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THE OBSTACLES TO CAPITAL

HENRY CAREY'S POLITICAL ECONOMY IN 19TH-CENTURY U.S. HISTORY

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to study the economic thought of Henry Charles Carey (1793-1879) as a scientific and political reflection on how to overcome the several obstacles that stood in the way of U.S. capitalism's affirmation and of the United States' global emergence as a state and as an empire. In particular, by reading Carey's theory within the social conflicts and crises that shaped the nineteenth-century United States, the dissertation reconstructs how, between the 1820s and the 1870s, Carey faced both the obstacles posed by the world market's power structure and those posed by class conflict and by the undisciplined movements of black and white labor. Against them, he deployed on the one hand the tools of economic and social science, in the attempt to provide an ideological representation that could naturalize U.S. capitalism and its hierarchies, while delegitimizing class conflict. On the other hand, Carey mobilized the tools of politics by publicly intervening, by engaging within the Republican Party, but most crucially by calling for a specific role of the state within capital, in the government and coordination of social and economic processes.

The first chapter focuses on Carey's first writings and public interventions between the 1820s and the 1830s, arguing that his economic science and his vision of a classless society were elaborated out of a long political and scientific battle against Philadelphia workers', that involved both a clash around the problem of class and a clash around different visions of republicanism. The second chapter reconstructs Carey's protectionism between the late-1840s and the mid-1850s, showing how he conceived the state's economic intervention through protectionism as the condition of possibility for the government of labor's movements, for fostering accumulation, for guaranteeing monetary abundance and for building U.S. imperial power. The third chapter deals with Carey's writings on slavery between the 1830s and the 1850s, arguing that his vision of a gradual, ordered and limited emancipation through protectionism was elaborated in the attempt to guarantee the command over black labor against the threats posed by the abolitionist movement and by slave revolts. It also reconstructs how, in the second half of the 1850s, Carey tried to affirm his anti-abolitionist vision of emancipation within the Republican Party. The fourth chapter centers on Carey's social science from the late 1850s, elaborated in the midst of the country's deepest crisis, as his highest attempt to scientifically ground the legitimation of U.S. capitalism through a new vision of society as a «machine», of the state as the «political head» of society and of «subordination» to social order as the condition of possibility for individual freedom. The fifth chapter follows Carey's scientific and political interventions during Reconstruction, highlighting his role in monetary debates, his opposition to Radical Reconstruction, his interventions at the Constitutional Convention of Pennsylvania and his increasingly anachronistic understanding of capitalism in a transformed economic and political context.

Throughout the five chapters, the dissertation thus aims to show that the study of Carey's scientific and political attempt to confront the several obstacles to the affirmation of capital as a social and economic system is crucial to historically understand the long nineteenth-century U.S. rise from former colony into a state and an empire.

Introduction. The Obstacles to Capital

Writing between the late 1820s and the late 1870s, Henry Charles Carey crossed one of the most transformative and turbulent periods in the social, economic, political and constitutional history of the United States. Throughout this half century, the country passed from 9 to almost 50 million inhabitants, abolished slavery, structured a national market, built an industrial system, affirmed the federal government's supremacy over state governments, and doubled its territory accomplishing the colonization of a large part of the North-American continent. At the center of this change stood the emergence and consolidation of U.S. capitalism as a system of economic and social relations, which allowed the United States to complete its long transformation from former colony with an agricultural slave economy at the periphery of the international system of European states, into a post-colonial state, a continental empire and an industrializing economy ready to project its power overseas.

This transformation, however, was not necessarily and manifestly predestined, nor smooth, and not even likely. In fact, in order to accelerate its accumulation while fueling the state and empire-building processes, in the central decades of the nineteenth century U.S. capital had to overcome a long series of «interferences» or «obstacles», as Carey repeatedly called them. On the one hand, the obstacles posed by the world market's power structure, in which the United States still occupied a colonial economic position, depending on British capital for investments and demand for the exportation of agricultural products, while struggling to develop its own manufacturing production because of the competition of British industries. On the other hand, the obstacles posed by the undisciplined movements of black and white labor, that were contesting the consequences of capitalist development in terms of impoverishment, exploitation and coercion.

