

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of Liberal Arts

**HEGEL'S DIALECTIC AND AFRICANA PHILOSOPHY: DU BOIS,
FANON, AND JAMES**

A Dissertation in

Philosophy

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2018

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ABSTRACT

Georg Wilhelm Hegel's dialectic plays a crucial role in some of the thought of the most prominent Black thinkers. The role it plays has received little attention. In this dissertation, I begin to fill this lacuna in Africana Philosophy by examining the arguments of William Edward Burghardt Du Bois in "The Conservation of Races," Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, and Cyril Lionel Robert James in *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* and *Notes on Dialectics: Hegel, Marx, Lenin*. I argue that forms of praxis are the result of their engagement with Hegel's dialectic: *reflexive practice*, *absolute praxis*, and *organic praxis* respectively. I show that in each of these cases Hegel's dialectical approach to history (dialectical thinking) was essential to their own attempts to understand the possibility of a positive transformation of the pervasively racist world they inhabited.

To my late parents Willie James Harris and Dyphine Theresa Coleman

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Acknowledgements

This dissertation has become a reality with the help of my friends, family, colleagues, and mentors. First and foremost, I thank my doctoral advisor and friend Robert Lambert Bernasconi. I appreciate the incredible amount of time you have spent with me helping me to develop my voice. You saw the vision even when I lost sight of it.

I thank Amy Allen. Your progressive leadership as the head of the Department of Philosophy at Penn State is admirable. I have come to view your work as a model for my own work because you have impeccable style. I thank Brady Bowman. I am in awe of your meticulous and rigorous approach to philosophy. I would not have come this far in my work on Hegel if it were not for all the time you have graciously given me. I thank Kathryn Sophia Belle. I admire the courage in which you defend Black women's place in philosophy. I thank Aldon Nielsen. Your knowledge of C. L. R. James's work is impressive and your enthusiasm for this project has been encouraging. I could not have asked for better people to read my work and help me improve it.

I thank John H. McClendon III and Debra McClendon for standing by me all these years. Thank you for encouraging me to be a better philosopher. I am truly grateful to have shared the past six years with all my fellows at Penn State. For the various ways they have supported me, I also thank the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Institute for Critical Social Inquiry at the New School for Social Research and Kwame Anthony Appiah, Gabeba Baderoon, Kathlene Baldanza, Jameliah Bourhanou, Charla Burnett, Charisse Burden-Stelly, Justin Clardy, Vincent Colapietro, J Everet Greene, Lewis R. Gordon, Justin Griffin, Aminah Hasan-Birdwell, Brandon Hogan, Len Lawlor, Céline Leboeuf, Axelle Karera, Zvikomborero Alexander Matenga, Eduardo Mendieta, Darla Migan, Brittany O'Neal, Christopher Moore, Sarah Clark Miller, Lauren Nuckols, William

Paris, Nicolas Raulin, Paul C. Taylor, Nancy Tuana, and Desiree Valentine.

Introduction

1. Narrative

This dissertation brings together Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's dialectic with five problems within Africana philosophical thought (the concept of race, Black identity, violence, the idea of revolution, and the history of the labor movement) articulated in the work of William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, and Cyril Lionel Robert James. I argue that Hegel's dialectic plays a role with respect to the methodologies Du Bois, Fanon and James employ in their quest to address these five problems. Since satisfactory and straightforward descriptions of Hegel's dialectic are difficult to find, philosophers have concluded that it is an elusive and useless alternative to analytical reasoning while others have merely reduced its meaning to the empty thesis-antithesis-synthesis and being-nothing-becoming triadic structures. I concentrate on Hegel's dialectic through history. Ultimately, in bringing these two topics together, I demonstrate that Hegel's dialectical approach to history (dialectical thinking) is essential to Du Bois', Fanon's, and James's attempts to understand the possibility of a positive transformation of the world.

Immediately, one can see that there are at least two deterrents in carrying out this project. The first deterrent is that it might seem as though Hegel and the Africana philosophical tradition have little overlap. However, my motivation for bringing these two topics together is to demonstrate their central point of convergence. Fanon and James provide sustained commentaries on Hegel's ideas. This, of course, is only a superficial point. The more astute point

is about reception. Currently, an Africana reception of Hegel's philosophy does not exist. There is no systematic account of the parts of Hegel's philosophy that Africana thinkers concerned with race and racism overemphasize, underemphasize, and/or employ. The worry with this project is it can be easily mistaken to suggest that Du Bois, Fanon and James are Black Hegelians. This suggestion, of course, centers the ideas Hegel in discussions about Black racial liberation. To be clear, this is not a suggestion I am making and it is not even an implication of the project I have laid out here.

