

# An Investigation of the Representation of the American Value System in Frederick Douglass' Narrative

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## I

A certain separation between the primary- and secondary values is present in major American works, specifically in one of Frederick Douglass' most recognized literary achievements. The question I intend to examine is how do these values and ideas reflect back and present us with the very meaning of the United States of America (USA). These underlying themes are although present, but mostly not explicitly explained and certainly not separated based on perceived importance, hence the primary and secondary method of separation, which examines them in a more comprehensive manner. This separation is required to better understand their significance in the field of value study in American studies.

Frederick Douglass' themes of the (American) values certainly convey those values to the readers in a unique setting and rather uncommonly. I say 'American' values parenthetically, because most of the values that appear in his book are so universal in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that they are subject to broad interpretation, therefore 'American' values could be realized in a myriad of ways. Presenting those values in his book definitely had its reasons, but he either subconsciously did so or he possibly aimed to more genuinely convey his message. The primary aim of this journal article is to analyze the primary- and secondary values of the American discourse and associate them with the examination of Douglass' slave narrative, titled the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845). I also intend to explore the possible reasonings as to why Douglass' gave priority to certain American values in his autobiography, while he ignored or did not put enough emphasis on certain others. In addition, I aim to give an explanation of what elements of his narrative are possibly based on propagandistic purposes.

## II

Zsolt Virágos offers one of the most comprehensive understandings of the examination of the core and secondary values. The basic premise of the renowned author is that “a normally functioning society in the state of relative cultural stability must have a central, Primary Core, surrounded within the larger culture by satellites of external, secondary cores. These discrete cores tend to be linked with one another, either through analogy [-] or opposition [<->], or both” (Virágos, “Diagnosing” 28-29). Virágos also provides four of his most intrinsic core values, as he states “The fundamental values of American civilization [are] liberty, equality, democracy, and individualism” (Virágos, “Diagnosing” 29). If one were to individually evaluate these values, they would find that their universality makes them excessively vague and broad in terms of interpretation, since anyone can define them in their own way. However, the idea they represented in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century America can be easily expanded upon via the use of the tools of public discourse (like the “Declaration of Independence” or Douglass’ *Narrative*). Although, it would be virtually impossible to thoroughly analyze the wide number of materials to facilitate the basic premise of what roles do core values play in the entire social system of the USA, I will attempt to concisely dissect them, and associate them with Douglass’ book. One should also consider the fact that the cores by Zsolt Virágos can be indefinitely expanded upon, so the number of major and secondary values in the USA and in the world can both be varying.

The scholarly works of Luther Luedtke and Robin Williams enables me to develop an argument for how specific secondary values can be determined. By comparing the two authors’ ideas on the basis of Virágos’ categorization concept, I can determine what constitutes as primary and as secondary aspect of the USA. Relying on that information, I will be able to use selected values to deduct the various affiliations regarding the American value system.

In the essay anthology titled *Making America: The Society & Culture of the United States* (1992), Luedtke outlines the following set of values: “individual personality, self-reliance, humanitarianism, external conformity, tolerance of diversity, efficiency and practicality, freedom, democracy, nationalism and patriotism, idealism and perfectionism, mobility and change” (20). Similarly these concepts and other ones can also be found in one of sociologist Robin Williams’ works as he identifies almost the same key components in the American social system in the form of: “activity and work, achievement and success, moral orientation, humanitarianism,

efficiency and practicality, science and secular rationality, material comfort, progress, equality, freedom, democracy, external conformity, nationalism and patriotism, and individual personality” (33).

Both writers present almost identical or abbreviated versions of the core ideas of Virágos’ “liberty, equality, democracy, and individualism” (Virágos, “Diagnosing” 29). In accordance with Virágos’ interpretation of the two sets of values, among the items listed above the core values of freedom, democracy, individualism and equality are still applicable to the primary core, while any other is regarded as a secondary value including “external conformity, nationalism and patriotism, individual personality,” or “self-reliance, humanitarianism, efficiency and practicality.” These are all extensions of the cores and are much more specific than their primary corresponding counterparts (Luedtke 20; Williams 33).

These values are all pivotal parts of both the social and cultural elements in the fabric of American society. Most of the features above (both core and secondary) manifest themselves in Douglass’ Narrative. Using Virágos’ fundamental core values and one selected from the secondary category of Williams and Luedtke, I will be able to comprehensively analyze Douglass’ narrative and more competently channel the significance of values to the reader. The secondary values I choose to analyze in more detail are practicality and efficiency.

