington’s programme. He also subverts or rather inverts Washington’s *Up From Slavery* by the appeal to the Western literary tradition that he employs to criticise the white political establishment. For DuBois, Washington was complicit with the Southern cultural apparatus in its affirmation of slavery as an “industrial school.” In conflating the slave narrative with the Horatio Alger myth of success (from rags to riches), DuBois informs the reader that Washington confused “means with ends.” Contrary to the success story of Washington, DuBois proposes another type of slave narrative to speak about the new slavery of the Negro, the one where the Negro was not the property of a single owner, but that of the state. It is significant that the book starts with a chapter entitled “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” and closes with a chapter “Of Our Sorrow Songs.” In this last chapter, DuBois rehabilitates the folk songs in the context of cultural denigration of the Negro that prevailed during his time. For him, the meaning of the folk songs is not that of the slave’s happiness as the white anthropologists attached to the Plantation school wants us to believe. Nor are they vulgar imitations of Protestant hymns, as some other white anthropologists claim them to be. In his words, they are “music of an unhappy people, of the children of disappointment; they tell of death and suffering and unvoiced longing toward a truer world, of misty wanderings and hidden ways.”(p.380) Once DuBois has deciphered the message of freedom encoded in the folk songs and traced their origin to African music and their subsequent dialectic development in America, DuBois refers to the folk songs from which he borrowed the epigraphic bars of music, which along with epigraphic poems from the Western literary tradition open each of the fourteen chapters of the

book. By using double epigraphs, DuBois wants us to understand that slave folk songs are as universal as Western poetry in their celebration of freedom. They speak of a shared humanity across racial and social barriers. As such they deserve to be preserved as a cultural heritage for the American nation.

The last chapter (Of the Sorrow Songs) closes with an end note that turns upside down the message of Washington's *Up From Slavery*. This end note rewrites the tradition of the slave narrative of which Douglass stands as one of the precursors, and to which Washington gave the death blow by associating it with the Horatio Alger's type of success story. Unlike his predecessor, he did not pattern his thought on an economic narrative model, but on a distinctively cultural one. This model is the myth of the cave in Plato's *Republic*. DuBois invokes this myth as follows:

Even so is the hope that sang in the songs of my fathers well sung. If somewhere in this whirl and chaos of things there dwells Eternal Good, pitiful yet masterful, then anon in His good time America shall rend the veil and the prisoned [Sic] shall go free. Free, free as the sunshine trickling down the morning into these high windows of mine, free as yonder fresh voices welling up to me from the caverns of brick and mortar below – swelling with song, instinct with life. My children, my little children are singing to the sunshine, and thus they sing: Let us cheer the weary traveller [...] And the weary traveller girds himself, and sets his face toward the Morning, and goes his way. (pp. 387-388)

DuBois's closing note echoes Plato's myth of the cave which runs as follows. Prisoners are chained in a cave since birth, with fire behind them throwing their shadows on the front wall. Since they have no knowledge of the outside world, their shadows cast on the wall grow so familiar to them that they mistake them for reality. At last, one of them manages to be free and to go outside discovering in due process the true enlightenment of sunshine. This enlightened individual informs the unenlightened prisoners about transcendent reality hoping to liberate them from their illusions. They find him difficult to believe, so he is derided as a fool and rejected. (Plato, 1945:227)

DuBois's version of Plato's myth follows the original, but it departs from it in important respects. There are still slaves chained in the cave. They are the Black slaves in the caves (in this case Jubilee Hall in Atlanta) of the American Republic, but unlike Plato's slaves they sing about freedom in the coded language of the folk songs. Moreover, DuBois's version of Plato's myth is preceded by the story of the Fisk Jubilee Singers. This story gives a more hopeful turn to Plato's myth because the enlightened individual (in this case DuBois) can return to the cave and free the still enchained slaves without being derided as a fool. DuBois tells us that

in 1871 the pilgrimage of the Fisk Jubilee Singers began. North to Cincinnati they rode, - four half-clothed black boys and five girl-women, - led by a man with a cause and a purpose. They stopped at Wilberforce, the oldest of Negro schools, where a black bishop blessed them. Then they went fighting cold and starvation, shut out of hotels, and cheerfully sneered at, ever northward; ever the magic of their song kept thrilling hearts, until a burst of applause in the Congregational Council at Oberlin, revealed them to the world.[...] So their songs conquered till they sang across the land and across the sea, before Queen and Kaiser, in Scotland and Ireland, Holland and Switzerland. Seven years they sang, and brought back a hundred and fifty thousand dollars to found Fisk University. (p.379)

So Reconstruction young generations were not only able to leave the cave of slavery (which is Atlanta, Georgia) momentarily, but they returned with funds to found Fisk University wherein DuBois had studied for two years before returning to it as a professor of philosophy. Fisk Jubilee Singers managed to have the denigrated folk songs recognised even by the representatives of European high culture, Queen Victoria and the Kaiser Otto von Bismarck. Plato's myth of the cave places the enlightened individual in a dilemma of trying or not to free unenlightened slaves is not applicable to DuBois, the enlightened individual. The so-called slaves have a folk culture, and it is the recognition of this folk culture that lies at the basis of an academic institution that has made possible the emergence of a cultivated black elite. Therefore, the enlightened individual can return safely to the cave of Post-Reconstruction neo-slavery and pull out

the black prisoners to the sunshine of freedom without fearing to be derided as a fool. Such is the new slave narrative that DuBois proposes as a replacement to the economic success story in Washington's *Up From Slavery*.

DuBois's cultural critique shows itself not only in the criticism of Washington's policy of accommodation but also in the criticism of the "veil" of racism, which he seeks to tear down; the worship of Mammon and above all the exclusion of the Negro from the field of culture and the disappearance of the good old ideals of freedom and justice. He writes that in the

Black World, the Preacher and Teacher embodied once the ideals of this people, - the strife for another and juster world, the vague dream of righteousness, the mystery of knowing; but today the danger is that these ideals, with their simple beauty and weird inspiration, will suddenly sink to a question of cash and a lust for gold". (pp. 266-267)

Like Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy*, the DuBois of *The Souls of Black Folk* considers that civilisation has only the men of culture left to save it. He calls these men of culture, the "Talented Tenth." (p.282) DuBois takes care to underline at every turn of the page of his book that the quest for higher knowledge is not peculiar solely to the white men. It is also an in-bred characteristic of nearly ten percent of the Negro population. DuBois mentions figures to sustain his argument about the Negro's thirst for higher education. At the end of the sixth chapter entitled "Of the training of Black Men," DuBois mocks those Southern white men who were against the training of the Negroes at Universities by asking the following rhetorical question: "Here, then, is the plain thirst for training; by refusing to give the Talented Tenth the key to knowledge, can any sane man imagine that they will lightly lay aside their yearning and contentedly become "hewers of wood and drawers of water."(p.252)

The Arnoldian conception of culture as a stabilising and harmonising social and political factor comes out in the same chapter, which ironically brings him close to Washington. DuBois exclaims as follows: "strange to relate! For this is certain, no

secure civilisation can be built in the South with the Negro as an ignorant, turbulent proletariat.” (p.252) This rhetoric strangely smacks of Arnold’s claim for “making the masses wiser and better [in order to] counteract the tendency to anarchy threatening us.”(p.82) Moreover, just like Arnold, DuBois regards the university as the centre of order. The function of the university, he writes, is not simply to teach “bread winning, or to furnish teachers for the public schools [...]; it is above all, to be the organ of that fine adjustment between real life and the growing knowledge of life, an adjustment which forms the secret of civilization.” (p. 268) DuBois’s argument is that Negroes can ultimately develop class consciousness if the right education is not provided for them is an argument which finds its full significance only if put within the context of what is called American exceptionalism. The exceptional character of the American society is based on the argument that the latter, unlike the European societies, is a classless society. Thinkers as various as Fabian H.G. Wells, Antonio Gramsci, Louis Hertz, and De Tocqueville have emphasised “ways in which the special history and resultant unique social structure of the United States have negated efforts to foster class-consciousness.” (Lipset Martin Seymour, 1997: 87) Wells, for example, explains the weaknesses of socialism and class-consciousness in America by referring to the absence of the two major European classes, the subservient land-bound peasantry and the landed aristocracy.

By referring to the threat of the rise of a class consciousness among the Negroes, DuBois simply makes the Negro problem not the sole province of the Negro but of America as a whole. In *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold claims that culture seeks to “do away with classes.” DuBois does the same in *The Souls of Black Folk* in relation to what he regards as the potential danger of racial consciousness which risks changing into a class consciousness if appropriate educational measures are not promptly

undertaken. It has to be noted here that education has always been a thorny issue in American civilisation. The importance accorded to this issue is largely due to the fact that America is essentially a land of adoption. American citizenship is mostly a question of choice not of birthright as in Europe. Consequently, education and the Frontier are elevated into two fundamental factors that have shaped the American character. It follows that the education of the Negro is as much a question of citizenship as that of being trained in trades. DuBois tries to demonstrate that the training of black men of culture do not unfit blacks for useful work by listing holders of BA degrees who were very productive citizens, teachers, physicians, civil servants and artists. He further argues that the leaders likely to emerge from such a cultured black class will not unleash the forces of anarchy. On the contrary, as obedient servants of the state, they will act as some sort of stopping gap between the masses and the progress of society. It is here that we can detect a remarkable similarity between DuBois and Washington. They disagree about the means to be employed for reaching freedom, the training of the hands on the one hand and that of the brain on the other, but they seem to agree on at least one aim which that of social harmony.

Three final observations can be made with reference to DuBois as a cultural theorist and critic. First, like Hegel and Arnold, DuBois regards culture as an imperative for liberation. However, whereas Hegel and Arnold's definition of culture is limited to what is best thought and written, DuBois stretches his predecessors' definition to include what is best sung by the Black folk. Music meant much less than literature to Hegel and Arnold. Putting on a par black folk culture and refined white culture closes that Hegelian loophole which allows for slavery in cases where different cultures are not at the same stage of development. The white Progressives exploited the Hegelian distinctions between cultures to exclude Blacks from the social reform movement. The

second observation relates to DuBois's cultural rehabilitation of Black folk songs as a coded language of freedom. Contrary to the Plantation tradition, the Black folk songs constitute a form of popular cultural expression carrying a counter-history that runs against the grain of the official history of Black culture. On this point, DuBois anticipates the 1960s theorists of Black aesthetics like LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal. The third and last observation is that DuBois follows in the footsteps of Hegel and Arnold in his conception of culture or cultural education as both a subversive and conservative force. For example, he proposes a new slave narrative to subvert Washington's racial success story and his compromising ideology, but in the same breath he affirms that cultured Black men and institutions are not a danger to the social order. In the final analysis, DuBois and Washington seem to have agreed on the importance of social harmony, but there remain many significant differences among them. DuBois's argument about these differences in cultural outlook assumes the dimensions of a family romance, a romance wherein sons and false fathers, white and black, are pitted against each other over the racial issue and the way out of it.

#### **D. DuBois's Displacement of Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic to Family Romance**

Many critics (Joel Williamson, 1984, Eric J. Sundquist, 1993, Shamoan Zamir, 2008, etc.) affirm the importance of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, particularly his master and slave dialectic, for understanding DuBois's thought about the racial issue in *The Souls of Black Folk*. As the first section of this chapter demonstrates, there is strong evidence for DuBois's employment of the German master's model of social interaction in the building of the double-consciousness concept. However, as it is argued in this section, Hegel's slave-master dialectic becomes in DuBois's book an object of interpretive contention between false fathers and sons giving birth to another Hegelian dialectic that Harold Bloom (1973) called "family romance." DuBois's family

background explains partly his filial rebellion against false fathers. (See supra, **Life and Times**) But this rebellion can also be understood in the larger context of *fin-de-siècle* cultural crisis. It may be a coincidence, but on both counts Hegel's battle with the false fathers resemble that of Hegel. John Edward Toews gives the significant title "The Origins of the Hegelian Project: Tensions in the Father's World" to the first chapter of his 1980 book on Hegel. In this chapter, Towes tells us that the French Revolution opened up new historical perspectives that affected the personal lives and vocational commitments of intellectuals like Hegel who no longer felt the "necessity of accommodation or resignation to the restricted horizons of their father's world." (1980:31) Toews accounts for the filial rebellion of Hegel in terms that echoes the above explanation of DuBois's rebellion against the restricted world of the fathers. He first lets us know that Hegel refused to confirm to the traditional programme of study and the traditional career patterns tied to it. Hegel quarrelled with his father over his desire to change his career from theology to law, and then to philosophy.

Towes continues the story of Hegel's filial rebellion by setting it in the context of the period. He tells us that:

There is nothing particularly unique or startling about such youthful generational rebellion, but for the members of the Hegelian generation this stage in personal development had a peculiar significance, because they identified their personal crises with the historical crisis of European culture and connected the possibility of a satisfactory resolution to the hopes for a collective historical transformation aroused the French Revolution. (Ibid, p.31)

Obviously, there are some minor differences in the factors that triggered Hegel's filial rebellion and that of DuBois. For example, Hegel knew his father, but DuBois did not because his father deserted his family at a very early age. Hegel lived through the turbulent times of the French Revolution, but DuBois did not do the same in relation to the Civil War, because he was three years later. However, in the literary/intellectual scene that is our own here, fatherhood is not solely a matter of biology but also that of

culture. In this sense, all those who came earlier to the field of cultural politics or the politics of culture are fathers to those who followed them. We also know well of the Oedipal complex and the phenomenon of transfer. So it is easy to imagine that DuBois collapses the history of his own family on that of his society and race and accuses false fathers and irresponsible leaders of having betrayed American revolutionary ideals.

One of the bones of contention between false fathers and sons in *The Souls of Black Folk* is over the meaning of slavery and the way to attain freedom. Contrary to Washington, DuBois did not regard manual labour or toil as a redeeming factor of the master-slave relationship. Throughout the book, he highlighted the exploitative nature of slavery and the “peonage” system that followed the Civil War. Instead of being looked at as an industrial school that taught the slaves to be up to the moral and economic standards of the mainstream society, on the whole DuBois considered slavery harmful to the development of the moral fibre of the black population. Servitude did not prepare the slave to assume his proper duties appropriately after the Civil War. DuBois denied that slavery had completely obliterated the moral foundations of the black population (for reasons that will be explained later), but he saw but a very small positive good in slavery in terms of the labour that the slaves accomplished for their masters. This small positive good resided in the contact that the domestic slave had with his master in the patriarchal big house, where according to DuBois “one found the best of both races in close contact and sympathy.” (p.322)

A comparative reading of DuBois ‘s *The Souls of Black Folk* and Washington’s *Up From Slavery* shows that the very point that the former selects as a redeeming factor in the slavery experience was dismissed as a demoralizing factor. As elaborated in the second chapter, Washington looked at domestic service in white masters’ houses as harmful to the black man because in the home environment the white man did not show

the best imitable behaviours. In his home, the white master was not to work but to relax. So he shows his worst instead of his best in terms of ethical behaviour. In Washington, slavery as a school of industrial training was most effective when the slave was in the fields or in the workshops. This was developed in conformity with his socio-economic philosophy which took the field slave as a predominant model in the South. Speaking from the Northern perspective wherein the field slaves were not as predominant even during the slavery period, DuBois had not the same positive opinion of the field slave that Washington had. For him it was rather the house-servant, in his contact with his master in a more or less cultured home, away from the brutality of the fields, which represented the ideal. The slave servant retained a modicum of contact with culture at least in its conception as refinement of manners and taste that Du Bois appreciated so much because of his German experience. Films such as *Gone with the Wind* and *Roots* seem to corroborate DuBois's appreciation of this aspect in their emphasis on how house servants especially the women servants were asked to give their opinion as to matters of fashion and culture.

When it came to the contact of the slave and master in the fields, DuBois saw it as totally dehumanizing. He made a small case of the Hegelian dialectic of the slave and master in relation to the manual work that these field slaves accomplished for their masters. The Negro built the material civilization of the South, but he did not learn any values from the labour that he invested in building it. For DuBois, the field slave continued to be quarantined in the slave quarters even after the Civil War. His "home" was often a one-room log cabin. He did not learn the ethics of work because the fruit of his labour were not his. Similarly he did not make of thrift a value because he lived in an environment characterized by extravagance. Nor did he learn about the meaning of crime, because he evolved in a context where he was not given any responsibility for his

actions. Washington's positive picture of the Hegelian dialectic of the slave and master gives place to a negative representation in the hands of DuBois when he speaks of this dialectic in economic terms. For DuBois, it is in the domains of folk culture and religion rather than in the economic field that the slaves made their greatest contribution to American civilisation. He looked at the slave folk songs and religion as forms of cultural resistance to white masters' domination.

In DuBois, the dialectic of the slave and the master did not unfold into a process of emancipation by itself alone, but it did so with the help of Black cultured men. The slave did rely solely on his own force to push himself up out of the cave of Southern slavery. It was those who lived outside this cave, i.e., the Black free men in the North who helped him to pull him out. These Black free men, often college-bred intellectuals provided the necessary leadership to the mass of brutalised slaves in the South. According to DuBois, "Progress in human affairs is more often a matter of a pull than a push, a surging forward of the exceptional man, and the lifting of his duller brethren slowly and painfully to his vantage ground." (p.275) DuBois was among the first historians to highlight the participation of college-bred black intellectuals in the Abolitionist movement whose activities contributed to the transformation of the War between the States into a Civil War over slavery. Until the publication of Leon F. Litwack's *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* in 1961, Du Bois remained nearly the one black thinker who opposed the view that the anti-slavery movement was essentially a white man's movement. In his work, William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips and other white abolitionists were not allowed to obscure the important and active role that their black counterparts such as David Walker, John Russwurm, Samuel E. Cornish, Henry Highland Garnet and Alexander Crummel played in the liberation of their black brothers. For DuBois, black abolitionism did not only

precede the white abolitionist movement but also put its promoters in more risky situations.

The Freedmen in the North contributed to pulling their brethren from the cave of slavery through cultured means of agitation such as the launching of their own newspapers, the organisation of conventions, the distribution of tracts, the making of orations and the writing of petitions. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, it was Alexander Crummel who emerged as the model of the Black committed intellectual not Frederick Douglass. DuBois devoted the eleventh chapter of his book to a short biography of Alexander Crummel, which he described as the “history of a human heart, - the tale of a black boy who many years ago began the struggle with life that he might know the world and know himself.”(pp. 354-355) The preference DuBois accorded to Crummell over Douglass was due to the fact that the latter gave more importance to the heart, to the cultivation of character than Douglass had done. In Crummell, DuBois saw a precursor of his philosophy of education giving as much importance to the development of the notion of man as to the education of skilled labourers. Crummell, it has to be observed, was a co-founder of the Negro Academy.

If Douglass is reduced to second rank in DuBois’s esteem, it is because he was mostly responsible for the split over the educational policy for the Black population. As mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis, Washington devoted a book-length biography to Douglass because the latter stood for the industrial type of education for which he militated. As Douglass makes it clear in the third version of his autobiography the *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, his support for such an education had much to do with his belief that a liberal type of education of the kind that Crummell received aided the Colonisation Movement. Douglass writes that “It would seem that education and emigration go together with us, for as soon as a man rises amongst us, capable by

his genius and learning, to do us a great service, just so soon he finds he can serve himself better by going elsewhere.” (p.729) DuBois seems to have located as strong an element of accommodationism in Douglass’s thought as in that of Washington to celebrate him as he did Crummell. Indeed, a reply to a letter by Harriett Beecher Stowe in 1843 asking his advice on how she could help in matters of education to help break the chains of slavery, Douglass insisted that what the Negro needed most was not the building of high schools or colleges, but rather industrial schools. He explained his preference in the same terms as Washington used decades later after the Civil War. Douglass stated that the higher type of education should come once the black man had guaranteed an economic foundation. What suited best the Negroes’ low economic status at the time were agricultural schools and mechanical arts. High Schools and colleges would follow at a “point of progress that we [blacks] have not yet attained’. (Ibid, p.728)

It follows that Douglass had contributed to the liberation of the slave only to bond him to another type of slavery that DuBois called “industrial slavery.” Crummell was a Black intellectual figure who opposed this industrial slavery before Washington gave it a political sanction with the Atlanta Address, which DuBois considered as a compromising sell-out of the Black man’s freedom. For DuBois the slave did not work himself out of slavery; Washington’s consent to the claim of the masters’ sons’ right over the manual labour of the ex-slaves by an appeal to the Gospel of Wealth would only push back the ex-slaves to the cave of another type of slavery. DuBois’s argument with Washington assumes the features of a family romance wherein the rebellious son (DuBois) declares the rights of the young black generation to rebel against the false father (Washington). DuBois takes the legitimacy for filial rebellion against

irresponsible fathers from *The Declaration of Independence* and *The American Constitution*:

By every civilized means and peaceful method, we must strive for the rights which the world accords to men, clinging unwaveringly to those great words which the sons of the fathers would fain forget: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." (p.252)

It is not only the black patriarchal figure (Washington) that DuBois challenges. For example, at the end of the first chapter (Of Our Spiritual Strivings), we find DuBois's reproaching the Northern liberals, those who have always positioned themselves as patriarchal authorities in American political life, for having failed to shape the dominant culture in conformity with the principles with the main constitutional documents. DuBois blames them not only for giving up on their patriarchal prerogative of shaping cultural and social life in the North and South, but also for transforming the Negro into a political problem on which they capitalised to retain power. In challenging the Northern liberals by proposing a Progressive political agenda of state intervention in the politics of culture, DuBois also appealed to the Law of the Father (the words are Jacques Lacan's), i.e., the Founding Fathers who drafted the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution*.

The failure of the Southern fathers did not escape DuBois's attacks. These are attacked not for having put the "red stain of bastardy" on the black race during the slavery period, but for reneging on the ideal of the Southern gentlemen during the post-Reconstruction period by giving up to the lure of wealth. Throughout the book, DuBois serves myths that show the crass materialism in the name of which the slave was enslaved after the Civil War. For example, in "Of the Wings of Atlanta," the fifth essay of the book, DuBois uses the myth of Atlanta that tells the story of 'the winged maiden of dull Boetia [...] who would marry only who outraced her', but who at last

fell in the trap of the ‘wily Hippomenes [who] laid three apples of gold in her way’. (p.263) Talking about Atlanta city with reference to this myth, DuBois tells us that “Atlanta is not the first or the last maiden whom greed of love has led to defile the temple of Love; and not maids alone, but men in the race of life, sink from the high and generous ideals of youth to the gambler’s code of the Bourse.” (p.263)

Another myth that DuBois tells us to denounce the crass materialism of his age is the myth of the Golden Fleece. DuBois compares the Cotton Kingdom - that region of the South where cotton was considered as a “king” staple crop - to Colchis. Colchis is the region wherein “the winged ram Chrysomalus has left that Fleece after which Jason and his Argonauts went vaguely wandering into the shadowy East three thousand years ago.” (pp.301-302) DuBois draws an analogy between cotton at harvest time with the mythological Golden Fleece stretched on an oak-tree suggesting that the quest for Cotton in the US history was as tragic as the quest for the Golden Fleece in the Greek myth. In both cases, the spiritual values that animated the quests were subverted by the quest for material gains. Just like the dragon who watched over the Golden Fleece, the Black population remained the guardian of cotton even after their emancipation with very small spiritual or material gains in return for its toil.

Atlanta turned into the capital or the emblem of the New South in the Post-Reconstruction period. In the Jeremiad that he directs against the city fathers, DuBois emerges as some sort of gentleman prophet calling his flock to come back, not to the ideal of righteous asceticism as Jeremiah did in the Bible, but to that of high culture for which their forefathers were well-known. For DuBois, the Southerners, both black and white, were short-changed by their political fathers in not capitalising on the ideals of grace, courtliness, honour and kindness peculiar to the former Southern patriarch. DuBois thinks that though the Southern patriarch of yore had recognisable historical

flaws, the ideal of gentleman that he embodied could be purified for modern times. The cultural means for such purification is higher education. In the case of the Black population, the University of Atlanta stands as some sort of “city upon a hill” providing the Black people in the New South with the opportunity of purifying false ideals of materialism and to retrieve in a purified form the old gentlemanly ideals of the South patriarchs.

All in all, the father-son trope or that of sons battling with masters is the shape that the Hegelian dialectic of the master and the slave assumes in DuBois’s book. Throughout the latter, DuBois seeks to unsettle the existent patriarchal order bringing against it charges of all sorts, flaws in character and historical foibles, etc. The present fathers (white and black) are not up to the standards of what he calls “the fathers’ fathers” (p.220). He implies that if they cannot be brought back to the moral order, the sons have the right to topple them down and construct an enlightened patriarchy to assume correctly social and political responsibilities in the ethical state. Titles of chapters like “Of the Faith of the fathers,” “Of the Passing of the First Born” (where DuBois mourns the early death of his child) speak of DuBois’s self-fathering drive. In concurrence with this drive, DuBois creates a representation of the Black race that elevates it to the level of what Hegel in the *Philosophy of Right* calls the ethical state.

#### **E. DuBois’s Ethical State and the Myth of the Negro’s Cultural Deficiency**

DuBois relies on the same principles as Hegel to “father” his ethical state. One of these is that history is rational and can be influenced by what Hegel and Kant call the moral imperative. The second is that issues of moral and social order including that of the Negro can be examined rationally and practical actions carried out through the compulsion of moral duty. It is with these principles that DuBois approaches the social problem of the place of the Negro in American society. The emphasis on cultural

institutions as mediation factors between races places DuBois on the third stage of ethical consciousness that Hegel defines in the *Philosophy of Right* as the Ethical State. The other two stages of ethical development are Abstract Right and Morality. In the second chapter, I tried to show that in terms of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, Washington's *Up from Slavery* belongs to the first stage that is Abstract Right, or what Elizabeth Flower calls the "customer morality". At this stage freedom was looked at in terms of the right to hold property. The white American society, North and South, as DuBois shows in *The Souls of Black Folk* had, after what he calls the "social revolution" following the Reconstruction period (1865-1877) regressed to the stage of Abstract Right in the affirmation of its right over the black man's labour. This labour was secured for the benefit of the Northern business men and their Southern counterparts through the progressive disenfranchisement of the black population and the enactment of labour and vagrancy laws that kept the Negro in his place. The achievement of the Black leadership during the Reconstruction period were denied whereas the blame for the corruption that characterised this period was put on him the better to show that the Black people were unfit to rule. A little literacy through industrial schools was allowed for the black people, but this literacy was granted not in order to elevate the cultural level of Black people but in order to train skilled Black labourers for the nascent industry in the South.

In the ethical state, as conceived by Hegel and revisited by DuBois the relations between people in the community are not based on the domination of the master over the slave or the slave's rule over the master. The relation is one of mutual equality in a community wherein people are neither slaves nor masters, but citizens or friends ready mutual recognition to each other. DuBois's double-consciousness provides a psychological confirmation to the social interaction between white masters and slaves.

It announces in some respects that “community of the beloved” that Martin Luther King Jr had made of the major aims of his non-violent action during the Civil Rights Movement in the late 1950s and the 1960s. Following in the footsteps of the German master, DuBois tells us that what should rule the ethical state are not the selfish interests that prevailed in the Abstract Right defended by Washington, but a social morality that relinquishes its particular desires for the benefit of the universal good. For DuBois, Black participation in the ethical state will guarantee the most concrete or objective form of freedom for both the white and Black populations, and especially to the talented tenth of both races.

The emphasis that DuBois puts on black cultural institutions like the Black family, the church, Black music and private property comes as evidence that black Americans have reached that stage of ethical development that allows them to participate in the ethical state as citizens. I shall follow DuBois’s mustering of cultural evidence to his claim for admittance to the ethical state step by step starting with private property. According to DuBois, the Black people managed to own private property though they had started with practically nothing at emancipation and had been victims of dispossession through various means. The case of the black people in Dougherty County in Georgia was illustrative of the difficulties that black people in general faced in owning their own farms. He tells us that “In all, one hundred and eighty-five Negroes have owned land in this county since 1875.” (p. 318) He continued to defend the dignity of the black men as conscientious workers with ambition to become proprietors by saying that if they “had been given an economic start at Emancipation, if they had been in an enlightened and rich community which really desired their best good, then we might perhaps call such a result small or insignificant.” (pp.318-319) DuBois judged

that the odds against which the black people had to struggle made this achievement more than honourable.

The Black church was a cultural aspect that DuBois fore-grounded in his defence of the ethical stature of the black man. He devoted a whole chapter, “Of the Faith of the Fathers’ to document the history of the development of this church as part and parcel of the development of the black man’s ethical consciousness. He regarded this church as “peculiarly the expression of the inner ethical life of a people in a sense seldom true elsewhere.” (p.343) Built on the naturally religious character of the black man, DuBois how this social institution first aided the black slaves to support the hardships in the plantation by developing interest in otherworldly matters before “identifying itself with the dream of Abolition.” (p.345)The church is the proof of the ethical awakening of the black man and through it he had “gained the right to share modern culture.” (p.348)

In *The Philosophy of Right*, Hegel says that the ethical state has its foundations on the family. The kind of feeling, for example parental and filial love, that cements the family finds its application at the level of the ethical state in the form of patriotism. DuBois takes care to demonstrate that in spite of slavery, the black man managed to retain this sense of family. Nothing shows this attachment to family more clearly than the elegy on “The Passing of the First Born” in which DuBois laments the death of his own child. In this chapter, DuBois expresses all types of feeling all related to his own family, his anxiety on becoming a father, his sense of guilt about being absent from home at the time of the birth of his child, his love for the mother and child. Above all, he expressed the anxiety of a father for the future of his son, who born in a colour-prejudiced society is most likely to suffer from racial discrimination. The elegy takes a happy turn when husband and wife realise that after all death allows their son to escape racial humiliation. This parental attitude towards the passing of their son recalls the

practice of some parent slaves who killed their children in order to spare them the hardships of slavery.

Black people are no less deserving in their claim to be admitted into the ethical state if their performance of their political leadership during the Reconstruction period was looked at objectively. Writing at a time when the Reconstruction period was dismissed as the period of “Negro rule”, DuBois sets out in the second chapter of his book to correct this totally negative picture. He singled out the negative sides of the Reconstruction while also taking care to underline the political achievements of this period. This period knew the entry of the Black people into ‘the political kingdom’ especially through their work in the Freedman’s Bureau. Of this Freedman’s Bureau, DuBois writes that “no approximately correct history of civilization can ever be written which does not throw out in bold relief, as one of the great landmarks of political and social progress.”(p.227) Among other things, the Freedman’s Bureau helped plant free schools and universities among the black population. It instituted free elementary education in the South regardless of the race and class. Above all it ‘helped discover and support such apostles of culture as Edmund Armstrong and Erastus Cravath.” (p.234) Apart from their work in the Freedman’s Bureau, presided at one time by Frederick Douglass, the college-bred black intellectuals sitting in the different legislative houses were the fathers of the new state constitutions. DuBois tells us that these constitutions elaborated during the so-called ‘Negro rule’ formed the foundation of constitutional state life even with the end of the Reconstruction in 1877 when the Southern states started to amend their constitutions in order to exclude the Negroes from participation in political life.

The ethical state, according to Hegel, is a state where arts hold an important place. Hegel was particularly enamoured with Greek tragedy to which he devoted a book-

length essay demonstrating how its aesthetics was closely linked to questions of ethics and to the evolution of the ethical state through history. Following Hegel, DuBois celebrates the aesthetic achievement of the Negroes in the last essay of the book, "Of the Sorrow Songs". With these songs, the Negro, by fateful chance, DuBois tells us, supplied the one thing that materialistic America needed most. Among the gifts that the Negro bestowed on his homeland, the "gift of story and song" and that of "Spirit" stood far above the "gift of sweat and brawn to beat back the wilderness." (p.386) The songs constituted the first cultural export to the Old World. The Fisk Jubilee Singers, who after conquering America, went on a seven-year European tour during which they performed before Queen Victoria and the Kaiser. As a sign of its success, both commercial and aesthetic, the Fisk Jubilee Singers 'brought back a hundred and fifty thousand dollars to found Fisk University.'" (p.379)

For the analyst, the manner in which DuBois tried to legitimate the Negro's admittance to the ethical state is as important as what he said about the ethical life of the Negro. This manner is far from being that of a neutral observer. The reader feels his commitment to the issues that he set himself to deal in the poetic register that he employed. It has to be remarked that he started each of the fourteen chapters, biographical, sociological or elegiac, with poems. Writing in the Progressive period, DuBois most used the thought-provoking style of muckrakers to expose the corrupting factors of the essentially ethical nature of the Black people. The other characteristic of this manner of exposing the 'Negro problem' is comparison. Throughout the book, DuBois keeps comparing the ethical life of the Negro with that of other European nationals like Italians and Greeks who hailed in great numbers to America at the turn of the twentieth century. One such example where the Black man is favourably compared with the Italians is chapter VIII where DuBois says that in spite of slavery the "rate of

illegitimacy is undoubtedly lower than in Austria or Italy, and the women as a class are modest.” (p. 306)

The comparative perspective that DuBois employs to render the ethical life of the Negro population can be explained in terms of the racial prejudice of the Progressive period. Apart from the biological categorisation of Black people as an inferior race, culture at that time was used in the manner of Hegel as the standard to separate between races, the higher and lower ones. The experience of slavery which for a long time was considered as a school initiating the Blacks to civilization was redefined as a destructive factor of the moral character of the Black population. They outlived slavery physically, but for the preachers and folk singer they would have emerged as totally destitute in terms of culture. According to white Progressives the cultural deficiency that came as a result of slavery unfitted ex-slaves and their sons for participation in the ethical state. In comparison with the immigrants like the Italians who had retained the sense of family and other moral traits, the Negroes were proscribed from the ethical state because of their supposed cultural deficiency, a deficiency deemed to be irredeemable at an age wherein efficiency was a household word. At the time there was a virtual consensus among the white Progressives as to the impossibility of social reform among the Negro population. A case in point is the leading journalist muckraker Ray Stannard Baker who in his *Following the Color* (1908) affirmed that “blacks were inferior in education, intelligence and efficiency to the white people as a class.”(Quoted in Op. Cit. Carroll and Noble, p. 253)The result of this cultural deficiency is that “they must find their activities mostly in physical and more or less menial labour. Like any race they must first prove themselves in these simple lines of work before they can expect larger opportunities.” (Ibid) Since at the time biological theories of inheritance were dominant it was understood that the race as a whole would never achieve that cultural minimum

that would entitle it to work in the intellectual fields and of course any type of reform in the direction of the Negroes would be a waste of money and effort.

As a Progressive, DuBois shared the same Hegelian social philosophy with the white Progressives. Like them he belonged to the historicist school of social thinkers who, among other things, rejected the liberal conception of society as a social contract and emphasised its organic nature. The ethical state or society is subject to a historical evolution that allows it to reach ever higher levels of refinement in morality. In the Hegelian social thought that the Progressives made their own, society does not function according to immutable economic laws of supply and demand. This law of supply and demand would be all right in the ethical stage of Abstract Right known as the Gilded Age, but in the ethical state, the third stage of ethical awakening, this law could lead to social disharmony if no regulatory agency intervened. This was particularly the case in industrialized countries like the US at the turn of the twentieth century. Natural laws could go wrong and it was for statesmen to intervene to correct these wrongs in order to preserve the social fabric of the ethical state. It was from the social philosophy of Hegel that Progressives got their emphasis on social reform. Yet this social philosophy had different implications for the white Progressives and DuBois. While the latter believed that social reform should apply across the racial divide, the former complied with the racial ideology of their time and used the same social philosophy to set the Negro outside the scope of social reform.