As a matter of fact, from the 1820s on, in the North, the opposition to wage labor was bringing strikes in Eastern manufactures and workshops in the context of the first insurgence of white labor, but also a massive westward migration in search of land that often produced a structural scarcity of workforce and further limited the possibilities of accumulation. Simultaneously, slave resistance, rebellions and escapes in the South, supported by the emergence of a radical, interracial abolitionist movement in the North, increasingly threatened slavery up to the point of forcing its abolition during the Civil War. Furthermore, capital had to face the obstacles produced by the deepening political and constitutional conflict over slavery between the North and the South, which ended up destroying the very unity of the American state. It was therefore despite a persistent economic

dependency, an emerging class conflict, a revolutionary emancipation of black workers, a secession and a Civil War that the United States could emerge as a capitalist economy, as a state and as an empire.

This dissertation springs from the assumption that Carey's intellectual trajectory is relevant to better understand this transformation and its difficulties. In fact, Carey precisely faced the question of how to affirm U.S. power within the world market, but at the same time acknowledged the several economic, social and political frailties that the United States had to resolve in order to rise as a state and as an empire. In particular, Carey realized the need to ground such political ascendancy upon the affirmation and consolidation of capitalism as a mode of production and as a system of social relations. In this respect, this dissertation does not read Carey solely as an economist or as a social scientist, but as a political thinker, and specifically as a theorist of capital who theorized in the thick of the conflicts and crises that characterized the United States' transformation into a global power. Thus, his long reflection should be considered as a scientific and political attempt, elaborated from within this transformation, to conceive and implement the social, economic and political conditions for a consolidation of capitalism that could ground the global emergence of the United States as a state and as an empire. Or, in other words, as a scientific and political attempt to overcome the obstacles to capital.

In doing so, this dissertation aims to bring a new and original interpretation of Carey's economic and social science that aims to fill the existing historiographic gaps around his figure. In the past century, in fact, scholarly assessments of Carey have tended to follow two main directions. On the one hand, his political economy has been studied by historians of economic thought who have proven uninterested in placing his reflection within its own historical context. Most of these studies have focused on Carey's critique of British classical economists, largely interpreting it as a nationalist, cultural reaction and highlighting its peculiarities and contradictions, as well as its lack of formal and scientific rigor¹. Joseph Schumpeter, for example, highlighted his «technical deficiency» as an economist, deploring his «negative contributions to analysis», while at the same time recognizing his «great vision» about capitalism's «productive capacity» and its «vast potentialities»². To the extent that Carey's theory was placed in historical context, like in Joseph Dorfman's five-volume history of American economics, it was only to dismiss it as a rationalization

¹ John R. Turner, *The Ricardian Rent Theory in Early American Economics* (New York: The New York University Press, 1921), 110–42; Eric Roll, *A History of Economic Thought* (London: Faber & Faber, 1938), 330, 461; Giovanna Valassina, *La teoria ricardiana della rendita nella storia del pensiero economico* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1976); Aurelio Macchioro, *Studi di storia del pensiero economico e altri saggi* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1970).

² Joseph Alois Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 516–18, 572.

of his own interests as an investor in coal mines³. Even scholars like Ernest Teilhac, Abraham D. H. Kaplan, and Rodney Morrison, who devoted entire studies to Carey, while stressing his originality and innovative contributions, did not go beyond an assessment of his arguments' internal consistency or historical plausibility⁴. Paul Conkin recognized Carey's centrality in the early history of U.S. economic thought, at least trying to connect his reflection to broader economic transformations⁵. Others, more recently, focused on more specific elements of Carey's economic theory. Michal Perelman reconstructed the «ecological» dimension of his political economy⁶ and Gerald Vaughn its institutionalist character⁷, while Stephen Meardon investigated his protectionism and his «zone theory»⁸.

Overall, however, and with only a few exceptions, historians of economic thought have failed to take into account the long arc of Carey's reflection, from the 1830s to the 1870s, or the historical conflicts in which it was elaborated, thus failing to understand the reasons of his theoretical stances and presenting him as an unorthodox figure, but largely detached from history. The same can also be said of those intellectual historians who highlighted Carey's role in the history of U.S. sociology, starting with Luther and Jessie Bernard in 1943 and Arnold Green in 1951⁹. While recovering a largely neglected chapter in U.S. intellectual history, in most cases, the attention to Carey's pioneering attempt at formulating a science of society has not been accompanied by an investigation of the historical and political reasons that led him to abandon political economy in the mid-1850s to embrace a Comtean scientific approach. This is also true of two recent

³ Joseph Dorfman, «The Carey-Colwell School», in *The Economic Mind in American Civilization*, vol. 2 (New York: Kelley, 1946), 789–825.