Freedom (or liberty, which I use interchangeably) as a value is considered to be first value with an utmost priority for Americans, since it is integral to American history and culture simultaneously. In the value and belief system of the USA, most scholars like Luther Luedtke, Robin Williams and Eckhard Fiedler all agree and evaluate freedom as one of the first key value components of the US (Luedtke 20; Williams 33; Fiedler et al. 25). I believe that for the purpose of emphasizing the significance of the freedom value, first I must clarify what this value stands for.

In my experiences, it is also the most challenging value to analyze or define, since most other core values identified by Zsolt Virágos, such as individualism, democracy and equality, root their origins back to this basic belief. Because of its overly simple, yet complex nature, it is possibly the most challenging definition to figure out. As I stated before, the definition for the core values varies greatly, since they are so universal that everyone may view it differently. However, I believe Karl Deutsch captures what freedom as a value constitutes. He states:

For the purposes of this inquiry, let us measure a man’s “freedom” by the number of significantly different choices between actions actually available to and recognized by that man. This definition implies preference for a larger number of choices over smaller one.

All choices are choices between operations, including physical and mental operations as well as the operation of relative non-interference or passivity (Deutsch 150-151).

In Deutsch's assumption, this means that "there are actual opportunities for choice in the world that surrounds us" (Deutsch 151). Freedom and liberty alike are understood as not just cultural or social beliefs, but as a constitutionally protected right for all American citizens. As most people are aware, this has not always been the case, because they are contradictory in a sense that "American culture has been the long coexistence of an official creed of individual freedom, equality, opportunity, and justice and the de facto, when not de jure, discrimination against African Americans" (Luedtke 21).

Equality as a core value has the same attributions in complexity as the value of freedom. One may define equality as being "centrally concerned with the classic civil and political rights that constitute the fundamental freedoms of liberal democratic societies" (Baker 116). Equality may even be more than a simple value, because it can be used for "constructing one or more coherent sets of principles for a good society. Such principles can be used to criticise existing social institutions and systems and to suggest ways to improve or replace them" (Baker 120-121). I often find this value unusual, because of its relationship with inequality. My assumption is that any political decision that limits or extends one's rights as a citizen (within the logical and reasonable boundaries of common sense), should apply to everyone, regardless of political affiliation, class, age, gender, race, etc.

Those who are left out on the basis of pre-formulated judgement (prejudice), would automatically be considered as victims of discrimination, therefore subject to exploitation and unfair possibilities in life. However, just as Baker remarked above "principles can be used to criticise existing social institutions and systems", therefore even if a new law applies to everyone, it is through inequality that people address societal, historical, and cultural differences between each other and adjust accordingly (Baker 120-121). There will never be a time in the history of our species that all people will be equal, but the continuing progress of reaching better and more efficient equality will be a goal that humanity should pursue. Consequently, equality and inequality will never cease to exist, since they are both dependent on each other. Even as a value, equality is universally applicable.

In the interpretation of Bellah (and others), "individualism" is described as being the "first language" which all American citizens foremost favor in their lives along with self-determination and self-sufficiency (viii). Although, the determination by Bellah (and others) is correct, it is mainly a 20<sup>th</sup> century view on this value, which

compels me to further analyze individualism on a different basis. The classic work called *Democracy in America* (1835) by French social scientist Alexis de Tocqueville, paints a somewhat different picture of how individualism used to be realized during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century USA. As he puts it “Individualism is a reflective and peaceable sentiment that disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of those like him and to withdraw to one side with his family and his friends, so that after having thus created a little society for his own use, he willingly abandons society at large to itself” (Tocqueville 477).

The French social thinker makes a notion that individualism was a form of social life that encouraged the individual to determine his/her own role in society, given the circumstance of desiring to participate in it. A citizen of the US is someone who would take their own independence and embrace it as they see fit. As Tocqueville points out, “These owe nothing to anyone, they expect so to speak nothing from anyone; they are in the habit of always considering themselves in isolation, and they willingly fancy that their whole destiny is in their hands” (478). Bellah (and others), view Tocqueville’s comments as a form of criticism of the American individualism, since he believed that this way Americans may undermine their own freedom. This would in turn lead to authoritarianism, which encourages such isolative tendencies (Bellah et al. 37-38).