The nature of this project is comparable to smaller projects on the affinities between Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy and African-American thought. Overall, the central point of convergence between Nietzsche and Du Bois, Fredrick Douglass, and Ralph Ellison is the importance they all attribute to the role of the cultural physician for social transformation.¹ There are also multiple accounts of the Francophone and Anglo-American receptions of Hegel's philosophy. Judith Butler argues that the focus on desire and subjectivity characterizes the Francophone reception of Hegel's philosophy.² In opposition to Butler, Bruce Baugh argues that it is actually unhappy consciousness that characterizes the Francophone occupation with Hegel.³ More recently, Alison Stone has incorporated Fanon's engagement with Hegel into the Francophone reception upon the admitted failure of Butler's study to do so.⁴ There is also the Anglo-American reception of Hegel's philosophy. According to John Kaag and Kipton E.

1. Jacqueline L. Scott and A. Todd Franklin, introduction to *Critical Affinities: Nietzsche and African American Thought*, ed. Jacqueline L. Scott and A. Todd Franklin (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 2-3.

2. Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

3. Bruce Baugh, *French Hegel: From Surrealism to Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

4. Alison Stone, "Hegel and Twentieth Century French Philosophy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel*, ed. Dean Moyar (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 697-722.

Jensen, the Anglo-American reception focuses on how to apply parts of Hegel's philosophy.⁵ Similar to these projects, the aim of this dissertation is to cast a bit of light on Africana philosophical thought and its complex relationship with a towering, canonical figure in the history of philosophy. I show the texture and nuance of Hegel's thought. Although people already know Hegel to be a complex and difficult thinker, this dissertation puts a spotlight on his complexity and difficulty from a different angle –the Africana angle.

The second deterrent is the fact that the shadow of the old Hegel remains. The old Hegel is the philosopher of logical contradiction, the harsh critic of liberalism, and the author of the idea that Africans had not yet entered world history. Even during his time, Hegel's social and political ideas were unpopular because they were taken to be an apology for monarchy and echo the sentiments of the status quo. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (hereafter: *LPWH*), it is alleged (since these are student notes) that Hegel maintained the view that Africa “has no historical interest of its own, for we find its inhabitants living in barbarism and savagery in a land which has not furnished them with any integral ingredient of culture.”⁶ Given this, one might wonder why I would bring these two topics together especially given the focus on racial liberation in Africana philosophical thought. I would point out that there is a critique of Hegel's racial chauvinism and Eurocentrism operating within Africana philosophical thought not merely by the fact that Africana philosophers (at least the figures I examine here) take the existence and experience of African descended people to be worthy of sustained philosophical inquiry but a direct indictment. Du Bois corrects Hegel's world-historical notion of race by concentrating on the contribution of the Negro to world history. Fanon repurposes Hegel's master-slave dialectic,

5. John Kaag and Kipton E. Jensen, “The American Reception of Hegel (1830-1930),” in *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel*, ed. Dean Moyar (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 670-696.

6. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 174.

as it does not apply to the experience of the colonized. Finally, James jettisons Hegel's notion of world history altogether because he takes it to be deterministic.

Du Bois', Fanon's, and James's critiques do not negate the idea that Hegel still had a profound impact on them either indirectly in the case of Du Bois or directly in the cases of Fanon and James. Similar to the tendencies in the Francophone and Anglo-American receptions of Hegel's philosophy, Africana thinkers have also been selective in their approach to dealing with its parts. In this way, those more inclined to attempt to provide definitive interpretations of Hegel's philosophical system can also accuse Africana thinkers of "cherry-picking." To be clear, extending an interpretation of Hegel's philosophical system was not essential to their projects and it is not essential to this project. Despite Hegel's racial chauvinism and Eurocentrism, Fanon and James are compelled to engage with some of Hegel's ideas and not for the sake of philosophical charity but in light of their own projects. While avoiding Hegel's racial chauvinism and opting for racial equality, Du Bois shares a conception of racialism with Hegel. Still, one might contend that Du Bois, Fanon, and James were not strong readers of Hegel. To which I respond: they are all primarily concerned with changing the way one thinks about race and racism and therefore how one imagines political and social solutions for these social ills.

There are two questions guiding this dissertation. The first question: which Hegelian concepts are criticized, emphasized, and/or employed in the Africana reception of Hegel? Rocío Zambrana poses the second question: does recovering a Hegelian concept depend on purifying it from its problematic content?⁷ I answer these questions by closely examining Du Bois's conception of race in his early work primarily "The Conservation of Races," Fanon's commentary on Hegel's master-slave dialectic in *Black Skin, White Masks* and the role of

7. Rocío Zambrana, "Hegel, History, Race," in *The Oxford Handbook on Philosophy and Race*, ed. Naomi Zack (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 251.

violence in *The Wretched of the Earth*, and James's presentation of revolution, in *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* and his account of the history of the labor movement in *Notes on Dialectics: Hegel, Marx, Lenin*. I present the answers to these questions in the following five chapters. Hegel's dialectical approach to history (dialectical thinking) is essential in each of these cases. As a result, I present five critical, hermeneutic, and practical studies.

a. How does Hegel describe the Dialectic?