One of the arguments in the second chapter was that Hegel's social philosophy can be easily interpreted in the direction of the separate but equal philosophy that the South developed for itself after the Reconstruction. In this regard, Allen W. Wood writes that "Hegel's argument helps to explain the fact that people in modern societies prefer to conceal from themselves their dominion over others, by sequestering the others in

different parts of town or in distant lands, or by representing the others as formally free and equal to themselves.” (Wood, Allen W. 1990, 93) Hegel’s remarks about the inferiority of women or African people that is difference in terms of gender or race and culture can be easily interpreted as terms of exclusion justifying the separate but equal social philosophies. At the end of the nineteenth century, the white racists in America had proceeded to set the cultural standard as a yardstick for the exclusion of the Black people from the ethical state. If DuBois seems to be desperately anxious to prove that the Black race is up to the cultural standards that give access to the ethical state, it is because the same Hegel says that “if members of the out-group have the same capacity to participate in universal consciousness as members of the in-group, then the argument requires that both be recognized alike.” (Ibid, p. 93)

DuBois’s socio-political thought is not without its pitfalls, pitfalls due mostly to his elitism. His elitism led him to deemphasise the notion of race and to play up that of elitist culture to the disadvantage of what may be called popular or democratic culture. This elitist culture emerges as a basis of exclusion across the predominant racial boundaries or what he calls the racial “veil”. In some aspects, his cultural arguments do not seem to go beyond the Washingtonian “separate but equal doctrine” that he denounced. Culture or rather elitist culture in DuBois’s social philosophy functions in the same as race in Washington’s. It is there to establish social exclusion. DuBois tells us that he imagines himself in company of Shakespeare, Socrates and other white intellectuals, but he is outraged because lower classes from the two races socialise. He expressed this outrage in *The Souls of Black Folk* as follows:

And here is a land where, in the higher walks of life, in all the higher striving for the good and noble and true, the colour-line comes to separate natural friends and co-workers; while at the bottom of the social group, in the saloon, the gambling-hell, and the brothel, that same line wavers and disappears. (p. 335)

Another instance of DuBois's outrage that demonstrates his "separate but equal" cultural doctrine is expressed in his denunciation of that "deadening and disastrous effect of a color-prejudice that classes Phillis Wheatley and Sam Hose in the same despised class."(p.336) Quotes like this one make the reader think that the term Negro for DuBois was not a matter of race but of culture. As a poetess, Phillis Wheatly ceases to be Negro by the very fact that she had ascended on the mount of Parnassus while the poor farmer Sam Hose was accepted as such along with farmers of his kind across the racial board. The elitism of DuBois had led to the extent of accepting the restriction of voting rights. He calls these restrictions a purging of the vote of "pauperism". His protest against disfranchisement came only when the Black elite, mostly out of an induced disinterest in the vote, was also excluded from the voting rolls. The cultural politics or rather the politics of culture that DuBois developed in *The Souls of Black Folk* resulted in some compromising attitudes easily understand within the context of the Progressive Age, but on the whole it was as trenchant as that of Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin White Masks*.

### **Conclusion**

It follows from the above discussion that DuBois follows in the footsteps of Hegel in some respects and diverges in some others. While he agrees with Hegel that the development of world history is rational and involves world-historical peoples in ever-increasing degrees of self-consciousness or freedom, he disagrees with him on the interpretation of world history with reference to the Negro. As it is made clear above, Hegel wavers between two views of world history. On the one hand, he suggests that world history reached its end during his time. In other words, he gives the impression that the German people of his period reached a stage of perfection wherein all possibilities in the historical evolution of freedom were exhausted. On the other hand,

he suggests that there is more world history to come in America though in forms he cannot predict. It is the latter view that DuBois makes his own in *The Souls of Black Folk* with one significant difference. While Hegel sees Anglo-Saxons as the possible prime movers of the future world history, DuBois puts in central stage those very Negroes whom Hegel excluded from that history. Similarly, DuBois belies his contemporary Anglo-Saxon Progressive historians who thought that world history in America had evolved on the racial lines that Hegel predicted, and that it would come to an end with them. DuBois relies on both the history of the Teutons or Anglo-Saxons and the counter-history encoded in the folk songs to expose the historical arrogance of the Progressive historians who denied the Negroes their chance of playing their roles as a world historical people.

The Hegelian dimension of DuBois's thought also shows in his adopted position as cultural critic and theorist. For both DuBois and Hegel culture is a prerequisite for the development of self-consciousness and freedom. However, while Hegel and his disciple Arnold restrict the definition of culture as being the best thought and said (written), DuBois stretches that definition to include the best sung in Negro folk music. For DuBois putting on a par classical literature and Sorrow songs is one way of rehabilitating the culture of the Negroes in the eyes of the Negro population of his time. It is also a way of exploding the Hegelian myth of the culturally regarded Negro propounded by the Progressives in order to exclude Negroes from social reform and maintain them in segregated conditions. However, just like Arnold and Hegel, DuBois does not look at culture solely in terms of criticism but also in terms of ideological resistance to forces of barbarism or anarchy. His "talented tenth" are there not only to break the chains of neo-slavery but to guarantee an enlightened leadership to the Black masses.

For DuBois, Black leadership cannot be left to accident and chance as his predecessor Washington seems to have done in his neglect of the importance of cultural education. To Washington's economic model of self-emancipation of the latter, DuBois opposes a cultural model. According to DuBois, the former will just maintain the Negro ex-slave in the same inferior position as that of his philosophical namesake in Hegel's dialectic of the slave and master. While DuBois initially uses Hegel's dialectic to elaborate the idea of double-consciousness, he displaces it in the course of his argument in the rest of the book and makes it assume the shape of a family romance. White and Black fathers are in turn pilloried for having adulterated the ideals of their fathers, and their sons are urged to rebel against them and to re-establish the moral order by invoking the law of the "fathers' fathers." Accordingly, as one of these sons in filial rebellion, DuBois unsettles the master-father of Tuskegee (Washington) and places himself at the head of a new enlightened patriarchy. Concomitant to this filial rebellion, he assumes the new patriarchal responsibilities by developing the idea that the Black community has reached the cultural maturity necessary for entering into what Hegel calls the Ethical State.

On the whole, DuBois's thought in *The Souls of Black Folk* shows a clear pattern of the interaction of his personal and professional experiences with the historical and cultural context of the Progressive Age. However, his disappointment with the white Progressives, who used the same Hegelian terms to exclude the Negro from social reform, led him back to the field of political activism and the militancy for what in liberalism are called civil and political rights. DuBois with William Monroe Trotter founded the Niagara movement in 1905. Five years later, he joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, an interracial and liberal organisation committed to desegregation and racial justice. As editor of the

Association's magazine *The Crisis*, DuBois continued the work of cultural critic and theorist that he had started in *The Souls of Black Folk*, thus paving the way for what came to be known as the Harlem Renaissance. At the same time, he used the editorial page of the Association's magazine to advocate full civil and political rights for the black American people. While he worked as editor of *Crisis*, DuBois redoubled his attacks first against Washington and his philosophy of accommodation and then against an unexpected Black political figure from Jamaica known as Marcus Garvey. The next chapter shows that the passage from the Progressive Age (1900-1917) to the Roaring Twenties brought out changes in cultural and historical outlook that made for the emergence of Garvey as a mass Black leader. The Pan-African, nationalist and anti-colonial sentiments which came in more or less muted form in *The Souls of Black Folk* were played up by Garvey into a full-fledged philosophy which made a small case of DuBois's demand for full civil and political rights for the Negro in America.

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## Chapter Four

### Marcus Garvey's Maroonage in Roaring Twenties America and the quest for National Self-Determination in Africa

#### **Introduction**

The next figure in this investigation of the Hegelian dimension of African-American political thought is Marcus Garvey (1887-1940). Unlike Douglass, Washington and DuBois, Garvey was not born American. He came from British Jamaica. Because of his origins, many critics during his time and after his death did not recognise his contribution to the African American political thought. However, there are many other analysts who saw him as the link between the Pan-Negro nationalists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the Black nationalists of the 1960s and 1970s. Some other critics like Theodore Vincent and John T. McCartney go as far as to claim that Garvey was the source of the major themes of the black separatist movements of the 1960s. (Cf. McCartney John, 1992: 75-90) The inclusion of Garvey in this thesis means taking side with those critics who recognise Garvey as a contributor to African American thought. To my mind, Garvey is one of the twentieth-century cultural figures who best embodied the principles of the Black Nationalist thought of the nineteenth century. At the same time, he updated some of the nationalist principles that later separatist/nationalist movements like the Black Muslims made their own in the 1960s.

Unlike Douglass, Washington and DuBois, there is no clear evidence that Garvey had read Hegel. While Garvey claimed to be knowledgeable about Greek and Roman authors like Aristotle and Aurelius, he did not make any public pronouncement as to his contact with Hegel's writings. Therefore, one of the arguments in this chapter is that the Hegelian themes that have fed into the speeches and writings of Garvey are a result of an indirect influence, that of the nineteenth century Pan-Africanist Edward Wilmot

Bylden. Indeed, Garvey read Blyden's works during his stay in London in the first decade of the twentieth century. And Blyden, as the following quote from Richard Brent Turner (2003:5) indicates, "was clearly in line with nineteenth-century German nationalist theorists such as Herder, Schleiermacher, Von Treitschke and Hegel." The German influences, especially that of Herder and Hegel, on nineteenth-century Pan-Africanism does not need to be documented extensively here. It is enough to refer to the principles that McCartney considered as those of nineteenth-century Negro nationalists to be convinced of Hegel's influence on their thought.

McCartney singles out four principles as being peculiar to Pan-Negro nationalism: Christian nationalism and trade, the mission of civilisation, Africa as a land of riches, Africa as a land for Black regeneration. These principles can easily be linked to Hegel's elevation of the nation and Christianity as objective parameters for self-definition and freedom in the modern world and his organic view of society that interweaves the notion of land or soil with the people. The emphasis on the spiritual character of history in Pan-Negro nationalism is also Hegelian. All of these Hegelian themes of Pan-Africanist thought found their route into Garvey's socio-political philosophy in the first three decades of the twentieth century, but particularly in the late 1910s and the 1920s when nationalist movements burgeoned worldwide in the light of President Wilson's call for national self-determination. Garvey's times, therefore, witnessed a resurgence of Hegel's political thought about the importance of nation for self-definition. For Hegel as well as Garvey, the idea of nation bears a direct influence on the issues of self-determination, identity and freedom. What follows retraces Garvey's Hegelian journey to this racial/national consciousness.

## **A. Garvey's Life, Times and Influence**

Garvey was born in August 1887 in St Ann's Bay, a small town on the northern coast of Jamaica, then a British colony. Collin Grant (2008) tells us that Garvey's father (Malcus Moziah) was both a stonemason and an ambitious bookish lover with an encyclopaedic mind. He bought up land on Winders' Hill, and built a "Spanish wall house" in Garden Parish, a chic quarter on the outskirts of town in St Ann's district. Garvey's Sarah Richards came from a peasant farmer's stock. Relations between husband and wife on the one hand, and those between father and son on the other hand were far from being ideal. We learn from Grant that though Garvey Sr., was relatively rich he was miserly enough to oblige his wife to work as a domestic servant in the home of the Wesleyan Minister Arthur Lightbourn. Miserliness added to the contentious side of his character resulted in the loss of his home and all his gathered wealth. Grant recounts how petty disputes over land ending with a series of court ruling finished him off, and led him to abandon his wife and children.

Though successful at school, Garvey Jr, was obliged to drop out to provide for his mother and elder sister, Indiana. He first worked in his maternal uncle's farm. But soon he accepted the offer of an apprenticeship to a local printer, Alfred Burrows, a friend of the family. He received no wages during his apprenticeship period, but instead he earned the necessary references for a printer's job in the firm of P. Austin Benjamin in Kingston (Capital of Jamaica) in 1906. A book lover like his father, Garvey took the opportunity to do a tremendous reading while doing the printing business. Being a quick learner, he advanced rapidly and was soon promoted through the low orders to the unprecedented position of foreman, which until then had been reserved for Englishmen. It was during his tenure as foreman that Garvey became involved in labour union activities. He became aware of the severe economic exploitation of the Jamaican masses

by the white oligarchy and of the debilitating colour prejudice that prevailed among the non-whites of Jamaica.

In the wake of an earthquake that ravaged Jamaica in 1907, Garvey's printers' union went on strike. In spite of his young age, Garvey became the strike leader. During the strike Garvey was offered money to defect, but he strongly refused to desert his fellow strikers. He declined to return to the job even after the Union's treasurer had absconded with the strike funds, and the strike had failed. This episode of his life explains Garvey's suspicious attitude to trade unionism later in political life, but it made him conscious of social inequities in Jamaica. For his militant stand, Garvey was branded as a troublemaker and blacklisted by private printers. So he was obliged to take a job in the government's printing office. After the strike experience, Garvey felt that positive action had to be taken to raise the consciousness of the Jamaican Black masses.

The first phase in his journey to racial consciousness started. To play the role of awakener, he launched a newspaper called *Garvey's Watchman*. He was inspired to pursue this goal by Dr. Robert Love, a U.S. educated Black from the Bahamas, who, as early as 1897, had started publishing a nationalist weekly paper called *The Advocate*. (Cf. Lewis Rupert, 1988) After this project failed, with Dr. Love's assistance Garvey formed a political group called the National Club around 1908. The "Club [is] Jamaica's first nationalist political organisation. [It] sought to challenge the abuses of the Crown government and campaigned actively for the removal of Governor Olivier and an end to 'coolie' immigration." (Op. cit. Grant, p. 111) At the same period of time, Jamaica witnessed the birth of a religious movement known as Bedwardism, a name derived from its founder Alexander Bedward (1859-1930) who was a priest by profession. In spite of its mysticism, Bedwardism represents the religious form of anti-colonialism. Rupert sets it within "the tradition of the peasant struggle" against white plutocracy

going back to Paul Boyle, the leader of Marant Bay Rebellion in the second half of the nineteenth century. The political activities of the Club and Bedwardist religious movement were repressed by the British authorities, but they provided Garvey his first schooling in racial and anti-colonial politics.

In the middle of 1910, Garvey cleared out his savings and went on a tour in Central America in quest of both money and experience. In Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua and Honduras, Garvey was shocked by the Jim Crow treatment of the West Indian migrants who worked on the Panama Canal and on the United Fruit Company's plantations. Just one year later, a bacterial infection and lack of money forced him to return to Jamaica to protest against segregation and the two-tier system that U.S contractors applied to West Indian workers. The British rulers refused to commit themselves to protect "overseas" Jamaicans, and insisted that if "the Jamaicans disliked their treatment abroad they could always return home." (Quoted in Op. Cit. McCartney John T, p.77) Rebuffed by the Governor in Jamaica, Garvey, after having quieted a revolt in 1912, decided to go to England itself to express his protest against abuses in his home country. This English experience heightened further his sense of racial/national consciousness.

Garvey stayed in England for two years wherein he enriched both his academic and political knowledge. According to his biographers (Collin Grant, 2008, Rupert Lewis, 1987, etc), Garvey followed courses at Birbeck College, a college for working-class youth where he studied Aristotle's works. He also observed British politics by attending the debates in Parliament, listening to the speeches in Hyde Park, and involved himself in the life of the Commonwealth minorities that made up Edwardian London's small ethnic community. Moreover, in this setting, Garvey first encountered the philosophy of pan-Africanism thanks to his acquaintance with Egyptian nationalist Duse Mohammed Ali, who in his *African Times and Orient Review* was already preaching Black

Nationalism and anti-colonialism. It is during this two-year stay in England that Garvey decided to visit some European countries like Spain, France and Italy that the contours of Garvey as an “anti-colonial champion” (Op. Cit. Rupert, title of his book) started to take shape. Writing about the change of outlook on race relations that occurred to Garvey during this period, Grant informs us that Garvey’s “script [as an anti-colonial champion] would be drawn from his study of African and West Indian writers in the pages of the *African Times* like the coruscating and intense Liberian scholar Edward Wilmot Blyden.” (Op. Cit. p. 53)

The influence of other African, West Indian and Black American thinkers was no less significant. Grant mentions J.E. Casely Hayford, the Gold Coast Lawyer and the author of *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation*, Henry Sylvester Williams, a Trinidadian barrister in London, who as early as 1897, had planned to bring together people of the “African race” from around the world to discuss their condition in a conference. This conference finally took place in 1900. Therefore, by the time that Garvey went to London in 1912, Pan-African ideas had already received enough circulation in the political circles that Garvey frequented. It was also in England that Garvey read Booker T. Washington’s *Up From Slavery*. According to Garvey, the encounter with Washington was a defining moment in his political career. It made him think of his “doom” of “being a race leader” and question the world around him in these dramatic terms:

Where is the black man’s Government? Where is his King and Kingdom? Where is [sic] his President, his country, and his ambassador, his army, his navy, his man of big affairs?” Unable to find such black institutions anywhere in the world, Garvey thought it his destiny to “to help to make them.” (Garvey Marcus in Bob Blaisdell, Ed. 2004: 3)

Having invested himself with what Hegel calls a world historical mission, Garvey returned to Jamaica in 1914 to implement it. Just one month after his homecoming from

London with the assistance of some friends, including whites, Garvey established the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Community League (UNIA) with a platform that combined the following points: providing care for the needy of the race, civilising “backward” African tribes, developing schools and colleges for black youth, establishing a universal confraternity among the race, creating agencies around the world to protect the rights of all Negroes, and conducting worldwide commercial intercourse. In short, the UNIA and its leader wanted to serve the same practical goals as Tuskegee and its Champion both at home and abroad. At this particular period of his life Washington was for Garvey what a “sorcerer was to [an] apprentice.” (Verney Kevern, p.111) Unable to raise the necessary funds to carry out the goals set for his “Jamaican Tuskegee,” Garvey was compelled to look for material sources in the United States to which many West Indians and Jamaicans had migrated after the end of the construction of the Panama Canal in 1914. The trickle of West Indian migrants assumed the proportions of a human flood with the entry of the United States to World War I.

The man to whom Garvey turned to raise funds in the United States is Washington. The credentials of Washington as a fund raiser were very well-known for Garvey, and that may explain the correspondence between the two leaders from 1914 to 1915. Washington sought to export the Tuskegee philosophy in Africa, the Caribbean and South America and helped in various ways to secure funds for experiments like that of Garvey in Jamaica. (Cf. Op. Cit. Verney Kevern, 2001:122-123) Garvey tried to approach DuBois for a similar purpose. According to Grant, Garvey “got himself on the guest list for a banquet on honour of the visit of W.E.B. DuBois to Jamaica in 1915,” (p.60) but the African American guest considered Garvey as being insignificant to receive his notice. Such a rebuff made him take sides decidedly with Washington in the battle that opposed him to DuBois, a battle exported even to Jamaica. Soon after the

death of Washington in 1915, Garvey reminded Robert Russa Moton, Washington's successor to Tuskegee, that he had adopted the "Washington Platform" as the basis for the programme of his organisation. Following this reminder of allegiance to Washington's philosophy, Garvey worked his way to the United States by signing up with the crew of *SS Tallac* on March 1916. The goal was always the same and he counted on the "Tuskegee machine" to help him raise the funds.

The third stage in the Garvey's Hegelian journey to racial consciousness started with his migration to the United States. On April 6, 1917, the United States entered the war on the side of the Allies with the avowed purpose of "saving the world for democracy." The declaration of war came as a result of the German attacks on American merchant ships and luxury liners like the *Lusitania* suspected of carrying weapons sold to the Allies. (Cf. *Declaration of War*, in Lane Jack and Maurice O'Sullivan, Eds. 1999: 125-128) Garvey had all the time to absorb the patriotic fervour that enflamed the country. From the beginning, Woodrow Wilson tried to give to the U.S intervention in World War I a larger moral meaning by increasingly associating it with a moral crusade for human justice. Ironically, In African American history, Wilson was remembered as the Progressive President from the South who instituted racial segregation at the level of the Federal Government during the first term of his presidency. To what extent the Hegelian dimension of the Progressive thought influenced his policy was not yet documented, but one point in the Platform of the Fourteen Points that he presented as a peace settlement to the Allies in January 1918 indicated the Kantian and the Hegelian trends of his political thought. Point Seven in the Platform provided explicitly for the need of national self-determination among peoples and nations as an attempt to establish peace on a permanent basis. At the Peace Conference in Paris, Wilson was forced to compromise on this principle with reference

to the self-determination of colonial peoples under European domination. Britain and France even carved other colonial territories in the form of Mandates. Until then, these territories in Africa and the Middle East had been under German and Ottoman control.

In this climate of political ferment, Garvey unearthed Blyden's demand of "Africa for the Africans," a demand which he had slipped under the carpet since he read about it in the columns of Duse Mohammed Ali's *African Times and Orient Review* in 1912. His destiny as a leader with a world historical mission could at last assume a concrete shape. Grant explains that

In anticipating Garvey, Blyden clearly enunciated the need for Africans at home and abroad to reclaim the continent. And the Jamaican Negro of united stock must have thought himself the subject of Blyden's prophetic message of a black Moses when the Liberian scholar wrote 'The Negro leader of the exodus, who will succeed will be a Negro of Negroes like Moses- no half Hebrew or half-Egyptian will do the job.'" (Ibid, p.275)

As leaders of the Black race, Blyden, Washington and Garvey followed a Hegelian dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis in the development of their political thought. Blyden was an enthusiastic supporter of the re-migration of the Black people in the Diaspora to Africa whereas Washington strongly opposed the idea, thus developing the antithesis of "casting the bucket where you are." Garvey synthesised the thoughts of these two cultural predecessors into a philosophy that later came to be known as Garveyism.

The catalytic ingredients that Garvey used in his synthesis of Blyden's and Washington's philosophies were those that prevailed during his times. Robert T. Hill and Barabara Bair have documented them as follows: the doctrine of success, new thought, boosterism and the influence of religious fundamentalism and classical literature. The two writers explain how Garvey embraced these aspects of the dominant intellectual tradition "reshaping them to the cause of pan-African regeneration." (Hill

Robert T. and Barbara Bair, 1987: XXIV) Garvey made the Horatio Alger's doctrine of rags-to-riches his own by giving it a collective racial dimension. Hill and Bair quoted Garvey's querying "Why should not Africa give to the World its black Rockefeller, Carnegie, Schwab, and Henry Ford." (Quoted in Ibid, p. XXVII) Contrary to the traditional doctrine, Garvey's gospel of success combines personal success with racial uplift. New Thought emerged during the Gilded Age out of the "allied branches of mental healing phenomenon." (Ibid, p.XXVIII) Today, we continue to hear echoes from New Thought in the form of the popular slogan of "Yes, we can" that Barack Obama made his motto during the 2008 Presidential campaign. Through various media, New Thought proponents offered a sort of mental hygiene to equip millions of Americans for the journey along the road to success. Hill and Bair listed Robert L. Paston, Alonzo Potter Holly and Garvey as the apostles of the New Thought for the Black community.

Apart from following the doctrine of success and the New Thought movement, Garvey adhered to boosterism as a political and social strategy for boosting the morale of the Black population. In the words of Hill and Bair, "boosterism pervaded the popular culture of the Progressive period." (Ibid, p.XXX) In support of their claim as to the influence that it exerted on Garvey, they adduced a statement wherein he claimed that he "admired the white man's spirit for he boosts for race and nation." (Ibid, XXX) Garvey also grew up in a period wherein rebellion against Victorianism gave rise to a religious fundamentalism whose best expression is the Scopes Trial of 1925 wherein John T. Scopes was found guilty for teaching the Darwinian evolutionary theory of man. As for the classical influence on Garvey's mind, it shows in his penchant for literary allusion to writers like John Bunyan and Alfred Lord Tennyson, and his attraction to such ancient Greek and Roman intellectuals as Aristotle and Marcus Aurelius. Garvey studied Aristotle's *Politics* in Birbeck College in London. According

to Hill and Bair, while he was in prison in the mid-1920s, he “asked his wife to send him a copy of A.E.Taylor’s *Aristotle*. These are some of the elements from the Western tradition that served as a background against which Garvey made the Hegelian synthesis of Blyden’s and Washington’s philosophies.

In conclusion, what comes out from this short review of Garvey’s life and times is that programmes of leading figures like that of Garvey are part and parcel of a dialectic process. In the final analysis, we realise that however influential these individual figures are, they are ultimately shaped as much by the conditions of the society in which they live as their own ideas. Garvey grew up in a period characterised by a mood of assertiveness among the Black population, an assertiveness resulting in part from its participation in the war effort, and in part from the cultural revival known as the Harlem Renaissance. Garvey was one of the most prominent political figures who gave concrete shape to this assertive mood in elevating the ideal of creating a Black ethical state into a moral imperative in the black man’s quest for freedom and social recognition.

The next section analyses to what extent Garvey’s ethical state measures up to the standards that Hegel set up in his *Philosophy of Right*. This is done with reference to selected writings and speeches (Cf. Bob Blaidzell, Ed. 2004) dating from the American period of his political career. Garvey did not write formal treatises on political and social theory of the kind that Hegel had authored. Had the German master lived in Harlem in the 1910s and the 1920s and heard Garvey giving his speeches in Liberty Hall, or from a stepladder or a soapbox on the Corner of 135<sup>th</sup> Street and Lenox Avenue in Harlem, he would surely have dismissed him as a “leader of [that] superficial brigade of so-called philosophers.” (1991: 15) Hegel used these denigrating terms to diminish the value of Herr Fries, a contemporary philosopher of his, whom he accused of the sin of bringing philosophy down to earth and haranguing the people in public places. It was

nearly in the same terms that DuBois sought to discredit Garvey nearly a century later. DuBois qualified Garvey as both a rabble-rouser and a political agitator. Notwithstanding the truth of this accusation, Garvey continued the provocation of his opponent even in jail by asking his wife to collect his speeches and articles in two volumes that he entitled *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or Africa for the Africans*. One may be tempted to join DuBois in calling this a self-styled philosophy in view of the very short time that Garvey spent in college. However, one has also to take into account that Garvey was a self-educated man, and that as an orator with a very long experience he was regarded as one of “the ebony sages” of Harlem during his time. Grant writes that Garvey was among the “harbingers of the period when Harlem would eclipse the age of Pericles and Socrates.” (Op. Cit. p, 88)

Therefore, it is not surprising to find critics like McCartney, Hill and Bair looking for parallels between Garvey’s conception of the ideal political state, and those elaborated by Greek and Roman thinkers like Aristotle, Plato and Aurelius. In doing so these authors have followed Garvey’s late public pronouncement as to the influence that the Greek and Roman authors exerted on his thought. What follows tries to complete the analysis of Garvey’s ideal state and the place of freedom in this state with reference not to the Greco-Roman dimension of his political thought but to Hegel’s reflection on modern society and freedom in *The Philosophy of Right*. This argument about the affinities between Garvey and Hegel is articulated in four sub-sections following in this the dialectic development of the idea of freedom in Hegel’s work.

### **B. Garvey, Hegel and the Purgation of Desires**

*The Philosophy of Right* comprises three parts including an introduction. The three parts are devoted respectively to Abstract Right, Morality and Ethical life, three different names for important stages in the dialectic development of freedom towards a

more concrete or universal form. The introduction is no less important in Hegel's work for it seeks to clear out misunderstanding about the classical liberal conception of freedom as consisting of the ability to do what one wants to do without restrictions. This definition of freedom as freedom from coercion is very close to the ordinary meaning of the word. Hegel both values and contests this classical liberation sense of freedom whose sources are the philosophical writings of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau, and especially those of liberal economists like Adam Smith. Like his predecessors Hegel sees human beings as a constellation of desires and preferences. Self-perception starts with the satisfaction of these desires (I consume therefore I am). The problem with these desires rises when we have to choose which desire in the constellation to satisfy, particularly in our modern society which never ceases to create new social needs to be added to the already existing biological desires. The liberal philosophers and economists claim that human beings are endowed with rational faculties that enable them to purge and establish priorities in the satisfaction of these desires. Hegel agrees that human beings have a rational potential to operate this purgation of desires:

When reflection applies itself to the drives, representing them, estimating them, and comparing them with one another and then with the means they employ, their consequences etc., [Sic] and with a sum total of satisfaction – i.e., with happiness – it confers formal universality upon this material and purifies it of its crudity and barbarity. (Op. Cit. Hegel, p.52)

However, the conception of freedom built on the freedom of choice is incomplete because ultimately that choice depends on arbitrary circumstances, especially in the nascent consumer society of his time. Our wants and desires depend partly on the society where we live, and as long as that society or community is not taken into account our sense of freedom will not be universal.

Where does Garvey stand in relation to freedom as it is defined in the ‘Introduction’ to the *Philosophy of Right*? What comes out of the analysis of Garvey’s speeches is that Black people’s attitudes towards desire do not even meet the principles of the freedom of choice. Most of the speeches emphasise the unreflective pursuit of all sorts of desires on the part of Black people. The desire for racial integration or “social equality” is one of them. In this regard, Garvey insists that the desire to intermarry is suicidal to both the white and Black races and contrary to what some Negro leaders claim can lead to insoluble problems. He writes

We do not believe that a black man should be encouraged in the idea that the highest purpose in life is to marry a white woman, but we do believe that the white man should be taught to respect the white woman. It is a vicious and dangerous doctrine of social equality to urge, as certain coloured leaders do, that black and white should get together, for that would destroy the racial purity of both. (p.8)

Garvey places emphasis on the fact that working on this desire is necessary for the preservation of the Black race. He goes so far as to urge the American Negro to compliment “the early prejudice of the South” (p.14) for it salvaged the Black race and helped the Black man in the United States to reach a high mark of racial consciousness. By contrast to the racial prejudice in the West Indies in general and Jamaica in particular, that of the South was “honest” and was sufficiently marked to allow for the birth of a racial consciousness, which he saw at the basis of the relative development of the American Negro in nearly all fields. The “choice” and the “acceptance” of the Negro to live apart from the mainstream society, a choice that Booker T. Washington elaborated into the “separate but equal doctrine” made of the American Negro a “peer of all Negroes, the most progressive and the foremost unit in the expansive chain of scattered Ethiopia.” (p.14)

The choice of separatism instead of integration in matters of social policy made the America Negro exceptional among the Negroes of the Diaspora. The American Negro’s

exceptionalism in all fields was due to the racial consciousness that evolved out of separatism. If the Negro population had leaders like Frederick Douglass or Booker T. Washington, leaders known throughout the world, it was because the American was racially self-conscious. If their economic and social way of life was comparatively more developed, it was because its members were more aware of their own interests. Garvey comes to the conclusion that

Industrially, financially, educationally and socially, the Negroes of both hemispheres have to defer to the American brother, the fellow who has revolutionized history in race development inasmuch as to be able within fifty years to produce men and women out of the immediate bond of slavery, the lachets of whose shoes many a 'favored son and daughter' has been unable to loose. (p.14)

Garvey comes to the above conclusion after having underlined that the resolution to keep the races separate had helped the American Negro to turn inward and develop the sense of self-help. Moreover, he makes it clear that it is not only in the social and racial domains that the black man is called for to purify his desires.

A similar process of prioritising needs is also required in the economic field, Garvey often repeats in his writings and speeches. By the 1920s (often referred to as the "roaring twenties" or "the jazz age" in American history) America had fully entered what can be called the stage of democracy of goods in contrast to the Jeffersonian democracy of land, which had gradually given ground to the advance of the former as a result of the unprecedented industrialisation at the end of the nineteenth century. Out of the twin factors of rapid industrialisation in all fields and urbanisation emerged a consumer society where the status of classes and individuals depended on what Thorstein Veblen in *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) named "conspicuous consumption." The emerging advertising industry in the 1920s made the Hegelian motto "You are what you consume," an American reality. Garvey strongly responded against the tendency of Black people to conspicuous consumption. Apart from launching a

counter advertising campaign through his newspaper *The Negro World*, he kept on warning the black masses in his speeches about the dangerous of not purging the desire of conspicuous consumption fostered by the white American advertising industry:

He [the white business man]raised the price of everything; he raised the price of luxuries, for he knew well that, above all other peoples, Negroes love luxuries, and he taxed us in the districts where Negroes live, for you paid more for the luxuries you received than the white folks paid for the same luxuries in their district. (p.27)

Garvey's call for the Black masses to purge their desires (e.g. the desire for racial integration and that of excessive consumption) makes him come close to Hegel's conception of freedom. For Hegel as well as Garvey, freedom starts with the necessary purgation of desires through the application of the rational faculty. Hegel tells us that the next stage in the dialectic refinement of freedom is that of owning property. As the subsection below shows, Garvey followed in his footsteps by underlining the importance of an economic base for racial self-definition.

### **C. Garvey, Hegel and the Negro as a Homo Economicus**

In "Abstract Right," the second part of *The Philosophy of Right*, Hegel takes a further move in his definition of freedom to overcome the limitations of freedom as purgation of desires independently of the arbitrary circumstances. These two limitations are related to its subjective and formal character. The fact of choice cannot fully elevate human beings above nature since the entire range of possible actions is geared to the satisfaction of ever-increasing desires which are sometimes artificially created. In other words, the arbitrary will or freedom is free in form, but restricted in content.

The account of freedom in the "Abstract Right" seeks to make clear how freedom becomes more objective, concrete, substantial (all these terms are used by Hegel) when we lay claim to private property. Hegel argues that "I as a free will am an object to myself in what I possess." (Op. Cit. p, 76) He also claims that the fact of owning property makes of us persons on whom other persons bestow social recognition. The

gist of Hegel's argument is that private property promotes the freedom which requires us not merely to think of ourselves as different and discrete, but to identify that particularity in a public medium (goods held as property) which permits our recognition by others as the locus of unique claims. Freedom becomes objective in claims to private property that command the recognition of others. Private property becomes a necessary element of freedom as it permits such appraisals of the self as are required for self-determination. As we acquire, use and alienate property, we work on the self in a manner that demonstrates our freedom to ourselves and to others.

There is no need to go through Hegel's account of the relation of person, property and freedom. The information in hand is enough to appraise Garvey's position to economic freedom as a factor of self-determination among the black population. Like his mentor Washington, Garvey sees a close connection between ownership of property and freedom. In the following quote, he explains how white racial prejudice arises from social degradation due to lack of a strong economic base among the black people:

The prejudice of the white folks of the United States of America is not so much because they hate your colour; it is because they hate your condition; and it is because they are human beings why they hate. Should you reverse the positions you would do the same thing as they did to us. (p.62)

Garvey goes on to say that it is irrational that Black people lay claims to America for the simple reason that it is the white people who took possession of the country. They built it up to suit themselves, and if Black people had contributed to the winning of the country from the wilderness they did it as slaves. The logic here is that a slave is himself a property and not a person and as such has no right to stake a claim in his master's property. Garvey seems to respond to some Black people who continued to blame the condition of the Black man on the ex-slave masters after emancipation, i.e., after taking possession of themselves instead of attempting to do something to uplift themselves and get the recognition. The route to mutual recognition and freedom, he

suggests, does not lie in trying to acquire a share in the white man's possession as reparation for harms done, but in working to build their own fortunes.

In another article, Garvey associates again prejudice with the destitute condition of the Negro. "The prejudice against us as Negroes is not because of colour, but because of our condition."(p.121)To be recognised as free agents, the Negroes have to display what they are capable of achieving in concrete economic terms. In absence of the material conditions that ownership of property implies, the Negro will not be able to get the recognition of other races. He writes that

If black men throughout the world as a race will render themselves so independent and useful as to be sought out by other race groups it will simply mean that all the problems of race will be smashed to pieces and the Negro would be regarded like anything else – a man to be respected and admired. (p.121)

What Garvey proposes for the Negro to promote his freedom is to enter into the capitalist system of needs wherein the Negroes will participate in a material give-and-take with other races. Garvey was strongly opposed to communism and trade union activities. Like Hegel, he thinks that the actions which conspicuously permit an external self-appraisal are those of taking possession, private owning and use of property.

To Garvey, in the physical world, "power is the only argument that satisfies man," and so tells the Black masses that they will never achieve equal status among other races until they "have power of every kind." (Op. Cit. Garvey, 1967 (Vol.1:19) It is only when Blacks achieve power as individuals and a nation in areas like "education, science, industry, politics and higher government" (Ibid, 19) that other nations will see them, or as Garvey goes on to declaim, "If they will not see, then feel." (Ibid) It is up to the particular race to master its own fate in the world and not to "blame God and Christ for the things that happen for us in the physical." While it is true that God is interested in the spiritual being, "man's physical body is for his own protection, is for his own purposes." (Op. Cit. Garvey, 1967 (Vol. II: 33)

Material prosperity comes uppermost in Garvey's plan to uplift the black race. He strongly believes that people of different races will never treat each other as equals until they are on the same economic level. In order to reach economic parity with whites, the Negroes must have their own institutions, including their own businesses and educational facilities, and ultimately, a homeland, which Garvey meant as an independent state in Africa. In an essay entitled "Let the Negro Accumulate Wealth: It Will Bring Power," Garvey wrote that in modern society people are judged solely by wealth. Because Negroes have no wealth, they are mistreated. Hence "economic independence or wealth is the recommendation of a people in order to gain full consideration of others... wealth is strength, wealth is power, wealth is influence, wealth is justice, is liberty, is real human rights". (Ibid, p. 36) In this emphasis on wealth, Garvey reminds us of Booker T. Washington's embracement of the Gospel of Wealth developed by Andrew Carnegie.

Just like Washington, Garvey believed that in order to attain and maintain their own wealth, the American Negro must separate from white Americans. The ways and means to procure this wealth is capitalism. Garvey was an unabashed capitalist. Capitalism, he said, "is necessary for the progress of the world." (Ibid, p.72) He had a deep respect for white society's economic success under capitalism and argued that African Americans must imitate the economic endeavours of whites. In addition, he claimed European culture as part of the Black man's heritage, and strongly believed that future socioeconomic success rested on the cultural underpinnings of European civilization, one of them being the sacredness of private property. For Garvey, there is no shame in following in the footsteps of the white man for building their economic prosperity. After all, Western societies are nothing but duplicates of those of Africa in the past.