I believe that the claim made by Bellah is false. Although authoritarianism and isolation are usually connected in the context of American individualism by Tocqueville, it is misunderstood. Tocqueville’s observations on American democracy and individualism show a distinctive society that was not necessarily ready to join a social communion, however, I do not think that this fact ever led to extensive abuse of political power (excluding the slavery, which was more commonly accepted throughout history). Another way to approach individualism is on the basis of Christian values, in which individualism possesses a deep-rooted origin in North America. “The biblical tradition, a second language familiar to most Americans through a variety of communities of faith, teaches concern for the intrinsic value of individuals because of their relationship to the transcendent” (Bellah et al. ix). Up to and after the introduction of the republic system, it set a common morality, which has long followed virtually all Americans in other aspects of life such as the Protestant work ethic.

The value of democracy is a deep-seated element of the USA. As I stated before, most core values are hard to define, however, democracy can be understood as governing by the will of the public’s logic and reasoning (Oommen 4). On more basic terms, democracy is “thought to be a matter of collective self-governance” (Southwood 504). Through these explanations, I see democracy as a system in which

all participants of a democratic society have the opportunity to enforce their will by the means of electing certain government officials via voting. This means that most issues may be resolved in society based on public opinion, however morally positive or derogatory they may be, they are addressed with the implementation of democracy.

All democratic countries apply this method, especially the USA. The sheer volume of democracy, makes it one of the most significant aspects in a free society, as a consequence one should prevent and/or denounce any incident that increases the endangerment of democracy, which would cause its jeopardy or dissolution (Southwood 518). As an American value, it is highly appreciated, since it furthers the will of the people, hence the famous quote by President Abraham Lincoln: “government of the people, by the people, for the people”. On an individual level, democracy is reinforced by “Numerous American authors [who] plead with their readers to keep in mind that a true democracy must respect individuals and encourage the greatest possible degree of personal self-expression in its citizens” (Baym 221). I conclude that this suggestion by Baym is even truer in case of Douglass, who frequently makes observations on individualism. As Virágos expressed, the cores are closely linked to each other, which is evident in Baym’s statement, since democracy and individuality, to some extent, correspond with each other through analogy. Therefore, they depend on each other to culminate in maximal efficiency.

Liberty and freedom were Douglass’ main underlying values that routinely appear in the Narrative. Douglass remarks in his narrative “The silver trump of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness”, meaning that freedom as value and as a goal was essential to him (Douglass 35). There are many plausible reasons for Douglass considering liberty as his primary goal in life. Clearly, the most obvious and understandable of those reasons is his forced confinement, however, as he was aware of the impact it might have had on the mind of the readers, he intentionally and rightfully made the core value of freedom his priority in the narrative. One quote embodies Douglass’ idea on his perception of liberty and how that correlates with slavery, as he stated, “I often found myself regretting my own existence, and wishing myself dead; and but for the hope of being free, I have no doubt, but that I should have killed myself, or done something for which I should have been killed” (Douglass 36).

Here Douglass plays with the idea of committing suicide or making a situation, which would result in his demise, but the thought of freedom prevents him from doing so. Later on, in the book, his attitude changed from his depressing state of mind, when he got into a fight with one of his masters called Mr. Covey. The fact that he showed irreversible defiance against his master, knowing very well that his strong resistance

will probably end up in his death or severe punishment, was the turning point in his life. As he states, “This battle with Mr. Covey was the turning-point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood. It recalled the departed self-confidence, and inspired me again with a determination to be free” and “I did not hesitate to let it be known of me, that the white man who expected to succeed in whipping, must also succeed in killing me” (Douglass 63). Therefore, Douglass changes his view of barely clinging to freedom as a last hope and reassures his determination on his own freedom.

Douglass also states, “In coming to a fixed determination to run away, we did more than Patrick Henry, when he resolved upon liberty or death. With us it was a doubtful liberty at most, and almost certain death if we failed. For my part, I should prefer death to hopeless bondage” (74). His dedication to fight with all means for his freedom and the fact that he would even devote his life for it, has the same determination as the aforementioned Patrick Henry’s famous quote “‘give me liberty or give me death!’” (Patrick Henry in NCC Staff). Douglass’ idea of establishing a parallel with the patriotic Patrick Henry leads one to believe that the secondary values of Luedtke’s abovementioned “patriotism and nationalism” as secondary values were integral to portray himself as a ‘freedom fighter’ (20). For this reason, I suspect that Douglass’ representation of the freedom value is unquestionably authentic and closely resembles its affiliation with Luedtke’s secondary value. One might also come to the conclusion, that freedom might have been “(...) exaggerated” for propagandistic purposes, which I believe to be somewhat true, however, due to Douglass’ circumstances, the message and the goal he tried to achieve, it would be an acceptable motive for the author to exaggerate this value (Virágos, “Portraits” 198).