The term "dialectic" is a continuing source of irritation. Many people think it is an outdated and convoluted way of speaking since most explanations of it are unsatisfactorily vague and thus too broad to be useful. Nevertheless, people attribute its basic meaning to Hegel. For example, the definition for the term in the *Oxford English Dictionary* describes it as:

The philosophical analysis of metaphysical contradictions and their resolution; *spec. (in Hegelian thought)* the repeated process by which internal contradictions within both concepts and the external world (i.e. the natural world and the world of human history and society) give rise to the dissolution of those concepts, forms of life, etc., and their transition into new ones, resulting in continued progress in both thought and the world; (also) the second of the three stages in this process, in which the original concept, etc., is negated.⁸

However, dialectics predates Hegel. Dialectics trace back to Plato's dialogues, which are back and forth debates featuring Socrates as one of the interlocutors. The dialogues produce a linear progression in terms of the sophistication of the positions presented. Commentators remain divided about the role it plays in Hegel's mature philosophy. Some think it is his most distinguishably useful and universally relevant contribution to philosophy. Hans-Georg Gadamer

8. Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "dialectic," accessed September 5, 2017. Emphasize mine.

suggests this when he says that Hegel “is the first to grasp the depth of Plato’s dialectic.”⁹

Others argue that there is a dialectical method present in his mature philosophy. Michael Forster writes, “Few aspects of Hegel's thought have exerted as much influence or occasioned as much controversy as this method.”¹⁰ Although it is a minority position, some, such as Robert C. Solomon even think that there is no such thing as a dialectic much less a “dialectical method” in Hegel’s philosophical system.¹¹ That is to say, readers and commentators impose these terms on to Hegel’s philosophy. Given all this debate, it clear to see that Hegel’s dialectic alone is a contentious topic. Still, a partial explanation of it is at the center of this dissertation.

Hegel articulates the meaning of dialectic as a transitional movement in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (hereafter: *PhG*), which is the introduction to his philosophical system, the *Encyclopedia Logic* (hereafter: *EL*), and the *Science of Logic* (hereafter: *SL*), which is his apex work. The *EL* (1817, revised 1827, 1830) contains Hegel’s only direct and prolonged discussion of the meaning of dialectic. He explains that his project in the *SL* is to trace all the basic categories [*Gedankenbestimmungen*], which organize human experience and the external world. There, Hegel distinguishes three stages in the development of thought:

The logical domain has three sides: (α) *the abstract side or that of the understanding*, (β) *the dialectical or negatively rational side*, (γ) *the speculative or positively rational side*. These three sides do not constitute three parts of logic, but are *moments of every properly*

9. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel’s Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976), 6-7.

10. Michael Forster, “Hegel’s Dialectical Method,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. Fredrick Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 130. Emphasis mine.

11. Robert C. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel: A Study of G. W. F. Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 21.

logical content [*Momente jedes Logisch-Reellen*], that is to say, of every concept or everything or everything true in general.¹²

In the first stage, concepts are treated distinctly and discretely. From here, in the second stage, these concepts inherently generate their own negations. Reason generates contradictions.

However, the dialectical stage is not merely negative. Together, abstraction and the dialectical stages generate a momentum toward the final speculative stage, which grasps the unity of these determinations in their opposition. Without these transformations, it is impossible for one to understand the world with any coherence. The dialectical stage is especially essential since it the first sign of the positive development toward the speculative moment. That is, for Hegel, the term “dialectic” is a shorthand description of the transitional movement through these stages of thought toward the speculative moment. This is why describing his dialectic, as a triadic structure is always incomplete.¹³ The dialectic is both unity and movement.

In the *PhG*, Hegel details how consciousness progresses to “Absolute Knowing” and with this process he attempts to demonstrate how dialectical thinking is possible and what it can achieve.¹⁴ The lordship and bondage [*Herrschaft und Knechtschaft*] sub-section of Chapter Four, which is better known as “the master-slave dialectic,” is his most famous example of his dialectic. It is a narrative. Hegel narrates the tension between two self-conscious beings that both want to be the dominant being and the process by which they each come to occupy the master and slave roles. The three moments of thought apply to the movement here. This second or dialectical moment concerns power. One of the self-conscious beings attempts to sublate

12. G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline, Part 1: Science of Logic*, ed. Klaus Brinkmann and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 125-126.

13. Gustav E. Mueller, “The Hegel Legend of ‘Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis’,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19, no. 3 (1958): 411-414.

14. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

[*Aufhebung*] the other being, which results in a life and death struggle. Hegel claims that sublation has a double meaning: to cancel and preserve simultaneously. The moment of understanding sublates itself because of its own one-sidedness. Here, one self-conscious being realizes that it is not the only self-conscious being in the world. The dialectical moment sublates itself in that it launches a process in which the determination from the moment of understanding both cancels and preserves itself, as it pushes on to or passes into its opposite. Here, in the narrative, the self-conscious being realizes that there are others and it “returns” into itself. In order to become free, each must aim at the death of the other. Negation necessitates this. Now, the final speculative moment is the unity of these two prior determinations. Here, in the narrative, it results in a life and death struggle. Despite the idea that the *PhG* concerns knowledge, this narrative has had the distinct benefit of demonstrating that unity and a transitional movement is present in virtually all concepts and thought even ones such as self-consciousness and the human psyche.

In the *SL*, Hegel attempts to elevate dialectics to a genuine science by tracing all the basic categories, which Plato’s dialectic failed to do. Plato could not get beyond approximate truths and his form remained fixed (static) and consequentially unable to capture the messiness of life and reason. Hegel’s mission is to elevate dialectics to a science fuels the reading that he does indeed have a dialectical method. Much of the way Hegel describes the dialectic in the *EL* and the *PhG* appears in the *SL* due to the unity of the system. However, what stands out for my purposes here is what Hegel says about the Concept [*der Begriff*] (also known as the Absolute Idea). It is the result of the dialectical process. Hegel puts it this way: “However, a more profound insight into the antinomial or, more accurately, into the dialectical nature of reason reveals that *every* concept is a unity of opposite moments to which therefore, the form of

antinomial assertions could be given.”¹⁵ Therefore, a new concept is higher and richer than the one preceding it because it negates or opposes the preceding and therefore contains it, and it contains even more than that, for it is the unity of itself and its opposite. Earlier determinations build new concepts. The result is increased comprehensiveness and universality. The concept approaches completeness. Dialectics drive toward the Concept, which is the unconditioned, all encompassing, self-referential idea. To refer back to an illuminating remark Hegel makes in the *EL*: “the dialectical moment constitutes the moving soul of scientific progression.”¹⁶

Finally, Hegel devotes a substantial section of *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* to the notion of world history, which deserves a brief discussion here because I focus on his dialectical approach to history throughout this dissertation.¹⁷ World history (also known as universal history) is the combined histories of particular peoples of the world. In the *PhG*, spirit assumes a particular principle on the lines of which it must run through a development of its consciousness and its actuality.¹⁸ One observes the same shapes of consciousness from the *PhG*, and the categories or the determinations of thought from the *EL* and *SL* in history. A people act on a principle that informs its social and ethical life. This dialectic links peoples across the world and reveals the path of liberation for spirit in general. Controversially, it is a dialectic that only applies to European peoples. This controversy is important to my project, since, as I have already pointed out excluded African peoples, that is, Black people with the exception of the Egyptians. *LPWH* states that “the more specific determination of these various stages in their universal form

15. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, ed. and trans. George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 158. Emphasis in text.

16. Hegel, *Encyclopedia Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline, Part 1*, 129.

17. G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 341-360.

18. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, xxx.

[universal history] belongs to the province of logic.”¹⁹ However, philosophy of history does not *deduce* actual empirical historical phenomena, instead it takes the results of actual empirical history as its material and attempts to find exemplified within this material the sorts of categorical progressions of the logic. The world is full of contingencies from which empirical historians will have already abstracted in constructing their narratives, especially when writing from a particular people’s perspective. To grasp history “*philosophically*,” according to Hegel, requires that it be grasped from *the perspective of world history* itself. This provides the transition to “*Absolute Spirit*,” as world history will be understood in terms of the manifestation of what from a religious perspective is called “God,” or from a philosophical perspective, “Reason.”

b. What is Africana Philosophy?

Defining Africana Philosophy is a difficult task.²⁰ It has three metaphilosophical hurdles to clear to provide a satisfactory understanding of it: (1) scope, (2) subject matter, and (3) the concern about “race-based” philosophies. These are intertwined issues but for clarity, I will first treat them independently. First, concerning scope, Africana Philosophy primarily investigates a variety of questions and conundrums that arise concerning existence of Black people. For instance, those questions can be ethical, social and political, or even metaphysical. To be sure, Africana Philosophy is not predominantly associated with any of the areas in philosophy over other areas. Africana Philosophy can be distinguished by the questions and answers it provides concerning the nature of philosophy, and it modifies the boundaries of what is considered

19. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, 130.