The importance that Garvey accords to economic development as a factor for the achievement of freedom and equality with other races shows a shift in outlook and priorities from his Jamaican days. In America, Garvey realised that the organisation of black business and industry was far more essential for the development of the race than the establishment of a school for blacks in Jamaica. There is nothing surprising in this when we know that the most current motto of the time is that of President Calvin Coolidge “The Business of America is business.” (Op. Cit. Lane Jack and Maurice O’Sullivan, pp. 192-207) The belief in business as a means for racial uplift led Garvey to form the Negro Factories Corporation, which offered 200,000 shares of common stock to African Americans and other Blacks at a par value of \$ 5.00 per share. The corporation was formed to establish and operate factories throughout the Western Hemisphere and Africa that would manufacture marketable commodities for Black people. The Corporation’s New York division ran three grocery stores, a printing plant, two restaurants, a laundry, and a men’s and women’s clothing factory, which made the uniforms, hats, and shirts worn by members of the UNIA. In addition, the New York division operated several buildings, trucks, and the UNIA publication, *The Negro World*. In the 1920s, the UNIA and its allied corporations occasionally employed more than 1,000 African Americans in the United States alone.

Garvey went so far as to claim that he wanted the Negro “to understand that economically we [the Negroes] are flirting with our graves if we do not start out to make ourselves economically independent.”(p.37) Writing during the economically depressed post-war era, Garvey warned his fellow Black men that the prosperity of the world war years when Negroes easily landed jobs was over. The Negroes were wrong in thinking that white industrial captains would give similar access to jobs as they did to white people. They should remember that “To the white man blood is thicker than

water.” (p.37) For Garvey, economic prosperity is not merely a question of recognition, but also of racial preservation. He predicts that if “the Negroes do not organise now to open up economic and industrial opportunities for themselves there will be starvation among all Negroes.” (p.37) Accordingly, in May 1919 Garvey announced the creation of the *Black Star Line*, a steamship company financed by shares sold to African Americans. Its declared aim is to carry freight and passengers between the centres of black populations in the United States, the Caribbean and Africa. The announcement of the *Black Star Line* was a significant step for Garvey and the UNIA in the assertion of the identity of interests among Blacks all over the world. In other words, it was a dramatic response to the call for the independence of Black-owned business at the world level. It has to be noted that this period of time was known for trade barriers erected by the European competitors. The famous British Navigation Acts of the mid-1650s were not yet totally abolished where trade concerned the British colonies in West Africa and the West Indies. This explains why the rising West African merchantmen, through Caseley Hayford, complained about the high tariffs imposed on the freight on such perishable goods as wood. This situation of monopoly over Black business was also behind Duse Mohamed Ali’s attempt to “set an independent Bank in Britain’s West African possessions to circumvent trade barriers erected by European competitors.” (Op. Cit. Grant, p. 45)

The *Black Star Line* was a spectacular move that caught the attention and the imagination of the African American community. It would be the first phase of a programme of economic development that envisioned a network of Black-owned stores, factories and other commercial establishments. Second, the *Black Star Line* fit in well with the internationalist, pan-African aspect of Garvey’s programme. Garvey’s Black-owned, Black-captained fleet of steamships would carry out trade between the Black

ports of the world, stimulate the economic development of Black peoples everywhere through commerce and trade, and carry millions of Black immigrants back to the African homeland. However, Garvey's economic vision exceeded his grasp because Garvey showed himself very weak in business and finance. The project of the Black Star Line involved him in a fraudulent enterprise about which he knew nothing. In January 1922 Marcus Garvey was arrested and charged with mail fraud in connection with the marketing of *Black Star Line* shares.

Even after the failure of the economic project of the *Black Star Line*, Garvey continued to believe that material progress remained the best way for the Negroes to affirm themselves among other races. In an article entitled "An Appeal to the Conscience of the Black Race to See Itself," he writes that "Progress is the attraction that moves humanity, and to whatever people or race this "modern venture" attaches itself, there will you find the splendour and self-esteem that never fail to win the respect and admiration of all." (p.139) In terms that remind us of Hegel's "Abstract Right" in *The Philosophy of Right*, Garvey goes on to remind the Negroes that their number and physical embodiment as persons are insufficient or incomplete for self-affirmation and display of freedom as a race. If recognition was a question of the number of population, China and India would have attracted more respect and reverence than the United States.

Garvey makes his own version of the myth of "rags to riches" developed by Horatio Alger in the second half of the nineteenth century. He mentions the cases of Rockefeller and Henry Ford whose economic success had made them stand out among their own people. Their success had made them "objects of universal respect", "but no one", he writes, "cares about the bum or hobo who is Rockefeller's or Ford's neighbour."(p.139) Success is as much force for the recognition of persons as it is for nations and races.

The world is attracted to successful nations and races, that is nations and races which have managed to make something of their selves, but “pays absolutely no attention to the bum or hobo races that lingers by the wayside.” (p.167) Like Hegel, Garvey assigns a metaphysical dimension to private property; it can allow the Black race to “see itself” and to be seen /considered by others as worthy of recognition. Self-help and self-reliance are the two principles conducive to economic advancement and racial rehabilitation.

Garvey’s belief in the principles of capitalism like self-help and self-reliance as prerequisites for salvaging the Black race from “backwardness” is as strong as his rejection of communism and socialism. He qualified Black socialists like Philip Randolph as “time-servers who have been trying to inoculate us with the doctrine of socialism.” (p.99)The socialist approach to American racial justice and equality is as inefficient and ineffective as the liberal approach of DuBois’s National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People. While the former keeps the colour line unchanged, the latter seeks to dilute the race in the white American crucible. Garvey condemned communism as well. He felt communists were lazy; and he especially disliked white working-class racism. Yet Garvey also recognised that capitalism could get out of control. To prevent that from happening, he planned to limit individual fortunes to one million dollars and corporate assets to five million dollars. (Op. Cit. Garvey, 1967: 72-73) Garvey’s brand of capitalism has both external and internal requirements. Externally, it is controlled by specifying how much property every Negro is allowed to have so that every other Negro should have some property –presumably enough to recognise themselves and be recognised by others as persons. Internally, Garvey wants to give it a moral basis.

#### **D. Hegel, Garvey and the Moral Imperative**

In his affirmation of morality in the quest for property, Garvey also follows in the footsteps of Hegel who claims that the freedom achieved through the possession of property is not complete if it is not anchored in morality. It is moral freedom that gives full sense to the kind of economic freedom by permitting the self to detach itself from material objects. From the right to property described in “Abstract Right,” Hegel moves to the description of the morality of our actions in the third section of the *Philosophy of Right*. According to Hegel:

The right of the subjective will is that whatever it is to recognize as valid should be perceived by it as good, and that it should be held responsible for an action – as its aim translated into external objectivity – as right or wrong, good or evil, legal or illegal, according to its cognizance of the value which that action has in this objectivity. (p.158)

Free moral agency, for Hegel, is not a matter of rejecting desires for possessions, acting against them and actively frustrating them, or ignoring or abstracting them from that aspect of human nature which is subject to natural laws. These desires do not represent the other bad side of human nature. On the contrary, they constitute the raw material of freedom, the natural will which is freedom-in-itself. But freedom in-and-for itself requires that such natural tendencies be, not absent, but in control of the moral agent.

Morality holds an important place in Garvey’s philosophy. In the absence of morality, he claims, “the world has gone mad; the world has become too material; the world has lost its kinship with God, and man can see nothing else but prejudice, avarice, and greed.” (p.151) He continues his Jeremiad against material acquisition by warning that avarice and greed will “destroy the world” if man does not try to moralise his way of life. While affirming that the Negro should seek material prosperity, he also claims that the Negro has a mission in this “age of human materialism” which consists of “shoring it [civilisation] up” (p.42) and putting it under examination in order to make it what it ought to be as “far as our race is concerned.” (p.82) This idea of Negroes

preserving Western civilisation rests on the belief that white people are just temporary custodians of that civilisation developed by their kith and kin on the banks of the Nile thousands of years ago. “You will love your property anywhere you see it,” he writes. (Ibid)

The assignment of the mission of saving civilisation does not mean that Garvey is content with the moral character of the Negroes. Indeed Garvey’s view of the Negro people sounds negative. Their moral character is not as it ought to be. One of their flaws is selfishness. In his opinion, selfishness is a natural phenomenon, but in the case of the American Negro selfishness was given free reign for historical reasons. “In the Negro’s struggle to get somewhere,” he writes, “every member of the race took a selfish course all his own. There was no group program or group interest.”(p.56)One of his premises is that if the race has no interest of its own to fight, its members are condemned to insignificance.

Garvey accuses both previous spiritual and secular leaders of having undermined the moral fibre of the African America Negro. Garvey’s criticism of the Black church is in line with that of Washington. In slavery times, the church was the only moral prop that white people provided to sustain their black slaves. Immediately after emancipation, “the illiterate Negro preacher took charge of us, and with the eye of selfishness he exploited the zeal of the religious.”(p.56)In the wake of the “illiterate preacher” came the “illiterate Negro politician” who undermined further the moral foundations of the Negro by catering for his own material desires. Garvey concludes that “the leadership of the past has been a leadership more destructive than constructive – a leadership that misrepresented the true desires, the true hopes of this struggling race of ours.” (p.37)To contemporary leaders like DuBois and Randolph he reproaches their association with white people. Such an association suffers from a lack of a social/racial perspective that

allows for the self-interest of individual Black members to become absorbed in the interest of the race.

The propensity to corruption on the part of the Negro is the lack of an adequate moral education. The lack of moral knowledge of what is good and evil has made the world of the Negro an amoral world, a world wherein even healthy individual projects are pulled down. Garvey borrows from Washington the metaphor of “crabs in a barrel” to describe the moral state of the race. He writes that Negroes were like “crabs in a barrel, that none would allow the other to climb over, but any such attempt all would continue to pull back into the barrel the one crab that would make the effort to climb out.” (p.9) It follows from the above that if the Negroes will never find their liberation in doing their duties when the institutions which prescribe their duties do not contribute in an identifiable fashion to the freedom as citizens in a society. Like Hegel, Garvey regards freedom as a social achievement that can by no means be realised outside institutions of ethical freedom like the family, the civil society and the nation state.

#### **E. Garvey, Hegel and the Ethical State as a Locus of Objective Freedom**

Hegel argues for the importance of an institutionally/rationally organised state in the third part of his book, entitled “The Ethical State.” When established on a racial basis, institutions, Hegel tells us, make people feel “at home” in an Ethical state whose laws are in harmony with what they think is right. For Garvey, as for Hegel, the family, civil society, and the state are natural or organic entities that allow people to fully realise themselves. Hegel values family life as a form of social liberation, structured as it is by rights and duties. Family life is liberation from personal isolation effected through love and marriage. It is a method of controlling the unruly press of sexuality and it is an objective structure that enables humans to express their capacities for long-term loving commitment through their relationship to spouse and children. It is a

valuable escape from the demands of self-interest by allowing the possibility for a wider, more capacious sense of self than abstract personality permits. In other words, the family is a crucial domain for the exercise of a distinctively social mode of freedom that sociability generates. “The family”, Hegel concludes, “is the first ethical root of the state. [...] It contains the moment of subjective particularity and objective universality in substantial unity.”(p.272)

Garvey does not provide us with much information about what family life was like among Negroes. He contented himself by drawing a very brief picture about his own family. He tells that his parents were “black Negroes”. His father was a man of “brilliant intellect and dashing courage,” (p.1) a courage that he retraced to his maroon ancestry. (Cf. Myers Aaron, 1999: 1253-54) As most bold men usually do, Garvey Sr took chances in the course of life, but unfortunately he lost his fortune. Poverty, Garvey tells us, did not in any way affect him personally because he knew how to take care of himself. Furthermore, his mother “assumed the responsibility that the father had failed to assume.” She is described as, “a sober and conscientious Christian.” Her character stands in contrast to that of his father. The latter was “severe, firm, determined, bold, strong, and refusing to yield even to superior forces if he believed he was right.” By contrast, “the mother was soft [...] and was always willing to return a smile for a blow, and ever ready to bestow charity upon her enemy.” (p.1)

Born out of a “strange combination” of the traits of poor “black parent negroes,” Garvey suggests that it is within the family unit of four members that he learnt to respect racial separation as quite natural. At the age of fourteen, Garvey and his white little mate parted. Her parents thought that the time had come to draw, what is called “the colour line”. So they sent her to Scotland to live with a sister there. To all evidence, Garvey’s family played its role as a socialising agent by giving him a lesson about his

proper place in a multi-racial society. He tells us that he “did not care about the separation after [he was told] about it.” (p.2) Garvey adds that the separation did not hurt him because he “never thought all during our childhood association that the girl and the rest of the children of her race were better than I was; in fact, they used to look up to me.” (p.2) This shows that apart from teaching racial separation, Garvey’s family taught him to trust his own self-definition and value himself as a Negro. It fostered in him the love for those girls of his race. He writes that after his “first lesson in race distinction”, he never thought of involving himself with white girls any more, even with those living next door. “At home his sister’s company was good enough for me, and at school I made friends with the coloured girls next to me.” (p.2)

Moreover, Garvey does not say much about the institution of the nuclear Negro family and about conjugal or filial love. It is racial love and appraisal that receives the most attention. When Garvey speaks about the problems of the black race, he speaks of them as problems of an extended family. This equation of family and race cannot be explained solely in terms of childhood personal experience in his own family. It is due mostly to the political and economic oppression that the black people endured even after emancipation. As Patricia Hill Collins puts it

During this period, revitalized political and economic oppression of African-Americans in the South influenced Black actions and ideas about family and community. Notions such as equating family with extended family, of treating community (the black race) as family, and of seeing dealings with whites as elements of public discourse and dealings with Blacks as part of family business endured. (p.53)

Throughout his speeches and articles, Garvey claims his love for his own race/family. But he is disappointed by those among his kith and kin who put their own selfish interests ahead of those of the family, which is the locus of ethical life. These are characterized as both slaves to their own selfish desire and pawns of the white men who foster in them degenerate social needs.

Garvey urges the Negroes to seek recognition of their selfhood through the pursuit of love and commitment as members of the same family, but when he comes to the recognition of the Negroes by the “other fellow”, the white race he underlines the necessity for the deadly rhetorical combat as described by Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Indeed, Garvey echoes Hegel’s slave-master dialectic several times in his speeches when he talks about the relation between the races. For example, he writes that “Slavery is threatened for every race and nation that remains weak and refuses to organize its strength for its own protection. Slavery has no day and no time. It is present when the strong race desires to oppress the weaker race.” (pp.124-125) He also writes that the “man, the race or nation that is not ready to risk life itself for the possession of an ideal [freedom], shall lose that “ideal.” (p.86)

However, Garvey qualifies his argument about the life-and-death struggle between races by saying that the latter holds true only in cases where these races are not separated geographically. Fellowship and love between races remain possible if each race is given a “vital space” wherein to pursue its own self-interest and to contribute something to civilisation. Contrary to what integrationists claim, the Negro race cannot guarantee its survival in the white man’s countries in the long term, Garvey warns the black masses. He also tells them that the competition between the races in the United States will become harsher as the white population increases and economic opportunity decreases in the next 50 or 100. Then the white race will no longer be able to afford to be indifferent or helpful to the black race whose members will have developed the needed skills likely to lead them to ask for the same jobs and positions demanded by whites.

The problem with Negroes who think about racial integration is that they live “directly under the white man’s institutions and the influence over [them] is so great

that [they are] only a plaything in the molder's hand." (p.22) Garvey urges his fellow Negroes to create their own ethical institutions and not imitate those of the whites the better to affirm themselves as a civil society, wherein to assume their full moral status as free agents. One such ethical institution as already explained is the family as race. The other is religion. It must be noted that in *The Philosophy of History*, Hegel traces the expansion of freedom in the modern world to Luther's Reformation. (See supra Chapter 3). Probably influenced by the rise of Ethiopianism (the African Church movement), Garvey makes extensive references to what he calls "African Fundamentalism." (pp.184-186) Indeed, Garvey's allusions to religion are so extensive that Garvey scholars like Randall K. Burkett (1978), categorise Garveyism as a religious movement. Still, in spite of the great number of Biblical citations that he makes in his speeches and articles, this religious sensibility does not of make of him a priest or a pastor as the case is with his successors Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X. While it is true to say that he made a name for himself in New York when he addressed a mass meeting at the Bethel AME Church on June 12, 1917, it is also true that the good performance that day led him not to the establishment of a house of worship but the foundation of the New York division of UNIA in New York. Just as with Hegel, his religious references occur within framework of racial assertion on a divine plan. If there is one idea in all the speeches and articles by Garvey elevated to a religious tenet it is the Ethical State, or nation. Garvey kneels down in front of this Idea in the manner of the German master. The essence of this Idea is patriotism.

#### **F. Patriotism and the Ethical State**

Nationalism is arguably the most important aspect of Garvey's philosophy. It was behind the creation of the UNIA right from the beginning. On this point, Garvey's philosophy comes close to that of Hegel who affirms that it is ultimately the existence

of the state that constitutes the conditions for the realisation freedom. Hegel's conception of the state differs from the contract view of the state developed by such philosophers as John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau who affirm that communities are founded on contracts serving the interests of the individuals who form them. For Hegel, such a view privileges private or particular interests of the individuals over collective or universal interests of the citizen. A state is like a self-renewing organ, and unless it is "present in consciousness" of the citizens, it does not really deserve the name of state at all. Patriotism functions much like love in the family in the affirmation of the organic unity of the state. Hegel tells us that

Patriotism is frequently understood to mean only a willingness to perform extraordinary sacrifices and actions. But in essence it is that disposition which, in the normal conditions and circumstances of life habitually knows that the community is the substantial basis and end [of Freedom]. It is the same consciousness tried and tested in all circumstances of ordinary life, which underlines the willingness to make extraordinary efforts. (pp. 288-289)

As far as Garvey is concerned, the Negro can never be free as long as the Negroes have not constituted themselves into a national community. Garvey says essentially the same thing as Hegel. For example, he considers investment in the different economic projects that he created as an act of patriotism. The UNIA, like the US government during World War relied heavily on mass purchase of bonds through Liberty Bond programme. Just like President Wilson, Garvey gave a patriotic slant to the bond campaign by marching at the heat of UNIA parades in New York and addressing the black masses in meetings for the Universal Liberian Construction Loan. The word "duty" is often recurrent in speeches delivered to raise funds. The following is a case in point: "There are still Negroes here who can help and buy shares in the *Black Star Line*. Those of you who have done your duty, I am not speaking to you; but there are thousands who subscribe to the Librarian Construction Loan." (pp.32-33) Selling and buying black are equally regarded as patriotic. In brief, Garvey, like Hegel, considers that only through habitual

participation in the life of citizenship that Negroes could realise themselves. He urges the Negroes to set up a state or a nation in Africa because it was mere self-deception to expect to participate as free citizens in a predominantly white society. Garvey reminds his contemporary negro community that only a “government, a nation of our own, strong enough to lend protection to the members of our race all over the world, and to compel the respect of the nations and the races of the earth,” ( Quoted in Drimmer Melvin, Ed, 1968:396) Writing at the wake of the race riots following World War I, and at a time when race discrimination and lynching were at their highest peak because of the Negroes’ attempt at social mobility, Garvey’s philosophy of racial nationalism could not fail to strike a cord of sympathy in the Negro masses. Garvey tells them that

If you cannot live alongside the white man in peace, if you cannot get the same chance and opportunity alongside the white man, even though you are his fellow citizen; if he claims that you are not entitled to this chance or opportunity because the country is by his force of numbers, then find a country of your own and rise to the highest position within that country.” (Quoted in Ibid, 396)

Two factors, one national and the other international, account for the easy reception of Garvey’s racial nationalism in the 1920s. The national factor relates to the revival of exacerbated forms of nationalist feelings among the Anglo-Saxon community in the United States. These nationalist feelings are expressed in such organizations as the Ku Klux Klan and the Anglo-Saxon Clubs which mushroomed in the country after the end of World War I. Nativism, Anglo-Saxon racism and militant Protestantism were the hallmarks of these radical and defensive organisations born out of the post-war wave of strikes, bombings, Red Scares and race riots blamed on immigrants and foreign ideas. It has to be observed here that Garvey was one of the immigrants who left Jamaica for the USA in 1916.

The nativist dimension of American nationalism in the 1920s had much to do with the foreign connections of many radicals, connections that led to the re-channelling of

the war-time patriotism towards the hatred of the foreigners. Two such radicals are Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, both of them Italian-born members of an anarchist group. Sacco, a shoemaker by profession, and Vanzetti, a fish peddler were accused of having shot to death a guard for the Slater and Morrill Shoe Factory in Braintree, Massachusetts, and robbed him of his payroll amounting to a mere \$15. Under the pressure of public opinion caught in nativist hysteria, Sacco and Vanzetti were brought for a ‘monkey trial’, convicted and sentenced to death on flimsy evidence. In spite of pleas for mercy and public demonstrations around the world on their behalf, the two men went to the electric chair on August 23, 1927, nearly seven years after their arrest on May 5, 1920. (Cf. Op. Cit.Lane and O’Sullivan, 1999: pp.280-282)

The resurgence of nativism in post-war America resulted from two interdependent sources: pseudo-scientific racist theories and immigration. The pseudo-scientific racist theory found its best expression in a widely read book, Madison Grant’s *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916) which was so popular that it constituted one of the topics of debate among some of the characters in Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1925). The great race in danger of extinction was the Anglo-Saxon of Northern Europe, threatened by the Slavic and Latin people of Eastern and Southern Europe. The flow of immigrants that inspired the writing of Grant’s book was momentarily stopped by the war before it resumed and reached its highest peak in the post-war period. Between 1920 and 1921, no less than 800,000 persons entered the US, the great majority of them hailing from Southern and Eastern Europe. (Cf. Ibid)

During the war, the hysteria against foreigners was directed mostly towards aliens from Germany and Austria, aliens rounded up and imprisoned on Ellis Island. After the war, it was to the immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, Italians, Greeks, Jews driven out of their countries by religious persecutions or the post-war economic distress,

who became the objects of fear. Unlike the earliest immigrants who came from Western and Northern Europe, these latest immigrants met different types of prejudice due to their differences in language, religion, and culture. Coming in such great numbers, new immigrants were naturally drawn together in city neighbourhoods known by names like Little Italy and Second Warsaw. This immigrant life in ethnic ghettos emphasised all the more the sentiments of strangeness and anti-immigration on the part of the American society. Moreover, prepared to take jobs at lower wages, these immigrants were looked at very unfavourably by American labourers because of what they considered as unfair competition in a reduced post-war job market.

The xenophobia against foreign immigrants found its best expression in the return of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) which sought a “100 percent Americanism”. The Klan originally arose in the white southern states as a resistance to post-Civil War Reconstruction policies. Headed by a former Confederate General Nathan Bedford, the KKK terrorized the newly freed black population so as to lead it to drop out the pursuance of civil rights. The activities of the Klan declined as a result of federal legislation, arrest and trial of several of its leaders at the end of the nineteenth century. (Ibid, p. 276) The KKK was in 1915 at Stone Mountain, Georgia, with the aim of saving the Anglo-Saxon heritage not only from the black people, as was the case with the policies of the post-Civil War Klan, but also from Roman Catholics, Jews and other Orientals.

The new Klan grew enormously in the post-war period by playing on American middle-class fears and frustrations, and on nativist alarm over the danger of Papacy and Jewry. It acted as a catalyst for a racial nationalism fuelled, among other things, by the powerful racist imagery of D. W. Griffith’s epic film *Birth of the Nation* and the black riots that flared up across the nation as a result of racial injustice towards the black

population parked in Northern ghettos. The KKK became some sort of nativist organisation with a constituency of 4 million Anglo-Saxon native-born members throughout the United States, a constituency which was able to elect senators “from 10 states and governors in 11 states – places like Oregon, Colorado, Indiana, and Maine, as well as southern states.”(King David C. and Maria Marvin *et al*, 1986: 485) It has to be noted here that if Garvey stressed the number of 4 million as the number of members in his UNIA, it was arguably in response to the 4 million members that the KKK boasted to have enrolled in its lists.

No matter what the exact numbers of the KKK and UNIA were, it should be noted that the United States government reacted to anti-immigrant/anti-foreign sentiments by enacting laws that drastically reduced immigration of nationals belonging to cultures, religions, and systems of governments different from those of the predominantly Anglo-Saxon stock. For example, in 1921 was passed the Quota Law limiting the annual number of immigrants to a total of 357,000 giving full advantage to nationals hailing from Western and Northern Europe through an elaborate system of percentage. The Immigration Act of 1924 further restricted the number of immigrants from southern and Eastern Europe by reducing the 1921 quota to 150,000 to be distributed among peoples of various nationalities in proportion to the number of the fellow countrymen already in the United States in 1920.

The US government did not only pass stringent immigration laws, it also enacted laws that invested the Executive with power to deport persons “threatening” national security through their subversive activities. The Federal Bureau of Investigation was created during this period when the communist revolution of the Bolsheviks of 1917 was thought to be at the doorstep of America with the creation of the American Communist Party in 1919. The “Red Scare” eventually led to mass arrests and

deportation of immigrant “agitators” or “trouble makers” under the joint supervision of Attorney General Palmer and his younger assistant J. Edgar Hoover. In December 1919, an American ship sailed to Russia with 249 unwanted alien radicals on its board most of them not charged with any crime at all, except their national origin. It was the self-same Hoover, who had gathered information on the radicals deported to Russia, who later investigated into the activities of Garvey, which culminated in Garvey’s deportation to Jamaica his home country in 1927 after nearly 5 years’ imprisonment.

Garvey’s racial nationalist philosophy can best be understood within the context of the racial nationalism pervading the American society during the mid-1910s and 1920s. It can be claimed that Garvey was caught in what Hegel calls the *zeitgeist* or the spirit of the times delineated above. Evidence can be found in the fact that Garvey’s presence in the United States was far from being a fortuitous and whimsical matter. It has to be recalled that Garvey rode on the crest of the unprecedented flow of Negro migrants into the urban industrial centres of the North and the Midwest. Speaking of this Negro migratory movement, Alain Locke writes:

The tide of Negro migration, northward and city-ward, is not to be fully explained as a blind flood started by the demands of war industry coupled with the shutting of foreign migration, or by the pressure of poor crops coupled with increased social terrorism in certain sections of the South and Southwest. Neither labor demand, [Sic] the boll weevil, nor the Ku Klux Klan is a basic factor, however contributory any or all of them may have been. The wash and rush of this human tide on the beach line of the northern city centres is to be seen primarily in terms of a new vision of opportunity, of social and economic freedom, of a spirit to seize, even in the face of an extortionate and heavy toll, a chance for the improvement of conditions. (Quoted in Op. Cit. Lane Jack and Maurice O’ Sullivan, Eds. p.218)

Alain Locke’s statement captures so well the spirit of the times as far as the Negro was concerned. This spirit seems to all evidence to have sounded the end of Washington’s philosophical call for the Negro to “cast your bucket where you are” and live in accommodation with the racist regimes of the Southern states.

In a way as Garvey says it in his speeches, his stay in the United States was not planned beforehand. In his words, he went to the United States to collect funds for starting an industrial school and get inspiration from the followers of Washington school of racial thought. Garvey did not know that he was far from being a transient voyager to the source of Washingtonism in Tuskegee since before long he was seized by the *Geist* (the racial spirit) that permeated the Harlem Black life. About the attraction that Harlem exerted on the Negro at the highest peak of the Garvey movement, Locke says that Harlem has attracted Negroes from all regions, urban and rural, and all walks of life and through “proscription and prejudice have thrown these dissimilar elements into a common area of contact and interaction. [...] So what began in terms of segregation becomes more and more, as its elements mix and interact, the laboratory of a great race-welding.” (Ibid, 218) Locke continues his description of the role that Harlem played in the shaping of New Negro identity and culture by saying that

Hitherto, it must be admitted that American Negroes have been a race more in name, or to be more exact in sentiment than in experience. The chief bond between them has been that of a common rather than a common a common consciousness; a problem in common rather than a life in common. In Harlem, Negro life is seizing upon its first chances for group expression and self-determination. (Ibid, p. 220)

Throughout his speeches, Garvey, like Locke later, speaks about the “New Negro” no longer satisfied with the old dispensations imposed on the older generations to whom freedom had been denied because of their acquiescence and submission to the orders that be. So much has been written about the Garvey movement being the creator a mass movement paying scant attention to the fact that it was this mass movement, as portrayed by Locke, which created Garvey. Locke writes that in the new situation of Harlem, “It is the rank and file who are leading and the leaders who are following.” (Ibid, p.220) Garvey was not like the migrating clergyman following in the trails of his errant peasant flock which decided to move into the Northern cities after desperately

trying to maintain them in the rural zones of the South. Yet, he resembled one in the sense that he luckily landed among a black community ready to listen to his call for racial nationalism and self-determination.

The Hegelian *zeitgeist* that caught Garvey reveals itself in other aspects of the rhetoric of his speeches than the leadership thrust upon him by historical circumstances. In the *Crisis of the Negro Leadership* (1984), Harold Cruise traces the bankruptcy of Negro leadership in the 1920s to the rivalries existing between the different leaders divided by the national origins (West Indian versus Black Americans) and ideological confessions (Pro-communists versus pro-liberals/capitalists). These rivalries undermined the effort to build a common front to ensure self-determination similar to the one that the Jews managed to do in spite of the same differences. Cruise's claim is to the point as regards to the dissension among the Negro leadership, but he failed to put them within the context of the white American thought of the period in which Garvey emerged on the stage of American Negro history. For example, Cruise pointed out the differences between Garvey the Jamaican with a British cultural background and the other native-born American negro leaders as the major cause behind the misunderstandings and animosity that marked negro leadership; yet he failed to show the extent to which the reactions on the part of the native-born negro American leaders towards Garvey's ascension to leadership of the black masses had much to do with white American nativism.

The point defended here is that if Garvey's Jamaican culture was made so much a case by leaders like DuBois, it was simply because American Negro leaders seemed to reproduce the same anti-immigrant sentiments that the white American society, through its Anglo-Saxon Clubs and White American Societies, showed to white immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe in the same period. Tried as he could to show that

“Great ideals know no nationality,” (p.10) , especially when these were as shallow and spurious as black American nationality, Garvey did not manage to extricate himself from American Negro nativism of the Black American leadership which managed to have him imprisoned and deported to his country of origin, Jamaica in 1925. The irony in all this was that though Garvey reacted very badly to these nativist sentiments on the part of his American fellow Negro leaders, he himself subscribed to the same nativist sentiments by advocating a return of the Negro to Africa that he considered as his native land. Garvey’s association of Africa (the native land) with the redemption of the black race strangely recalls Hegel’s organicism that made of the existence of the nation (a native land and a people) the ultimate condition for the realisation of freedom. Garvey’s belief in organicism born partly as a result of racial segregation and discrimination (to which he was thankful for the white racists supposedly for having preserved the race from dilution) made him relinquish the civil rights for the Negroes in the United States for any help that nativist America could provide for the repatriation of the Negro to his native land (Africa).

The extent to which Garvey was seized by the nativist spirit of his times is reflected in his hostile attitude towards his fellow Negro socialists and communists like Randolph, Owen and DuBois. Following the Red Scare hysteria of the 1920s, Garvey attempted to depict these fellow leaders as stooges of the Bolsheviks seeking social and political equality in a land which he considered as primarily a “white man’s land.” Garvey’s making a small case of the fact of being native-born citizens was one way of reducing native-born rival Negro leaders into permanent immigrant agitators, throwing back the stone to those leaders who denounced him to the American authorities as a foreign-born agitator.

Garvey's political and social thought was not steeped solely in the American ideas of his time as it might have been suggested above. It was in England that he decided to enter the world of politics in the 1910s after his contact with nationalist leaders like Duse Ali. It can be claimed that Garvey decided, to use Hegel's words, to reconcile the Negro with nationalism, an idea which was whipped up by people nearly in every part of the colonized world. Referring to nationalism, Garvey urged the Negroes to build a nation of their own by all means because it was the ideological bandwagon into which all peoples jumped in the 1920s. He affirmed to his mass audiences that if nationalism was good for all races it could not fail to be so for the Negro race. He pointed out the fact

There is a mad rush among races everywhere towards national independence. [...] This year [1922] is regarded as a year of racial and national changes. Egypt and Ireland have already secured their freedom for 1922, and it is most likely that before the close of the year India will have gained a larger modicum of self-government. We cannot, therefore, allow the cause of Africa to lag behind. It is for us to force it. (pp. 44-73)

Garvey places his idea of Negro nationalism within the context of what Hegel calls world history. The call of "Africa for Africans... has become a positive, determined one. It is a call that is raised simultaneously the world over because of the universal oppression that affects the Negro." (Ibid, p.45) Apart from urging to 'strike the first blow' for realising the African dream of independence, Garvey tells the Negroes that this fight for the freedom of the motherland had also a providential dimension. It was 'written on the wall' that the Negroes would be freed from oppression. According to him, "God Almighty is our leader and Jesus Christ our standard bearer.... It is the same God who inspired the Psalmist to write, 'Princes shall come out of Egypt and Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God.'" (p.47) Garvey spoke of the Negro's migration back to Africa in terms of an Exodus type of religious migration wherein he emerged as a Moses figure. He warned the colonial holders of Africa that the only way to escape the

wrath of God and his standing army of “4 million Negroes” was to quit it as soon as possible. It is in this apocalyptic judgmental view of history that Garvey comes closest to Hegel in his conception of the world spirit of freedom. This world spirit of freedom assumed the contours of nationalism in Garvey’s speeches.

Many critics have pointed to the similarity between Zionism and Garveyism. (Cf. McCartney John T, 1992) But most of these critics have contented themselves with underlining their shared ideological call for the ‘migration back home’, overlooking other important aspects common to the two movements. One of these aspects is the relation between the idea of nation and freedom. For both movements, the migration back to the home country was not meant to be applicable indistinctly to all Jews (for the Zionists) and to all Negroes (for the Garveyists). For both movements, the building of a nation was regarded not only as essential for cultivating and maintaining the identity of the community in a determined sanctified territorial space, but also in allowing those Jews and Negroes still living in the Diaspora to develop a sense of pride for having achieved nationhood, and in imposing respect on other nationals living in foreign nations, which might otherwise be tempted to oppress them. It can be claimed, therefore, that for Garveyism and Zionism from which it was partly inspired, nationalism was not solely a geographical removal of a whole people from their “exile” to a regained Kingdom of old, be it “Ethiopia” or “Zion,” but a spiritual Hegelian idea that endows the race with an identity among other races.

The above claim finds support in the following statement by Amy Jacques Garvey, who collected and published her husband’s speeches while in prison: “At no time did he visualize all American Negroes returning to Africa.” Garvey corroborates his wife’s political statement affirming that the return is necessarily selective: ‘Some are no good here, and naturally will be no good there.’ (Quoted in Drimmer Melvin, 1967:395)

Those Negroes particularly qualified for nation building are those who boasted of a practical, humble and pioneering turn of mind such as engineers, artisans, and farmers. No supercilious Negro could qualify for the migration back to Africa unless he managed to drop out the “practice of race superiority complex inflicted upon him” by the white man. (p.72) Furthermore, he warned the potential Negro migrants that his organisation

does not want any bums to go to Africa. [...] And if I have any friends who are bums, take my advice and stay where you are, because we will put you in jail. [...] The fellow who has a grudge or a spite against the other fellow’s goods, please stay in Harlem, in America, and make the best you can wish with the Irish cops. (p.173)

In short, what Garvey’s project of establishing a national home for the New Negro needed most were people imbued with qualities such as self-reliance, a strong work ethic and racial solidarity. He did not want to make of Africa a human junkyard for the unwanted of the Western World, but a home for what he called the New Negro.

There are many parallels that can be established between Garvey’s nationalist project and that of Zionists like Sokolow. One of these was their equal emphasis on respectively the New Negro and the New Jew. For both Garvey and Sokolow, those of their racial fellows who did not share the qualities that they assigned respectively to the New Negro and the New Jew are unnatural and unreal, Negroes and Jews lost to their respective races. Garvey’s strain of anti-Negro racism directed especially against those Negroes of lighter skin pigmentation, and generally against those who did not follow the principles of his organisation recall Sokolow’s tendency to Anti-Semitism. Addressing the New Jews, i.e., Zionists of his time, the latter told them that “You are, if I may use the paradox, a little bit of an Anti-Semite.” (Quoted in Elie Kedourie, 1987:113) Garvey did not address his New Negroes in such explicit terms as Sokolow did with the New Jews, but all through his speeches he castigated the mediocrity of the old Negroes and their brainwashed leaders. In short, Garvey and Sokolow excluded

those portions of Jews and Negroes who did not subscribe to their nationalist projects from Jewry and Negroness.