Equality as a value is exhibited through Douglass’ continuous comparison between him, different slaves, his captors and ordinary Caucasians. When Douglass recalls him seeing a city slave, a slave with vastly different conditions and lifestyle, he says, “A city slave is almost a freeman, compared with a slave on the plantation. He is much better fed and clothed, and enjoys privileges altogether unknown to the slave on the plantation” (Douglass 30). Although, neither of them are equal in the face of pro-slavery laws, still they are different in comparison. One slave may face far more suffering, torture and forced work, than the others who at the very least can enjoy things as simple as receiving decent food rations and clothing. From Douglass’ account, it seems some slaves are in a sense more ‘equal’ to the whites than others.

Douglass also stated, “I had very strangely supposed, while in slavery, that few of the comforts, and scarcely any of the luxuries of life were enjoyed at the north, compared with what were enjoyed by the slaveholders of the south.” Therefore he

refers to equality by comparing his conditions to that of slave masters, which of course was vastly different (Douglass 96). This is a constant topic of discussion in the book and the comparisons made in it were possibly used as a deterrent. So, the assumption can be made that Douglass intended to use this imagery as a means to communicate the acute social inequalities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century USA.

Douglass makes frequent comparisons between different slaveholders as well. Most share similar methods in slaveholding and exhibit especially cruel methods like his former masters: Mr. Covey, Thomas Auld, Edward Lloyd and Captain Anthony. The slaves' treatment differed to a great range, since among the owners' motives and methods one can find fanatic religious justification, the practice of pre-inflicted punishment, punishment for no reason at all, etc. On the other hand, Douglass acknowledges those individuals who at the very least display some level of fairness or provide more equal treatment despite being slaveholders still. He states:

But to return to Mr. Freeland, and to my experience while in his employment. He, like Mr. Covey, gave us enough to eat; but, unlike Mr. Covey, he also gave us sufficient time to take our meals. He worked us hard, but always between sunrise and sunset. He required a good deal of work to be done, but gave us good tools with which to work. His farm was large, but he employed hands enough to work it, and with ease, compared with many of his neighbors. My treatment, while in his employment, was heavenly, compared with what I experienced at the hands of Mr. Edward Covey. (Douglass 69)

Douglass recalls his time at Mr. Freeland's plantation in a manner that is unseen in case of other captors. This shows that Douglass was willing to feature such slavers who are not as vicious or self-righteous as others. This indicates that not all slavers practiced equally brutal and barbarous treatment of slaves, therefore strengthening Douglass' benefit of the doubt in the Narrative. Another comparison between people is simply based on ordinary folks, who were fortunate enough to be born white. Douglass makes this clear in the very first page as he states, "The white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege. I was not allowed to make any inquiries of my master concerning it" (Douglass 1).

By today's standards, such a simple fact as knowing one's age seems not like a 'privilege', but a universally equal fact in life, which was not the case for slaves in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century USA. The fundamental value of equality in Douglass' interpretation reveals his deprivation of such basic rights that limits him as an individual, but amplifies his goal of pursuing happiness. For Frederick Douglass, equality is in all likelihood the second most significant value he stood by. Douglass'



ambition to free the slaves from the physical confinement of slavery expanded further to desiring to grant them equal social- and political freedom. In order to achieve that, it was necessary to ensure emancipation from slavery, giving citizenship and securing voting rights for black males, which were all made into reality with the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the US Constitution, respectively.

Following his ambition to do away with slavery, granting blacks equal rights and equal representation were among the foremost of goals for Douglass. Although, he promoted equal rights to women as well, he concluded that because of the violent and racist treatment of black people they had to first promote black equalization while addressing the issues of female equality only later. The American Woman Suffrage Association argued that if black equalization is properly addressed, then achieving female suffrage and equal rights would be less challenging, so they settled to continue their work together with Douglass (Darrah 151-152). Therefore, Douglass' determination to achieve equality transcended his membership in the black community in the USA.