⁴ Ernest Teilhac, *Histoire de la pensée économique aux États-Unis Au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1928); Abraham D. H. Kaplan, *Henry Charles Carey. A Study in American Economic Thought* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1931); Rodney J. Morrison, *Henry C. Carey and American Economic Development* (Philadelphia: Transactions of American Philosophical Society, 1985).

⁵ Paul K. Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity. America's First Political Economists* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980). Similarly, see: Donatella Parisi, «L'«American System of Political Economy» e la storiografia economica dell'Ottocento: da Francesco Ferrara a John Kenneth Galbraith», *Rivista Internazionale Di Scienze Sociali* 97, no. 3–4 (luglio-dicembre 1989): 487–97; Donatella Parisi, «Nascita e sviluppo dell'«American System of Political Economy». Il pensiero economico nordamericano Tra Settecento e Ottocento», *Rivista Internazionale Di Scienze Sociali* 98, no. 4 (ottobre-dicembre 1990): 547–81.

⁶ Michael Perelman, «Henry Carey's Political-Ecological Economics», *Organization & Environment* 12, no. 3 (September 1999): 280–92; Michael Perelman, «The Comparative Sociology of Environmental Economics in the Works of Henry Carey and Karl Marx», *History of Economics Review* 36, no. 1 (January 2002): 85–110.

⁷ Gerald F. Vaughn, «Institutional Economics and Community Development: the Pioneering Roles of Henry C. Carey and Van Buren Denslow», *Journal of Economic Issues* XXXVII, fasc. 3 (settembre 2003): 681–97.

⁸ Stephen Meardon, «How TRIPs Got Legs: Copyright, Trade Policy, and the Role of Government in Nineteenth-Century American Economic Thought», *History of Political Economy* 37, no. 5 (2005): 145–74; Stephen Meardon, «Reciprocity and Henry C. Carey's Traversies 'On the Road to Perfect Freedom of Trade»,» *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 33, no. 3 (September 2011): 307–33; Stephen Meardon, «Henry C. Carey's 'Zone Theory' and American Sectional Conflict», *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 37, no. 2 (June 2015): 305–20.

⁹ Luther L. Bernard e Jessie Bernard, *Origins of American Sociology. The Social Science Movement in the United States* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1943); Arnold W. Green, *Henry Charles Carey. Nineteenth-Century Sociologist* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951). See also: Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

contributions in intellectual history that give Carey a central role. First, Christopher Calvo's book on the history of Smith's reception in the United States, which described Carey's theory without critically questioning the historical underpinning and the political meaning of his ideas¹⁰. Second, Eric Helleiner's history of neomercantilism, which reconstructed in great detail the global spread of Carey's, as well of Friedrich List's, ideas, providing a useful map that, however, does not say much about his thought, taking it as a monolith and studying it in a historical vacuum¹¹.

On the other hand, Carey has been studied for his political involvement and intellectual influence within the Republican Party, particularly concerning protectionist policies, by economic and political historians of the Civil War and Reconstruction. First in this trend was, in 1951, George W. Smith's very well-documented study of Carey's political role during the sectional conflict, which had the merit of highlighting his stances on slavery and emancipation¹². Then, Eric Foner reconstructed the broad influence of Carey's political economy on the Republican Party's free-labor ideology, and on Lincoln himself¹³, while Daniel Howe stressed his relevance to the Whig Party's political culture¹⁴. Most historical studies, however, focused on Carey's role in influencing the Republican Party's economic policies before and during the Civil War, and specifically in lobbying for the approval of the Morrill Tariff in 1861¹⁵. Others have traced Carey's long collaboration as an editorialist for Horace Greeley's *New York Daily Tribune*, stressing his subterranean conflict with Karl Marx¹⁶, or his involvement in the experience of the American

¹⁰ Christopher W. Calvo, *The Emergence of Capitalism in Early America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2020).

