

Moral Reasoning 74:
The Theory and Practice
of Republican Government

Lecture 20:
Extensions and Challenges
to Republicanism I

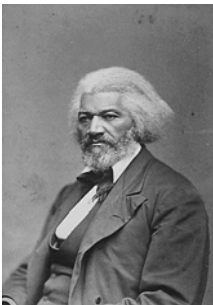
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Major Themes (Today & Thursday)

Generally, consider historical extensions to, philosophical and historical alternatives to republicanism.

- I. Free Labor Critique of Slavery (Abolitionists and early **R**epublicans)
- II. Free Labor Critique of Wage Labor (Jacksonians & Knights of Labor)
- III. Emergence of Progressivism

Douglass as Literary and
Philosophical Figure



Douglass:
Antislavery lecturing, 1841-1845
Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass; An American Slave, Written by Himself
[autobiography, 1845]
Continued speaking and publishing
[from Rochester], 1847-1859
May-June 1851: Break with Garrison and Garrisonian abolitionists

Douglass, 4th of July Oration

I. Begins with Praise of Declaration and of American Revolution

To say *now* that America was right, and England wrong, is exceedingly easy. Everybody can say it; the dastard, not less than the noble brave, can flippantly discant on the tyranny of England towards the American Colonies. It is fashionable to do so; but there was a time when, to pronounce against England, and in favor of the cause of the colonies, tried men's souls. They who did so were accounted in their day, plotters of mischief, agitators and rebels, dangerous men. **To side with the right, against the wrong, with the weak against the strong, and with the oppressed against the oppressor! *here* lies the merit, and the one which, of all others, seems un fashionable in our day. The cause of liberty may be stabbed by the men who glory in the deeds of your fathers.**

Douglass, 4th of July Oration

B. Indicts his Audience

Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here today? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?

Douglass, 4th of July Oration

C. Is Independence a Fiction?

I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common.-The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought life and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth July is *yours*, not *mine*. *You* may rejoice, I must mourn.

Douglass, 4th of July Oration

D. 1. Slavery Incompatible with Liberty

Would you have me argue that man is entitled to liberty? that he is the rightful owner of his own body? You have already declared it. **Must I argue the wrongfulness of slavery? Is that a question for Republicans?** Is it to be settled by the rules of logic and argumentation, as a matter beset with great difficulty, involving a doubtful application of the principle of justice, hard to be understood? How should I look today, in the presence of Americans, dividing, and subdividing a discourse, to show that men have a natural right to freedom? To do so, would be to make myself ridiculous, and to offer an insult to your understanding. -There is not a man beneath the canopy of heaven, that does not know that slavery is wrong *for him*.

Douglass, 4th of July Oration

D.2. Slavery Makes Mockery of Supposed Republican Liberty

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; **your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity;** your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; **your denunciations of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery;** your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade, and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. **There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices, more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour. ...**

Fellow-citizens, this murderous traffic is, to-day, in active operation in this boasted republic.

Douglass, 4th of July Oration

E. Douglass: Slavery Inherent to American Capitalism

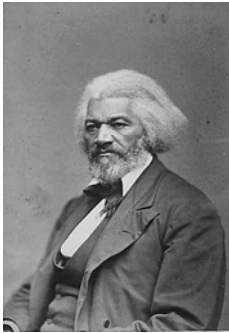
Behold the practical operation of this internal slave-trade, the American slave-trade, sustained by American politics and American religion. Here you will see men and women, reared like swine, for the market. You know what is a swine-drover? I will show you a man-drover. They inhabit all our Southern States. They perambulate the country, and crowd the highways of the nation, with droves of human stock. You will see one of these human flesh jobbers, armed with pistol, whip and bowie-knife, driving a company of a hundred men, women, and children, from the Potomac to the slave market at New Orleans. These wretched people are to be sold singly, or in lots, to suit purchasers.

Douglass, 4th of July Oration

E. Douglass: Slavery Inherent to American Capitalism

...Follow this drove to New Orleans. Attend the auction; see men examined like horses; see the forms of women rudely and brutally exposed to the shocking gaze of American slave-buyers. See this drove sold and separated for ever; and never forget the deep, sad sobs that arose from that scattered multitude. Tell me citizens, WHERE, under the sun, you can witness a spectacle more fiendish and shocking. Yet this is but a glance at the American slave-trade, as it exists, at this moment, in the ruling part of the United States.