As Sandefur reflects on Douglass' view on the value of individualism, he states, "In fact, individualism was the centerpiece of his creed—a creed he embraced proudly and with full consciousness" (xii). I would argue that Douglass, as an individual, does not directly assert his state of being in a literal sense. Douglass steadily develops, with the reader, from object to subject in the course of a hundred pages. This is clearly outlined in his narrative. The ultimate goal of individualism as a value is to establish one's 'well-being' in all aspects of his or her life. Douglass constantly mentions that some of his masters had a belief in the justification of slavery, which was enforced through religious means, when he remarks:

I have said my master found religious sanction for his cruelty. As an example, I will state one of many facts going to prove the charge. I have seen him tie up a lame young woman, and whip her with a heavy cowskin upon her naked shoulders, causing the warm red blood to drip; and, in justification of the bloody deed, he would quote this passage of Scripture—'He that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes'. (Douglass 48)

Sandefur elaborates on this by saying "This propaganda was a powerful device for weakening the incipient individualism of those kept in servitude, strengthening the resolve of the tiny master class, and assuaging guilt among whites who, like Captain Anthony, owned few slaves, or none at all" (2). Douglass deeply condemned this cruel practice and as a profoundly religious person who would frequently pray for his salvation and liberation, he understood the reason behind the possible intention

of slaveholders. They managed to deform and corrupt individualism among blacks, using one, if not the most significant aspect of the African-American community against them, which is religion.

Another example of the slave narrative's manifestation of the value of individualism is through the secondary value of "self-reliance" by Luedtke (20). Douglass portrays his great sense of accomplishment in work. Towards the end of his book, after he got a job as a calker, Douglass says that he was able to command the highest wages given to the most experienced calkers.

I was now of some importance to my master. I was bringing him from six to seven dollars per week. I sometimes brought him nine dollars per week: my wages were a dollar and a half a day. After learning how to calk, I sought my own employment, made my own contracts, and collected the money which I earned. My pathway became much more smooth than before; my condition was now much more comfortable. (84)

Douglass takes great pride and joy in his employment. This is due to actually earning a decent wage and presumably him feeling becoming more and more self-sustaining and self-reliant. It was a unique way of communicating how the value of individualism appeared in his work. His well-being and feeling successful at work reveal a correspondence with Williams's and Luedtke's secondary value of "achievement and success" and "(...) individual personality (...)" (Williams 33; Luedtke 20). However, this would not last for too long, and the reason is that

[He] was now getting, as I have said, one dollar and fifty cents per day. I contracted for it; I earned it; it was paid to me; it was rightfully my own; yet, upon each returning Saturday night, I was compelled to deliver every cent of that money to Master Hugh. And why? Not because he earned it,—not because he had any hand in earning it,—not because I owed it to him,—nor because he possessed the slightest shadow of a right to it; but solely because he had the power to compel me to give it up. The right of the grim-visaged pirate upon the high seas is exactly the same. (Douglass 85)

Douglass feels rightfully angered by the dispossession of something that he earned with his own two hands. This event also has a high resemblance to two of Williams' key secondary values of American society, which are "activity and work" and "material comfort" (30). By the latest quote I referenced from Douglass, it can be assumed that he deeply cared for these secondary values noted by Williams'. It has always been crucial in the world that an individual could actively work and

create material comfort in life, thus making Douglass' ambition of breaking free of his confinement is even more symbolic.

Democracy as a primary value was crucial to Douglass, because he saw it as one of the only assurances of liberating his brethren. The way of how the black slaves would achieve their desire to take their place in politics by democratic means was always disputed. There was a constant fear among citizens that those "Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow", therefore fearing the potential of a slave rebellion (Sandefur on Lord Byron xvi-xvii). There was a notion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that liberty should not be granted to African-Americans by the white majority of the voters, simply because from then on, the freedom of the blacks would be at the democratic mercy of the white majority (Sandefur xvii).

Instead of believing in such notions, Douglass dismissed the idea of not gaining liberty through the white majority of the votes as "He believed that only by taking responsibility for their own fates—through hard work, education, and diligence; by undertaking the duties of citizenship on the battlefield, in elections, and in the jury box; by demanding and meriting an equal place in democratic society—could black Americans achieve and deserve their own liberty" (Sandefur xvii).

In his narrative, Douglass even mentions "A representative could not be prouder of his election to a seat in the American Congress, than a slave on one of the out-farms would be of his election to do errands at the Great House Farm" (Douglass 10). This sort of comparison is meant to be 'compliment' for the democratic institutions of the USA, which would eventually grant Douglass' wishes on emancipation.