¹¹ Eric Helleiner, *The Neomercantilists: A Global Intellectual History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021).

¹² George W. Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1951).

¹³ Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial. Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: Norton, 2010).

¹⁴ Daniel W. Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979).

¹⁵ Reinhard H Luthin, "Abraham Lincoln and the Tariff," *The American Historical Review* 49, no. 4 (July 1944): 609–29; Arthur M. Lee, "Henry Carey and the Republican Tariff," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 81, no. 3 (July 1957): 280–302; James L. Huston, "A Political Response to Industrialism: The Republican Embrace of Protectionist Labor Doctrines," *The Journal of American History* 70, no. 1 (June 1983): 35–57; James L. Huston, *The Panic of 1857 and the Coming of the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987); Heather Cox Richardson, *The Greatest Nation of the Earth. Republican Economic Policies during the Civil War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); Marc Egnal, *Clash of Extremes. The Economic Origins of the Civil War* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009); Phillip W. Magness, "Morrill and the Missing Industries: Strategic Lobbying Behavior and the Tariff, 1858–1861," *Journal of the Early Republic* 29, no. 2 (2009): 287–329; Brian Schoen, "The Political Economies of Secession," *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 37, no. 2 (June 2015): 203–19; Marc-William Palen, "The Civil War's Forgotten Transatlantic Tariff Debate and the Confederacy's Free Trade Diplomacy," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 3, no. 1 (2013): 35–61.

¹⁶ Michael Perelman, *Marx's Crises Theory. Scarcity, Labor and Finance* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1987), 10–26; Adam-Max Tuchinsky, *Horace Greeley's New-York Tribune: Civil War-Era Socialism and the Crisis of Free Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Simon Vézina, "Henry C. Carey, le New York Tribune et la formation de l'opinion économique américaine," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 27, no. 3 (2019): 28–61. On the relationship between Marx and Carey, see also: Isabella Consolati, "Marx e gli 'accidenti' della storia universale. L'India, lo Stato e il mercato mondiale," *Scienza & Politica. Per una storia delle dottrine* XXXI, no. 61 (December 2019): 153–70; Matteo Battistini, "Karl Marx and the Global History of the Civil War: The Slave Movement, Working-Class Struggle, and the American State within the World Market," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 100 (2021): 158–85.

Emigrant Company after the Civil War¹⁷. Marc-William Palen has depicted Carey's protectionism as a fundamental root of later U.S. imperialism, tracing his influence on the Republican Party's commercial and foreign policies up to the twentieth century¹⁸. Nicholas and Peter Onuf had instead the merit of investigating the conceptualization of the nation inherent in Carey's protectionism, while also highlighting his influence on Northern public opinion before the Civil War¹⁹. Historians of Reconstruction have highlighted Carey's prominent role in postwar monetary debates and in the defence of greenbacks²⁰, albeit often exaggerating his closeness to labor greenbackism and Radical Republicans²¹. Most of these historical contributions, however, did not couple the investigation of Carey's role within contemporary political debates with analyses of his theory and its conceptual shifts, in addition to focusing only on the years between the 1850s and the 1870s, thus ignoring his previous writings.

Thus, if historians of economic thought and intellectual historians have tended to study Carey's theory out of history, detaching his science from its political meaning, historians of the nineteenth-century United States have tended to place Carey within history while largely overlooking his theory, studying his politics without acknowledging its scientific underpinnings. Of course, there have been a few outliers to this schematic division. Nicolas Barreyre has given attention to Carey's role in Reconstruction economic and political debates, while highlighting the relevance of his strictly political vision of money²², and conversely Sofia Valeonti has provided a long-needed assessment of Carey's monetary thought carefully showing its embeddedness in the politics of Reconstruction²³. Ariel Ron has instead studied Carey's developmental vision to show a relevant theoretical foundation of the mid-nineteenth-century movement for scientific agriculture, as well as of the Republican Party's understanding of the state's economic role²⁴. None of them, however, actually read Carey's reflection moving from the history within which it was elaborated. Something

¹⁷ Charlotte Erickson, *American Industry and the European Immigrant 1860-1885* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957).