There are other points in common between Sokolow and Garvey that have made for the rapprochement drawn here between Zionism and Garveyism. It is their acceptance of the racist theorists of their times, who saw in the presence of Negroes and Jews in Europe and America a menace to Western civilization. Just as Sokolow made his own the anti-Semitism of G.K. Chesterton and that of Sir Mark Sykes so did Garvey appropriate the anti-Negro racist ideas of last-day champions of the American Colonization Society such as McCallum. What Garvey and Sokolow shared in common with their respective white supporters was, to paraphrase Elie Kedourie's statement, the idea that the hyphenated and diluted Jew and Negro was both the cause and the result of Anti-Semitism and anti-Negro-racism. By striving for social equality and political positions in Western countries, these misguided Jews and Negroes gave rise to suspicion of their host countries. Therefore, helping Jews and Negroes to build their own nations elsewhere was the ideal way to re-establish racial harmony.

The harmony between the races, as envisaged by Sokolow and Garvey, was predicated on the division of labour. For both, the nation to be established would be a nation constituted of an agrarian population living in Kibbutzim or homesteads. The New Negro and the New Jew farmers would provide raw materials and agricultural products in exchange for the manufactures supplied by the Western World. Wearing the garb of an Abraham Lincoln, Garvey elaborated a program for the restoration of the Negro to Africa spelled out in similar terms as the agricultural programmes of the Reconstruction Era. Speaking about this Reconstruction/Restoration program, he writes as follows:

We have made arrangements whereby every industrious family going to Liberia will have twenty-five acres of land which you can develop

agriculturally or industrially, and in addition to that you will get a free house lot in the city to build your home, and after you have built your house on it the government will give you a free title in fee simple for the occupation of the land. (p.173)

The quote above provides a sample of Garvey's propaganda for the re-settlement of Negroes in a nation of their own in Africa. No matter what material benefits it invoked to persuade the Negroes to return to Africa, the ultimate purpose behind the Restoration of the New Negro to his homeland, just like that of Sokolow's New Jew (Zionist), was the completion of the project of freedom, which according to the Hegel of *The Philosophy of Right*, could not be achieved without a country and governmental institutions of one's own.

### **Conclusion**

It follows from this discussion that Garvey started his career with principles borrowed from Washington's *Up From Slavery* with which he came across during his stay in England in the early 1910s. Like Washington, Garvey sought to lay the economic foundations for racial uplift giving his full agreement to the separation of the races. Inspired from Washington's separate but equal doctrine, Garvey's philosophy of life was steeped in the claim for an economic freedom defended in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* as the stage of Abstract Right. Just as abstract right or economic freedom was predicated on the necessity for the purification of desire (e.g. achievement of status through miscegenation), so the viability of social recognition grounded in economic achievements was set upon morality corresponding to the second stage in Hegel's scheme of freedom. As I have tried to demonstrate, it is the third stage of the Hegelian freedom, i.e the objective freedom in an ethical state (nation) to which Garvey gave the most prominence in his speeches. For Garvey as much as for Hegel, freedom could by no means be objective, concrete without the recognised geographical and institutional entity of the nation.

I have tried to relate Garvey's militancy for the creation the Black nation to the prevalent nationalist, not to say nationalitarian discourse of the period. In other words, Garvey took his cues from both the patriotic culture of his adopted country, in the United States, and that of continental Europe which soon witnessed the birth pangs of nationalist movements such as the Sinn Fein in Ireland. As a charismatic leader, Garvey's call for creating a nation in Africa did not fail to appeal to the black masses caught between recurrent economic depressions on the one hand and the racial prejudice often expressed in the concrete form of lynching on the other. However, the social movement to which he managed to give birth, just like many mass movements of its kind, lost its social bearings soon after the deportation of Garvey to Jamaica in 1925. Until the mid-1960 when racial separatism as a political and socio-economic philosophy came to the fore again, the remnants of Garvey's philosophy had remained dormant. Confronted to the Great Depression of the 1930s, racial theorising of the Garveyist kind became less important to the Black people as they sought to weather the hard times by joining labour unions and trying to get the most out of Federal Projects of the New Deal. The next chapter will show that racial prejudice dies hard and that the progressive and socialist-oriented policy of the Roosevelt era left the problem of racial injustice unsolved, a problem to which Martin Luther King JR would try to bring a solution in the late 1950s and the early 1960s.

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Lewis Rupert, *Marcus Garvey: Anti-Colonial Champion*, Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1988. Rupert quotes Garvey's claim that "Much of my early education in race consciousness is from D. Love. One cannot read his Jamaica Advocate without getting race consciousness."(p.25) Rupert also writes that in "Love's writing as well as in Garvey's race consciousness is used in its positive sense. 'Race consciousness' was an anti-colonial concept." (p.27)

Locke Alain, "The New Negro," in *A Twentieth-Century American Reader*, Vol.1 (1900-1945) Eds. Jack Lane and Maurice O'Sullivan, Washington D.C: USIA, 1999.

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Myers Aaron, "Maroonage in the Americas: The forming of communities by escaped slaves in North America, Latin America and the Caribbean," in Appiah Kwame Antony and Henry Louis Gates Jr., Eds. *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, New York: Civitas Books, 1999. Myers writes that the "phenomenon of escaped slaves forming a communities known as maroonage , represented a common response to slavery throughout the New World. p.253.

Sewell Tony, *Garvey's Children: The Legacy of Marcus Garvey*, Trenton (N.J.): Africa World Press, 1990. For DuBois the deportation of Marcus Garvey was a blessing to the Black Race. "The present generation of Negroes," he says, "has survived two grave temptations- the greater one fathered by Booker T. Washington, who said "Let politics alone, keep in your place, work hard and do not complain. [...]The lesser, fathered by Marcus Garvey who said "Give up! Surrender! Struggle is useless, back to Africa and fight the white world." Sewell shows the irony in DuBois's political career as follows: "DuBois died in Ghana in 1963 at the age of 95. He spent many of his working years working out how to overcome racism, until ironically he finally came around at a Garveyite perspective. If I were to write a book on DuBois, I would call it *W.E.B DuBois: The Reluctant Garvey*. His eventual conversion would begin in 1930 when Garvey was back in Africa, and DuBois moved from integration to separation." (p.52) In this regard, Rupert Lewis writes the following: "In many respects Garveyism resembled another movement of minority group nationalism, the Jewish Zionism of Theodor Herzl. Arnols Rose has pointed out the interesting similarity in background and outlook shared by Herzl and Garvey. Neither was exposed to strong anti-minority feelings in his formative years and later reacted against prejudice in terms to escape to a land free of discrimination and both sought

support from those groups most hostile to their own minority group. Both adopted a chauvinistic, even religious nationalism. Both movements took on elements of fanaticism in their belligerent determination to secure a new life for their oppressed people. "Cf. Rupert Lewis, *The Story of Marcus Garvey and the UNIA*, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1968, p.199)

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## Chapter Five

### King's Moral Upgrading of the Master-Slave Dialectic and Aesthetic Staging of Providential History

#### Introduction

Among the Black American thinkers in the corpus under study, Martin Luther King Jr was arguably the most Hegelian of all. Unlike Douglass, Washington and Garvey, King made public pronouncements as to the influence of Hegel's ideas on his own philosophy. For example, in an interview with Tom Johnson for the *Montgomery Advertiser* during the Montgomery Boycott, which lasted nearly a whole year, from December 1955 to August 1956, King singled out Hegel as his favourite philosopher. In his book-length reminiscence of the same boycott called *Stride Toward Freedom* (1958), he stated the same preference for the German master whose dialectic, he writes, helped to see that "growth comes through struggle." (p.16)) In his *Autobiography*, he tells the reader that Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *The Philosophy of History* and *The Philosophy of Right* were some of the assigned books in a philosophical course that he attended under the direction first of Dr Brightman and then under that of L. Harold DeWolf at Boston University. Though he recognised that "There were points in Hegel's philosophy I disagreed with," (p.32) among which he mentioned his "absolute idealism," King admitted that his intellectual method and modes of action were deeply steeped in Hegel's philosophical thought.

We can expect that King's recognition as Hegel's influence on his socio-political thought will result in the critics' interest in this influence. Yet so far, apart from sparse references here and there in articles and critical books on this influence, no book-length studies have been devoted to this aspect in his work. Moreover, to date critics have contented themselves with digging up the Hegelian sources of his philosophy. The

hunting for sources has made them overlook King's creative use of Hegel in the formulation of his non-violent philosophy. How King trimmed off Hegel's philosophy to accommodate it to his non-violent social and political revolution; in other words how he expanded the dialectic of the slave and master to make it fit with his Christian principles of love and understanding; how he made a synthesis of Hegel's social philosophy and aesthetics to dramatise the struggle for freedom; and finally how he appropriated Hegel's conception of world history to link it to Puritan providential history are important features of King's philosophy that critics seem to have neglected in their pursuit of what some critics have called "King the plagiarist of Hegel." (Cf. Cone James H, 1999) It is these Hegelian aspects of King's socio-political thought that will receive the most attention in the following chapter. My discussion of these aspects will be carried out in terms of both the continuities and discontinuities in the Hegelian stream of African American socio-political thought, which I have traced back to Douglass in the first half of the nineteenth century.

#### **A. King's Times and Rise to Black Leadership**

In accordance with the historicist approach followed in this dissertation, I shall first highlight the enabling conditions for the emergence of King as a leader of the Civil Rights Movement. In the third chapter, I attempted to show how DuBois shifted from Progressivism, the roots of which I traced back to the German socio-economic thought at the end of the nineteenth century, to liberalism and the fight for civil rights. DuBois, I tried to argue, saw in racism a social problem that could be resolved by making high culture available across the racial board. It was his realisation that white Progressives had used the same paradigm of culture to exclude the Black population from the political/ethical kingdom that led DuBois to resume the fight for civil and political

rights first through such movements as the Niagara Movement, and then the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

In the fourth chapter, I also documented how Garvey rose to the leadership of the Black masses in the 1920s, overshadowing the activities of the NAACP for nearly a decade because of his appeal to the Black masses. Garvey's philosophy had its roots in the "Pan-Negro" or nationalist thought and Washingtonism, both of them steeped in Hegelianism. The Garvey Movement declined with the arrest and deportation of its leader in 1927. With its decline, the NAACP had stood more than ever before for the Black man's rights and his integration into mainstream society leaving other issues such as employment to other associations such as the Urban League. It has to be observed that the NAACP was formed in response to the 1908 race riots in Springfield, the capital of Illinois and the birthplace of President Abraham Lincoln. According to Langston Hughes, the Springfield riots resulted in the burning of Negro homes and businesses, the serious injury of at least 70 people, and worse the lynching of a Negro bartender and an 84-year old man for "no reason at all except that the prisoners the whites were looking for were not in jail." (1962: 20) Following these two-day riots in Springfield and a moving article by the muckraker journalist English Walling a group of white liberals including Mary Ovington White and Oswald Garrison Villard, both of them descendants of abolitionists, issued a call for a meeting to discuss racial justice. In the words of Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates Jr (1999), some 60 people, only 7 of whom were African American including W.E.DuBois, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Mary Church Terrel signed the call, which was released on the 100th anniversary of Lincoln's birth. Here I shall emphasise the activities of the NAACP for the simple reason that King was a member of this organisation before he assumed the leadership of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) (1955) and the

Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) (1957). (More about this later) But for the moment it is important to note right at the start that deeply steeped as he was in Hegelianism, King did not consider it a contradiction to militate in many organisations at the same time. Synthesis, which is the third stage in the Hegelian dialectic triad, assumed the shape of a synergy with other civil rights organisations in King's socio-political and economic agenda.

The NAACP received its official name in May 1910 though most historians considered that the day of its founding was 12th February 1909 the date of Abraham Lincoln's birth and that of the call written by Villard. Though a biracial organisation, the NAACP was actually dominated by white liberals during the first two decades of its existence. As I said above, it was strong enough and sufficiently funded to withstand both Washington's attacks in the 1910s and those of Garvey in the 1920s. The period between 1915 and 1955 is generally considered the most influential of the NAACP, which in the words of Hughes, was "considered by conservative whites and even some prominent Negroes [...] as radical." (Ibid.28) During those forty years, the NAACP was instrumental in improving the legal, educational and economic lives of African Americans.

According to the platform submitted to the State of New York for incorporation, the NAACP was created in order to promote equal rights in terms of suffrage, employment and education. As I said earlier, the NAACP delegated the struggle for economic rights to other organisations like the Urban League. For a relatively long period, between 1915 and 1948, it concentrated on the first item in its agenda which was to increase African-American voting power by using the courts to reverse discriminatory laws preventing African Americans from exercising the franchise. To this end, the NAACP established its tax-exempt arm which was the Legal Defense Fund. Among other cases that it

defended and won, we can mention the *Gunn vs. the United States* case (1915), which declared the ‘grandfather clause’ illegal, and the *Nixon vs. Hendon* (1927), *Nixon vs. Condon* (1932), and *Smith vs. Allright* (1944) cases against the white primary system. According to historical records, of the twenty-six cases it argued before the Supreme Court during this period, it won twenty-four of them. The end result of these NAACP legal successes was the widening of the Black constituencies in several states across the country. To paraphrase Joanne Grant (1983), though the gains in the total vote count might be small, they were big enough to affect the balance of political power and to enable the Democrat Franklin Roosevelt to win the 1944 presidential election.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s which was disproportionately disastrous for African Americans, the NAACP began to focus on economic justice. After years of tension with white labour unions, the NAACP cooperated with the newly formed Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) in an effort to win jobs for Black Americans. Walter White, a friend and adviser to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt – who was sympathetic to civil rights – met with her often in attempts to convince President Franklin D. Roosevelt to outlaw job discrimination in the armed forces, defence industries (which were booming in anticipation of U.S. entry into World War II) and the agencies spawned by Roosevelt’s New Deal legislation. Though this effort was not initially successful, when the NAACP backed Black labour leader A. Philip Randolph’s March on Washington in 1941, Roosevelt agreed to open thousands of jobs to Black workers and to set up a Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to ensure compliance.

Taking advantage of the new international focus that typified American foreign policy after World War II, the NAACP in another strategy presented to the newly formed United Nations a document called an “An Appeal to the World” protesting the

treatment of African Americans. This signalled that the NAACP realised the potential influence world opinion could bring to bear on the racial problem in the United States. The NAACP continued to pursue a strategy of struggle against racism in public accommodation, a struggle symbolised by the fact that in Washington, D.C., as late as 1951 Blacks were barred from white theatres, movie houses, hotels and restaurants.

The major change of focus in the legalist approach of the NAACP occurred in 1945. By this time, it had realised that segregated schooling was the basis for continued racism in the country. That is why it focused on making integrated education the law of the land. Admittedly, the NAACP's fight against educational segregation had started earlier than this. For example in 1933 it filed a segregation suit against the University of North Carolina which it lost on a technicality. Two years later the NAACP councillor Thurgood Marshall, a Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court persuaded the Maryland Court of Appeals to order the state university to admit a Black student Donald Murray. However, it was not until 1945 that the NAACP really started its legal battles for school desegregation.

School desegregation was achieved as the law of the land in two distinct stages. In a series of cases like *Sweatt vs. Painter* (1950) and *McLaurin vs. Oklahoma State Regents* (Ibid, p.150), the Supreme Court ruled that "white universities must admit negroes to graduate facilities. If a desired course of study was not available in a Negro institution." Following these successes, the Southern States, as Antony Lewis writes, "sensed the changing judicial temper" (1967:423), so they proceeded to upgrade the Black schools facilities so as to meet the yardstick of "separate but equal" and block the march of desegregation. In response, the NAACP changed its approach by arguing that regardless of school facilities, racial segregation was psychologically harmful to the school children. Previously, the NAACP commissioned Robert L. Carter, Professor of

Psychology at the City College of New York to “inquire whether psychologists had any findings which were relevant to the effects of racial segregation on the personality development of Negro children”.(Ibid, p.423)It was the latest summary of the findings by Carter and other psychologists that the NAACP presented to the Supreme Court as a special science brief on the effects of racial segregation on children. Operating at a time when psychology had a greater prestige than any other social science in the United States, the Supreme Court did not fail to take it into account in their deliberation over the monumental *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education* case of 1954. Echoing Carter’s words, the Supreme Court voiced the opinion that “segregation of children solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other tangible factors may be equal deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities.” (Quoted in Breidlid Anders, *et al* Eds. 2004:273-74) On the basis of this psychological evidence, the Court ruled that school segregation constituted “a denial of equal protection of the laws” even in cases where school facilities were physically equal.

Certainly, the 1954 Supreme Court Decision of 1954 constituted the highest point in the NAACP struggle for school desegregation. It managed to bring the Supreme Court to reverse a decision that nearly a century earlier had sanctioned racial segregation, thus starting an irreversible movement for civil rights. After the Supreme Court’s 1954 ruling in favour of the NAACP suit, euphoria hit the African-American community. Integrationists felt that the last great roadblock in racial equality and freedom in the United States had been surmounted and that a non-racist United States was a distinct possibility in the not-distant future. However, the NAACP legalist (and somewhat) moralist approach to civil rights, an approach which in Hegel’s dialectic would qualify as Abstract Morality, made the 1954 Court decision read just like a pious wish. Legal decision and moral suasion, as the Abolitionist Movement of the nineteenth century

shows, are not enough on their own to bring people to implement social and political changes. They need an element of coercion to trigger a change of consciousness and behaviour, especially in the South where the majority of white people considered that it was their Abstract Right (the terms are Hegel's) to preserve their way of life by separating themselves from the Black population. It was this element of coercion that King brought to the Civil Rights Movement.

With respect to this necessity for a dimension of social tension and coercion in the struggle for Civil Rights, King followed in the footsteps of Douglass. As it is developed in the first chapter, Douglass created his own branch in the Abolitionist Movement because he considered that short of commitment to revolution, moral suasion as it was practised by the Garrisonian Abolitionist could not lead to the abolition of slavery. It is true that King and Douglass saw revolution in two different ways, the former emphasising non-violent resistance whereas the latter did not object to violence if necessary. But both of them were Hegelians in the sense that they strongly believed that social change was a dialectic that requires a struggle between “masters” and “slaves”. The involvement in this struggle is a prerequisite for bringing out the cognitive and psychological maturation that will eventually lead to the recognition of a new social order. In the hands of King, the Hegelian dialectic of the slave and master, as I shall try to argue shortly, assumes the contours of non-violent resistance.

King's retooling of the Hegelian dialectic into the direction of non-violence resistance to fit into what he called the temper of the times came as a result of the obstruction to the implementation of the 1954 Court decision in the South. In his *Autobiography* and *Why We Can't Wait?* King recalled that the Southern States, just as was the case in the first half of the nineteenth century, spoke of “nullification” of the Supreme Court decision of 1954. This “nullification” was virtually obtained when the

same Supreme Court retreated from the decision by approving the Pupil Placement Law, a law that allowed the States themselves to decide in which school children should be enrolled according to family background, special ability and other objectives. The mounting white resistance to the Supreme Court's ruling and the awareness that long years of litigation would still be required to integrate specific schools gradually deflated the African American optimism that the legal approach of the NAACP would prove sufficient by itself to solve the racial problem. When in 1955 African-Americans succeeded in integrating a segregated bus line in Montgomery, Alabama, by boycotting it for one whole year, those who were aware of the limits of the NAACP legal approach to the racial issue felt they had found out what seemed to be its perfect supplement in non-violent protest and resistance. Non-violent resistance gave a cutting edge to the moral crusade against racial injustice, especially in the Hegelian context of the global revolution that was shaking the colonial world then, and the dawning of a new consciousness among the Black population in the United States as a result of increasing urbanisation and literacy, economic power and the accumulation of legal victories against the segregated system. The man destined to take up the struggle for racial justice was Martin Luther King, who had just rounded off his education at Boston University with a study of Hegel's major works.

### **B. King's Life as a Hegelian Dialectic of Growth**

In his *Autobiography*, King mentions Hegel last in the list of the thinkers who exerted influence on his social philosophy. Yet the fact that Hegel came last in King's recognition of indebtedness to the German master does not mean that he was the least important of all the influential figures that he listed. Indeed, even if Hegel was cited last in his work, Hegel's dialectic of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis presided over its writing. In other words, King looked through Hegelian lenses at his life to make a

synthesis of the dominant strands of social thought of his time, a synthesis that made him assume the leadership of the Civil Rights Movement. In the manner of Hegel, King considered that his tendency to synthesise is an inherent trait that grew out of his family background. Writing about his early years, King says that

In my life and in the life of a person who is seeking to be strong, you combine in your character **antitheses** strongly marked. You are both militant and moderate; you are both idealistic and realistic. And I think that my strong determination for justice comes from the very strong, dynamic personality of my father, and I would hope that the gentle aspect comes from a mother who is very gentle and sweet. (*Emphasis mine 2000:13 All further references included in this text are to this edition.*)

After announcing that he was the synthesis of his father and his mother, King gave a short biography of his parents to illustrate further his point. He tells that “Daddy” was the son of a sharecropper who one day, after discovering that his father’s boss was cheating him “out of hard-earned money” (p.4), decided to leave rural Stockbridge for the capital city of Atlanta in order to avoid the miserable life of his father. There against all odds, he worked and studied hard to fulfil a promise he made to himself after being denied entrance through the front door of a white friend’s house. According to King, “Daddy” became a major force in Atlanta’s Black community. He assumed the leadership of the local branch of the NAACP in Atlanta involving himself in both the economic struggle to equalise teachers’ salaries and in the social struggle to eliminate Jim Crow elevators in the courthouse. In King’s eyes, “Daddy” had epic proportions. He tells us he weighed about 220 pounds and his will was so strong that he never adjusted himself to Jim Crow laws. He even won the grudging respect of white people. In short, for King “Daddy” was simply an ideal father from whom he learned not only essential American values like thrift, work and perseverance but also resistance to racial injustice and the principle not to bend one’s back to the oppressor. Such was the thesis that King developed about Daddy.

“Dear Mother” whose name is Alberta Williams King appeared as the “anti-thesis” of “Daddy”. King recounts that unlike his father, his mother was “soft-spoken and easy-going”. Spared the “worst blights of discrimination” (p.3) because of her relatively comfortable circumstances, she managed to transmit to her own children that sense of “somebodiness”, i.e. self-respect. What King remembered most about his mother were not the fairy tales that white mothers generally read to their children, but history lessons that explained the origins of slavery and segregation. These historical stories, he reports, were not told in order to accommodate him to the segregated social system of the day, but to make him understand that “the divided system of the South was a social condition rather than a natural one” (p.3) and as such must never let him feel inferior. Thus, the care that King received from “Dear Mother” softened the passage from the family to the segregated world outside and prepared him to question it later in his life.

King continued to use the Hegelian dialectic method in speaking about his childhood. He lets us know that he was baptised at the age of five in imitation of his sister, and how he and a white boy his age across the street became friends. This episode in his life constitutes another thesis in the development of his identity. It was war marked by an emphasis on love in both the family circle and the Sunday school and his friendship with a white boy. However, doubt about such values started to creep into King’s mind when one day his white friend “told me that his father demanded that he would play with me no more.” (p.7) King noted that this antithetic socialisation began at the age of 6 when he and his friend entered segregated schools. This episode, in King’s life reminds us of a similar episode in Garvey’s life and that of DuBois. King avows that it had a “tremendous effect on my development.” (p.6) It led him to question the family’s advice that “he should not hate the white man” (p.7). King recounted several other incidents in his childhood that made him hate the segregated system and the white

people. One of these was the slapping that he received from a white lady in a department store while shopping with his mother. The other was travelling in segregated buses to high school on the other side of the town suggestively named the Booker T. Washington High School.

The first synthesis unity that King made was in Morehouse College. It was there that he discovered that white people were not necessarily enemies of the Black people. “The wholesome relations in the Intercollegiate Council convinced me that we had many persons as allies.” (p.14) With the Morehouse College commitment to seek a solution to the racial ills, King shifted from resentment against white people to racial cooperation. Hate was redirected from white people to the racial system leaving enough elbow room for love to grow between white and black people, who after all are both victims of the same system. While in Morehouse College, King informs us, he made another synthesis in matters of religion, a synthesis that took him beyond the emotionalism and fundamentalism of the Black church. With the help of Dr Mays, President of Morehouse College, and George Kelly, a professor of philosophy and religion in the same school, King quieted his theological doubts and turned to the ideal of ministry.

At the age of 19, King entered the Crozer Theological Seminary. At this point, King’s life intersects with that of Hegel who also entered the Tubingen Seminary at nearly the same age. Like Hegel, it was while he was at the Seminary that King undertook a serious study of the major Western thinkers going as far back as Plato and Aristotle in his quest for a “method to eliminate social evil.”(p. 17)The first social thinker that he mentions is Walter Rauschenbusch. King tells us his study of *Christianity and the Social Crisis* strengthened an earlier belief that no religion could be separated from social concerns at the peril of its demise. Born in the Great Depression, and having

witnessed the breadlines, King was particularly receptive to Rauschenbusch's social gospel to become one of its advocates later in his life. However, in a characteristically Hegelian manner, King begged to differ from Rauschenbusch when it came to what he called "the cult of inevitable progress" on the one hand and his "superficial optimism in human nature" on the other (p.18). He also reproached Rauschenbusch for "identifying God with a particular social and economic system."(Ibid)

Contrary to Rauschenbusch, King identified himself neither with Marxism nor with capitalism. In his argumentation, King first exposed the main theses of these systems. He then criticised each of them separately taking care each time to supersede the partial truths of each before ending with the following synthesis:

My reading of Marx [...] convinced me that truth is found neither in Marxism nor in traditional capitalism. Each represents a partial truth. Historically capitalism failed to see the truth in collective enterprise and Marxism failed to see truth in individual enterprise. Nineteenth-century capitalism failed that life is social and Marxism failed and still fails that life is individual and personal. The Kingdom of God is neither the thesis of individual enterprise nor the antithesis of collective enterprise, but a synthesis which reconciles the truths of both. (p.22)

This combination of a partial "yes" and a partial "no" illustrates best the dialectic method that King continued to observe in his reading of the great thinkers as he went through college.

King tells us that while he was at the Crozer Seminary he came in contact for the first time with the pacifist thought. Dr. A.J. Mutse was the professor who initiated him to this thought that made him question his former belief that war can sometimes "serve as a negative good in the sense of preventing the spread and growth of an evil force." (p.23) But it did not completely unsettle it to make him hold the belief that love constitutes the wherewithal for the resolution of social problems. While in high school, King read Henry David Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* (1849) from where he learned the moral necessity of not cooperating with evil. But Thoreau did not exclude the recourse

to violence, so King continued to think that “the only way we could solve our problem of segregation was an armed revolt.”(p.23) Mutse’s pacifism did not take hold of him because it read as if Christian love was a workable solution only in cases of individual relationships not in those involving social conflicts. Mutse’s pacifist thought stands as an antithesis to the thought of Nietzsche that King was also reading at the time. Nietzsche’s thought contradicts Mutse’s in its affirmation that the Christian ethic of love grew out of weakness and impotence. Instead of making virtue out of necessity, Nietzsche says that God is dead and it was time to follow our will to power. The ideal man for Nietzsche was the superman, a superman who would surpass the ordinary Christian man, just as the latter surpassed the ape.

Mutze’s thesis of Christian pacifism and Nietzsche’s antithesis of anti-Christian resentment are resolved in the higher synthesis that King discovers in the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence. Mordecai Johnson, President of Howard University, was the catalyst that brought out the change in King’s outlook. King attended one of his sermons at the Fellowship House of Philadelphia that triggered his interest in the Gandhian teachings about non-violence. Johnson’s preaching of Gandhian philosophy, which came as a result of a visit to India, found a reverberating echo in King Jr who after leaving the meeting “bought half-dozen books on Gandhi’s life and works.” (p.23) King did not cite the titles of these books, but among these books figures Richard Gregg’s *The Power of Non-violence* (1944) that he read for a research paper at the Crozer Seminary. He even wrote a foreword to the 1959 edition, where he spoke about the Montgomery Boycott. Gregg knew about the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence from the inside as he lived nearly four years in India, from 1925 to 1929, and spent several months in Gandhi’s *ashram*. It was this self-same Gregg, as Richard Attenborough’s film *Gandhi* shows, who covered the non-violent protest of the Indians

against the British forces for the *New York Times*. From Gregg, King learned that non-violence and love, contrary to the negative affirmation of Nietzsche about “turn-the-other-cheek philosophy,” can be potent forces against social evil. Gregg’s book, as it will be argued later in this chapter, was at the root of the synthesis that King made of Hegel’s lectures on aesthetics, and the master and slave dialectic in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

In accordance with Hegel, King does not stop at one synthesis once it is made. Every synthesis he makes is in its turn broken down anew to give place to a new dialectic move from thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. Hence, the synthesis of the contradictions between the Christian pacific positions and those of Nietzsche through the thought of Gandhi becomes a thesis when it is viewed against Reinhold Niebuhr’s ethical theory. Niebuhr was a Christian pacifist, but he broke away from pacifism when he saw its limits. For example, he considered that non-violent resistance of the Gandhian type could work only in situations when the groups they resisted were endowed with some degree of moral conscience. He excluded its applicability in totalitarian regimes where this moral conscience is supposed to be non-existent. Furthermore, Niebuhr saw no difference whatever between violent resistance and non-violent resistance when it came to morality. Both of them involve coercion and thus the difference between them is a matter of degree. As usual, King admitted that his encounter with Niebuhr’s ethical thought temporarily confused him, but his deeper reading of this social theologian soon convinced him about some of its shortcomings. Niebuhr, according to King, distorted the truth about pacifism when he considered it as an “unreal submission to evil power.” Siding with Gandhi, King Jr countered Niebuhr by affirming that the former “resisted evil with as much vigour and power as the violent resister, but he resisted with love instead of hate.” (p.26) It follows that there is a world of difference between non-violent

resistance and violent resistance when they are put on the scale of morality. The final result of the former is a change of heart that brings reconciliation between the opponents whereas the final outcome of the latter is an increase of their bitterness and resentment.

In working out a synthesis out of reading of Niebuhr's thought against Gandhi's, King retained Niebuhr's rejection of the false idealism characteristic of Protestant liberalism and Christian pacifism. The latter made him hold a balanced view about human nature and realise man's potential for evil. For Niebuhr, man is essentially moral when considered as an individual entity, but as a member of a group he is liable to sin and corruption because society is basically immoral. The sinful character of man in society necessitates the intervention of government to regulate man's lust for security and ensure social and economic justice. According to King, many Christian pacifists of his time failed to "recognize the complexity of man's social involvement and the reality of collective evil," (p.27) that Niebuhr made him see. King defined his pacifism as a "realistic" pacifism, a pacifism that took him beyond the "unwarranted optimism" of Protestant liberalism. Niebuhr made him realise the truth in some of the dilemmas of Christian non-pacifists like Niebuhr and to commit himself more deeply to the struggle for social and economic justice.

An examination of the structure of King's *Autobiography* shows the extent to which Hegel's triadic dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis was influential in shaping the narrative unfolding of his educational growth. In a characteristically Hegelian manner, he looked at this education, "*Bildung*" in the words of Hegel, as "a pilgrimage to non-violence." (p.30) Such a qualification places King's *Autobiography* in the category of spiritual autobiography whose best representative is Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Like the latter, it traces the growth of a spirit not only of a man, i.e. King, but also that

of his people. For King, his early education up to high school constituted a thesis in the sense that he nearly fell into the trap of racial hate and belief in the necessity of violence for social change. The second stage, the antithesis, corresponded to his experience with Christian pacifists at Morehouse College and Crozer Seminary where he learned that the white man was not necessarily the enemy of the Black people and that love was the best weapon for fighting the social evil of segregation. His moral growth during these two stages took him all the way from Henry David Thoreau's famous essay *Civil Disobedience*, which made him think of the moral reasons why one should refuse to cooperate with an evil system, to Gandhi who supplied him with the method for eliminating it.

The third stage i.e., the stage of synthesis in King's intellectual odyssey came when he read the works of the philosopher Hegel at Boston University School of Theology which he entered in September 1951. During the four years he spent there, King continued to evolve under the influence of Christian pacifists like Dean Walter Muelder and Professor Allen Knight Chalmers who contributed to the deepening of his interest in the theory of non-violence. In terms of the dialectical evolution of his theological thought, King lets us know that it was at Boston University that he definitely reached a balanced view of neo-orthodoxy and theological liberalism. While keeping faith in "certain enduring qualities in liberalism," (p.31) King did not hesitate to see that neo-orthodoxy provided a corrective to "liberalism that had become all too shallow and that too easily capitulated to modern culture." (Ibid.p.31) Therefore, he came back to the criticism of Niebuhr, one of the proponents of the neo-orthodoxy, to counter the latter's pessimism about human nature with an optimism concerning divine nature, and to respond to his emphasis on "man's sickness" with an equal emphasis on the "cure of grace". (Ibid.p.31) With this resolution of the theological oppositions between neo-

orthodoxy and liberalism, King was ready to tell about the Hegelian sources at the heart of his dialectical thought.

Among other things, King tells us that he studied Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* under Edgar S Brightman, and then under L. Harold DeWolf and Peter Bertocci after the death of the former. King was so interested in Hegel that he spent his spare time reading Hegel's other works such as *The Philosophy of History* and *The Philosophy of Right*. As suggested earlier in this section, King's placement of Hegel at the end of a list of social thinkers who contributed to the formation of his social philosophy indicates that it is Hegel who provided the methodological tool for the organisation of both his autobiographical narrative and the writing of his doctoral dissertation entitled *A Comparison of the Conception of God in the Thinking of Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman*. Tillich and Wieman were chosen because they "represent different types of theology" (p.32) providing an ideal terrain for honing the Hegelian dialectic before its application in the social field. The two most important results that he reached in his doctoral research is that contrary to the one-sided theological views of Tillich and Wieman, the immanence of God is as evident as his transcendence, and that His power is as much felt as His goodness.

King tells the reader that "In 1954 I ended my formal training with divergent intellectual forces converging into a positive social philosophy." (p.32) Hegel was the last stepping stone in the elaboration of his philosophy whose main tenet of non-violence is like the synthesis stage in Hegelian philosophy. It seeks to reconcile the truths of two oppositions in the struggle for freedom and social recognition – acquiescence and violence – superseding the extremes and immoralities of both. Taken in isolation, it was as immoral to acquiesce to evil as to oppose violent resistance to that evil, but the partial truths of these positions can be synthesised in such a way that the

non-violent resister recognises the truth in wilful submission to evil and in the necessity of resistance through other means than violence. The “truth is the whole,” King quoted Hegel saying, and King’s truth in this case is non-violent resistance. It grew into a deep conviction because Hegel “led me to a philosophical method of rational coherence.” (p.32)

Very often critics of King have contented themselves with pointing out the similarities between King’s non-violent philosophy and that of Gandhi overlooking the differences in terms of both their genealogies and their contents. However, a brief look at his *Autobiography* shows that if Gandhi’s thought exerted a shaping influence on King it did not constitute the whole truth for him. Gandhi was just another important moment in his growth as a social thinker. It could be affirmed that Hegel played the most crucial role in the distinctions that can be easily be established between King and Gandhi. We have already said that the non-violent resistance corresponded to the synthesis stage in Hegelian philosophy. When King graduated from Boston University, his social philosophy was already full-fledged. He says that at the time he had “no firm determination to organize [non-violent resistance] in a social effective situation,” (p.32), but this affirmation shows to what extent King was convinced that he had reached the “Absolute philosophy” before its application in the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The case was different with Gandhi whose philosophy was forged and refined in the process of his non-violent campaigns in both South Africa and India. No matter his affirmation about his disagreement with Hegel about his “absolute idealism,” King, contrary to Gandhi, seemed to have grown as ‘absolute’ in his philosophical beliefs as Hegel himself.