20. Africana Philosophy also goes by “Black Philosophy.”

legitimate philosophical inquiry. Second, scope ties to the subject matter of Africana Philosophy. It investigates the very meaning of the “Black” in Black people. There is a question as to whether “Black” is a racial, ethnic, or cultural designation. This leads me to the probably surprising idea that race is not the organizing principle of Africana Philosophy, but rather race comes to play a central role in the sub-discipline due to the various ways Black people are defined by race. Despite the centrality of discussions about race and racism among Africana thinkers, it cannot be equated with Critical Philosophy of Race, Philosophy of Race, Philosophy of Racism, or Social and Political Philosophy. Instead, race is undeniably an important theme in Africana Philosophy. Third, the concern about “race based” philosophies congeals the other two meta-philosophical concerns about scope and subject matter since the pervasive notion that philosophy is objective and abstract. It is the “view from nowhere.” The worry is that if Black people are the point of departure for answering questions about their existence, then all other philosophies that claim to focus on social identities are also legitimate. This reasoning is fallacious because it assumes that if one accepts the idea that Black people are the starting point to answering questions about their existence, then it will lead to seemingly ludicrous consequences such as any and all social groups have legitimate philosophies. As William R. Jones put it, Africana Philosophy in particular is asked to “respond to the prior question of its legitimacy” and “establish its right to exist as an appropriate philosophical position.”²¹ Furthermore, this concern can easily be responded to by pointing out that social identities that constitute philosophies require a standpoint. Standpoints are not merely individualized accounts of experience. I take caution against using the term “standpoint” in this context due to its feminist roots and all the baggage it has as Black women

21. William R. Jones, “The Legitimacy and Necessity of Black Philosophy: Some Preliminary Considerations,” *Philosophical Forum* 9, no. 2 (Winter/Spring 1977): 149.

theorists have already articulated.²² The metaphilosophical hurdles Africana Philosophy allegedly must overcome to be considered legitimate are representative of the prejudice philosophers continue to foster with false notions of universality.

I propose that one understand Africana Philosophy as *a phenomenology*. *I do not mean to imply that Africana Philosophy is merely relegated to the sub-discipline of Phenomenology, especially not the twentieth-century works by Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, or Jean-Paul Sartre. Instead, the emergence of Africana Philosophy itself represents a phenomenology in that it observes Black experience. It is the study of the structure of Black consciousness as it is experienced from Black perspectives. Readers will realize through the work of Du Bois, Fanon, James, that the structures of Black experience is its praxis or being directed toward human freedom. Thus, Black experience is directed toward liberation by virtue of it's meaning coupled with appropriate enabling conditions. Phenomenology is narrowly thought to relate to the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, and hearing) but it has a much wider range, addressing the meaning of race in Black experience and the significance of human freedom, as it arises and is experienced in Black life. Du Bois, Fanon, James demonstrate that Black consciousness is always doubled, split, or unsatisfied and frustrated. Further, human freedom is not merely an achievement but a movement. It remains a difficult question how much of Black experience falls within the province of Phenomenology as a sub-discipline. The idea that Africana Philosophy is a phenomenology is what motivates my turn to the Africana reception of Hegel.*

There are two substantial attempts to define Africana Philosophy.²³ Lewis R. Gordon provides the first attempt to define it. He advocates getting beyond the tendency to focus on the

22. Patricia Hill-Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2009). See the second chapter "Distinguishing Features of Black Feminist Thought." Tracey Reynolds, "Re-thinking a Black Feminist Standpoint," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25, no. 4 (2002): 591-606.

biographical details of the lives of Africana philosophers. He rightfully emphasizes that it is important to engage with their ideas. He goes on to claim that Africana Philosophy is a branch of Africana Thought, which is “engaged with theoretical questions concerning Africana cultures.”²⁴ He construes Africana cultures to include “hybrid, mixed, or creolized forms worldwide.”²⁵ According to Gordon, colonialism, imperialism, and conquest impose African identity on Black people through these experiences gives rise to a “unique set of questions.”²⁶ Importantly, he attempts to distinguish “Africana Philosophy” and “Africana Thought” but does not clarify what “Africana Thought” is besides thought produced by African descended people yet his definition depends on this distinction. Gordon’s attempt does not clarify which questions are theoretical enough to be categorized as philosophical ones. The history of Africana Philosophy is certainly the writing of Black thinkers; however, this is only one approach to Africana Philosophy. I would not go as far to say people who are not Black cannot do Africana Philosophy and seriously engage the questions and conundrums that arise concerning the existence of Black people. With the professionalization of Africana Philosophy, it is especially important to promote more people to specialize in the subdiscipline.