¹⁸ Marc-William Palen, *The «Conspiracy» of Free Trade: The Anglo-American Struggle over Empire and Economic Globalization, 1846-1896* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

¹⁹ Nicholas Greenwood Onuf and Peter S. Onuf, *Nations, Markets, and War. Modern History and the American Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006).

²⁰ Irwin Unger, *The Greenback Era. A Social and Political History of American Finance, 1865-1879* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

²¹ Robert P. Sharkey, *Money, Class, and Party. An Economic Study of Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959); David Montgomery, *Beyond Equality. Labor and Radical Republicans 1862-1872* (Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1967).

²² Nicolas Barreyre, "Les échelles de la monnaie. Souveraineté monétaire et spatialisation de la politique américaine après la guerre de Sécession," *Annales. Histoire Sciences Sociales*, 439-468, LXIX, no. 2 (2014); Nicolas Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom. The Political Economy of Reconstruction* (Charlottesville-London: University of Virginia Press, 2015).

²³ Sofia Valeonti, "Henry C. Carey's Monetary Thought and American Industrialization in the Greenback Debate," *History of Political Economy* 54, no. 2 (April 1, 2022): 189–216.

²⁴ Ariel Ron, *Grassroots Leviathan: northern agricultural reform in the slaveholding republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020).

that, in my opinion, was at least attempted by two intellectual historians, whose intuitions have been crucial for this research. First, Martin Burke, who in his conceptual history of class in the nineteenth-century United States revealed the clash between the first U.S. economists' vision of a harmonic and classless society and the first labor movement's denunciation of strengthening class hierarchies²⁵. Second, Jeffrey Sklansky, who in his *Soul's Economy* understood Carey's turn towards social science in the context of the sectional conflict and of the class struggle that underpinned it²⁶.

Differently from the works that have investigated Carey so far, this dissertation tries to place his theory within history in order to show the inextricable connection between science and politics that lies at the roots of his reflection. Only this way, in fact, is it possible both to understand the political function of his scientific reflection and to show the scientific foundation of his political interventions. This also requires reversing the perspective from which scholars have usually studied Carey, by looking at his thought from the point of view of the conflicts and of the crises it observed, and especially from the point of view of the social movements, particularly those of black and white labor, that he sought to oppose. This reading was made possible not only by paying a closer attention to the historical context in which Carey was writing, to the interlocutors he chose and to the political implications of his arguments, but also, and most crucially, by the discovery of new and previously unknown archival sources, particularly the unsigned journalistic articles he collected in a series of scrapbooks held at the Kislak Center of the University of Pennsylvania.

Moreover, this dissertation, contrary to all previous studies on Carey, aims to offer a close reading of all his intellectual production, taking into account not only his published works but also his pamphlets, journalistic articles and private correspondence. And it does so, by considering the long trajectory of his reflection between the 1820s and the 1870s, following its evolution in connection to social, economic and political transformations. This makes all the more difficult to find a single, unified interpretative key to Carey's thought, that can keep together his free-trade, harmonious economic science of the 1830s, his protectionism after the late 1840s, his gradualist vision of emancipation in the 1850s, his gravitational social science at the eve of the Civil War and his theories on money during Reconstruction. It is difficult precisely because, being deeply enmeshed within historical conflicts, his reflection tended to focus on different problems at different times, according to the most urgent economic and political questions. The subsequent shifts and deviations of Carey's reflection thus corresponded to different phases of the nineteenth-century

²⁵ Martin J. Burke, *The Conundrum of Class: public discourse on the social order in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

²⁶ Jeffrey Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy. Market Society and Selfhood in American Thought, 1820-1920* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2002), 73–103.

troubled history of the United States. Carefully reconstructing them is therefore crucial to understand the way in which his thought both reacted to and accompanied the long U.S. transformation throughout the century.

To follow this journey, this dissertation has applied a method of intellectual history that attempted to constantly relate Carey's theoretical elaboration to its social, economic and political context, trying to identify the polemical objects and the political meaning of his writings, as well as the historical problems that he tried to answer through his science. In this respect, the method followed is close to that of conceptual history, as advocated by Reinhart Koselleck in particular, who stressed both the need to correlate semantic changes to broader social, political and economic transformations and to consider concepts as powerful tools endowed with a specific political function that contribute to shape historical changes²⁷. Only this way, in fact, by placing intellectual history within social history, has it been possible to consider the meaning of economic and political concepts as contested rather than fixed, to understand their function in criticizing or legitimizing social structures and to show the inherent political character of apparently non-political doctrines: three operations that are crucial to this dissertation²⁸. More precisely, by investigating the reinterpretation of the most relevant political and economic concepts, this research tries to grasp both how Carey's economic and social science was elaborated in reaction to social conflicts and how it contributed to politically shape them. Only through this lens, has it been possible to highlight the conceptual and ideological strategies at the roots of Carey's reflection.