Once these philosophical beliefs were established in the academic world, King proceeded to their application without thinking about their revision even in the most

difficult moments of the Civil Rights Movement. On 24th January, 1954, King delivered a trial sermon at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Alabama, and became officially pastor of Dexter 10 months later on 31st October. In accordance with the social philosophy that he formalised during his long process of education, he joined the local branch of the NAACP in Montgomery and took an “active interest in implementing its programme in the community itself.” (p.48) He also enrolled in the activities of another civil rights organisation known as the Alabama Council on Human Relations. Just a few months after this enrolment, he was elected to the office of vice-president of this organisation. The strategies of the NAACP diverged from those of the Alabama Council on Human Relations. The former emphasised legislation and court action whereas the latter underlined the importance of education. But truthful to the acquired Hegelian dialectical turn of mind, King sought to reconcile the two different brands of strategies of struggle without seeing any inconsistency in his simultaneous “dual interest” in two organisations. In similar fashion as when he confronted the contradictions of the social thinkers that he read at school, King proceeded to expose the false assumption that made the supporters of the NAACP and the Alabama Council on Human Relations think that “there was only one approach to the solution of the race problem.” (p.49) Then, he argued that a double allegiance to both organisations was not only possible but necessary. Such a synthesis of principles rests in his belief that “through education we seek to change attitudes and internal feelings [whereas] through legislation and court orders we seek to regulate behaviour.”(p.49)

During the Montgomery Bus Boycott, King was elected President of the Montgomery Improvement Association. In this position, he worked with both E.D. Nixon, the chairman of the NAACP local branch who took in charge the case of Mrs Rosa Parks whose refusal to leave her bus seat triggered off the boycott, and such white

members of the Council on Human Relations as Jo Ann Robinson, a teacher, and Miss Juliette Morgan. According to King, it was the latter who vulgarised the social thought of Gandhi to the grassroots by writing a letter to the editor of the *Montgomery Advertiser*. In this letter, Miss Juliette Morgan compared the bus protest with the Gandhian movement in India. Seemingly, the educational work that Morgan did was so efficient that “People who had never heard of the little brown saint of India were now saying his name with an air of familiarity.” (p.67) King made it clear in his *Autobiography* that the dialectic method was as efficient in the world of academia as in the real world. Through the synthesis of the strategies of the NAACP and those of the Council on Human Relations, the Movement Improvement Association (MIA), he managed to have the Supreme Court declare bus segregation laws unconstitutional on 13th November, 1956. When the MIA voted to end the boycott just a month later, King was one of the first passengers to ride a desegregated bus.

As explained earlier, the Hegelian dialectic method exerted such an influence on King that it constituted for him the whole truth. Always with reference to the Montgomery Bus Boycott, King informs us that it was the Sermon on the Mount that “initially inspired the Negroes of Montgomery to dignified social action.” (p.67) The rallying word of the protest movement was “Onward Christian Soldier”. The social philosophy of Gandhi for the Black protesters came in the second stage of a dialectic movement. For King, “Christ furnished the spirit and motivation while Gandhi furnished the method.” (p.67) Even Gandhi’s method was not taken as it stood. It was shaped in such a way as to fit not only the spirit of Christian religion but above all that of America as an independent Christian country. In the words of John J. Ansboro (1992), the changes that King brought to the method of Gandhi had much to do with differences of goals. King sought integration to the mainstream society while Gandhi

fought for independence. The divergence in terms of goals led to King's reshaping of the Gandhian method of non-violence. While keeping some of the Gandhian techniques of non-violence such as marches, he also changed some others in order to make his resistance more suitable to context. For example, King "did not encourage the voluntary closure of shops, raids on property, the voluntary renunciation of property, resignations from political groups, fasting, the usurping of government functions, or the non-payment of taxes."(p.134) In the *Autobiography*, he says that even the boycott method, so much praised by Gandhi did not fail to become a moral issue, i.e. whether its use was not questionable in terms of ethics since it was also used by the White Citizen Council of Montgomery. It was not until Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience was brought into the consideration of the issue that King declares that boycotting was just another of "non-cooperation with an evil system." (p.54) Even so, King writes that "From then on I rarely used the word 'boycott'." (Ibid) He preferred to use the euphemism of economic withdrawal.

It follows from what has been said previously that what distinguishes most King's social philosophy from that of Gandhi was the fact that it accorded pre-eminence to Hegel's dialectical thought. Like Hegel, King was busy looking for ways of reconciling apparently divergent social thoughts. Also, in similar fashion as Hegel in his epoch, when King moved from the world of academia to the social world he had already arrived at a "system of definite philosophical and theological convictions about the nature of God, human nature, the direction of history, the mission of the Christian Church, and the role of the state." (Cf. Op. cit. Ansboro, p.140) In Hegelian terms, we can say that at the time of his entrance to the world of politics, King had already formalised the Truth or the Absolute, ready for implementation. This constituted the whole difference between him and Gandhi who never stated that he had found the

Truth. Apart from the affirmation of non-violence, Gandhi, unlike King had “no fixed or final theological or philosophical system apart from his commitment to the principles of non-violence”. (Ibid, p.140) I have already stated the fact that King’s *Autobiography* like Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* is a spiritual autobiography. It can be added that it also reads as a series of conversion narratives whose final revelation was Hegel’s dialectic method.

It is arguably paradoxical that King was the most Hegelian when he used the dialectical method to criticise Hegel himself. Under the influence of the “Personalistic philosophy – the theory that the clue to the meaning of ultimate reality is found in personality,” (p.31) King questioned Hegel’s Absolute idealism. But even in his interrogation of the Truth or the Absolute that Hegel had reached, it was Hegel who provided the method. In applying the Hegelian method to criticise Hegel, King Jr warded off what he and his teachers Edgar Brightman and Dr. Dewolf considered as the pitfalls of Hegelianism which tended among other things “to swallow up the many in the one.” (p.32) The origin of this critique goes all the way back to Soren Kierkegaard who took Hegel to task for having reduced such distinctions as that between God and nature (pantheism), faith and reason, and the one between man and God as a Holy Trinity. (Cf. Hartnack Justus, 1991 and Michael Werton, 1991) Yet even if King followed in the footsteps of his teachers in dismissing Hegel’s absolute idealism, he shored it up by elevating the Hegelian dialectics of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis into an absolute form of thought and an ideal way of working out social problems like racial segregation.

### **C. The Moral Upgrading of Hegel’s Master-Slave Dialectic**

Though King admits having read Hegel, critics of King’s philosophy of non-violence agreed on the profundity of his reading of Hegel and where he stood with reference to

Hegel's dialectic of the slave and master. One of the representative critics to emphasize King's in-depth understanding of Hegel's works is Stephen B. Oates (1982). For the latter, Hegel was nothing less than a "revelation" to King in terms of both method and content. Oates takes over King's words when he writes that Hegel "furnished King with a philosophical method of rational coherence" (Ibid, p.39), a method that permitted him to put order to his vast accumulation of knowledge and to free himself from an either-or choice in his social and theological concerns. Hegel also provided King with notions such as the *Zeitgeist* (Ibid.39). On the debit side of the critical spectrum related to King's understanding of Hegelianism figures Louis E. Lomax. The latter denies King any intellectual stature and ironises about his shallow understanding of Hegel. Lomax writes that "sur le plan intellectuel, Martin lui même serait le premier à reconnaître l'insuffisance de sa formation. Ce n'est pas la faute de Martin. [...] La formation que reçoit l'ecclesiastique américain est incroyablement étroite, et cela tient au fait que les séminaires enseignent aux hommes à croire et non à penser."(1963 :97)

It has to be noted that very often those critics engaged in the controversy over King's mastery of Hegelianism have not fully developed it. For example, Oates developed it in less than two pages of a book that runs for more than 500 pages. Similarly, Lomax devotes less than a page to this question in a book that counts 263 pages, Stewart Burns (2004) two out of a total of 502 pages, Taylor Branch (1988) four out of 1062, and together Lewis Baldwin and Amiri Yasin Al-Hadid only three pages out of a very thick book. That no critic has written a book-length study about the place of Hegel's master-slave dialectic in King's philosophy of non-violent direct action to date is probably due to the fact that Hegel's presence in King thought is considered as being of the domain of self-evidence or commonplaces. Granted this, it is my belief that King's attitude to

Hegel is not that of the “plagiarist”, which in the words of James Cone, characterises King’s relationship with other thinkers.

King follows in the footsteps of Hegel in rendering the black man’s quest for freedom in an age of segregation that he often compares to a covered-up slavery, but this does not mean that he is a blind imitator of Hegel. Indeed, it can rightly be said that King completes or supplements Hegel’s dialectic of the master and slave developed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. This completion shows in King’s translation of the Hegelian desire for recognition through a life-and –death struggle into dialectic of love and mutuality. Winning recognition by appealing to love is the completion that King brings to what can be considered as the unfinished project of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. That Hegel left the latter work as unfinished is illustrated in the following extensive quote by Dudley Knowles:

Hegel claims that psychologically, and perhaps logically, we cannot achieve a sense of ourselves as independent self-consciousnesses unless this status is recognized by others. This is the tragedy of the protagonists in the life and death struggle of the *Phenomenology* who fight to the death for their standing. It is a good question why Hegel, given his earlier thoughts on love, did not at this point in the *Phenomenology* account of the development of self-consciousness emphasize how independent persons might seek recognition of their selfhood through the pursuit of love rather than war. After all love achieves what war only risks- the loss of the independent self. What the agent seeks is recognition of the ethical standing. (2002: 246)

To support his argument that Hegel had earlier advanced the idea that love, just like war, is equally capable of affording recognition, Knowles quotes Hegel when he says that “through love I find myself in another person. [...] I gain recognition in this person who in turn gains recognition in me.” (Quoted in Ibid. 246) At the time that King was involved in the fight for Civil Rights, pacifists on both sides of the Atlantic dismissed Hegel as a social and political philosopher because he “seems to think that everything important takes the form of war.” (Russel Bertrand, 1946: p.765) King did not join this pacifist attack on the warlike tendencies in Hegel’s thought, an attack due mostly to

resentment against all German philosophers whose works were thought to have contributed to the rise of Nazism. Instead of this, King turned to the Hegel who claims that love can overcome hostility. John Toews (1980) has fully documented the ethical aspect of Hegel's thought. Toews quotes Hegel writing as early as 1799 that "the cancellation of lordship in the restoration of the living bond, of that spirit of mutual love was the highest freedom." (p.45) To the warlike image of Hegel developed by the pacifists of his time, King substituted the image of Hegel as the promoter of love elevated to a means of social reconciliation through non-violent resistance to lordship.

In King's writings, the Hegelian dialectic of the master and slave is moralised through the appeal to love. In accordance to the Socratic tradition, King distinguishes between three types of love, all of them derived from the Greek: *eros*, *philia* and *agape*. *Eros* is defined as aesthetic love, which in literature and ordinary life assumes the shape of romance. *Philia* is the type of love that binds friends together. For King neither *eros* nor *philia* can meet the requirements of his non-violent philosophy for loving "those who oppose and who seek to defeat you." (King Martin Luther, Jr. 1958: 31) King tells us that the Greeks called this most refined form of love *agape*. The latter is a type of love which seeks nothing in return since it is a replication of the love of God for his people at a human scale. It is a love that is put on a par with an understanding and creative redemptive will for all people regardless of their feelings towards us. Only people who are capable of loving at such a level really deserve to be enrolled in the non-violent resistance to racial evil. As re-tooled by King, *agape* is a synthesis of the Christian notion of love, Gandhi's *Satyagraha* (love force) and Hegel's universal consciousness.

However, though King put *agape* at the centre of his philosophy, he did not depart from the idea of the Hegelian idea of struggle for recognition. Quite apart from *agape*,

there are six conditions for participation in non-violent direct actions. King says that weekly institutes, a kind of symposia, are organised to explain these conditions to potential resisters in order to make the love-force (*agape*) a reality for them. First, he defines the philosophy of non-violence as a philosophy that excludes cowards. It is a philosophy wherein the non-violent resister refrains from violence not because he is afraid or merely lacks the instruments of violence, but because his aim is not to defeat the other but to seek to persuade the opponent that he is wrong. Evil is the common enemy. So as a second condition for enrolment in the battle for recognition, the violent resister, armed with a love-force, must by no means try to “humiliate the other but to win him over.” (1958:30) Third, evil is more structural, institutional than personal, so the love-force must be directed rather against “the forces of evil” or the system than white persons who are also victims of the same system. The fourth condition is that the non-violent must never retaliate in order not to fall into the trap of the evil system that they are fighting against. Finally, the terms of the fifth and sixth conditions, is that non-violent resisters must not do themselves internal harm by harbouring hate against their opponents. Above everything else, they must be able to stand above temporary setbacks and believe very strongly in the existence of a creative force in this world, which will ultimately make universal consciousness a reality.

King departs from *Phenomenology of Spirit* in the emphasis that he accorded to love instead of war in the Black man’s quest for freedom. Contrary to affirmations by some critics that “King was influenced by Hegel’s thought in a fairly conventional way,” (Lisher Richard, 1995:107), King can be put in the company of thinkers belonging to the modern Hegelian tradition of social and political analysis, thinkers like Marx, Sartre and Fanon who broadened the purview of Hegelianism. In King’s philosophy, the church and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, instead of the workplace,

became the locus for the development of consciousness for the necessity of struggle for freedom, which contrary to Fanon, need not be violent. King criticised harshly the Black Power Movement which elevated Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* into some sort of a Bible. (p.329) While King agrees with the humanistic project of Fanon, he disagrees with his conception of violence as a therapeutic and cathartic force in the hands of the wretched of the earth. In the view of violence as psychologically harmful, King comes close to Hannah Arendt's dismissal of Fanon for his "glorification of violence." (1970:12) King shares with Fanon the Hegelian idea of man creating himself, but he differs from him in the moral choice of non-violent protest instead of physical violence as a means of creating the new man and "community of the beloved." In King, it is more Hegel's idealism related to the possibility of reconciliation that comes to the fore than the Marxian and materialist rewriting of Hegel's dialectic.

This reconciliation is predicated on a Hegelian conception of history as a necessary progress of the spirit (the *Geist* in German) towards higher forms of freedom. One of these is objective freedom that Hegel associates with the nation-state. King and Hegel shared a common concern with the alienation of their peoples from their respective nation-states, the United States and Prussia. Just as Hegel thought it timely to seek to reconcile the German people with their political institutions after the Napoleonic wars, King thought it also timely to reconcile Americans with state institutions bedevilled by the cancer of racism in the 1950s and 1960s. Speaking in the context of the latter decades, King writes that "the time for freedom has come," and he quotes Victor Hugo saying that "there is no greater power on earth than an idea whose time has come." (p.75)

As early as 1957, just a year after the victory of the African-American Freedom Movement, at the Montgomery bus boycott, in an address before the First Annual

Institute on Non-Violence and Social change, King showed to what extent Hegel was an inspiration to the Civil Rights Movement. In this address he relates his understanding of the concept of struggle to that of Hegel by saying the following:

Long ago the Greek philosopher Heraclites argued that justice emerges from the strife of opposites, and Hegel, in modern philosophy, preached a doctrine of growth through struggle. It is historically and biologically true that there can be no birth and growth without birth and growing pains. (King Martin Luther Jr, 1957: 16)

At first sight the above summary of King non-violent philosophy might seem to be far removed from Hegel's dialectic of the slave and the master. But a closer look is enough to show that they have many points in common. Like Hegel, King started from the principle that self-consciousness is a social product arising out of a life-and-death struggle for recognition. To realise our selfhood, we need to be confronted with another self-consciousness. In other words, we need to be involved in the struggle for recognition and freedom involve the need to risk one's life. King's philosophy does not exclude the death of the non-violent resister. What is common to Hegel's dialectic of the slave and master and King Jr's non-violent direct protest is their emphasis on the necessity of courage and the putting of life at stake for the affirmation of freedom. For both, courage is the prerequisite condition for rising above the nature of things or objects to that of spirit or what King calls "somebodiness". As in emphasis that Black people have come to a stage of history wherein they have outgrown the fear of death that made of them "slaves", King never ceased throughout his *Autobiography* speaking of the "New Negro", who unlike the "Old Negro," is no longer ready to bend his back to the white master.

In the third and fourth chapters, I said that for Hegel the social relationships among human beings fall into three main categories. In the first category, the master rules over the slave. In the second, the dialectic is reversed and the slave becomes the master of his master. In the third category of social relations, there are neither masters nor slaves for

their merely oppositional relationships are superseded by mutual relationships that make of them a community of friends. At the basis of this community of friends, or what King called “the community of the beloved,” is the principle of equality or mutual recognition. What distinguishes the first two categories of social recognition from the third one is the fact that the social relationships in the former are unstable whereas in the latter they are permanent. Thus, Hegel’s slave-master dialectic is inscribed within the larger dialectic of the development of thought as a triad of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. It is the synthesis stage of the slave-and-master dialectic that King sought to bring out through the non-violent method of protest. No role in King’s synthesis of the dialectic is left to Marx’s proletariat since what is looked for is not a classless society but a “beloved community”.

In giving a moral or thoughtful turn to the life-and-death struggle against segregation, King goes beyond the unstable social relationships that arose out of the Hegelian dialectic of the slave and master towards what the latter calls universal consciousness. The goal behind the non-violent direct protest is not the replacement of the white master’s domination by a Black slave’s supremacy. If love is so important in the philosophy of non-violence, it is because it contributes to the containment of violence as well as to the growth of goodwill between the adversaries out of which will grow “the community of the beloved”. In King’s moral version of the dialectic of the slave and master we find many moral reasons, reasons missing in Hegel’s original version. These reasons are at the heart of his belief that the Americans across the racial board and, more particularly, the Black Americans must restrain their impulses to dominate others, exploit them and reduce them to a condition of servitude. Unlike Hegel, King did not leave any doubt that the white master’s freedom, i.e. a freedom whose aim is the satisfaction of material desires through the imposition of a segregation

system, is immoral and, therefore, unacceptable. In this respect, King's advocacy for the strength to love even one's enemy recalls that "dogged strength" which DuBois invoked when he spoke about "double consciousness" in *The Souls of Black Folk*.

For King, we win freedom for ourselves not by subjugating others but by liberating them, granting them the same free status we claim for ourselves. In Hegel's terms, the master standing over the servant was still not truly free, for he still did not thoroughly see himself in the other. Consequently, it is only through self-liberation that the master, too, becomes perfectly free. King's adherence to Hegel's idea for realising freedom shows in several of his pronouncements. In a summary of his first book *Stride toward Freedom*, published in the form of an essay entitled "Our struggle" in the religious journal *Liberation*, King synthesises the motivations and objectives that eventually led to the foundation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1957 as follows:

We do not wish to triumph over the white community. That would only result in transferring those now on the bottom to the top. But, if we can live up to non-violence in thought and deed, there will emerge an interracial society based on freedom for all. (p.13)

King's emphasis on "non-violence in thought and deed" in seeking freedom is identical to Hegel's rejection of the one-sided recognition that would result from the supremacy on the part of either the master or the slave. The ultimate goal of the Black man's struggle is the creation of the "beloved community", a community where Negroes and whites could live together as brothers and sisters.

Throughout his public addresses and writings addressed to the Black people, King developed a point of view about the Black people (most of them grand-sons and grand-daughters of ex-slaves) similar to the one that Hegel evolved about the slave in his dialectic. King strongly believed "that the Negro [the son and daughter of ex-slaves] is God's instrument to save the soul of America." He urges his people to accept their redemptive role by pursuing five main objectives. One of these objectives is self-

respect. King declared that Negroes must “maintain a continuing sense of dignity and self-respect.” With a history of more than two hundred years of slavery and a century of segregation, King realised that it was easy for many Negroes to feel that they did not belong or were insignificant. “Let no force, let no power, let no individual, let no social system,” he advised them, “cause you to feel that you are inferior.” (p.154)

King was greatly concerned about complacent Negroes who as a result of years of oppression had lost their sense of “somebodyness”, adjusting to segregation, accepting the place whites assigned to them. For King, when laws are not applicable to all, it is better to be maladjusted than adjusted to the status quo. Against those who in that highly Freudian period looked down on the maladjusted, King offered the counterexamples of Jesus and Socrates who through their maladjustment managed to change the world. King considered that giving up to forces of domination is synonymous with the death of the spirit. Despite segregation, which denies the essential worth of its victims, King told his audiences that “We must have the spiritual audacity to assert our somebodyness. We must not allow our physical bondage to enslave our minds.” (Ibid) King regarded self-respect as connected with being an American citizen, with being treated with the same regard as others and without reference to colour. Segregation (slavery) was evil precisely because it defined human beings on the basis of colour, with whites on the top and Negroes on the bottom. To change the ruling group by putting Negroes on the top and whites at the bottom would not result in respect for Negroes. Genuine self-respect means seeing oneself not as a Negro but as a human being. It is in this re-conception of the self-image with an emphasis of mutual respect that King converges with Hegel. Both assert the necessity to move from the one-sided recognition to full recognition through universal self-consciousness. Just like Hegel, King considered that recognition through domination of the other is similar to

domination over nonhuman objects. This form of domination will not give the Negro what he needs, because it denies to the other, in this case the white fellow man, the freedom he needs so as to fully confirm his self-worth.

Another aspect of the Hegelian dialect that King borrows in his texts is that of the redemptive value of work. King urged Negroes to “make full and constructive use of the freedom we already possessed,” refusing to “use our oppression as an excuse for mediocrity and laziness.” He frequently pointed to the Jews as an example of a people who did not allow discrimination and suffering to prevent them from achieving excellence. Being Jews did not prevent Spinoza, Handel, and Einstein from achieving excellence and distinction in their chosen fields of study. King quoted repeatedly the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson: “If a man can write a better book, or preach a better sermon, or make a better mouse trap than his neighbour, even if builds his house in the woods the world will make a bitten path to his door.” (Op. Cit King 1957: 20) King’s point was that if Negroes were going to be ready for the new age of integration, then they had to strive to be the best that they could be and not simply strive to become “good Negro teachers, good Negro doctors, good Negro ministers, and good Negro skilled labourers. We must set out to do a good job, irrespective of race, and do it so well that nobody can do it better.” (Ibid, p.20)

The street sweeper image was another favourite image that King uses to speak about recognition. “If it falls to your lot to be a street sweeper,” he writes,

sweep streets like Michel Angelo painted pictures, like Shakespeare wrote poetry, like Beethoven composed music ; sweep streets so well that all the host of heaven and earth will have to pause and say, ‘Here lived a great street sweeper, who swept his job well.’ (Ibid, p.20)

King’s comparison of the job of sweeping to various arts shows the importance that he accords to work and the importance that jobs performed with excellence in the eyes of the other people. King often cited past and current examples of Negroes who had

performed their jobs with excellence and the role they played in enhancing the image of the black man. Booker T. Washington as a race leader, Rolan Hayes and Marion Anderson as singers, Joe Louis, Jackie Robinson, and Jessie Owens as athletes were some of his favourite examples of excellence.

The lesson that King wanted to deliver to the Negroes was that Negroes had to deepen their conception of self in matters of respect in their struggle for freedom. Genuine freedom cannot be built on the notion of racial domination on either side. The “beloved community” can be established only by rational human beings, capable of independence in relation to their particular desire for domination, and capable of acting on principles that are universally valid for all people. One of these principles is that of mutual respect that can be exercised only within an integrated community in which white and Black people are socialised mutually to claim and grant to each other the right to exercise their freedom within a limited external more sphere.

Freedom as self-transformation is shared by both King and Hegel. King connects this self-transformation to struggle rendered in terms reminiscent of the Hegelian struggle for recognition. King description of the confronting scene between police and protestors in Birmingham is a case in point. There were “hundreds, sometimes thousands, of Negroes who for the first time dared look back at a white man, eye to eye.” He vividly conveys the reversal of attitude on the part of the Negroes from passive acquiescence to active, submissive to assertive, impotent to powerful when he writes the following : Bull Connor’s men, their deadly hoses poised for action stood facing the marchers. “The marchers,” he went on, “many of them on their knees, stared back, unafraid and unmoving. Slowly the Negroes stood up and began to advance. Connor’s men, as though hypnotized, fell back, their hoses sagging uselessly in their knees.” (p.211) The emphasis on the trope of “gazing”, “staring”, “seeing” and “being seen” in the

quotations above shows King's appropriation of the Sartrean reading of the Hegelian dialectic of the master and the slave in his *Being and Nothingness*. In the latter work that King read and appreciated, Sartre makes the eyes stand metonymically for the self. "Seeing" and "being seen" are central in interpersonal relationships, especially when these two acts are magnified and disseminated through the big eye of the camera as was the case with the Civil Rights Movement protests in the US. In this amplification of the confrontation through the media, King did not aim to topple one class by another as was the case with the Marxist appropriation of the Hegelian dialectic, nor to show the existential angst outside what Sartre calls Non-Exit or "Huis-Clos", which is the title of one of his best plays. To use Sartre's and Marx's words, the racial other in King stands neither as hell to the others (the white adversaries) in their existential anguish nor as a proletariat ready to shed blood to bring out a classless society. What King sought to bring out through the amplification of the confrontation is the awakening of consciousness and the thinking about the racial issue on the right track in order to build the community of the beloved. In the final analysis, it can be said that King made his own Hegel's idealist philosophy at whose basis is the socio-cognitive principle that man produces himself through thought in social interaction or confrontation of views.

#### **D. Providential History and the Aesthetic Staging of Non-Violent Protest**

Speaking of King's moral version of the Hegelian dialectic of the slave and master will not be complete if we neglect to mention the aesthetic dimension that is given to it. Many critics of King's non-violent direct protest have already pointed out that if this protest had the impact that it had at the time it is because King knew how to "manipulate" the media especially TV and bring the struggle for Civil Rights to American homes. But what these critics overlooked was the close similarity between the non-violent direct action to a street theatre. Indeed, King realised the necessity to

circulate information about the different campaigns for civil rights through TV. He considered it as the best medium to reach the conscience of the American people, and to shake their moral comfortableness. Yet apart from this necessity, King spoke about non-violent direct actions sometimes in terms of drama and at other times in terms of story. For example, he begins the episode of his *Autobiography* that he devoted to the Montgomery Bus Boycott by reminding the reader that the story that he is about to recount is not just another ordinary news story:

While the nature of this account causes to make frequent use of the pronoun “I”, in every important part of the story it should be “we”. This is not a drama with only one actor. More precisely it is the chronicle of fifty thousand Negroes who took to heart the principle of non-violence, who learned to fight for their rights with the weapon of love, and who, in the process, acquired a new estimate of their own human worth. (p.50)

King considers that the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955-1956 is “the first act of [...] an unfolding drama”, (p.54) followed by other no less significant acts: the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom in Washington, D.C., in 1957, the Sit-in Movement in 1960, the Albany Movement in 1961, the Birmingham Campaign in 1963 and the March on Washington in the same year, the Freedom Summer Campaign in Mississippi in 1964 and the Selma-to-Montgomery March in 1965.

The emphasis that King puts in his *Autobiography* on words such as drama, dramatise, stage, act, actor, play, preparation for participation in non-violent direct action, performance and even the funding for the direction of the movement denotes his intention to aestheticise the non-violent protest and to elevate it to the level of Greek Tragedy through some kind of street theatre. There are two sources behind King’s impulse to give an aesthetic turn to his non-violent direct protest. One of these is his influence by Richard Bartlett Gregg the chronicler of Gandhi’s fight for Indian Independence, and the other source is Hegel. As it has already been said earlier in this chapter, King refined his understanding of Gandhi’s non-violent social philosophy by

reading Gregg's *The Power of Non-Violence* (1944), for which he wrote the foreword to its second edition in 1959. According to John S. Ansboro, King's emphasis on the dimension of spectacle owes much to the importance that Gregg accorded it in his conception of the power of non-violence. Among the quotes that Ansboro included in his discussion of the link between King's non-violent direct action and Gregg's conception of non-violent struggle, we have the following one:

Instinctively he [the assailant] dramatizes himself before them and becomes more aware of his position. With the audience as a sort of mirror, he realizes the contrast between his own conduct and that of the victim. (p.148)

Ansboro continues the discussion by suggesting that King might have learned the importance of dramatizing the struggle from Gregg. It is the audience in this drama that makes the whole difference between the non-violent resister and the violent assailant. Through the mediation of the audience or spectators, the assailant starts to reflect on the moral dimension of both his actions and those of his non-violent opponents and to recognise under the compulsion of public opinion his misjudgements about the situation. In the scale of moral values, the non-violent resister's dignified, courageous and generous manners contrast with the assailant's excessive, violent, and disrespectful behaviour. It is the behaviour of the former that unsettles the latter and wins the support of public opinion and even the respect of the assailant.

Ansboro is arguably to the point when he traces the spectacular dimension that King accorded to his campaign to Gregg's influence. Yet he neglects another equally important source in King's aestheticisation of the civil rights protest. That source is Hegel's *Aesthetics* (1983). It is true that the latter did not figure among the works that King admitted having read while he was studying Hegel at Boston University School of Theology. But in his speeches and *Autobiography*, King showed the same admiration for Greek tragedians like Aeschylus and Sophocles as Hegel did in his *Aesthetics*. King's

interest in Greek Tragedy, as it will be argued, in what follows might as well be due to his reading of Hegel's *Aesthetics*. Having elevated Hegel's saying that "the truth is the whole" into a maxim, it is likely that King had proceeded to the reading of even the *Aesthetics* (1820) to be true to himself and to Hegel. No matter whether these assumptions are correct or not, evidence in the *Autobiography* shows that his notion of the struggle for civil rights as a drama owes much to Hegel's theory of Greek Tragedy.

What is Hegel's aesthetic theory of Greek tragedy and where does it stand in relation to his dialectic method? Hegel defines Greek tragedy as the "collision of equally justified powers" (Hegel, 1983:112) or laws. As a case in point, he referred to Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* and Sophocles' *Antigone* to illustrate his argument. He tells us that the conflict in these plays is that between "the state, i.e. ethical life in its spiritual universality, and the family, i.e. natural ethical life". (Ibid. 113) This conflict is embodied respectively in King Creon who honours Zeus and the public life and social life that he stands for, and Antigone, Creon's niece, who defends the bonds of kinship best represented by the gods of the underworld. The tragic complication of this dialectic opposition leads to a synthesis in "the chorus which clearly assigns equal honour to all the gods." (Ibid, pp.114-115) Unlike Aristotle, Hegel did not consider the rising of pity and the purgation of feelings at the sight of tragic suffering to be the final aim of tragedy. For him, what "excites our admiration" in Greek tragedy is the "indestructible harmony" that results from the "cancellation of conflicts as conflicts in the reconciliation of the powers [...] which struggled to destroy one another in their mutual conflict." (Ibid, p.115)

The Hegelian idea of tragedy as a collision of equally justified powers finds its best expression in the "Letter from Birmingham Jail" that King included as a whole chapter in his *Autobiography*. This letter was written as a response to eight fellow Alabama

clergymen who, through a newspaper statement, took a stand against King for his Birmingham campaign. These clergymen comprising nearly all Christian denominations and a Rabbi blamed King for interfering in the affairs of the state of Alabama. Apart from not being a resident of Alabama at the time, and therefore dismissed as an “outsider troublemaker”, King was taken to task for having chosen the Easter period as a period for street demonstrations. On the whole the eight clergymen called King to stop his activities because they are both “unwise and untimely”. (p.188) From Birmingham Jail and in a Socratic tone, King responded to the clergy men’s condemnations of the Birmingham campaign reminding them that the Southern Christian Leadership Conference is not a state but a national organisation with an affiliate in Alabama which is the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. It was the behest at the latter affiliate that King decided to launch the Birmingham campaign in 1963 and in his capacity as the chairman of SCLC he could by no means be considered as an “outside agitator”. (p.189) In addition, as a clergyman himself truthful to the prophets of the Old Testament and to the Apostle Paul, he could not abide to the argument for respecting state boundaries when it came to injustice.

Many critics, among whom figures James H. Cone, have argued that the Civil Rights Movement was a disguise for the recurrent struggle between the States and the Federal government. Admittedly, as King’s response to the clergymen above shows this view is not mistaken. But King was not just a pawn used by the Federal power to settle a problem that had existed since the creation of the American nation. We have to point out that the Civil Rights Movement started with the Supreme Court Decision of 1954 and this decision was met with threats of nullification from the Southern states similar to the ones that the same Southern States expressed in the first half of the nineteenth century whenever the Northern States dared to question the existence of slavery or its

expansion to the West. There is no difference whatever between a John Calloun in his legal battle for maintaining slavery during the Abolitionist era and Governor of Alabama George Wallace –whose inauguration vow, King tells us, “had been a pledge of “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever.” (p.173) Indeed, there is strong evidence in the *Autobiography* that King looked upon the Birmingham campaign as another attempt to oblige the Federal government to intervene in Alabama to make it comply with the laws of the nation. But true to his dialectical method King did not take the position of the Federal government without formulating harsh criticism against it.

In answering his fellow Alabama clergymen’s criticism, King told them that the movement “seeks to dramatize the issue” of racial injustice in Alabama and to create “a type of constructive, non-violent tension which is necessary for growth.”(pp.190-191) The elaboration of this response increasingly assumes the shape of Greek tragedy as defined by Hegel. The interpretation of law emerges as the central issue in the Civil Rights struggle in Alabama. According to King, the clergymen’s anxiety over the willingness of the non-violent resisters to break state laws is legitimate but it is also paradoxical because the latter are obeying another superior law which is the Supreme Court’s decision of 1954. This represents the “collision of equally justified powers” of which Hegel spoke in his *Aesthetics*. The state segregationist laws and city ordinances enacted by the white majority constitute the natural ethical life. They honour, in the words of Hegel, the bond of natural kinship. According to King such laws are unjust because the racial segregation they maintain “distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority.” (p.193) In taking a moral stand against the maintenance of segregationist laws, King invoked constitutional laws such as the Supreme Court

decision of 1954 and the Bill of Rights. For him these laws represent the laws of the land which Hegel characterised as the “ethical life in its spiritual universality.” The non-violent resister, according to King, is as morally bound to disobey segregationist state laws as to respect the Constitutional law of the land.

However, to say that King supported the breaking of segregationist laws by an appeal to national laws does not mean that he was some sort of King Creon. The ethical state that Creon defended against the affirmation of kinship ties by his niece Antigone in Sophocles’ play was a concrete reality. For King, it was a dream for which he prayed and which he hoped to realise by staging the drama of the Birmingham campaign. In King’s staged drama, the nation as it stood then was morally retrograde since it was not true to the moral principles that it announced at the beginning of its foundation. It was, therefore, the moral obligation of the non-violent resister to oppose its moral lethargy and bring it in alignment with the universal by calling to the conscience of the American people. The American people in King’s drama stand for the chorus in Hegel’s conception of tragedy. It is through the appeal to their conscience that King sought to push the nation to align itself with the universal principles that it consigned in its major constitutional documents and to put an end to the tragic racial conflict bedevilling its moral foundations.

Several times in the *Autobiography*, King refers to what he calls “the stage of history.” This motif of history shows the influence that Hegel’s *The Philosophy of History* exerted on his view of the drama of racial conflict. Yet true to himself, King remained a Hegelian dialectician even in his interpretation of the Hegelian view of history. Like Hegel, King viewed history as an inevitable dialectic process leading to the extension of the boundaries of freedom. For example, in speaking about the victory of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party that brought out the desegregation of the

Democratic Party Convention, King said that “those who sought to turn back the tide of history suffered a bitter defeat.” (p.253) With the election of the Black Democrat Barack Obama to the Presidency of the United States, we can fully measure today the extent of the defeat of racists by the inexorable progress of history. King also followed in the footsteps of Hegel in referring to history as a providential plan. In Hegelian language, King kept telling his audiences that the new age is coming and cannot be stopped because God wills the oppressed to be liberated. Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The urge for freedom will eventually come. This is what happened to the American Negro in the decades of the 1950s and 1960s. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom and something without has told him that he can gain it. Among the historical explanations that King offered for the inevitability of freedom are: the Supreme Court decision to desegregate schools in 1954, the Black man’s migration to the urban north, the participation of black soldiers in the two great wars, the rise of the literacy level among the black population, the relative economic prosperity of the Black man and the explosion of freedom movements abroad. For all these reasons, consciously and unconsciously, the Negro was swept in by what the Germans after Hegel call the *Zeitgeist*, or the spirit of the times.

King often used the word *Zeitgeist* to refer to his belief that “the universe is under the control of a loving purpose, and that in the struggle for righteousness, [we have] cosmic companionship.” This was what he had in mind when he said that Rosa Parks “had been tracked down by the *Zeitgeist* – the spirit of the time.” He had made a similar statement in relation to himself when he offered his resignation to Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery after the success of the bus boycott there: “I can’t stop now. History has thrust upon me a responsibility from which I cannot turn away.” (p.136) King was referring to a historical movement of freedom that was rooted in ultimate reality and

thus was not exclusively on human decisions. To use Hegel's words, King poses himself as a "world-historical figure" chosen by God to bring about social change in human conditions. He keeps talking about the Black man's freedom in terms of the Exodus analogy, an analogy based on the assumption that the Black Americans of the 1950s and 1960s, just like the early Puritans, were a chosen people charged with the divine mission of redeeming America. More importantly, King conceived of his destiny and that of his people as a divine call to allow America to assume the moral leadership thrust upon it by historical circumstances after the two great wars.