Lucius Outlaw provides the second attempt. Outlaw first presents Africana Philosophy as a negation in terms of doctrine and a contemporary emergent philosophical subdiscipline (since

23. There is scholarly work done on the topic of Africana Philosophy, which intersects on the question of how to define it but on more specific themes. Robert E. Birt, *The Quest for Community and Identity: Critical Essays on Africana Social Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001). Tommy L. Lott, “Comparative Aspects of Africana Philosophy and the Continental-Analytic Divide,” *Comparative Philosophy* 2, no. 1 (2011): 25-37. Clevis Headley, “Three Recent Texts in Africana Philosophy: Overcoming Disciplinary Decadence,” *Journal of World Philosophies* 1, no. 1 (2016): 141-149.

24. Lewis R. Gordon, *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1. Lewis R. Gordon, *Existential Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

the 1980s). It does not refer to any “a particular philosophy, philosophical system, method, or tradition,” but rather is “a third-order, metaphilosophical, umbrella-concept.”²⁷ He understands “philosophizing” to include “activities of reflective, critical thinking and articulation and aesthetic expression.”²⁸ According to Outlaw, there are three heuristic presumptions: (1) Africana Philosophy as intellectual praxis, (2) Africana Philosophy as normative, and (3) Africana Philosophy as reflective. It has various subject matters that do not always involve race and racism. The continuity of Africana Philosophy is that it is “born out of struggle” to use Leonard Harris’s language.²⁹ Outlaw proceeds to divide Africana Philosophy into three sub-categories: African Philosophy, African-American Philosophy, and Afro-Caribbean Philosophy. From there, he looks at themes within specific periods: 1600-1860, 1860-1915, 1915-2000, and a separate category for the emergence of African philosophers from 1950 onward. Unlike Gordon’s account, Outlaw gives a considerable amount of attention to the professional history of Africana Philosophy. Yet, one might still find oneself wondering why refer to this as a cohesive subdiscipline of philosophy at all.

A partial view of Africana Philosophy emerges from this dissertation. This is not an attempt to define Africana Philosophy, especially since it will only cover some of the work of Du Bois, Fanon and James, and only one aspect of their work at that. I doubt the metaphilosophical perspective alone usefully help one understand Africana Philosophy. This puts me at odds with these two established accounts. One must abandon attempts to define it as a subdiscipline, especially since it is so context dependent. Its locality is the only thing that distinguishes it.

27. Lucuis Outlaw, *s.v.* “Africana Philosophy,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed September 5, 2017.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Leonard Harris, *Philosophy Born of Struggle: An Anthology of Afro-American Philosophy from 1917* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt, 2000).

Further, the metaphilosophical definitions are representations of an anxiety about gaining mainstream philosophical legitimacy. I plan to discuss a thread in the thought of Du Bois, Fanon, and James with the goal to demonstrate that on some occasions they found Hegel's dialectic to be indispensable for thinking about the problems concerning the existence and experiences of Black people. More importantly, Du Bois, Fanon, and James each have diverse and vast oeuvres. One cannot reduce their ideas to Hegel's influence. It is only part of their philosophical stories so to speak.

No Black thinker has garnered as much attention from philosophers, than Du Bois. He rightfully has become a towering figure. Along with being one of the founding members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), as a scholar he authored over twenty-one books and over one hundred articles.³⁰ He also edited a number of periodicals with the *Crisis* being the most notable one. Philosophers of race have often reduced his contributions to his concept of race and furthermore a narrow (and sometimes incorrect) framing of its meaning. I must admit that Du Bois courts misunderstanding due to the complexity of his ideas as they are seemingly riddled with contradictions. He also adopts vague expressions of his ideas, especially in his early work. Both European and Anglo-American philosophical traditions influenced him. Until recently, those discussions primarily focused on his adoption of pragmatism in large part because William James, George Herbert Mead, and George Santayana

30. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy On Viewing My Life From the last Decade of Its First Century* in *The Oxford W. E. B. Du Bois* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). See Chapter Ten of this autobiography for a first-hand account of his time in Berlin. David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Biography 1868-1919* (New York: Henry Holt, 2009). Lewis gives a general account of the first part Du Bois's life. Hamilton Beck, "W. E. B. Du Bois as a Study Abroad Student in Germany, 1892-1894," *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 2, no. 1 (1996): 45-63. Beck provides a focused discussion on Du Bois's time in Berlin.

trained him at Harvard University.³¹ However, the current discussions focus on his German influences especially intellectual movements such as German Romanticism and German Idealism, and specific figures such as economist Gustav von Schmoller and historian Heinrich von Treitschke to help tell a more complete story about his philosophical commitments. Du Bois spent 1892 to 1894 at the University Berlin. This short time was very intellectually influential on his early work “The Conservation of Races” (hereafter: CR) and his most famous work *The Souls of Black Folk* (hereafter: *Souls*). It goes without saying that Du Bois is a central figure in the history of Africana Philosophy, which is why he is included in this study but his socio-historical conception of race is also foundational to Critical Philosophy of Race and the Philosophy of Race and Racism.