Furthermore, there are other indications of democracy in the book's preface. Here we are familiarized with Daniel O'Connell an Irish national, emancipator, and abolitionist (Garrison in Douglass Preface ix). Although, he was a politician in Ireland and represented the Irish Catholic majority, his influence and representation of the Irish people's cause in attaining independence from Britain was sufficient enough to be mentioned in Garrison's Preface. In this sense, O'Connell's aspiration had a striking affinity with the American Revolutionary War. William Lloyd Garrison remarks on O'Connell's commentary of the slavery issue, as he states:

No matter (...) under what specious term it may disguise itself, slavery is still hideous. It has a natural, an inevitable tendency to brutalize every noble faculty of man. An American sailor, who was cast away on the shore of Africa, where he was kept in slavery for three years, was, at the expiration of that period, found to be imbruted and stultified— he had lost all reasoning power; and having forgotten his native language, could only utter some savage gibberish between Arabic and English, which nobody could understand, and

which even he himself found difficulty in pronouncing. So much for the humanizing influence of THE DOMESTIC INSTITUTION! (Garrison in Douglass Preface ix).

Garrison includes the harsh criticism by O'Connell, since the Irish nationalist leader severely disagreed with the USA's policy on African-Americans. The reason behind Garrison, including O'Connell's disapproval of the USA's domestic situation at the time served as a grave reminder that common sense outside of the US dictates the wrongful nature of the practice of slavery. I assume that the mentioning of this Irish patriot was for propagandistic reasons (although they also did it to reflect truth). Douglass was an avid believer in democracy, however, it is also worth mentioning that he rarely points it out directly in the book. The only logical assumption, I can think of, for not putting enough emphasis on democracy is that Douglass could have felt disappointed in democracy, that it failed him and his fellow slaves, still he knew more than anyone, that democracy was also the solution to his problems. Douglass was a solid believer in the value of democracy and the opportunities that it represents, which was also evident in his ambition of emancipation and female suffrage, that could not have been achieved without the support of the American people, regardless of racial or gender tensions, respectively.

He exceeded himself not only in his efforts to bring forth emancipation, but afterwards, for instance, he continued his agenda to make female suffrage a reality as demonstrated among others in an 1847 newspaper article "Right Is of No Sex—Truth Is of No Color—God Is the Father of Us All, and All We Are Brethren" (Douglass, [a] "Rochester" 1). His' remark about 'sex' being an unimportant feature, when it comes to 'rights', shows that one's sex affiliation should not be a dividing factor in the American public life. Douglass' support reveals that in his mindset, American women should not experience any form of limitations of freedom, equality and democracy, nor share any commonality with slave treatment. Despite the fact that later on, he did place the black issues above those of female issues in society, he eventually endorsed suffrage for women after his fellow slaves were set free.

As I discussed in individualism, Douglass highly evaluated the paid work he did as a calker, however, due to practicality and efficiency (as secondary values) being strongly connected to the Protestant work ethic, it is worth investigating further Douglass' attitude towards working. The Protestant work ethic is characterized by "discipline, thrift, lean welfare, and above all, hard work" (Jordan 7). All these virtues promote a strict life, that ensures one's complete determination to work and God.

Following Douglass' escape, he found "employment (...) in stowing a sloop with a load of oil. It was new, dirty, and hard work for me; but I went at it with a glad heart

and a willing hand. I was now my own master. It was a happy moment, the rapture of which can be understood only by those who have been slaves. It was the first work, the reward of which was to be entirely my own” (Douglass 99). Douglass spoke graciously about his own labour, but he also noted how challenging and hard it was. Despite that, he still found enjoyment in his employment, which is an admirable feat, but it also has close connections with the Protestant work ethic, which I mentioned earlier.

Therefore, he projected the value of practicality and efficiency, through hard working and radiated his strangely positive attitude towards any jobs. This is further implied in the narrative, since after he left stowing, he states “Finding my trade of no immediate benefit, I (...) prepared myself to do any kind of work I could get to do There was no work too hard—none too dirty. I was ready to saw wood, shovel coal, carry wood, sweep the chimney, or roll oil casks,—all of which I did for nearly three years in New Bedford, before I became known to the anti-slavery world” (Douglass 99). Through those three years of hard labour, Douglass did not falter and executed any odd jobs effectively. His practical approach presents him as a true representative of the Protestant work ethic.

### III

In conclusion, I firmly believe Douglass to be a promoter of the abovementioned values, which becomes rather obvious in his own narrative. His adherence to these values may have had a myriad of reasons, but it is important to remember that his confinement justifies virtually every aspect of his aspiration to the betterment of the African-American cause in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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