The international moral leadership that America was called to assume was predicated on the capacity of its citizens to bring to full completion the American dream through the reconciliation of white and black citizens as sisters and brothers in a "beloved community". In King's rhetoric the American Dream emerges as the Hegelian Idea, an idea, which in the words of Langston Hughes (1951), has long been "deferred" and which is likely to "fester" and "explode" if nothing is done to make Black Americans feel at home in their nation-state. King pointed out a contradiction at the heart of the American society. This gap is between American scientific achievements and the failure in matters of morality. He lauded America's great advances in science and technology that enabled Americans to "cure dreaded diseases, to carve highways through the stratosphere, and to build the greatest system of production the world has ever known. But in the midst of all our scientific and technological advances," King told white ministers in Nashville, Tennessee, on 23-25 April, 1957, "we have not learned the simple art of loving our neighbours and worth of all human personality. Through our scientific genius, we have made the world a neighbourhood, but through our moral and spiritual geniuses, we have failed to make our Nation a brotherhood." (Op.Cit. King 1957:19) The Negro's gift of spirit to America and the world that DuBois

talked of in *The Souls of Black Folk* assumes in King's ministerial mind the shape of love and the art of loving.

In speaking about what Hegel calls the world-historical processes, King places the activities of the Civil Rights Movement within the context of resistance to colonialism. For him, segregation and colonialism have in common social injustice, political domination and economic exploitation. This parallel explains to a large extent the links that King established between himself and such post-colonial figures as Nkrumah and Gandhi. Indeed, King's educational career resembles theirs. The three of them were educated in the North (the North of the United States for King and the West for Nkrumah and Gandhi). All three of them can be regarded as native sons returning to the colonial South their motherland (the Segregated South of the US for King, the colonised India and Ghana for Gandhi and Nkrumah) after having completed their process of education. All three of them had learned the main outlines of their liberationist ideologies in the North and sought to implement them in the South.

An indication about King's identification with these post-colonial leaders shows in the way he structures his *Autobiography*. For example, chapter 10 which covers such important events as the creation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in February 14, 1957 is followed by a chapter entitled the "Birth of a New Nation". This chapter is devoted to a biographical sketch of Nkrumah and the independence ceremonies of Ghana, which King attended at the invitation of Nkrumah. In writing about Ghana's independence, King comes very close to what is known as the theory of internal colonialism. "Ghana," he writes, "has something to say to us. It says to us first that the oppressor never voluntarily gives freedom to the oppressed. You have to work for it." (p.110) In this quote, King makes no difference whatever between the oppression of the segregationists in the South and that of the British colonizers in the Gold Coast

(Ghana). Nkrumah's non-violent resistance to oppression, through his Convention's People Party, is held as a concrete example to be followed in its strategies by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. It can be said that King came back from Ghana with a postcolonial dream. For him, "That old flag [the Union Jack] coming down doesn't represent the meaning of this drama taking place on the stage of history, for it is the symbol of an old passing way. That new flag (Ghana's flag) going up is the symbol of a new age coming into being." (p.112)

King did not change his postcolonial posture even when he decided to move the activities of the Civil Rights Movement up to the North after the Watts Riots of August 11-15, 1965 in Los Angeles, California. The Watts Riots made King re-assess the political situation of America and came to the conclusion that the Northern Ghettoes as much as the South are colonies. King's internal anti-colonialist rhetoric of resistance assumes an explicit form as he spoke of his Northern campaign against segregated housing in Chicago. This is what he says about his assessment of the situation of the Black people living in the Northern Ghettoes:

The Northern ghetto had become a type of colonial area. The colony was powerless because all important decisions affecting the community were made from the outside. Many of its inhabitants even had their daily lives dominated by the welfare worker and the policeman. The profits of landlord and merchants were removed and seldom ever reinvested. The only positive thing the larger society saw in the slum was it was a source of cheap labour in times of economic boom. Otherwise, its inhabitants were blamed for their own victimization. (p.301)

Without abandoning the non-violent method protest, King operates the last Hegelian synthesis in building his own concept of Black power. This synthesis emerges as a combination of Douglass's socio-political agitation with Washington's advocacy for economic power and DuBois's cultural resistance, one of the songs of the protest movement is a sorrow song known as "We Shall Overcome.". Dropped by the Northern liberals once the struggle was moved to the North, King met with less success in the

North than in the South. King was behind the passage of at least two important Acts, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, but his great expectation for the birth a beloved community or what Hegel calls universal consciousness remained in the domain of “unfulfilled dreams.” (p.356) Before he was assassinated on April 4, 1968, he committed himself more fully to the extension of Lyndon Johnson’s concept of Great Society by fighting poverty in the urban ghettos while fighting the escalation of war in Vietnam and other parts of the world. King undertook this double fighting for peace and the end of poverty that he undertook in the name of that universal consciousness that had been there since the beginning of his struggle against racial segregation and racism in the late 1950s.

### **Conclusion**

The above analysis shows that among the five Black American writers who have been investigated, King made the most use of Hegel’s works in terms of both ideas and methodology. This pre-eminence accorded to Hegel is explained by the fact that King was more deeply steeped in the Hegelian philosophy with which he rounded off his education at the University of Boston School of Theology. I have tried to argue that the Hegelian dialectic method was implemented by King for the writing of his doctoral dissertation, and that he sought to extend its application to the social field. The synthetic approach to the racial problem culminated in the elaboration of the non-violent resistance to racial injustice. The study of King’s *Autobiography* as a spiritual autobiography similar to Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* also demonstrates that King looked back at his life, his educational and political career as a dialectic unfolding of the *geist* whose ultimate development led him to the stage of (world) history. On this stage of (world) history, King sided with the Hegel of the *Aesthetics* who saw in the chorus or

the spectators a catalytic force likely to bring out the reconciliation of colliding forces for the realisation of a higher ideal.

The synthesising turn of King's mind also shows itself in his attitude towards his predecessors on the Black American political scene. His urgent call for racial pride recalls that of Garvey whom he mentions by name in *Why We Can't Wait ?*(1963) and *Where Do We Go From Here?* His emphasis on the necessity of doing well one's work in order to achieve social recognition echoes Washington's call for the rehabilitation of the ethic of work. His preference for classic literature especially Greek Tragedy reminds us of DuBois's elevation of culture as a means for the resolution of the racial problem. The legalist and moralist strands of his non-violent resistance philosophy evoke Douglass's belief in the ethicality of the main constitutional documents as bases for waging a legal and moral struggle for racial justice. Yet as I have tried to show in this analysis, King went beyond these predecessors in his elaboration of his socio-political plan for social integration and racial freedom. This plan backfired when he attempted to transpose it to the Northern black ghettos in the mid-1960s. However, the election of a Black man to the Presidency of the United States in November 2008 shows that the backfiring of King's plan was, after all, only a temporary halt in the march of American history towards the realisation of the racial dream that he spoke of in 1963. In the meantime, as the next chapter will try to show, Malcolm X's socio-political vision of America as a waking "nightmare" temporarily replaced King's rhetoric of the racial dream.

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\_\_\_\_\_, *A Stride Toward Freedom*, New York: Harper and Row, 1958. In *The Papers of Martin Luther King Jr , Vol. I and II*, Ed. Clayborne Carson, and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, claims in nearly the same terms Hegel's influence on his social philosophy. He writes the following: "Just before Dr. Brightman's death, I began studying the philosophy of Hegel with him [L.Harold DeWolf] . Although the course was mainly a study of Hegel's monumental work, *Phenomenology of Mind*, I spent my spare time reading his *Philosophy of History* and *Philosophy of Right*. There were points in Hegel's philosophy that I strongly disagreed with. For instance, his absolute idealism was rationally unsound to me because it intended to swallow up the many in the one. But there were other aspects of his thinking that I found stimulating. His contention that "truth is the whole led me to

a philosophical method of rational coherence. His analysis of the dialectical process, in spite of its shortcomings, helped me see that growth comes through struggle.” (p.480)

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## Chapter Six

### Malcolm X's Autobiography: Social Bondage and the Struggle for Recognition in the Internal Colony

#### Introduction

Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little in Omaha hospital, Michigan, on 19th May, 1925. This date of birth is very significant in the history of the Black people's struggle for social recognition since it was also the year when Marcus Garvey was sent to prison on mail fraud charges. Garvey, as I tried to show in the fourth chapter of this thesis, represents the nationalist or rather the separatist branch in the struggle for the Black man's freedom. His arrest in 1925 and his deportation to his home country, Jamaica, two years later in 1927 sounded the decline of his movement. Without the charismatic presence of Garvey on the American soil, his movement (UNIA) lost its capacity to rally the Black masses, which more than the other ethnic groups, were hard hit by the economic crisis resulting from the Wall Street crash of 1929. Its leaders, among whom figured Malcolm's father, were persecuted and the Black masses were temporarily seeking refuge in government welfare to weather out the effects of the Great Depression. What remained of the nationalist fervour was siphoned off by Black labour organisations like that of Philip A. Randolph which placed the Black man's fight for recognition at the level of the class struggle between the proletariat and the owners of capital. (Cf. Appiah Kwame A. and Henry L. Gates, 1999)

In his *Autobiography*, Malcolm poses himself as the legitimate heir to the Black Nationalist Movement. The history of his family, especially his father's, is figured out as continuous to the history of the Black Nation. Malcolm tells us that he is the seventh son of the family. As such according to African-American popular belief, he saw himself as endowed with uncommon faculties that destined him, among the eight

siblings of the Little family, to take over the fight for the Black man's freedom, the fight for freedom that caused the demise of his father when he was only five. (Cf. DuBois W.E.B, 1903) Indeed, no other Black American leader laid bare the injustices of the mainstream American society towards his fellow Black Americans as outspokenly as Malcolm X did. Whether he was speaking to white audiences in Ivy League Universities like Harvard or to Blacks on the streets of ghettos like that of Harlem or the West Side of Chicago, his words never went totally unheeded. This was because Malcolm always tried not to indulge in half-truths and euphemisms when he addressed the issue of antagonism in the relations among ethnic groups in the United States and the world. Without academic knowledge like the one that King acquired through his long academic career, Malcolm's speeches were mostly inspired from the bottom of the Black experience and not from the privileged position of the Black middle class. He made a small case of King's idea of integration and defined his identity, instead, as an affirmation of Blackness in opposition to mainstream white America. In this regard, his allegiance went more to the Black community than America which started then to be conceived as a mosaic or a salad bowl of nations.

In opposition to King's proclamation of faith in the middle-class, integrationist image of ethnic groups working together to make the American dream a reality, Malcolm bore witness to the seamy side of the racial divide that turned out this dream into a nightmare. In one of his derisive remarks about King's philosophy of integration following the 1963 March on Washington, Malcolm derided King as having his middle class dream while the rest of his Black kith and kin in the urban ghettos are having a nightmare. Such outspokenness on the part of Malcolm has led many of his contemporaries to dismiss him as an anti-Christ figure, an apostle of hate, or a Black Muslim agitator who glorifies violence. These widely abusive publicised images made

of him a perfect foil to the romanticised figure of King. In spite of the rekindled interest in Malcolm the man of action during the Black Revolution of the mid-1960s and the early 1970s, the assessment of his philosophy has so far been often overlooked. To all evidence, both the lingering effects of the earlier negative attacks and the recent popular interest raised in him by Spike Lee's film *Malcolm X* encourage people not to take Malcolm as a serious philosophical thinker.

It is the purpose of this chapter to go beyond the often distorted popular cliché about Malcolm by examining his *Autobiography* and some of his speeches in relation to the Hegelian themes, which constitute the framework of this study. My interest in Hegelian themes in Malcolm's work does not spring from any pronouncement whatsoever that Malcolm made as to the influence of Hegel on his thought. Indeed, reference to Hegel is totally absent in both the *Autobiography* and the literature that it generated. However, there are some similarities in contexts of the works which might well account for the Hegelian dimension of Malcolm X's life writing. At first sight, the context in which Hegel wrote his works and that in which Malcolm produced his seem to be far removed. However, it has to be observed that the themes of freedom and social recognition had as much importance in the revolutionary times of Hegel as in those of Malcolm X. In both contexts, the legitimacy of the old world order was put into question by revolutionary forces at home and abroad. In addition, the importance that Hegel accorded to freedom makes it impossible to ignore him totally in the analysis of the theme of freedom and related concepts in Malcolm's work.

However, to make my analysis more relevant, I shall discuss Malcolm's philosophy through the Hegelian categories as reworked by Frantz Fanon in his *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968). These two works provide a revision of Hegel's works especially the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *The Philosophy*

*of Right* from the perspective of the colonised. Just as in the case of Hegel, there is no pronouncement whatsoever that Malcolm read Fanon. Fanon's books were written in French respectively in 1952 and 1963, years corresponding more or less to the rise and fall of Malcolm as one of the most important leaders in the Nation of Islam. Fanon's works were translated into English and published respectively by the Grove Press only in 1967 and 1968, at the height of the Black Power Movement. So we can go so far as claiming that the early Malcolm, i.e. Malcolm the Minister/leader of the Nation of Islam had not even heard of Fanon and his Hegelian philosophy.

I can add that if Malcolm had heard of Fanon, his interest in him might have been so slight that he had not regarded it as really necessary to make either direct or indirect reference to him in his speeches. For example, when Fanon died in the Boston Hospital in 1961, Malcolm who was then the editor of *Muhammad Speaks* had not considered the event worth covering. In any way, Fanon's death passed unnoticed in both the white and Black press of the time. However, if it can be claimed that Malcolm had not heard of Fanon in his early career as a leader of the Nation of Islam, the same claim cannot be sustained for the period of political activity following his separation from that organisation in 1963. Malcolm toured the African continent at least twice and made a stopover in Frantz Fanon's adopted country Algeria, rightly considered then as the Mecca of the revolutionaries. We know for sure that "he received this book [Les Damnés de la terre, apparently from the hands of the Algerian Ambassador to the Republic of Ghana Taher Kaid] while visiting Africa" in 1964. (Jenkins Robert and Mfanya D. Tryman Eds, 2002: 214) Consequently, another claim can be made that Fanon's Hegelian ideas could not have passed unnoticed by Malcolm X, except if he belonged to that category of brainwashed Black men whom Malcolm himself dismissed as "the deaf, the dumb, and the blind," which of course, he was not. The following

Fanonian statement, which is obviously borrowed from *Black Skin, White Masks*, supports my claim:

When you just judge a man because of the color of his skin, then you're committing a crime, because that's the worst kind of judgment. If you judged him because he was a Jew, that's not as bad as judging him because he's Black. Because a Jew can hide his religion. [Sic] He can say he's something else. But the Black man can't hide. When they start indicting us because of our color that means we're indicted before we're born, which is the worst kind of crime that can be committed. (Malcolm X, 1965:85)

The quote above echoes the same remarks that Fanon made about the relatively harsher discrimination based on skin pigmentation than on other factors such as religion. It should be pointed out that Fanon's qualifying statement was a response to Jean Paul Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew*. It follows from the argument above that the influence that Hegelian themes might have exerted on Malcolm was, to borrow a formalist terminology, an indirect influence, i.e., an influence that came through Fanon.

Malcolm's *Autobiography* was published posthumously in 1964. I assume, therefore, that like all auto-biographers, it was informed by his late Fanonian ideology, the main lines of which are assessed and re-ordered, as it is suggested above, after his visits to the then independent countries in Africa. (Cf. Linda Anderson, 2004) Commenting on Malcolm's forthcoming autobiography, the *Saturday Evening Post* said that if "Malcolm were not a Negro, his autobiography would be little more than a journal of *abnormal psychology*, the story of a burglar, dope pusher, addict and jailbird- with a family history of insanity- who acquires messianic delusions and sets forth to preach an upside down religion of brotherly hatred." (Quoted in Cone H. James, 1999:30) Arguably, without knowing it the *Saturday Evening Post* establishes a parallel between Malcolm's *Autobiography* and Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks*, characterised by Fanon himself as an essay about the Black man's psychopathology brought about by the exploiting nature of colonial conditions. The same newspaper continues its criticism by

writing that “We shall be lucky if Malcolm is not succeeded by even weirder and more virulent extremists.” (Ibid. p.30) The wish expressed by the journal remained a pious one since Malcolm was succeeded, not by “weirder and more virulent extremists” (Ibid, p.30) as the *Saturday Evening Post* calls them, but by the not less Black American Powerites in whose hands Malcolm’s *Autobiography* and speeches, and Fanon’s books became the handbooks for the Black revolution of the mid 1960s and the early 1970s. Hence by what Hegel called the “cunning of reason,” Fanon and Malcolm reappeared on the stage of African-American history as kindred spirits of the Black American revolution.

#### **A. Malcolm X’s Life and Times from a Comparative Perspective**

Malcolm starts his *Autobiography* with a chapter suggestively called “Nightmare”. In terms of the history of the Civil Rights movement, such a subtitle points to the failure of the American dream as redefined by Martin Luther King Jr, in the speech that culminated the March on Washington in 1963. King’s redefinition of this American ideal was done from a racial perspective. It propounded the dream in the form of a racial reconciliation wherein individuals across the racial board propelled by the force of love would lead to what Hegel calls an ethical community in which these same individuals are socialised mutually to claim and grant one another the right to exercise their freedom. However, as I attempted to demonstrate in the previous chapter, King’s dream soon turned into the nightmare of the urban riots that shook the North in 1964. In his reference to the “Nightmare,” Malcolm, therefore, makes an ironical thrust at the idea of the racial dream which King defended in his “I-Have-A-Dream” speech in 1963 when he was still struggling against segregation in the South, and which he tried to extend to the North after the racial explosion in the Northern ghettos in 1964.

In engaging King's notion of the American dream as a racial reconciliation, Malcolm gives the reader another historical version of the social conditions that led to the riots of the 1960s. The route to the conclusion that the American dream is a nightmare for the Black people is recounted through his family history and his own childhood experience. Malcolm's description of his Hegelian journey to consciousness as a Black man strangely reads as a concrete example of the one that Fanon delineated in broad strokes in *Black Skin, White Masks*. As the autobiographical details reveal, Malcolm recounts his childhood experience as a pathological case, making himself representative of all the Negro misfits who populated the Black American ghettos. This pathological twist that Malcolm gives to the recounting of his growth as a child shows most by the parallels and divergences that he draws between his family and personal histories and those of his contemporary fellow Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King.

Malcolm and King had a more or less similar religious background. Both of them came from Baptist families from Georgia in the South, their fathers being Baptist preachers. The difference between them was that King's father held the permanent pastorate of the Ebenezer church in Atlanta until his death while Malcolm's was an itinerant preacher assassinated by the Black legionnaires in the North. As a Christian sect, the Black Baptists were, in the words of Black thinkers like Douglass and Washington, more committed to social change and progress. This most likely explains the deep involvement of King's father and that of Malcolm in Black American people's struggle for social recognition. The integrationist King, Sr. worked for the civil rights organisation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) whereas Earl Little was a nationalist and a "dedicated organizer" for Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).

However, the social and family background determined to a large extent the form of protest that Malcolm and King had later adopted in their confrontation with racial injustice. The former issued from Northern poor Black masses whereas the latter came from a Southern Negro middle class stock. As I have already said, Malcolm Little was born in Omaha on 19th May 1925. He was the seventh child of J. Earl Little (who had three children by a previous marriage) and the fourth of M. Louise Norton, a West Indian from Grenada. Until his conversion to the Nation of Islam in Charlestown State Prison in the early 1950s, he lived the life of a hustler in several Black ghettos in the country. On the whole, the social background of these two contemporary Black American leaders largely predetermined the perspective from which they looked at mainstream America. On the whole, Malcolm was heir to the nationalist perspective of his father that saw liberation in terms of separation from the dominant white society while King was the inheritor of the integrationist perspective that equated freedom with integration on equal terms to other members of the mainstream society.

To develop further the comparison above, I can say that the seeds of Malcolm's nationalist sentiments were sown by both his father and mother who belonged to the nationalist or separatist tendencies in the Black resistance or protest against racial injustice. His father served as President of the Omaha branch of Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) while educated mother worked for the same organisation as a reporter. Malcolm kept a vivid memory of his mother as an "active worker in the Garvey movement". This mother was so proud of her African blood and heritage that she tried to shake out any superiority that her lighter children might feel towards her darker ones. Malcolm also kept very fond memories of his father whom he regarded as the most potent symbol of Black Nationalism. As he searched his memory,

he recalled that he often took him to Garveyite meetings in Lansing, Michigan. In his *Autobiography*, he writes that

The image of him that made me proudest was his crusading and militant campaigning with the words of Marcus Garvey. [...] I can remember hearing [...] ‘Africa for the Africans,’ ‘Ethiopians, Awake!’ And my father would talk about how it would not be much longer before Africa would be completely run by Negroes- ‘by black men,’ was the phrase he always used. ‘No one knows the hour of Africa’s redemption cometh. It is in the wind. It is coming. One day, like a storm, it will be here. (p.6)

King was equally proud of his father who, he affirms, never turned the other cheek when it came to his dealing with contemptuous white men. In the *Autobiography*, Malcolm claimed that when he was young, he “had very little respect for people who represented religion,” (p.5) but he terminated his seven-year imprisonment with a conversion to the Nation of Islam in order to become a minister like King. In so doing, he followed in the footsteps of his father whose end was as tragic as his.

What is worth noting in this comparison of fathers and sons is that in his autobiography King shows that his father managed to carve a social and economic position in the segregated South, while Malcolm described his father as victim of the Ku Klux Klan, just because he tried to start a small business in retailing in the supposedly freer northern part of the Middle West. This picture of the Middle West that Malcolm delivers belies the positive picture that Ralph Ellison (1964), for example, rendered of this region when he spoke about racial relations. Malcolm shows that the perspective of accommodation that Washington had made possible for families like that of King in the South was closed for their likes in the Middle West and the North East. The Ku Klux Klan destroyed personal business ventures of Black “frontiersmen” like that of Malcolm’s father to maintain them at the bottom line of society the better to establish social differentiations alongside racial ones in order to help justify their sequestration in ghettos. Just as colonial peoples, Black people in the United States of America were

threatened to stay where they were, to be content to be equal to themselves, and not to try to break out of the ghetto by seeking equality with the white people in the ethical state. As I have pointed in the previous chapters, Hegel's conception of the ethical state can also be interpreted on exclusive lines when, for example nations or states or their influent members decide on the basis of differences to exclude others (racial groups, social classes, women, etc) from rights which they recognise for themselves and their kind. It is this exacerbated ideology of racial and social differences purposely maintained by the violence and terror of extremists from the white dominant group that made Malcolm think of the loudly claimed integration as a mere shibboleth.

Quite apart from the social violence, Malcolm spoke of domestic violence at the heart of which was the racial issue. His father and mother kept fighting against each other and both against his seven brothers and sisters and himself. While King could "hardly remember" his mother and father arguing with each other, Malcolm's parents "seemed to be nearly always at odds. Sometimes my father would beat her [my mother]." (p.4) It was precisely after one such domestic quarrel over food that the father went out in the dark to meet his death at the hands of the Black legionaries. The children were not spared the ordeal of this domestic violence. The mother vented her anger on Malcolm while the father victimised mostly the other siblings. In other words, each of the parents had his own victims and preferences. Malcolm explained these preferences in terms of skin pigmentation. In his words, the father, who was "jet-black," exempted him from whippings because he was the "lightest child". "As anti-white as my father was," Malcolm reflected, "he was subconsciously so afflicted with the white man's brainwashing of Negroes but [Sic] he inclined to favor the light ones." On the contrary, the mother who was a mulatto [her mother was raped by a white man], was prejudiced in the opposite direction. As he wrote it, "Just as my father favored me for

being lighter than the other children, my mother gave me more hell for the same reason.” (p.6)

Family life, as it is described by Malcolm in his *Autobiography*, is therefore not the seedbed of love and ethical life that Hegel makes of it in the *Philosophy of Right*. Family life regarded by Hegel as a crucial domain for the exercise of a distinctively social freedom emerges as undermined by racial prejudices arising from the racial brainwashing of the parents. Malcolm comes very close to Fanon by tracing his childhood waywardness to the sickness and the total breakdown of his family after his father’s murder. In his *Autobiography* and in several interviews and speeches, Malcolm said that his father was murdered, “thrown under a street car” by the Black Legionnaires (p.10). The father’s absence had a profound effect upon the economic and emotional well-being of the Little family. Louise Little used all possible means in order to survive with eight children during the depression years of the 1930s. The pain of hunger became a daily experience of the Little family. As Malcolm recalled, “Our family was so poor that we would eat the hole of out of a doughnut.” (p.5)

Proud as she was Malcolm’s mother was later obliged to accept public outside relief. As a result of social accusations by relief workers that she was unable to care of her large family, she became mentally ill. This started the dispersal of what remained of the Little family. Malcolm, for example, began to steal, because, as he said, “I was so hungry, I didn’t know what to do.” (p.16) The welfare agents availed themselves of his juvenile delinquency to place him in a foster family. Malcolm’s memory of these relief agents partly explained his intense antipathy toward whites in his later life: “They acted as if they owned us, as if we were their private property.” (p.13) In his eyes, the welfare workers were nothing but “home wreckers”. As for Louise Little, she suffered, as I have said above, from a severe mental breakdown that landed her in the state hospital at

Kalamazoo. Her elder children became “state children”(p.21) while the younger ones, including Malcolm were placed in several foster homes. The way Malcolm described the separation of his family members across the state recalls the old practice of slave auctioneering. Looking back on that painful event, Malcolm writes the following:

I truly believe that if ever a state social agency destroyed a family, it destroyed ours. We wanted and tried to stay together. Our home didn't have to be destroyed. But the Welfare, the courts, and their doctor, gave us the one-two-three punch. [...] We were ‘state children,’ court wards; [the judge] had the full say-so over us. A white man in charge of a black man's children! Nothing legal, modern slavery, however kindly intentioned. (p.21)

It has to be noted that in 1932, as Eugene Victor Wolfenstein writes it so well, in the name of Roosevelt's New Deal for the forgotten man, “the American welfare state was born. The great morning presaged a century before in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* developed experimentally in Bismarckian Germany and apparently liberalized by Keynes had finally arrived.” (1993: 126) Obviously, the Black forgotten man in Malcolm's life writing did not only continue to be forgotten, but in the name of the New Deal his family was shattered.

The above comparison of Malcolm X's and King's early childhood experiences provides a clue to their radically contrastive images of mainstream America in their later lives. As the previous chapter showed, King's parents provided their children with “a very congenial home,” including “the basic necessities of life,” and important role-models of the race for them to emulate. They also protected them from the worst experiences of white racism. King, therefore, was able to develop the inner fortitude, self-confidence, and discipline to prevail over his disadvantages in a segregated society. The case was different for Malcolm. His parents were not able to protect their children from the violence of white hate groups or from the more civilised violence of institutional racism like that of the welfare agency or the insurance agency which robbed the Little family of its dues. Malcolm was only five years old when his father

was killed and twelve when his mother was committed to a mental institution. With no real and stable parental love to affirm his identity and instil in him the self-confidence that he was as good as anybody else, he did not acquire the emotional strength to cope with the prejudices of the mainstream American society. Accordingly, King's fighting impulse for admission into what Hegel calls the ethical state turned into a self-destructive impulse.

Moreover, the contrast in King's and Malcolm's church and educational experiences during childhood partly explains their different perspectives on America as an ethical state. While King attended segregated churches and schools and came in contact with whites only when he had developed a sense of himself as a Negro in a white world, Malcolm's church and educational experiences after the death of his father were primarily integrated and thus defined by whites. In this regard, Fanon writes that "As long as the black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts to experience his being through others." (1967:109) As he reflected back on his childhood, Malcolm said that "I lived a thoroughly integrated life" as if to underline the pathologic turn that his encounter with the white world had taken. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel describes education (*Bildung*) as closely linked to the process of liberation. In the colonial context, Fanon shows that the same education contributes to the psychopathology of the Black French man. According to him, the purpose of children's games and stories, psychodramas, folktales to which children are exposed at school in Martinique provide the catharsis which society needed to expel its collective anxieties. The problem for the black French school child, according to Fanon, is that these stories were written for white children. The characters who symbolize fear and evil are often represented by Indians and Blacks. The Black

child identifying with the hero found himself identifying unconsciously with the white figure against the Black one.

Malcolm's educational experience resembles that of the Black French child that Fanon describes in *Black Skin, White Masks*. Following his father's death, his mother joined a Seventh - Day Adventist church which was mostly white. Malcolm attended three schools in Michigan, all of them controlled by white principals and two of them chiefly white in terms of student population. What he remembered about the white people he encountered in the schools and the detention home where he resided was the names they called him, names such as "Nigger," "coon," "darkie," and "Rastus." He heard these derogatory names so often that they ceased to be insulting, thinking that they were his actual names.

Malcolm's climactic educational experience occurred at Mason Junior High School. Quite apart from the children of a Black family called Lyons, Malcolm was the only one of his race at that school. He studied hard and managed to become one of the top students in his class. He was also elected president of the seventh-grade class. The Swerlins, a wife-husband team who ran the detention home where Malcolm stayed, were proud of him, the way one is proud of a "mascot". It seemed that everyone- fellow students, teachers, and townspeople liked him, and he was proud that they did. But in spite of this seeming recognition, those whites made it clear to him that he was not white, and thus could not do what others did. He could not date white girls. Malcolm was their favourite nigger, but that was all. The final shock came when his English teacher or Master Mr Ostrowski discouraged him from holding the ambition of becoming a lawyer and suggested instead carpentry as a "more realistic goal for a nigger." (p.36) The Washingtonian philosophy of education seems to have had a firm hold on even a supposedly open-minded teacher such as Ostrowski. In his eyes, Negroes

remain essentially “hewers of wood” (the words are DuBois) no matter what their intellectual achievements are. This childhood episode in Malcolm’s life points to the gap between the theory and practice of social integration that his contemporaries were fighting for. Although Malcolm had performed well at a predominantly white Junior High School and had assimilated white American values, he discovered that the American society was a racist society in which the colour line was the overriding principle that precluded his full admission to, and social mobility in mainstream America.

In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon writes that in the colonial context, the role that labour performed in the Hegelian instance did not apply to the historical experience of Blacks in the West. This is the conclusion that Malcolm seems to have come to in this episode of his life. Unlike the Hegelian slave, his hard work (at school) did not win him his English master’s recognition. On the contrary, Mr Ostrowski laughed at his desire to become a lawyer. Ostrowski did not expect recognition from Malcolm the intellectual either. What he was interested in was the manual work of Malcolm as a carpenter. Moreover, unlike the Hegelian dialectic, the master in Malcolm’s *Autobiography* did not save his slave (Malcolm). Psychologically speaking, he gave him a deadly blow by standing as a psychological obstacle to the realisation of the self through intellectual work. Malcolm later looked at this decisive point in his educational career saying that

If Mr Ostrowski had encouraged me to become a lawyer, I would today probably be among some city’s professional black bourgeoisie, sipping cocktails and palming myself off as a community spokesperson for and leader of the suffering black masses. (p. 35 )

As Fanon would have written, Malcolm whose ego was too weak to insist on fulfilling his ambition, “turned away from intellectual work” by dropping out of school and going to live with Ella Mae Little Collins, a half-sister of his who lived in Boston.

This decision of living in Boston had a previous motivation. Going there during the summer of 1940 and seeing so “many Negroes [...] thronging downtown Roxbury at night, especially on Saturdays – the neon lights, nightclubs, bars, the cars they drove!” created in him, “the sense of being a real part of a mass of my own kind, for the first time”. (Ibid) It had also caused him such

a [strong] restlessness with being with white people [that it] became a physical strain simply to sit in Mr Ostrowski’s class. Where ‘nigger’ had slipped off my back before, wherever I heard it now, I stopped and looked at whoever said it. And they looked surprised that I did. (p.37)

The psychological shock attendant on being refused an intellectual career and the subsequent rendezvous with his own race in Boston represent for Malcolm the beginning of a change in consciousness, and a turning point in the liberation of the self and his race. Paradoxically, it is the master’s negative attitude that made him break from the house of slavery and seek his roots among his own people, instead of taking the intellectual route of the Negro bourgeoisie and Negro leaders whose “primary concern,” he says, “is grabbing a few more crumbs from the groaning board of the two-faced whites with whom they’re begging to “integrate”. This quest for roots corresponds to the second phase in Fanon’s three-step journey of the colonised intellectual towards national culture. The first phase is that of the “unqualified assimilation” (Fanon F, 1978:222) to the dominant culture that Malcolm experienced until he “decides to remember what he is” (Ibid.) while the third phase is the “fighting phase” during which Malcolm turns into the awakener of the Black people.

It was in Boston that Malcolm began to immerse himself in the violent and self-humiliating world of the Black masses, where he was fully accepted. But looking back at this episode from a larger perspective, Malcolm saw that no matter how self-humiliating his experience in the Black ghetto had been, it was not as damning as the experience of the educated Negroes who wanted to assimilate themselves with the white

people. In Boston, Malcolm identified with the Black masses and rejected the Negro middle class. Although he appreciated what his half-sister did for him, she could not entice him to associate with the successful “Hill Negroes” of her neighbourhood in Roxbury, the “Four Hundred,” as they called themselves. The reason is that they pretended to be who they were not “breaking their backs trying to imitate white people.” (p.40)

Malcolm was drawn to the ghetto section of Roxbury, which the ‘Hill elite’ “looked down their noses.” For him, Black Roxbury was “much more exciting, with its grocery stores, walk-up flats, cheap restaurants, poolrooms, bars, storefront churches, and pawnshops.” He “felt himself more relaxed among Negroes who were being their natural selves and not putting on airs.” (p.43) For Malcolm, before and after his conversion to the Nation of Islam, being natural meant acting like black people- talking, walking, and dancing according to their instincts of their African heritage. It also meant not feeling “any better than any other Negro” and avoiding the “indignity of self-delusion” about integration. Nothing disturbed Malcolm more than hearing Negroes talking with “phonied up Black Bostonese” accents, about being in “banking” or “securities,” as if “they were discussing a Rockefeller or Mellon when in fact they worked as menials and servants.” Some “talked so affectedly among their own kind,” he said, “that you couldn’t even understand them.” Malcolm called them “Hill clowns.” (Ibid. 43)

Malcolm’s picture of the Black elite of Boston recalls in many ways the picture that Fanon drew of the “Negro [elite] of the Antilles.” Both of them suffer from an inferiority complex, which according to Fanon, “has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality”. Into this cultural void comes the language of the dominant civilisation or group. Taking stock of the Sappir-Whorfian hypothesis

equating language with culture, Fanon asserted that in the colonial context, the “Negro [...] will come closer to being a real human being – in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language.” (1968:18) Malcolm makes the same case as Fanon when he implies that the Bostonian Black elite is living in the prison-house of the white man’s language and culture. This Black elite is constituted of mimic men, who in the absence of a true recognition in the ethical state, is satisfied with a formal or nominal recognition straining not to slide back from the “Hill” into the dark hole of the black ghetto. In short, the Black elite, far from being integrated on equal terms with the white members of the ethical state, are living an in-between or a liminal existence in an essentially Manichean world.

### **B. The Internal Colony and the Hegelian Dialectic**

The Manichean world that Malcolm draws in his work reminds us of the Manichean world of the colony that Fanon sketches in *The Wretched of the Earth*. The racial divide separated this world into two irreconcilable zones, one of them reserved for the settlers and the other one to the natives. The former, as Fanon tells us, is “a strongly built town all made of stone and steel, [a town] brightly lit [whereas] the native town, the Negro village is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil.” (Ibid.39) Malcolm’s picture of Boston, one of the first towns of colonial America, is similar in its structure. On the one hand, there is the town of the descendants of the white Puritan settlers to which the Black elite desperately tries to belong and the world of the Black ghetto. Each of these zones is kept off limits except for those white ghostly people, who under the cover of darkness spend their spare time in Negro leisure places. Fanon writes that the divide line between the native town and that of the settlers is marked off by police barracks. This seems also to be the case for the separated zones of the white and Black people in Malcolm’s work wherein police brutality recurs as a motif. Above all,

however, the colonial world that Fanon and Malcolm portray for us are worlds marked by violence, a violence turned towards self-destruction on the part of the dominated group.