By comparison, Fanon is a lesser-known figure among philosophers.³² Recently there has been an explosion of interest in his work particularly among continental philosophers to uncover his philosophical commitments.³³ However, Fanon is a prophetic figure in the History of Africana Philosophy not to mention his work is widely discussed in the academy and is foundational to Post-colonial Studies. Fanon supported Algerian independence from France and joined the Algerian National Liberation Front. He trained as psychiatrist in Lyon. Several intellectual movements such as Marxism, Négritude, and psychoanalysis influenced him. Hegel, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jacques Lacan influenced him. However, the philosophical tradition that Fanon belongs to is a matter of debate. One of the most important related debates concerns Fanon’s relationship to psychoanalysis. Some scholars argue that Fanon

31. Paul C. Taylor, “What’s the Use of Calling Du Bois a Pragmatist?,” *Metaphilosophy* 35, no. 1-2 (2004): 99-114.

32. David Macey, *Fanon: A Biography* (New York: Verso, 2012).

33. Lewis R. Gordon, *What Fanon Said: A Philosophical Introduction to his Life and Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015).

adopts psychoanalysis as his chosen philosophical method, but according to others, his work should not be read through European intellectual traditions at all. According to David Macey, scholars should be cautious about calling Fanon a psychoanalyst because he challenges the universality of some of the foundational concepts of psychoanalytic discourse.³⁴ Macey claims that this is true because Fanon criticizes Sigmund Freud, Alfred W. Adler, and Octave Mannoni. A cohort focuses on the existential dimensions of Fanon's work and consequently his connection to Sartre. There are those more inclined to locate Fanon alongside Négritude thinkers such as Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, and Édouard Glissant.³⁵ Of course, a variety of philosophical topics and themes emerge within scholarship on Fanon's work such as humanism, racial embodiment, Marxism, and nationalism. Like Du Bois, Fanon's ideas have a strong interdisciplinary appeal.

Of all the figures studied in this dissertation, James is the least known and engaged with by philosophers.³⁶ Gordon mentions James in his *Introduction to Africana Philosophy*; however, he does not give him any sustained attention due to the introductory aim of his study but Outlaw makes no mention of him at all. Gordon categorizes James's work under Marxism following Paget Henry's characterization of James's work.³⁷ James's oeuvre ranges from topics such as cricket in *Beyond a Boundary* to his apex work *Notes on Dialectics: Hegel, Marx, Lenin*

34. David Macey, "The Recall of the Real: Frantz Fanon and Psychoanalysis," *Constellations* 6, no. 1 (1999): 97-107.

35. Robert Bernasconi, "The Assumption of Negritude: Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and the Vicious Cycle of Politics," *Parallax* 8, no. 2 (2002): 69-83. John E. Drabinski, "Fanon's Two Memories," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no. 1 (2013): 5-22. Kris Sealey, "The Composite Community: Thinking Through Fanon's Critique of a Narrow Nationalism," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 6, no. 1 (2018): 26-57.

36. Farrukh Dhondy, *C. L. R. James: Cricket, the Caribbean, and World Revolution* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001). Kent Worcester, *C. L. R. James: A Political Biography* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

37. Paget Henry, *Caliban's Reasoning: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

(hereafter: *Notes*). It is a matter of debate how to trace James's intellectual influences and there is much contention among scholars as to the appropriate way to present his intellectual legacy in general. Scholars have largely provided two options for thinking about James's legacy. Aldon Nielsen argues that James is "haunted by prophetic figures of imprisonment that seem attendant upon his narratives of emancipation."³⁸ Herman Melville and William Shakespeare are just two of those prophetic figures. While some scholars like Nielsen have focused on James's literary works, others maintain that his legacy is "properly" philosophical. John H. McClendon adopts this latter position when he argues that James must be read and understood through his Marxism and furthermore a Left Hegelian.³⁹ No thinker manages to address the complexity of everyday life without neglecting philosophical rigor quite like James. James emerges as a true gem in the Africana philosophical tradition.

2. Chapter Descriptions

I organize chapters of this dissertation in chronological order of the figures. It moves from Du Bois to Fanon, and it ends with James. In Chapter One, I begin by analyzing Du Bois's conception of race. I first discuss the elements of Du Bois's conception of race. I contend that previous philosophical discussions have focused on whether Du Bois transcends the scientific conceptions of race and as a result ignore the idea that race is primarily historical. I turn to *Dusk of Dawn: An Autobiography of a Race Concept* to demonstrate that his discussion of race in Chapter Five is actually compatible with his early conception of race in CR. Second, I

38. Aldon Nielsen, *C. L. R. James: A Critical Introduction* (Jackson: Mississippi State University Press, 1997), 32.

39. John H. McClendon, *Notes on Dialectics: Left Hegelianism or Marxism-Leninism?* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2004).

investigate Kwame Anthony Appiah's claim that Du Bois adopts Herderian historicism by comparing and contrasting Johann Gottfried von Herder's historicism in *Letters for the Advancement of Humanity* and Hegel's historicism in *Lectures on the Philosophy of World-History*. In the end, I argue that Du Bois's conception of race relies on a dialectical understanding of history and progress, *striving*, which is more prominent in Hegel's historicism rather than Herder's historicism.