Douglass – Break with Garrison



Questions from Douglass and Abolition

- (1) From Montesquieu: was anybody really free in the early 1800s?
- (2) Is the founding point of American liberty 1776, or 1863, or 1964?
- (3) Was the slave system abhorrent to the commercial republic or an expression of it?

Free Labor Ideology

Classic book: *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, by Eric Foner

1. "Free Labor" ideology dominant among northern Republicans
2. United abolitionists and more conservative opponents of slavery
3. Opposition to "slave system" b/c it is seen as inimical to free labor
4. Labor valued in its own right – not as means to economic ends but as expression of personhood and cultivation of character, citizenship
5. Also concern about wage system. Free labor ideologues prefer craft production and autonomy.

THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR I

A. The Roots of Labor Unrest and Organization.

- Depression of 1870s leads employers to cut workers' pay
- Increasing size and force of employer organization (early forms of "downsizing")

KOL – (1869: Uriah Stephens in Philadelphia, PA. Principal leader: Terence V. Powderly). Growth slow in 1870s. KOL grew most in expansion of 1880s.

THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR I

B. Extremely Rapid Membership Rise

1880: 28,000 members	1885: 104,000 members
1883: 52,000 members	1886: 700,000 members

Other Threats: (1) local electoral competition – Knight ran successfully in 1884 and 1886.

(2) a cross-trade and cross-craft labor movement – thus much more threatening than earlier forms of union.

1884-1886: massive and violent strike activity (MayDay, Haymarket)

THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR I

C. Unique Facets of the Knights:

- (1) organizational – extremely cohesive labor organization
 - org'n was based in locals (parallel to agrarian movement)
 - Based in skilled workers (artisans, craftsmen, skilled industrial workers), not so much in poor.
- (2) ideological -- "producerist" ideology.
 - balance of power btw capital/labor.
 - distinction btw producers and non-producers -- Kists and UE alike.

Republican Tropes in KOL

Jeffersonian/Jacksonian distrust of large organizations (govt and economic):

George McNeill (Knights leader): “[T]he power of these corporations over the government, and over their employees, [is] equalled only by the power of the Czar...the question will soon force itself upon the republican citizens in this form: ‘Shall these great corporations control the government, or shall they be controlled by the government?’”

Critique of Wage Labor System

Sandel (p. 169): “Few if any would now challenge the notion of wage labor as such. But in the nineteenth century, many Americans did. For according to the republican conception of freedom, it is by no means clear that a person who works for wages is truly free.”

Critique of Wage Labor System

Sandel (cont.): “Of course, exchanging my labor for a wage may be free in the sense that I voluntarily agree to do so. Absent unfair pressure or coercion, wage labor is free labor in the voluntarist, contractual sense. But even a voluntary agreement to exchange work for a wage does not fulfill the republican conception of free labor. On the republican view, I am free only to the extent that I participate in self-government, which requires in turn that I possess certain habits and dispositions, certain qualities of character. Free labor is thus labor carried out under conditions likely to cultivate the qualities of character that suit citizens to self-government.”

Value of Craft Production

“The artisans, craftsmen, and mechanics who carried out most manufacturing in the early nineteenth century were typically small producers who owned their means of production and were beholden to no boss, at least not as a permanent condition. Their labor was free not only in the sense that they agreed to perform it but also in the sense that it equipped them to think and act as independent citizens, capable of sharing in self-government.”

Notice Jefferson’s basic concerns here: do urban settings, commercial life create “fit tools” for ambitious tyrants?

The Fall of the Knights of Labor

1. Identity and economic diversification – difficult to associate across trades.
2. Ethnic identity and neighborhood networks: associations among various European immigrants difficult.
3. Employers’ organized resistance (Kim Voss)
 - study of New Jersey KOL local assemblies
 - KOL 4.28 times more likely to collapse in one-industry towns
 - KOL 2.47 times more likely to collapse where hostile employers’ associations appeared
 - New Jersey death rate fed off national death rate
 - Comparison: English employers less hostile



The Fall of the Knights of Labor

4. Racial/ethnic typecasting (Carol Horton)

- Decline of KOL begins in 1886, w/ Haymarket affair
- racial/ethnic typecasting (culturalist and critical explanation). [non-native = violent, anarchist]
- binary opposition category

5. Statist argument (Victoria Hattam): American government (here courts) rarely intervenes in the process, except to favor employers. State favors unions in GB.