Malcolm identified himself completely with the world of the hustler from the moment in 1941 when he first arrived in Boston to his conversion in 1948 to Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam while in prison. He found himself a "slave" (job) as a shoeshine boy at the Roseland State Ballroom, bought himself several zoot suits, smoked and sold reefers, and got himself a white woman, "too fine to believe," as a status symbol. As a shoeshine boy, he not only shined white customers' shoes, making his rag "pop like a Chinese firecracker" to the rhythm of Benny Goodman's band, he also "whiskbroomed white cats [for] a nickel or dime tip [and] for two bits, uncle Tommed a little". Nothing, however, revealed Malcolm's contempt for himself more than the "conking" of his hair. Reflecting back on his 'self-defacing conk,' he said the following:

This was my first really big step toward self-degeneration: when I endured all that pain, literally burning my flesh to have it look like a white man's hair. I had joined that multitude of Negro men and women in America who are brainwashed into believing that the black people are 'inferior'-and white people 'superior'- that they will even violate and mutilate their God-created bodies to try to look 'pretty' by white standards. (p.54)

Malcolm echoes Fanon when he reports the violence that he did to his body to meet white standards and the muscular tension that he soon learned to release through wild dancing, the taking of drugs and the quarrel with his kith and kin. Fanon, for example, spoke of the same muscular tension on the part of the "native", tribal warfare, personal feuds and "emotional sensibility exhausting itself in dances which are more or less ecstatic." (1978: 57)

The colonised, Fanon writes, live on a "phantasmic plane (Sic)". (Ibid.52) This seems to be true for Malcolm. At the start of the war in the Pacific, he landed a job as a

railway man through the connections that his sister Ella had with an elderly Pullman porter. The shortage of labour and Ella's decision to get him away from the white woman Sophia soon helped him realise a long-held dream of visiting New York. When he first visited New York as a fourth-cook (dishwasher) on a Boston- York train, Harlem mesmerized him and made him think that he belonged there because people did not put on airs as in the South End of Roxbury. "New York was heaven to me," he recalled. "And Harlem was Seventh heaven!" (p.76) Small's Paradise, the Savoy Ballroom, the Theresa Hotel, the Braddock Hotel bar, the Apollo Theatre, the nightclubs, speakeasies, and other places "wherever Negroes played music" consumed every waking hour of his time when he was not working as a "sandwich man on the Yankee Clipper"(train) to New York. Harlem was like Roxbury's South End "magnified a thousand times." It was in Harlem that Malcolm was 'schooled' in his hustling trade by 'experts' such as "Sammy the Pimp," "Jumpsteady," "Fewclothes," 'Dollarbill' and 'West Indian Archie'. (Ibid) Malcolm succeeded in becoming "one of the most depraved parasitical hustlers" of his time. He learned all about "such hustles as the numbers, pimping, con games of many kinds, peddling dope, and thievery of all sorts, including armed robbery." (Ibid) Malcolm's description of his life in the world of the Black underclass is a powerful story of the psychological violence that white society inflicted on the black underclass.

While, in Harlem Malcolm escaped being given death by fellow hustlers several times, and he came close to committing murder. "I would risk just about anything," he recalled. At this stage Malcolm's *Autobiography* reads as if he were saved to enter the stage of world history. Malcolm could have died as a hustler and nobody would have heard about him. But history decided otherwise and made of him one of the historical figures who influenced the Black man's struggle for freedom. Indeed, when Malcolm

returned to Boston, old acquaintances (especially his half sister Ella) were surprised how weird and “uncouth he had become.” He had developed a cocaine habit that cost him twenty dollars a day. To support it, he organised a burglary ring which included a friend named Shorty, their white girl friend, and a ‘finder’ named ‘Rudy’. Malcolm thought himself fortunate to have been caught and sentenced to ten years imprisonment for burglary and racial mixing, for it was in prison that he encountered the teachings of Elijah Muhammad, teachings that radically transformed his life.

The analysis of this episode in Malcolm’s early life as it is revealed in his *Autobiography* shows all the symptoms of the existential-pathology detailed by Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*. First, the Hegelian dialectic of recognition assumes the perverted form of the quest and conquest of the white woman. Speaking in the name of the alienated Black French man, Fanon writes the following: “I wish to be acknowledged not as black but as white. Now – this is a form of recognition that Hegel had not envisaged- who but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man.” (1967:63) Throughout the episodes relating his relation with Sophia, Malcolm poses as her master and exhibits her as the trophy of his combat with the white man, much to the envy of other fellow Black men, he often confesses.

The second symptom of Malcolm psycho-existential pathology is also related to self-negation. Fanon writes that the alienated Black French man considers himself as a prisoner of his Black appearance. His skin pigmentation is viewed as a malediction, a curse from which he tries to flee by lactification, either through miscegenation or whitening products. In his *Autobiography*, Malcolm shows to what extent he was involved in the “quest” of breaking out of his Black appearance to look like “the man”, which in Black American English means the white male. For Fanon, “the black man is

comparison,” and that is exactly the case of Malcolm who tried to straighten his hair. He nearly burned his scalp when he applied a “home-made mixture whose operative ingredient is Red Devil lye,” in a desperate attempt to whiten his skin and look like the white man. In this desire to resemble “the man”, Malcolm became his own enemy, and unwittingly diverted his energies from the Hegelian fight for mutual recognition to that of setting up the white man as an idol to be imitated at least in his outward appearance. Reflecting back on the time when he could not go out without wearing a ‘conk’, he says that “if they (Negroes) gave the brains in their heads just half as much attention as they do their hair, they would be a thousand times better off.” (p.55)

In “*The Autobiography* of Malcolm X: A Revolutionary Use of the Franklin Tradition,” Carol Ohmann sets herself to demonstrate that Malcolm’s autobiography and that of Benjamin Franklin are similar in

the conceptions of the self they convey, in the categories by which they understand men and events, in the standards by which they judge them, and in the ways, looking backward as autobiographers do, they pattern or structure the raw material materials of their own lives.(1970:132)

There is some truth in Ohmann’s assessment of the two life writings, but as it will be shown later, it is in aspects other than the ones that Ohmann mentions that the similarity resides. As it has already been suggested above, in his early life as a hustler before “being born again” into the Nation of Islam , Malcolm’s aim in life was not really to realise himself as a man, but as ‘the man’ i.e. as a white man. The cultural imposition was such that he participated in self-degradation without knowing it.

The attempt to be like the white man is necessarily self-defeating, given the racist structure and institutions of America. The myth of Franklin as a self-educated boy inventor and a self-made man is not applicable to the case of Malcolm because of the colour of his skin. Malcolm was as much intelligent and practical as Franklin, but when the two authors stopped in their life writings to reflect back on their early lives the odds

were rather stacked against the former. Franklin had as much to be proud of as Malcolm had to be ashamed of in terms of achievements. Contrary to the Black man, “you can’t name a thing the white man can’t make. You can hardly name a scientific problem he can’t solve,” Malcolm says. (p.268) In comparison with the white man, the Black man has none of the material achievements from which the former derives his sense of self-worth. This lack of material achievement on the part of the Black was not natural, but it was primarily structural.

As he describes the ghetto of the South End of Boston (Roxbury) or that of Harlem, the reader realises that the racial realities in America are structured, as I have already tried to demonstrate above, on a similar pattern as that of the colonies described in Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*. The ghetto is nothing less than an internal colony. What marks off the ghetto from mainstream society is violence both physical and psychological. Malcolm X portrays the Black man in the ghetto as a victim of economic exploitation and police brutality. In such a racially divided world, it is ironical to speak of material success as Malcolm does in his life writing because that success was more a matter of criminal activity, often against his fellow Black men, rather than hard work. The Black ghetto diminishes the victims’ mental and material potentialities. “All of us [in the Black ghetto] might have probed space, or cured cancer, or built industries,” (p.90) writes Malcolm.

Malcolm’s *Autobiography* is not meant to be only a historical account of an individual life, i.e., that of Malcolm as an individual but that of the whole Black community. For example, his migration to Boston and then to Harlem epitomizes the migration of Black people, mostly from the Agrarian South to the North during the Great Depression period and during World War II. The first chapters relate mostly the hardships that the Little family faced during the depression years which, in the case of

Malcolm, started with the murder of his father by the Black legionnaires, a white racist group in Lansing, resentful of his militancy among his Black fellows, and jealous of his drive to set up a business of his own. Cheated out of her husband's insurance money, Malcolm's mother found it hard to keep a job in a racist environment, and to keep her family together. There is no doubt that racism played a role in Malcolm's move from the country in the Middle West to the North, but it can equally be claimed that it is the economic crisis which exacerbated the racial tensions, and which ultimately broke the Little family, eventually leading to the adoption of Malcolm, his detention and his migration to Boston, and from there to Harlem.

When Malcolm describes the Black ghetto of Roxbury, Boston, in a chapter significantly entitled "Homeboy," the reader becomes aware that Malcolm is only a historical representative of the Black migrants drawn by the migration wave from the North to the South during the Great Depression. "Homeboy" is the name given to Malcolm by a previous migrant friend who hailed from the same town (Mason, Michigan) as Malcolm to the ghetto of Roxbury. Malcolm also talks about a Black man who came all the way from Texas to take over a job as a "shoeshine" boy in the Rosalind Ballroom, a job that Malcolm himself had taken over from a previous migrant. The comparison might seem to be exaggerated, but in this same chapter "Homeboy," Ella, Malcolm's half-sister, emerges as some sort of a twentieth-century Harriet Tubman saving her kith and kin from the economic and, certainly, racially hard conditions that prevailed in Georgia, deep in the South. As Malcolm writes it,

Ella told me about other relatives from that branch of the family. A number of them I'd never heard of; she had helped them up from Georgia. They, in turn, had helped up others." (p.33) Malcolm also points out that it was Ella who "arranged for official custody of me to be transferred from Michigan to Massachusetts." (p.38)

Chapter four entitled "Laura" with reference to the Black girl friend that Malcolm quitted for the white woman (named Sophia by Malcolm) ends with the Japanese attack

on Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941, an attack that signalled the start of the Pacific War between the Japanese and the USA. For Malcolm, this date signals the start of his migration to New York. The “war was snatching away railroad men so fast” that Malcolm had, at the recommendation of an elderly Pullman porter and a friend of Ella’s, landed a railroad job in spite of his young age. Malcolm seems to have diminished the importance of the historical events in recounting this episode in his life, tracing everything back to the racial question. For example, he give only secondary importance to the role that World War II had played in making him a world historical figure (the words are Hegel’s) by creating a shortage of labour and offering him a chance to take a job as a Pullman porter between Boston and New York. For Malcolm, the opportunity to work in the railroad was not historical at all. It was mostly due to Ella who wanted to get him away from the white woman and his youthful attraction to the Mecca of the Black man, Harlem in New York.

The irony in Malcolm’s *Autobiography* resides in the fact that World War II waged in the name of freedom was parking the Negroes in ghettos. Though economic recovery was due mostly to the war effort, the Negro in the ghetto did not much profit from it. On the contrary, money was siphoned off these ghettos through legal and illegal economic activities. Racial antagonism was exacerbated as Negroes in uniform took it in their mind to break racial taboos. Malcolm recounts how the shooting of a Negro soldier in the Braddock Hotel in Harlem triggered off a riot leading to a further drastic restriction of the “trickle” of money that the white men had allowed to flow into the Black ghettos since the 1935 riot. Even the Negro bourgeoisie, those Negroes that Malcolm calls the “integration-mad Negroes” (p.114) fled from Harlem “taking their money downtown to the white man.” (Ibid)

All in all the picture that Malcolm draws of Harlem exposes the contradictions of the American society supposedly involved in a war for freedom and democracy. It is paradoxically during the war that the “dividing line” between the Harlem ghetto and downtown New York, which Malcolm himself called the “Casbah,” (p.83) was marked off more sharply. The portrayal of Harlem in Malcolm’s *Autobiography* is similar to the picture of the colonial world that Fanon draws in the *Wretched of the Earth*:

The colonial world is a world cut in two. The dividing line, the frontiers, is shown by barracks and police stations. [...] The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of reciprocal exclusivity, no conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous. (1967: 29-30)

While the world at large was involved in the fight for ideals, that of Harlem was given up as a den of thieves and a sinful Babylon. It is a world of dope peddlers, burglars and hustlers of all sorts, and “rookie cops and shyster lawyers.” Above anything else the Harlem ghetto is depicted as a fallen world where the psychopathology of the two races is fully played out.

The Boston ghetto to which Malcolm fled for his life when he fell out with Archie (a West Indian gang leader) was not different from that of Harlem. “Sex specialty houses” catering for supposedly white guardians of morality, burglaries, dope peddling, etc. characterise this world. In this world, Malcolm became a leader of a gang of burglars. He was “caught” in Boston while trying to pick up a stolen watch that he had left for repair in a jewellery shop owned by a Jew. His involvement with Sophia whom he describes as some sort of a “whore of Babylon” worsened his case. He was sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment.

On the whole, the representation that Malcolm makes of the Black ghettos share many points with what, in postcolonial studies, is called the internal colony (Cf. Liu John, 1976). The situation of the Black minorities resemble that of the indigenous populations in classical colonies in the sense that in both cases coercive power is used to

impose relationships of subordination. The Black Americans, as Malcolm keeps reminding the reader, unlike the white Americans, were forcibly uprooted by the colonial power to be colonized first in plantations and then in ghettos. Apart from this forced entry into ghettos, Malcolm demonstrates that the social structure in America, like that of the classical colony, fosters the economic and political dependency of the ghetto. Malcolm tells his life story to illustrate how Black individual ambitions like his wanting to become a lawyer are further thwarted by hegemonic/institutional mechanisms like schools. While white youths are free to choose their educational careers, the Black ones are dissuaded to do so because they are supposed to qualify them for manual labour the better to serve the white population. It is understood that this difference in qualifications results in the economic exploitation of the Black population by the white dominant population.

Malcolm put the emphasis on the dimension of racial and cultural oppression common to both the internal and classical colonial situations. In speaking about the negative impact of racial and cultural oppression, Malcolm, as I have tried to demonstrate, comes close to Fanon in his reworking of the Hegelian dialectic of the master and the slave in a colonial context. First, Malcolm uses several times the term “Casbah” to refer to the Black ghetto. What characterises the life of the ghetto and the Casbah is that violence directed against the self and fellow Black men or women. As a result of racial and cultural oppression, the Black man does not seek Hegelian combat with the white master, the “man” as Malcolm calls him, but with his own image. His quest for freedom and manhood, as Malcolm tells us, assumes the shape of a quest for the love of a white woman, the speaking of English with a phoney accent, and a desperate attempt to break out of the prison of his Black skin through bleaching lotions. In retracing the inferiority complex fostered by racial and cultural oppression, Malcolm

shares with Fanon the aim of liberating the Black man from himself by laying bare the psycho- existential deviations from which he suffers. Ultimately, both Malcolm and Fanon sought the realisation of freedom by conversion to what they thought were liberating ideologies in the 1950s. The decisive factors for Fanon's and Malcolm's conversion were the coming into contact with the Algerian war of independence for the former and the encounter with the Nation of Islam in prison for the latter.

### **C. Hegelian and Puritan Providential History**

Retrospectively, Malcolm's view of his arrest for robbery and racial mixing is not totally negative. He assigns it a religious value by putting it in the context of providential history. His narrow escape from death several times during his life is explained in terms of his belief that "everything is written." In other words, it is written that Malcolm would experience a descent into the hell of the Black ghetto and be saved from death in order to serve his people. Though Malcolm spent more than 4 chapters of his *Autobiography* retracing his life as a hustler, he reminds the reader that he "hasn't done it to sound as though I might be proud of how bad, how evil, I was." (p.150) Like all autobiographies, he gives it a didactic dimension:

Today, when everything that I do has urgency, I would not spend one hour in the preparation of a book which had the ambition to perhaps titillate some readers. But I am spending many hours because the full story is the best way that I know to have it [his life] seen, and understood, that I had sunk to the very bottom of the American white man's society when- soon now, in prison- I found Allah and the religion of Islam and it completely transformed my life. (p.150)

From the quote above, we can infer that Malcolm's *Autobiography* is also meant to be a spiritual autobiography putting as much emphasis on his descent into the hell of the ghetto as well as on his ascent from it. (Cf. Flower Elizabeth and Murray G. Murphey) As in American literature in general and the Black American one in particular, the mobility of Malcolm from one place to another is not merely geographical but also spiritual. (Cf. Stepto Robert, 1979) In spite of the fact that Malcolm claims his

affiliation with the Nation of Islam, the rhetoric of his *Autobiography* smacks of the rhetoric of early Puritan writers such as Jonathan Edwards and their twentieth-century descendants like Billy Graham. (Cf. Nancy Clasby, 1974) This rhetoric in turn reminds us of that of Hegel (himself a Lutheran protestant) in its emphasis on the providential and prophetic view of history.

All of the five tenets of Puritanism set forth on the occasion of a 1619 ecclesiastical council can be detected in his rhetoric. These tenets are as follows: original depravity, unconditional election, irresistible grace, perseverance of the saints. According to Puritans, man's original sin destroyed forever his chance of earning grace by his sole personal powers. The original sin in Malcolm's *Autobiography* is basically racial. It is the problem of race that led to Malcolm's expulsion from the garden of his childhood in Lansing, Michigan, which is described at the beginning of the *Autobiography*:

Not only did we have our big garden, but we raised chickens. [...] One thing in particular that I remember made me feel grateful toward my mother was that one day I went and asked her for my own garden, and she did let me have my own little plot. I loved it and took care of it well. I loved especially to grow peas. I was proud when we had them on our table. I would pull out the grass in my garden by hand when the little blades came up. I would patrol the rows on my hands and knees for any worms and bugs, and I would kill and bury them. And sometimes when I had everything straight and clean for my things to grow, I would lie down on my back between two rows, and I would gaze up in the blue sky at the clouds moving and think all kinds of things. (p.8)

This quote coming in a chapter significantly called “nightmare” signals his fall from innocence to the nightmarish realities of racism after his father's death and mother's internment.

The extent of Malcolm's depravity foregrounds his “unconditional election”. Indeed, a person who has gone through all sorts of hustling as Malcolm did can be considered as a lost soul. But Malcolm makes his *Autobiography* read as if he were predestined to receive redemption. Of all the hustlers that he mentions in the book, it is he alone as a chief sinner who receives the abounding grace of God. It was God's spirit which

worked in his soul simply because he is among the elect. “Irresistible grace” came upon him in prison while he was wrestling with “Satan”. When God’s grace finally descended on him, he could neither question nor refuse it. Malcolm compared himself to “Paul on the road to Damascus, upon hearing the voice of Christ, was so smitten that he was knocked off his horse, in a daze.” Like a good Puritan, he recognises that “the truth can be quickly received or received at all, only by the sinner who knows and admits that he is guilty of having sinned much.” (p.163) It is in prison that Malcolm atones for his sins. Malcolm marvels at how “swiftly my previous life’s thinking pattern slid away from me, like snow off a roof.” (p.170) Through Elijah Muhammad, Allah offers a “new covenant” to the Black race.

After his redemption, Malcolm shows the perseverance of the saints. He relentlessly strives to further God’s works inside the prison and outside it after his liberation by “fishing” for new converts among the lost souls, first in the Detroit Black ghetto and then in Harlem. The Puritanical dimension of the faith (the Nation of Islam) assumed shows in the encouragement that it gives to frugality, discipline, effort and a desire for improvement. Already in prison, Malcolm refused to eat pork and gave up smoking, devoting himself instead to reading. Out of prison, he went to live in Detroit with his brother Wilfred, a convert to the Nation of Islam,. For the first time since his separation from his family, Malcolm had integrated family life and started to work in a furniture store owned by a Jew. (Cf. Ahlstrom Sydney E. 2004: 1069)

Malcolm did not make a lot of money. So it was not material success that he took to be the sign of God's grace. His success was his quick rise in the hierarchy of the Saints of the Nation of Islam. Soon after his introduction to Lemuel Hassen, then Minister at Temple Number One in Detroit, Malcolm worked hard to enlarge the membership of the Temple. He saw himself as an active agent in providential history, “feeling that

Allah would be more inclined to help those who helped themselves.” Such an attitude went against the “self-defeating waiting view [...] that Allah would bring us more Muslims.’ (p.195) Malcolm’s commitment to recruitment of new converts pleased Elijah Muhammad so much that “in the summer of 1953 – all praise is due to Allah – I was named Detroit Temple Number One’s Assistant Minister.” Malcolm soon resigned from his job in the Ford Motor Company’s Lincoln-Mercury division to devote himself wholeheartedly to his vocation as Minister, first as Minister of Temple Eleven, and then that of Temple Seven in New York before being nominated as Plenipotentiary Minister moving across American cities to establish other Temples for the Nation of Islam.

The way that Malcolm writes about his life reads and sounds as if he were destined to be among the Saints of the Nation of Islam. First, his mother instilled in him that sense of separation by raising the family on a healthy diet, a diet that excluded among other things the eating of pork even in hard times. It was clear that this family idiosyncrasy explains his easy acceptance of the Puritanical lifestyle of the Nation of Islam later in his life. Second, it is suggested that his descent into the hell of the Black ghettos in American cities was willed by Allah as a preparation for God’s work as a Minister. While living as hustler, he mastered the language of the people living in the Black ghettos, which permitted him later to ‘fish’ more efficiently than other ministers by speaking the language which hustlers understand best.

However, there is another dimension to Malcolm’s entry to providential history that seems to explain the quick rise of the Nation of Islam as a religious force with prominent leaders. All through the second part of the *Autobiography*, which traces the history of the Nation of Islam, Malcolm keeps reminding the reader that before his conversion and his assuming of ministerial duties, the Nation of Islam had practically no influence on the life of the Black people. All that it could show were two temples

with very few believers. It was at the moment when Malcolm joined the Nation that it began to attract the notice of public opinion. Malcolm made a small case of history to explain the prosperity of the Nation of Islam tracing everything to the perseverance of the saints in their work for God.

A review of the American history during this period belies the explanation that Malcolm gave in his *Autobiography* to explain the rise of the Nation of Islam and himself as one of its saints to the stage of what Hegel calls providential world history. What Malcolm seems to have skipped from his *Autobiography* was the fact that his rise to prominence as a Saint of the Nation of Islam had happened at the height of what is called the Cold War. While the country tried to counter Soviet interference abroad, there was an almost paranoid fear that communism was also beginning to contaminate the United States itself. Senator Joseph McCarthy from Wisconsin was the leading man behind the crusade against communism at home. As early as 1950, i.e., at the time when Malcolm was liberated on parole, McCarthy revealed that the “government is full of communists. We can hammer away at them.” The “Palmer Raids” just after World War I had already shown that the United States government had a deep fear of Bolsheviks, but in the middle of the atomic age, the anxiety was considerably multiplied. McCarthy’s accusations against Americans- including members of the US State Department – often made the national news. The press faithfully covered his activities, with headlines such as “McCarthy Outlines News Red-Hunting Plan.” (Cf. Allitt Patrick, 2003)

In the *Autobiography* Malcolm seems to have overlooked on purpose the role that the communist threat played in the rise of the Nation of Islam. Apart from his explicit dismissal of communism nearly at the end of the book, Malcolm reveals at least twice in the course of the *Autobiography* that the Nation of Islam was deeply involved in the

fight against communism. For example, he reminisced that episode of his life when he first time entered the ghetto of Harlem. He recalled that

Negro and white canvassers sidled alongside you, talking fast as they tried to get you to buy a copy of the *Daily Worker*. [...] Who do you think fought the hardest to help free those Scottsboro boys? 'Things I overheard among the Negroes when the salesmen were around let me know that the paper somehow was tied in with the Russians, but to my sterile mind in those early days, it didn't mean much; the radio broadcasts and the newspapers were then full of our-ally-Russia, a strong, muscular people, peasants, with their backs to the wall help America to fight Hitler and Mussolini. (p.76)

Though Malcolm never came back to talking about the Russians during the war period which he mostly spent in Harlem, he hardly managed to conceal his concern over the fact that even when America was involved in some sort of unholy marriage with Russia, the Black ghetto of Harlem was a hot spot where secrets of State were leaked to prostitutes/spies by "Society Leaders. Big Politicians, [...] Hollywood celebrities" indulge themselves in "strange appetites." (p.119)

It follows that if Malcolm's voice and that of the Nation of Islam was amplified so much in the 1950s it was because it was considered neither "subversive nor un-American propaganda" by the Un-American Activities Committee busy chasing communists then. As paradoxical as it may seem today, Malcolm was considered as being more American than his fellow Black leader Martin Luther King suspected by the FBI, especially its director Hoover, of entertaining relationships with communists because of Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) recruitment of ex-communists. The Saints of the Nation of Islam to which Malcolm belonged placed their fight for the Black man's rights on a purely religious ground. The Nation of Islam was recognised as a religious group. As such it showed itself as being more interested in ensuring the freedom of worship than in promoting political rights as such. Nonetheless, its religious activities siphoned off black discontents which might have been tempted to join the communists.

Speaking about the religious dimension of Malcolm's thought, it can rightly be said that it is informed by a basically Puritan/Hegelian historical vision of the world. Why Malcolm had made the Puritan vision of the world his can be explained in at least two ways. First, it was in Norfolk Prison Colony's library that Malcolm became interested in history and religions. Malcolm let the reader know that a millionaire named Parkhurst had willed his library to Norfolk Prison Colony and that the majority of the donated books were about history and religions. To all evidence, as the name of the prison suggests, Malcolm had immersed himself in what V.Y. Mudimbe calls the "colonial library", a library retracing the history of the early English colonies on the eastern seaboard, best represented by the Massachusetts Bay Colony. "At Norfolk," writes Malcolm, "we could actually go into the library, with permission – walk up and down the shelves, pick books. There were hundreds of old volumes, some of them probably quite rare. I read aimlessly, until I learned to read selectively, with a purpose." (pp.157-158)

Malcolm did not tell the reader about the religious books that he had read in prison. But as the words "old volumes" in the quote suggest, Malcolm found himself in the position of an "archaeologist of knowledge" (the words are Foucault's), digging into the colonial history of New England (America), particularly that of Massachusetts in one prison of which he was interned. Malcolm's thirst for knowledge had its source in Bimbi a fellow Black convict in Norfolk prison colony. For Malcolm, Bimbi was a mentor, an exemplary figure who could "command respect through words" (p.154) from both black and white inmates. What made Malcolm seek Bimbi's friendship was "when I heard him discuss religion." Until he had come into contact with Bimbi, Malcolm considered himself "beyond atheism – I was Satan. But Bimbi put the atheist philosophy in a framework, so to speak. That ended my vicious cursing attacks. My

approach sounded weak alongside his, and he never used a foul word”. (p.154)The seed of religion that Bimbi planted in Malcolm’s flowered by his reading of religious and historical books in Norfolk Prison Colony.

However, it was from the world outside the prison that the urge to cultivate his religious and historical knowledge came to Malcolm. Malcolm informs the reader that “one day in 1948 after I had been transferred to Concord, my brother Philbert, [...] wrote me that he had discovered the “natural religion for the black man [...] called the Nation of Islam.” Shortly afterwards, Malcolm started his correspondence with Elijah Muhammad, the religious leader of the Nation of Islam. Much has been written about the Nation of Islam since Louis Lomax and C. Eric Lincoln published their books in the early 1960s. According to Malcolm, Lomax’s and Lincoln’s books, alongside television programmes such as “the Hate that the Hate Produced” (p.238) helped to pull out the Nation of Islam out of underground existence to make it one of the prominent realities in American public life. Apart from revealing the media through which the Nation of Islam got out of the underground life of the Black ghettos, Malcolm did not go into the real “enabling conditions” that really paved the way for the circulation of the ideas of the Nation of Islam. Malcolm placed the interest that the public had shown for his speeches about the Nation of Islam in the context of the culture of scandal that America knows so well to cultivate.

Admittedly, part of the publicity that the Nation of Islam got was due to the culture of scandal about the existence of a hate religious group in a country whose motto is to “love it or leave it”. Yet, this culture of scandals is incomplete as an explanation for the circulation of the discourse of the Nation of Islam, which as it has been claimed above, borrows so much from a Puritan/Hegelian idea of history. If Malcolm was first interested in religion and history in Norfolk Prison Colony, and then went out to

become a successful Minister of the Nation of Islam, it was to a large extent because American public life was open to receive the religious discourse. The period in which Malcolm and the Nation of Islam left out the underground life of the Black ghetto was the period that knew a revival of interest in Puritan historiography. This interest in Puritan historiography in the academic world was signalled by the publication of Perry Miller's famous essay *Errand into the Wilderness* in the early 1950s. The title of Miller's essay recalls Samuel Danforth's sermon entitled *A Brief Recognition of New Englands Errand into the Wilderness* published as early as 1670. Danforth was a second-generation Puritan Minister. The thrust of his election sermon was an urgent call and reminder to Puritan New England of their errand or divine mission to purify the church in the wilderness of America and to establish God's kingdom there. The "wilderness of America" is a motif that recurs in Malcolm's *Autobiography*, a motif that leads the reader to place it in the context of the Puritan literature of the 1950s and 1960s.

The decade of the 1950s was a timely decade for the revival of Puritan thought even in the public at large. For Puritans, as Avi Zakai writes it so well, history and the apocalypse are closely intertwined in their rendition of their migration to the New World. This event was placed within the context of sacred providential and ecclesiastical history. According to Zakai, the migration of the Pilgrim Fathers to Massachusetts was justified by the appeal to the flight of the "Woman into the Wilderness" in *Revelation*. In the typology of Puritan thought, this flight and refuge of the Woman of the Wilderness, standing for God's church, from the dragon was considered by the early Puritan Ministers like John Brightman, Robert Cushman, John Winthrop and John Cotton as a major prophetic and revelatory event prefiguring the necessary flight of the early pilgrims to seek refuge in the "wilderness of America". For

Zakai, the early Puritan thinkers established parallels between the apocalyptic events in the *Revelation* and contemporary historical events such the Thirty Years' War and the Restoration, announcing God's punishment of the Englishmen who had come short of the Reformation. The Puritans drew the justification for the migration seen as a divine mission or errand to establish the Kingdom of God from their interpretation of contemporary historical events in the light of the *Revelation*.

Nothing less than a clean-cut separation from the sinful Church of England, which Puritans had vainly tried to purify, could save them from divine punishment. To paraphrase Zakai, when the Puritans realised their failure to reform the Church of England, they resorted to its desacralisation through a refurbishment of Protestant ecclesiastical history developed by English divines such as John Fox in the Elizabethan period. They demoted England from its position as the elect nation and promoted America as the sacred land instead by appealing to the apocalyptic event of the Woman's flight into the Wilderness. Within the unfolding drama of providential history, the Puritans came out as the persecuted Woman (representing in their view the Congregational church) who fled into the Wilderness to escape the rise of the Beast to predominance in a fallen world doomed to be destroyed. For many Puritan divines like Danforth, the religious life of the Puritans belonging to the third generation in New England knew a decline because of economic prosperity. As a result many of them like Jonathan Edwards launched their Jeremiads to denounce their sickness and backsliding and to exhort them to renew their fathers' covenant with God and to continue their errand. New England's religious decline was a sign of God's impending judgement. "Sinners [are already] in the Hands of an Angry God," Jonathan Edwards warned his congregation.

Obviously Malcolm's philosophy and that of the Nation of Islam to which he adhered

for more than a decade could best be understood within the context of the revival of the Puritan ideology in the 1950s and the early 1960s, which as I said resembles that of Hegel in its emphasis on providential apocalyptic history. The parallel between these two decades and the early Puritan period was drawn by Arthur Mailer in the *Crucible* (1953) by comparing the hunt for communists by McCarthy and the Un-American Activity Committee with the Salem Witch Trials in 1692. Both saw the execution of innocent people. The Puritan church fathers executed 20 people- 13 women and 7 men- and their twentieth-century grandsons sentenced Julius and Ethel Rosenberg to death for supposedly belonging to a communist spy ring that had stolen nuclear secrets and sent them to the Soviet Union. Within the context of the arms race between the two superpowers whose fears sank deep into the public psyche through the digging of nuclear hideouts and rehearsals in preparation of nuclear strikes, the Americans could only be responsive to the apocalyptic and eschatological discourse of the Puritan Fathers. The Billy Grahams of the affluent society of the 1950s and the early 1960s like their peers of the “easy-going” third-generation Puritan migrants saw in the decline of religion a sign of impending divine punishments, announced in the 1950s by the calls of the sirens for sheltering in nuclear hideouts. It can be said that if Malcolm was drawn to the Nation of Islam, it is because, to paraphrase T.S. Eliot’s explanation about his conversion to Catholicism, he considered that “there is more genuine Puritanism in the [Nation of Islam] than outside it.” (1933:676)

It was the apocalyptic vision of Puritan history as delineated above that Malcolm x and Elijah Muhammad used to define the ideology of the Nation of Islam. As it appears in Malcolm’s *Autobiography*, this ideology is a separatist ideology built not only on race but above everything else on religion. What Minister Malcolm did to American Puritan history resembles strangely what the Puritan Ministers like John Brightman and

John Cotton did to the protestant vision of history defined by their contemporary divine John Fox. The American society in the *Autobiography* comes out not as an elect country but a profane country where God's people (the Black race) were persecuted because of racial prejudice. Speaking of the Black man's life in the "wilderness of North America," Malcolm writes that "We didn't land on Plymouth Rock, my brothers and sisters... Plymouth Rock landed on us!" (p.201) The white man whose best representative was the white Anglo-Saxon "blue-eyed devil" was depicted as a "sinner in the hands of an angry god." His major sin was the persecution of the Black man, the "bleaching" of his race through miscegenation and the denial of its history.

Malcolm and the Nation of Islam go as far back as the story of creation to justify the separation of the profane i.e., the white society from the Black society i.e., the society of visible saints. In this story, the Black man is represented as the original man (*ab-origin*) whereas the white man comes from the manipulation of the Black genes by an evil scientist named Yacub. In other words, the white man is a degenerate creature, a beast born out of genetic engineering involving a process of selecting white genes and letting out Black ones over the centuries. Curiously enough, Yacub had manipulated the human genes in Patmos the same island where John had the revelation that was at the basis of the typology of Puritan ideology known as the Woman in the Wilderness. This typology seems to have been turned inside out in the ideology of the Black Nation. The Woman of the Wilderness, those Puritans who fled from the beast (the dragon) had become the persecutors of the Black man, who can well stand for the demonised dragon in *Revelation*.

There are many other points of comparison between the ideology of the Nation of Islam and that of the early Puritans in their attempt to justify separation. The most salient one is related to the prophetic dimension given to their sacred histories. In both

ideologies, it is prophesied that the predominance of the reign of the beast, black in Puritan sacred history and white in the Nation of Islam, is only temporary. In both of them, the godly people expected the divine chastisement of the corrupt and sinful people. The separation is sought because of the much-feared impending God's judgement God's and wrath that would pour upon England for the Puritan ministers of the seventeenth century and upon American for the ministers of the Nation of Islam in the second half of the twentieth. Malcolm speaks of the Armageddon in his *Autobiography* and every little accident that happened to the white man was interpreted as the "trumpet sound" announcing the Last Judgement of the white man. In his epilogue to Malcolm's work, Alex Haley reminds us how, for example, Malcolm came to announce him the "good news [of ] thirty-odd white Americans, mostly of Atlanta, Georgia, killed" (p.394) in a plane crash at Orly Field in Paris. Malcolm was carried so much in his apocalyptic interpretation of incidents in the white man's life that he saw in Kennedy's assassination in 1963 a case of "the chickens coming home to roost' during a speech significantly entitled 'God's Judgement of White America.'" (p.301)

Following his excommunication or "isolation" from the Nation of Islam by Elijah Muhammad for qualifying Kennedy's assassination as an example of "chickens coming home to roost," Malcolm came to another crossroads in his ideological life. Even so, he continued to read his life within the prophetic context of his early Puritanism when he was Minister of the Nation of Islam. As a first move in the desacralisation of the Nation of Islam in the eyes of Black Muslims, Malcolm decided to make the Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca. The Hajj did not only make of Malcolm an orthodox Sunny Muslim but also a legitimate leader of the Islam Mosque Inc. a religious organisation that he created just before he went to Mecca. In his "Letter from Mecca," he made it clear that "my Hajj to the Holy City of Mecca has established our Muslim Mosque's

authentic religious affiliation with the 750 million Muslims.”(p.361) While sacralising the Muslim Mosque’s Inc., El-Hajj Malik El-Shabbah proceeded to the desacralization of the Nation of Islam by divesting its leader Elijah Muhammad of his divine cloak as the prophet : “There on the Holy World hilltop [Mount Arafat], I realized how very dangerous it is for people to hold any human being in such esteem, especially to consider anyone some sort of ‘divinely’ guided and ‘protected’ person.” (p.365) Hajj Malik reproaches his old mentor, now turned into his tormentor, his immorality.

With death threats pending on him, Malcolm’s consciousness became more deeply prophetic. In the last chapters, Malcolm (or El-Hajj Malik) knew that his life could be cut short at any fateful moment. It is in these last chapters that Malcolm also speaks most of the freedom to which he was ready to sacrifice his life. His rhetoric recalls Hegel when he says that the ultimate purpose of the world is freedom, and that the means of its realisation are the actions and passions of historical agents. Actions and passion for freedom, as Malcolm tells the reader and as Hegel remind us in his description of the historical process lead “to the slaughter-bench at which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of states, and the virtues of individuals have been victimised.” (1991:21)

As Malcolm moves away from the orbit of the Nation of Islam, his political rhetoric gradually assumes the contours of a postcolonial intellectual. More than King, Malcolm affirms that the case of the oppression and exploitation of the Black people in the United States, especially those living in the Northern ghettos is similar to colonial oppression. Malcolm can be considered as one of the founders of what in the 1970s became known as the Internal Colony School of Black American history (Cf. Malcolm X, 1965:96). In his *Autobiography* and speeches, the Black ghetto becomes the colonial Kasbah of Algiers, separation from mainstream society becomes a question of

independence; the issue of the continuation in the violation of civil rights is transformed into an issue of human rights, regarded as a case to be presented to the United Nations. Malcolm dropped out the religious approach to the racial issue that he advocated while he was member of the Nation of Islam to become “committed for the betterment of the community by any means necessary.” (Ibid. 128) This means that Malcolm became committed to a broader range of fighting strategies including the resort of what he called “the ballot or the bullet”. To this end, he first established the Muslim Mosque, Inc in 1964. This “new organization [...whose] religious base,” he tells us “is the religion of Islam... [and] will have black nationalism” at the core of its political, economic and social philosophy. (Malcolm X, 1964:13) But soon under the influence of African politics, he realised the need for a completely non-religious organisation and rapidly proceeded to the establishment of the Organization of Afro-American Unity on June 28, 1964.