In Chapter Two, I analyze Fanon's commentary on Hegel's master-slave dialectic. I argue that Fanon repurposes Hegel's dialectic. Hegel's master-slave dialectic is a paradigmatic framework for Fanon to think through the meaning of slavery and its relationship to colonialism. More than borrowing the dialectic of action to describe what the Black subject must do, Fanon engages in a distinctly dialectical project in *Black Skin, White Masks* (hereafter: *BSWM*). Fanon repurposes the idea that racial difference gives rise to a negation that should culminate in a life and death struggle. First, I focus on the claims that Fanon makes in his commentary on Hegel's master-slave dialectic. Second, I outline what I take to be Fanon's main objectives, which are to provide a construction of Black subjectivity, and to provide a critique of the psychoanalytic approach. Finally, I provide an account of how the framework in Hegel's master-slave dialectic figures into the achievement of both of these objectives.

In Chapter Three, I first discuss the relationship between *BSWM* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. I provide Fanon's theory of violence through his rendition of decolonization. I argue that Fanon's conclusion that violence is atmospheric is one of the most important statements he makes because with it he assigns violence a distinctively pneumatic character. What I call *pneumatic violence* differs from other descriptions of Fanonian violence in that it emphasizes the ontological necessity of violence rather than its ethical utility. Next, I give an account of the

meaning of Hegel's Absolute and its relationship to Fanon's dialectical thinking. The idea that "every beginning must be made from the *absolute*" inspires Fanon.⁴⁰ I also give an account of the meaning Sartre gives *praxis* and its general relationship to Fanon's dialectical thinking, Fanon is inspired by the idea that "reciprocity is a praxis with a double (or multiple) epicenter [...] violence is always both a reciprocal recognition of freedom and a negation."⁴¹ It is essential to think about the Hegelian dimension of Fanon's work to interpret what he means by "absolute praxis."

In Chapter Four, I consider James's remark about the secret of Hegelian dialectic from a letter to Constance Webb. I argue that although James did not begin studying Hegel until the mid-1940s after *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (hereafter: *Black Jacobins*) was published, the argumentative claims that are usually attributed to James as a result of studying Hegel were actually already present in *Black Jacobins*. Those two argumentative claims are: (1) James became less interested in telling grand (comprehensive and definitive) historical narratives and (2) a practical dialectic informs how he understood the emergence of revolutionary politics. Together, these two claims are the so-called "romantic" dimensions of James's thought due to the emphasis on unity and wholeness along with the primacy of the individual. James's claim, "Great men make history, but only such history as it is possible for them to make" is similar to a claim Sartre makes in the *Critique of Dialectical*

40. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, 740. Emphasis in text.

41. C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Penguin, 2001), 7. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, vol. 1, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith (New York: Verso, 2004), 11.

Reason “the men that History makes are not the men that make history.”⁴² The Haitian Revolution is an instantiation of the secret of the Hegelian dialectic.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I clarify James’s understanding of Hegel’s dialectic and hereafter his position on Hegel’s philosophy by turning to *Notes*. Two separate issues will be important for clarifying James’s position. The first issue involves a letter correspondence between James and Raya Dunayevskaya. The Johnson-Forest Tendency was a radical left tendency that notably consisted of three members: James, Raya, and Graces Lee Boggs. Together, they read Hegel’s *SL* and *EL*. One of the issues in the group concerned how to understand Hegel. Dunayevskaya claims that James saw nothing useful in Hegel’s philosophy of mind, especially for their project of describing a history of the labor movement. Due to this interjection it is often thought that James abandons Hegelianism altogether. Dunayevskaya claim affects how one interprets James’s sarcastic remark: “Here lies G. W. F. Hegel R. I. P. He deserves it.”⁴³ This chapter is an intervention into this discussion as I aim to provide a clarified perspective on James’s presentation of Hegel. To be clear, my goal is not to offer a reading of *Notes*. I focus not on how James gets Hegel wrong but rather how he thinks about Hegel as a thinker of the instinctive dialectic and the value he derives from the instinctive dialectic.

42. Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, 13.

43. C. L. R. James, *Notes on Dialectics: Hegel, Marx, Lenin* (London: Allison & Busby, 1980), 66.