The programme of the Organisation of Afro-American Unity as detailed by Malcolm in his two founding rallies emphasised the necessity of acquiring political, social and economic power. Harold Cruise seems to be echoing favourably Malcolm when he wrote that “America, which idealises the rights of the individuals above everything else, is in reality, a nation dominated by the social power of groups, in-groups and cliques... [and that] the individual in America has few rights that are not backed up by the political, economic and social power of one group or another.” (Cruise Harold, 1984:7-8) However, what strikes most in Malcolm’s new programme is the importance accorded to the dimension of culture. Indeed, culture became the defining feature of Malcolm’s programme whose philosophy can be said to be cultural nationalism. With this cultural nationalist programme in mind, Malcolm X was able to claim the legacy of Marcus Garvey and call for the “restoration of cultural or spiritual

bonds between our people here [America and Western hemisphere] and our people there [Africa].” (Malcolm X, 1964:127) However, Malcolm’s urgent call for Black Americans to make a cultural/spiritual return to Africa is accompanied by an affirmation of their birthright on the American soil. The commitment to Africa as a cultural and spiritual energising source for the Black population and to America as his birth place make his philosophy fit in with the then-emerging communitarian idea of America conceived as a nation comprising several nations. This communitarian idea of the nation, as I have claimed earlier, has its solid roots in the Hegelian philosophy in its questioning of the contractual vision of society comprising self-interested individuals.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Malcolm X’s *Autobiography* is informed by ideological frameworks that changed with the shift in the author’s experiences in life. In the first two parts, this framework is defined as being basically Puritan. The work reads both as a conversion narrative and a Jeremiad. It retraces the life of “sinner caught in the hands of an angry god,” a sinful life which ended in his reception of the Grace of God to become one of the Elect among the visible saints of God in the Nation of Islam, which he regarded as the carrier of what Hegel calls a World Spirit. These chapters also expose the sins and corruption of the mainstream society in the manner of a Jeremiad. It is argued that the use of these Puritan chronotopes or typologies can be explained by the resurgence of Puritan writings in the 1950s and early 1960s because of the Cold War on the one hand and the easy reception of their associated rhetoric by the audience on the other. I have made the case that the Puritan historiography and that of Hegel share in common the emphasis that everything that happens in the world occurs according to a divine providential plan.

The second framework is Fanonian philosophy as developed in his two major works, *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. I have attempted to show that this Fanonian framework is more global and explains, at least partly, the Hegelian themes in Malcolm X's work. Hence, while the first parts were indeed written in a Puritan mode, Malcolm fore-grounded in the manner of Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* the twisting in the identities of the racially oppressed. As the *Autobiography* continues to unfold, especially after the separation from the Nation of Islam, the emphasis fell on the sociological reality of the Black ghetto as an internal colony. Echoes from *The Wretched of the Earth* became more prominent in these parts. The diagnosis of psychological traumas due to racial oppression gives place to the revolutionary call for a cultural politics, the aim of which is the affirmation of a national identity peculiar to the Black people in a society thought to be dominated more by group politics than by the ideal of individualism. It is in this celebration of group politics that Malcolm X comes closest to the ideal of the ethical state defended by Hegel in *The Philosophy of Right*. The battle for recognition is not pictured in terms of Black individuals seeking integration into mainstream society but in terms of the combat for a cultural identity and the development of Black power in all fields in order to affirm their independence in the ethnic mosaic of American society.

## Notes and references

Allitt Patrick, *Religion in America*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2003. According to Allitt, the “1950s were the last decade in which theologians played a major role in American public life. [...] They were featured in the press as spokesmen not only on religious affairs but also on religious and cultural affairs.” (pp.23-26) Allitt also underlined the sociological opportunity that the uncovering of American spies of protestant origin offered to other ethnic groups like Catholics. In this regard, he writes the following: “Imagine the Catholics’ relief and righteous indignation on noting that many of the communists and spies turned up by the era’s loyalty investigations like Alger Hiss had come from privileged Protestant families.” (p.23)

Ahlstrom Sydney E. (1972), *A Religious History of the American People*, New York: Yale University, 2004. In a footnote devoted to the Puritan dimension of the Nation of Islam as reflected Malcolm’s *Autobiography*, Ahstrom writes the following: “ Its prohibitions of alcohol, and sexual profligacy, like its demands of respect for womanhood in the context of a strong patriarchal family, of occupational responsibility, and of quiet, decorous behavior, are those of the traditional Puritan-American mainstream. Black Muslims are thus summoned to the moral standards of the Caucasian devils; in this sense, it is a ‘a cultural sect’ calling Negroes out of their subculture.” (p.1069)

Anderson Linda (2001), *Autobiography*, London: Routledge, 2004.

Kwame Antony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates Jr, *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, New York: Persus Books, 1999. Randolph was the founder of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. He was also one of the architects of the March on Washington in 1941, which led to the establishment of the Fair Employment Practices Committee. With respect to Randolph’s commitment to trade union activities, Kwame and Gates write the following: “Although many civil rights leaders focused on voting, education, and other governmental functions, A. Philip Randolph spent his long career as a labor leader working to bring more and better jobs.” (p.1587)

Carmichael Stokely and Charles V. Hamilton (1967), *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, London: Pelican, 1969.

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Cleaver Eldridge (1968), *Soul on Ice*, New York: Delta Books, 1992.

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Cone H.James (1991), *Martin, Malcolm and America: A Dream or a Nightmare?* New York: Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1999.

DuBois E.B. William (1903), *The Souls of Black Folk*, in *Three Negro Classics*, New York: Avon, 1973. The idea of the seventh son as gifted with spiritual vision recalls DuBois's following statement: "The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world." (p.214)

Ellison Ralph, *Shadow and Act*, New York: Random House, 1964. The divergence that existed between Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright is somewhat similar to the divergence between King and Malcolm. In his response to Wright's denunciation of the conciliatory and modernist mode of writing in Ellison's *Invisible Man*, the latter declared that "Geography is destiny," meaning that the relatively tolerant environment of the Middle West in which he grew up explain his departure from Wright's naturalism, which fore-grounded racial violence. Wright was from the Deep South.

Eliot T.S, "The Modern Dilemma," in *The Christian Register: A Journal of Free Churches* CLL, (Oct. 1933), 675-676. In this article Eliot claims that "the sense of sin is absolutely essential to Christianity from which it came; and as for Puritanism, there is more genuine Puritanism inside the Catholic Church than outside it".

Fanon Frantz (1952) *Black Skin, White Masks*, Trans. Charles Lam Markmann (1967) New York: Black Cat Edition, 1968. This is what Fanon says about the difference in degree between the persecution of the Jews and that of the Black people in the West: "The Jew is attacked in his religious identity, in his history, in his race, in his relations with his ancestors and with his posterity; when one sterilizes a Jew, one cuts off the source; every time that a Jew is persecuted, it is the whole race that is persecuted. But it is in his corporeality that the Negro is attacked. It is as a concrete personality that he is lynched. It is as an actual being that he is a threat." (p.163)The similarities between the quote above and Malcolm's quote in the text cannot be missed.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1963), *The Wretched of the Earth*, Trans. Constance Farrington (1968), New York: Grove Press, 1978. Nancy Clasby and Chester J.Fontenot, Jr are two critics who have tried to draw parallels between Fanon's thought and that of Malcom. But these parallels remain sketchy and do not show the extent to which the ideas of these two Black thinkers link up with Hegel's thought. For more information, see Clasby Nancy, "Autobiography of Malcolm X: A Mythic Paradigm," in *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol.5, N° 1(Sept., 1974), pp.18-34. See also Chester J. Fontenot, Jr, "Fanon and the Devourers," in *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 9, N° 1, (Sept., 1978), pp.93-114.

Flower Elizabeth and Murray G. Murphey, *A History of Philosophy in America*, New York: Capricorn Books, 1977. See particularly chapter, "The Absolute Immigrates to America: The St.Louis Hegelians," wherein they qualify Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit* as a spiritual autobiography.

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Zakai Avihu, *Exile and Kingdom: History and Apocalypse in the Puritan Migration to America*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

## General Conclusion

In this research, I have tried to develop the idea that Douglass, Washington, DuBois, Garvey, King Jr and Malcolm X have enlisted each in his own way Hegel in defence of the Black man's freedom. Paradoxically, the philosopher in Western philosophical tradition, who had done most to the exclusion of the African, and by extension of the African-American from world history, is the philosopher who furnished both the necessary themes as well as the methodological tools which permitted for Black American thinkers to elaborate liberating or emancipating projects. My view that Douglass, Washington, DuBois, Garvey, King and Malcolm constitute individual talents in a Hegelian tradition in the Black American political thought falls in line with Fanon's definition of the American struggle for civil rights as basically Hegelian in its orientation.

The historicist approach that I have adopted in this research has allowed me to set each of the works under study in its particular historical context to see how the Hegelian themes and tools were made serviceable for the cause of the Black man's liberation. My research has started with the analysis of Douglass's *Autobiographies*, the final version of which appeared in 1893. In the introduction, I have said that Hegelianism, without being as pervasive as other home-grown philosophies such as Transcendentalism and Pragmatism, had a strong hold in American learned society by the time that Douglass published the first version of the autobiography in 1845. The story of the diffusion of Hegel's thought was best represented by the St-Louis Hegelians, but in the case of Douglass and without denying the influence of the St-Louis Hegelians on him, I have tried to argue that he might have known about Hegel's ideas through Ottila Assing, one of Douglass's intimate friends, who was also a convinced Hegelian. In all cases, the influence of Hegel is there in the second and third versions of his autobiography and

Douglass was literate enough to have read Hegel on his own to re-inscribe the Black voice in what Gates Jr calls the “texts of Blackness.”

At this synthetic stage, it is perhaps necessary to place Douglass’s enlisting of Hegel within the context of the Hegelian interpretations of nineteenth-American history, particularly the one dealing with the first half of the nineteenth century. One such Hegelian interpretation is that of Snider, one of the most famous among the St-Louis Hegelians. According to Flower and Murphey, Snider looked at the conflict-ridden period of Abolitionist agitation preceding the Civil War in terms of the dialectic that Hegel develops in *The Philosophy of Right*. In the words of Flower and Murphey, Snider “interpreted the Southern cause as Abstract Right.” Abstract right (thesis) is the first stage in a dialectic that comprises an antithesis stage called Abstract Morality and a third synthetic stage referred to as Social Morality. Freedom in the first stage consists of the freedom to possess and exchange property. The problem, of course, is that property right in their slaves claimed both by individual slave owners and Southern states transgressed the equal entitlement of each and every individual to freedom no matter to which race s/he belongs.

In Snider’s Hegelian interpretation of American history reported by Murphy and Flower, the Northerners represent Abstract Morality in the sense that their conscience made them recognise the “equal need of men for freedom and self-realisation.” (p.502) Yet their incensed moral consciences at slavery made them overlook the fact that the “state is more than a collection of private ethical individuals.” (p.502) It ignored the national consciousness embodied in the Constitution, which Snider considers as the equivalent of what Hegel called the Ethical State, the synthesis stage in the dialectic of freedom in *The Philosophy of Right*. In Snider’s view of the conflict-ridden period, Lincoln emerges as the hero in the historical process of liberation since he rested his

defence of the Union on the basis of the principles of the Constitution. The completion of freedom according to Hegel in *The Philosophy of Right*, it has be observed, can be achieved only through gradual improvement of the institutions of the Ethical state rather revolution.

Mayflower and Murphey appealed to Snider's interpretation of American history as evidence that the St. Louis Hegelians' appropriation of Hegel belongs neither to the political left or right. In their own words, the "solutions urged by the St-Louis [Hegelians] run the full gamut of the center. Their slogan might have been, 'Reform, yes; revolutionary change, no.'" Mayflower and Murphey go on writing that their favourite Hegel was not the early and youthful Hegel of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* but the Hegel of *The Philosophy of Right* (1821) and *The Philosophy of History* (published posthumously) i.e., the mature Hegel who posed as the official philosopher of the autocratic state of Prussia. Contrary to the St. Louis Hegelians, it is the Hegel of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that appealed most to Douglass as my discussion of his autobiography has attempted to show. Douglass shows how he resisted the brutality of the slave breaker Covey to the peril of his life. Resistance to the order of a white man in slavery times, it should be reminded here, was punishable by death. This episode captures best the Hegelian dialectic of the slave and master. Out of his contestation of Covey's authority, Douglass emerges as a man, jealous of his freedom and master of his own destiny.

It is true that Douglass followed for some years in the footsteps of the Abolitionist leader Lloyd Garrison who advocated moral suasion (that is Abstract Morality) as the best means for shaking the foundations of slavery and permitting slaves access to freedom. But his Hegelian cast of mind was such that soon after the publication of the first version of his autobiography in 1845, Douglass decided to leave the Garrisonian

branch of the Abolitionist movement in favour of a more politically committed branch. His quarrel with Garrison was another example of refusal to submit to another master who seemed more intent on exhibiting him as one of his prizes in his lectures against slavery. Lectures, at that time, were forms of intellectual entertainment. Admittedly, his resistance to Douglass was less deadly than the one that opposed him to Covey, but it was no less dangerous for his turn to journalism as a form of political action against slavery might well have been killed in the bud by the influential Garrison. Still, Douglass took the risk since he believed that only a Black man could speak correctly on behalf of his slave brethren. This spirit of resistance eventually led him to militate for the right of the Blacks to participate in the Civil War on the side of the Union troops against the Confederates in order to authenticate their rights to freedom.

However, no matter what parallels can be drawn between Douglass and Hegel, they should not obscure the fact that Douglass did more than adapt the German master's themes. We can say that he polemically refashioned them to suit the Black slave's historical conditions. In this process of refashioning the Hegelian themes and retooling his message, Douglass resembles Fanon's refashioning of the dialectic of the master and the slave to make it fit the colonial situation. For example, just like Fanon, Douglass showed that the African-American slave's labour could neither save him from the violence of the master nor end his alienation. The American slave system, as Douglass represented it, seemed to have borrowed the Aristotelian view of the slave as a tool in the hands of the master. And as such, he was an expendable object that could not expect any recognition from the master. In this context, resistance and revolution, not labour seem to be the best way of access to manhood.

The historicist approach that I adopted also demonstrates that if the early Hegel seemed to have provided Douglass the themes and methodological tools to fight for

freedom during the Abolitionist period, it was rather the mature Hegel that did the same for Washington later in the post-Reconstruction era or what is commonly called the Gilded Age. By this time, Douglass without completely giving up his fight for civil rights had grown to be a conservative supporter of the very political party (the Republican Party) that sold out the Southern Black people for both political and economic expediency. With the northern armies withdrawn from the South leaving the Black population under terrorising extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan, and with the complicity of both Northern and Southern industrialists and farmers, laws were passed largely forfeiting the freedom of the ex-slaves. These Black Codes and later the Jim Crow laws recognised the right of the former masters, some of them now turned industrialists, to the labour of the ex-slaves. In such historical conditions, it was practically impossible for Douglass to advertise the same militant stand for Black man's civil rights or at least for saving those that the 13th, the 14th and the 15th Amendments guaranteed for him. Near the end of his life, Douglass contented himself with denouncing the "stupendous fraud" of the sharecropping system, marrying a white woman and moving to live in Cedar Hill, once the property of General Robert E. Lee, in a desperate symbolic attempt to win recognition for the Black man. This form of recognition is, in the words of Fanon, not envisaged by Hegel.

When Douglass died, on February 20, 1895, the stage was already set for the emergence of another actor in the African-American political scene whose discourse was more tuned to the hegemonic discourse of the period. This actor was Booker T. Washington who posed himself as heir to Douglass by writing a biography wherein he set up his predecessor as the champion of his political philosophy of accommodation whose social application he had started as early as 1875, but which he made official in his Atlanta Address in 1895. This philosophy of accommodation was founded on the

belief that industrial training and voluntary servitude constituted the ideal route for the Negro to achieve such values as hard work. These values, most of them economic, are prerequisites before any attempt to enter into the political kingdom. Writing in the revisionist context of the post-Reconstruction period, Washington adhered to the thesis that slavery was before everything else a “training school” that permitted the Negro to acquire skills, skills which sometimes earned him freedom, and which it is assumed, would have eventually led to the full liberation of the Black population in the South. The Civil War in this regard appeared as a “big mistake” and the Reconstruction had merely contributed to the “deskilling” of the Black population through an emphasis on liberal arts. Washington also legitimated his appeal to industrial training for the Black people by enlisting Douglass’s view of the liberal arts as being unsuitable for racial uplifting. At his time, Douglass justified his opinions by the fact that most of the nationalists of the American Colonization Society like Martin Delany, Highland Garnett and many others were highly educated people incapable of fitting themselves into American mainstream society, Douglass thought, simply because of their higher education. For Washington, the preference of industrial education over liberal education was a matter of adjusting the Black people to the political order of the day by offering them skills needed by the white masters of the burgeoning industries in the South. Washington’s compromise with the South in this period of terror and lynching reads as if the struggle, so central to the Hegelian dialect of the slave and master was given up, to give place to a compromise where the ex-slaves exchange their labour for their lives, except that in this case that labour did not win them any social recognition.

In his *Up From Slavery*, Washington affirms that he was tempted by entering politics, but he resisted this temptation and gave himself up to the humbler but nobler function of teacher/headmaster of the industrial school of Tuskegee. Notwithstanding

Washington's affirmation of having stood outside the political game, this industrial school was initially founded with the help of the white Southern Democrats whom Washington helped to win elections by rallying to them the Black vote. This tactic of playing politics behind the scene while preaching racial accommodation in the public arena has made of Washington one of the most important cultural figures of this period of American history. In Hegelian terms, this period can be qualified as some sort of perverted "Ethical State" wherein the Black people were called to conform themselves to newly enacted laws, strangely reminiscent of those that prevailed in slavery times. It has to be observed that this period witnessed the publication of *Hegel's Philosophy of the State and of History* (1887), some sort of philosophical primer, by a St-Louis Hegelian whose name is George Sylvester Morris. (Flower E. and Murray G. Murphey, p.503). The popularity of this "primer" in both the South and the North allows us to draw parallels between the autocratic Prussia of Hegel's time and the racist South of the period when Washington reigned supreme over the kingdom of Black American politics.

The last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth witnessed the emergence of America as a modern national state, a modern national state similar to Prussia in terms of the reactionary laws enacted after more or less ravaging wars. Prussia for Hegel was the example of the "ethical State" that he posits as the last stage of social organisation. Acting as the official philosopher of this state, he looked at it as a source of all morality, an uncontested authority holding every right over all individuals simply because it was considered as the manifestation of rationality in the historical life of the German people. No matter what the number of victims this 'ethical state' can make, the terrorism of the "ethical state" of Prussia remained justified because it was only under its authority that freedom could be attained. In his refusal to

publicly criticise the American national state of the post-Reconstruction period, and in his call for Blacks to be absolute in their loyalty to the nation state by following his economic scheme and accepting racist laws that excluded them from the political kingdom, Washington was similar to Hegel in his complicity with the South's dictatorship. More importantly, the popularised Hegel of his time seems to have largely primed him about what to say about slavery and voluntary servitude in order to fit in within the prevalent compromising discourse of the post-Reconstruction era.

However, in matters of the ethical state, Washington seems to have put some distance between himself and Hegel. Hegel takes it for granted that his contemporary fellow Germans were at the same level of social organisation marked by three stages corresponding to three different forms of freedom. This is not the case with Washington, who believes, that the Black people are still in the Abstract Right stage on the evolutionary scale of American history. Hegel says that at the Abstract Right stage, the individual objectifies his person in things. Freedom is translated in terms of the liberty to possess things and to exchange property, labour included, through contract. This is the type of freedom that Washington seems to be promoting in his *Up From Slavery*, and which some historians would have dismissed as wage slavery. He regards this economic freedom as the foundation on which the Black race should build before being admitted to participation in the "Ethical state". Like Hegel, Washington considers that freedom in the modern national state is potentially open to all, Black and white, but admittance to the Ethical State, which ensures a fuller freedom than the Abstract Right social stage, is momentarily closed to them until they develop the values (industry, thrift, etc.) that fit them into it.

DuBois is arguably the author whose work fits in best with the historicist approach to the issue of social recognition that I have tried to develop in this research. I have

attempted to place the analysis of *His Souls of Black Folk* within the context of the Progressivism whose main inspiration is the German historical school of economics of the third quarter of the nineteenth century. This school is as its name indicates is historicist in the sense it questioned liberalism in terms of the doctrine of natural rights, its notion of society as a contract between individuals, of the state as the protector of political and social rights and of economy as a self-regulated activity based on demand and supply. What was taken as natural by liberalism was considered as historical by the Progressives, including hallowed liberal institutions like free market and *laissez faire* which find their justifications in customs and culture. From this historicist assumption, social ethics and reform emerged more prominently than individual rights in their agenda. To correct the wrongs of the liberal economic and politic machine such as corporations, the Progressives advised the intervention of the state and the establishment of social welfare like social security, health care and so on.

The German School of economics, as Axel R. Shafer argues it so well owes as much to Hegelian metaphysics as to Kantian epistemology and Herderian historicism. (p.934) Hegel, it should be reminded, held that social ethics are embodied in institutions subject to improvement through the dialectic of history. What the German Historical School of Economics added to the Hegelian metaphysics of social evolution toward freedom is the element of human agency. Contrary to Hegel, the German Historical School of Economics does not look at ethical development as an unfolding historical process wherein man stands as a mere witness. Man is a historical agent, ready to intervene to smooth the way for the realisation of the ethical community. This is especially true in the context of an industrial age where selfish individual interests, if given free reign, can destroy social ethics and lay bare the social fabric of the ethical community conceived as a growing social organism. Social ethics and their improvement, for both the

Progressives and the German Historical School of Economics rest on culture and cultural behaviour which can be cultivated through social interaction in institutions specially established for that purpose.

The German Historical School of Economics was one of the influences behind the importance that DuBois accorded to culture and history in the *Souls of Black Folk*. The other source of Hegelian influence behind the premium that DuBois accorded to education and culture was a “scene of instruction” closer at home than the high cultured society of Imperial Germany and the University of Berlin to which his stay from 1892 to 1894 brought him into contact. This Hegelian “scene of instruction” was the one provided for by the St-Louis Hegelians who were as critical of the abuses of liberalism as the Progressives issued from the German Historical School of Economics, and who laid as much emphasis on the building of elementary and secondary schools for “fostering not merely the learning of skills but also the development of personality.” (Op. Cit., Flower and Murphey, p.500). This leads me to the conclusion that DuBois was under the convergence of two Hegelian influences, one of them home-grown and the other imported from the Imperial Germany of the 1890s.

DuBois had for a certain number of years adhered to the philosophy of accommodation that Washington proposed as a solution to the “negro problem” in the South. This temporary adherence to a philosophy which accepted the abrogation of civil rights for the Black population can be explained not solely in terms of the pre-eminence of Washington as a leader and spokesman for the Black population, but also in those of the Progressivism that DuBois made his own after his German stay. As a Progressive thinker what mattered was not the question of civil and political rights, but ethical and cultural development. In all cases, the white American society of the Progressive Age, both in the North and in the South, seemed to have been totally deaf and blind to the

question of the violation of the civil and political rights of the Black people. Under the impulsion of the Progressives, reform was sought not in the protection or extension of civil and political rights, but in ethical improvement which often assumed the form of a crusade for purity. Under such circumstances, DuBois had provisionally sided with Washington with whom he shared the belief in the necessity for the ethical improvement of the Black man even if he disagreed with him over the means and ways of achieving the 'ethical state'. Washington brought up in the liberal values of the Gilded Age gave priority to economics and industrial education whereas DuBois sharing the values of the Progressives chose culture and education in liberal arts.

In this thesis, DuBois's *Souls of Black Folk* is read as a repudiation of Washington's philosophy and the affirmation of the social morality of the Black man notwithstanding the constraints and ravages of slavery. In contrast to the affirmation of the age that made the Black man an ethical cipher, a man reduced to a mere "Sambo", incapable of capitalising on the civil rights that he earned during the Reconstruction period, DuBois shows that the Black slaves have fashioned their identity as African-Americans in the very smithies of slavery. The values that the African-Americans have managed to shore up are given form in original cultural, religious and economic institutions that make of them full contributors to the building of an American civilisation. *The Souls of Black Folk* suggests that the spiritual values of the Negroes are the cultural leaven that may save American civilization from its crass materialism. At the same time, he recognises that this culture is rough hewn and needs to be polished and refined. Cultural criticism and refinement is the mission of the "talented tenth," the cultural elite who will uplift the Black folk to racial equality and justice by elevating them above "the status of hewers of wood". It is understood that cultural refinement will not come without a

proper investment in a system of education that gives equal emphasis to skills as well to liberal arts.

For DuBois, race is as important as the racial class one belongs to. So if he, at first, went along with Washington in his abdication of civil rights, it was because of his firm conviction that the restrictions of the vote by tests of several sorts will ‘purge it of ignorance, pauperism and crime.’ (Sollers Werner, 1989: 85) When he realised that the tests applied mostly to the Black people indistinctly as to class to which they belonged, he took his distances from Washington. The period in which DuBois lived and produced his *Souls of Black Folk* was a period that witnessed enthusiastic attempts at definitions of the American identity. In the face of the unprecedented industrial changes and the hitting waves of immigrants from mostly Eastern and Central Europe, these identities were very often defined in defensive terms. It was also a period when the idea of America as the melting pot was developed. The problem for DuBois who advocated cultural pluralism was the fact that even the white Progressives used the very same ideas that he borrowed from the German Historical School of Criticism to defend the point of view that Blacks were culturally deficient as a race and that, therefore, unlike the new immigrants could not be melted in the mainstream society.

On the whole, I have argued that DuBois related to Hegel in three major ways. In his view that the Negro race was endowed with a civilization mission, he stretched the German master’s idea of world history by placing the Black race at centre stage. In his belief that the Black people have a distinctive original culture that favourably compares to the Anglo-Saxon, he reminds us of the Hegel of *The Philosophy of Right* and the one of *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*. Culture is the common ground on which DuBois sought to build a synthesis out of the racial dialectics bedevilling the society of

his time. At the heart of this synthesis as a “double Consciousness” I have seen the influence of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Even when DuBois joined the NAACP in 1910 to renew the fight for civil rights, he never completely gave up his early historicist and critical attitude to culture as the ideal way to uplift the race to the standards of the Ethical State. At the death of Washington in 1915, DuBois emerged as the uncontested leader of the Black people. His legalist and moralist approach in conformity with his high belief in the panacea of high culture was a top-down approach. It constituted of using his widely circulated newspaper *The Crisis* to publicise the legal cases raised by the NAACP against the infringements of civil rights and to appeal to the conscience of white men of influence in the Ethical State. On the cultural front, *The Crisis* gave voice to the emerging Black literati that later became known as the Harlem Renaissance. Yet, this top-down approach did not pay off with the Black labouring classes impatient with the different social exclusions. This impatience flared up in riots after World War I with the return of thousands of Negro soldiers no longer satisfied with the old segregationist dispensation. It was in this context that Marcus Garvey emerged in 1916 to blaze another route for racial salvation.

Taking his cue from Washington and Blyden, Garvey gave up, for a second time in Black American history, the claim for civil rights in the United States, emphasising instead the good old Washingtonian fight for economic power as a prerequisite for the amelioration of the status of the race. Garvey, as I have tried to show, believed that the American society was more open than ever before for Blacks to put together their efforts to create an economic power that would earn them social respect as a nation. This belief seems to have found support in President Coolidge’s slogan that the ‘business of America is business’. To Garvey, the civil rights approach to integration was going to a blind alley in view of the antagonisms born out of the revival of racial

fears whose roots are the big waves of immigrants that hit the American shores in the early 1920s, the threat of a Bolshevik revolution at home, and the alarming calls by social scientists for the preservation of the “great” (white) race from the “dangers of black impurity.” Garvey tried to ride over the crest of this high wave of racism by conceding to the claim that America is a white country in exchange for the Black man’s claim of Africa as his birth right. The last claim was grounded on the Wilsonian claim for the right of peoples for national self-determination.

No matter what became of Garvey’s economic projects, they were meant to establish the economic base for the establishment of a nation state in Africa. To this end, Garvey also whipped up the racial pride in the Negro heritage. His speeches are full of references to the achievement of the race and the heroism of its representative men. Garvey’s emphasis on the noble ancestry of the Negro, his history nourished racial self-respect and pride. It is of interest to note that if Garvey appealed so much to self-respect, it was because the audience was already disposed to hear it. As I have tried to explain, this readiness had much to do with the great migration of the Black population to urban and urbane centres of the North, the participation in the war effort and not least to the propagation of Black-owned newspapers and journals like the *Journal of Negro History* and the formation of such societies as Carter Woodson’s Association for the Study of Negro Life and History.

It follows from the analysis of the vision of society is articulated on the model of Hegel’s social organisation rendered in *The Philosophy of Right*. The first stage is Abstract Right wherein the social relationships are seen in purely economic terms. What is sought at this stage is economic progress in the U.S. for the Black people regarded as a nation bound by racial ties. In other words, self-determination in the US can be realized only in economic not social or political terms. In the second stage, Garvey

envisions the re-settlement or repatriation of the Western black people in Africa and the establishment of the nation state, or to use Hegel's term, the Ethical State. Just like Hegel, Garvey looked on this ethical state as the most objective expression of freedom for the black people. Peoples and races rise or fall according to the strength of the nation state that is behind them. Garvey shares this emphasis on the nation state as the bulwark against oppression in the West with Zionism.

With the deportation of Garvey in 1928, and the socialist turn that DuBois took in the 1930s, racial theorising reached its lowest ebb in the depression era when Blacks, as Judith Stein writes it so well, "accepted the working-class identity of the new unionism or the populist ideology of the New Deal and defined themselves in it."(Op. Cit. Sollers, p.103) This being said, the NAACP has never ceased to lead through its Defense Committee the legal battle for regaining civil rights. In the 1950s it reversed its strategy of defence by arguing that without regard to the equality of educational facilities, segregation in schools had detrimental psychological effects on Black children. Such arguments were supported by psychological and sociological studies. The NAACP 's new approach led to the Supreme Court decision of 1954 called *Brown V. Topeka Board of Education* which overturned the Supreme Court decision of *Plessy V. Ferguson* of 1896 that sanctioned segregation in public facilities.

The 1954 decision signalled the start of what historian of the Black struggle in the US, Melvin Drimmer rightly named the Second Reconstruction. The legal approach of the NAACP towards segregation proved its limits because if it managed to bring the Supreme Court to declare segregation in schools unconstitutional, it did not manage to stop the same court taking a second decision undermining the first decision under the influence of southern segregations. This second decision is the Pupil Placement Test that allowed the states to determine where school children might be placed according to

criteria such as family background and special ability. It was in this context of the Supreme Court wavering that King and his organisation the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) emerged not in order to supplant the already existing Civil Rights organisations such as the NAACP but in order to supplement them by proposing a complementary strategy based on non-violent direction action. The occasion for implementing this new strategy was provided by Rosa Parks an NAACP adherent who on December 1, 1955 decided to transgress one of the segregation laws by refusing to move to the back of a bus. Arrested and brutalised by the police, the Rosa Parks case triggered off the 1955-1966 Montgomery Bus Boycott in Montgomery, Alabama that propelled up Martin Luther King Jr to the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement.

From my analysis of King's educational and political career, King emerges as a post-colonial thinker and politician. His move from the South to the North of the United States for educational purposes is similar to the move that colonials like Mahatma Gandhi, Kwame Nkrumah and Frantz Fanon had made from the colonial periphery (south) to northern metropolises (London, New York, and France). Like them, it was in the North that King digested social, political, economic and theological ideas that he synthesised through a Hegelian methodology all his own before moving back to the South to put them into application for battering down the walls of segregation. The Southern states in this regard could be compared to colonies. Most of the ingredients of colonialism are there: exclusion of a majority from the vote, economic exploitation, segregation, Black indigenes and colons etc. King did not pose himself explicitly as a colonial, but his comparison of his struggle for Civil Rights to the struggle of Gandhi and sometimes to that of Nkrumah implies it.

Seen from this postcolonial perspective, the Federal Government (the North) assumes the role of what the colons refer to as the “Mother Country”. The fight for Civil Rights that King led was inextricably linked to the problem of States and Federal prerogatives. It is of interest to observe that the Federal Government, under pressure of international politics, had first tried to reduce and eliminate barriers to black voting through the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and the Civil Rights Act of 1960 which said, among other things that states could be sued for voting- rights violations. Because of the recalcitrance of the states to apply the law, the Federal Government gave up the battle hoping that civil-rights groups like NAACP, SNCC and SCLC would be able to advance voter registration at the state and local levels. It was the latter that attracted the most publicity through mass demonstrations spearheaded by King. Following these demonstrations, the Federal Government had enough popular support to pass the 1965 Civil Rights Act that definitely made the right of the vote a reality for the Black population.

The demonstrations that King staged with the help of his organisation the SCLC look like street theatre. The “direct action” protests that this street theatre staged are mostly tragedies in the Hegelian sense of the word. King admitted having read Hegel’s *Phenomenology of the Spirit* and the *Philosophy of History*. This shows, as I have tried to argue in the discussion part of this thesis, not only in the way he used the Hegelian dialectic method to synthesise contrary opposites but also in his view of freedom as a historical process of struggle. Wherein King diverged from Hegel was the importance that he accorded to love instead of war. Love in the hands of King was an essential element not only in the family but also in the ethical state. In the ‘genealogy of morals’ (the words are Nietzsche’s) that King elaborated with the use of Hegel’s dialectics, love was not born out of weakness but out of strength. The “strength to love” is not the characteristic peculiar to the slave but to that of the master. Using Hegel against Hegel

himself, King staged demonstrations wherein two kinds of laws are in conflict, that of love and the unjust laws of the state come into collision ending not in separation but in reconciliation. In this reconciliation of opposites in action, King comes close to espousing Hegel's poetics/aesthetics of Greek tragedy. As a religious leader, King's direct action could be considered as the "religion of art," an expression that Hegel used to qualify Greek tragedy.

The "religion of art" applies equally well to the practice of politics that King's contemporary fellow Black leader Malcolm during the period of time when he was an influent member of the Nation of Islam. In his case, as my research has tried to show, his speeches and autobiography read as a Puritan jeremiad or a conversion narrative. I have tried to justify the puritan turn that Malcolm gave to his speeches and autobiography to the revival of Puritan religious writings in the context of the Cold War. In my analysis, Malcolm comes out as some sort of a Black Billy Graham trying to purify the Nation of Islam of its sins and separate it from the mainstream American society the better to avoid the wrath of God whose hand is the communist bloc. I have underlined the providential dimension that Malcolm gave to the history of the Nation of Islam, a history reminiscent both of the ecclesiastical accounts of the early Puritans and Hegel's Calvinist view of providential history. In my emphasis on the religious dimensions of Malcolm's *Autobiography*, I have not overlooked the psychological conflicts, psychological conflicts that I have interpreted in the Hegelian terms that Fanon used in *Black Skin White Masks*.

In his Black Nationalist phase, Malcolm X adopted a more politically committed stance towards racial problems. This political orientation of his political thought came as a result of his exclusion from the Nation of Islam and the influence that the politics of decolonisation and independence of the African countries had exerted on him. The

analysis of his work shows that this Black Nationalist phase in Malcolm's combat for social recognition was propped up by a cultural nationalism that sought to bring out a spiritual return to Africa. In advocating this spiritual return, Malcolm X appealed to the Hegelian notion of group or communitarian politics, which in his view was more a reality than the individualist policy espoused by his contemporary Black fellow militant Martin Luther King. It is this group or communitarian politics that became the watchword of the Black Power Movement in the late 1960s and the 1970s. That Martin Luther King came to adopt, at least partially, the Black Power rhetoric just before his assassination shows to what extent Malcolm's stance towards group politics was an inescapable reality in American political thought.

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