Overall, this dissertation presents Carey's reflection as a scientific and political endeavor to legitimize U.S. capitalism and to foster its affirmation in the United States against the obstacles and the constraints posed by social conflict and by the world market. On the one hand, Carey had to deploy the tools of science, first a science of the economy and later a science of society, in order to provide an ideological representation of the United States that allowed to naturalize and justify existing class, racial and sexual hierarchies, while at the same time indicating the individual «subordination» to the «machinery» of society as a condition of possibility for self-improvement and for individually profiting from the accumulation of capital. By reversing the main categories of British classical political economy, Carey rejected Ricardo's and Malthus's economy of scarcity, as well as their conflictual representation of the relations between classes, depicting instead an

²⁷ Reinhardt Koselleck, "Storia dei concetti e storia sociale," in Id. *Futuro Passato. Per Una Semantica Dei Tempi Storici* (Genova: Marietti, 1986), 91–109; Pierangelo Schiera, "Strutture costituzionali e storia del pensiero politico," in *Critica illuminista e crisi della società borghese*, by Reinhardt Koselleck (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1972), VII–XXII.

²⁸ Burke, *The Conundrum of Class*, XVI.

economy of prosperity and a fundamentally classless society grounded upon a natural «harmony of interests», in the attempt to scientifically delegitimize social conflict.

On the other hand, Carey had to mobilize the tools of politics by intervening through newspaper articles and pamphlets, such as during his public polemics against Philadelphia journeymen's strikes in the 1830s, against the abolitionist movement in the 1850s and against monetary contraction after the Civil War, but also through a direct engagement within the Republican Party in the 1850s, in support of protectionist policies and of a specific politics of emancipation, or within the Constitutional Convention of Pennsylvania in the 1870s. Most crucially, however, Carey mobilized politics by calling for a specific role of the state within capitalism, in the coordination of economic and social processes. By protecting the national market through tariffs, in fact, to Carey the state had a crucial political role in fostering the accumulation of capital and the building of U.S. independence and imperial power within the world market. At the same time, it had the task of shaping a small-scale, locally diversified capitalism: a form of «concentration» and «association» that could anchor individuals to the social relation of capital while at the same time preventing social conflict by guaranteeing increased consumption, higher wages and growing opportunities of investment, at least for white, male and industrious workers. Against the obstacles to capital, then, Carey resorted to science and politics to discipline labor into the existing social relations but also to shape capital on a local level so as to give it a broader foundation and legitimation that could avoid the emergence of social conflict while fostering its accumulation within the national market and its affirmation within the world market. Science and politics, connected by ideology, thus represented the two fundamental poles of Carey's economic and social thought, which were either alternated or combined throughout the different phases of his reflection.

This monographic study on Carey, the first in almost forty years, the first historical one in more than seventy years²⁹ and actually the first one to cover the entire arc of Carey's writings, would not have been possible without the progresses that historiography has made in the past decades. First, since the 1970s, labor history reconstructed the existence of processes of proletarianization in Northeastern cities that dated back to the late-eighteenth century, as well as of a labor movement carried on by journeymen mechanics and factory operatives since the 1820s³⁰, allowing to reassess

²⁹ The last one being Rodney Morrison's *Henry C. Carey and American Economic Development*, published in 1985, basically a work of economic theory, and the previous George Winston Smith's *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, published in 1951.

³⁰ David Montgomery, "The Working Classes of the Pre-Industrial American City," *Labor History* 9 (1968): 3–22; Herbert George Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (New York: Knopf, 1976); Bruce Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980); Sharon V. Salinger, "Artisans, Journeymen, and the Transformation of Labor in Late Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (January 1983): 62–84; Sean Wilentz, *Chants*

the meaning of Carey's political economy from the 1830s. Second, in the past two decades the "new" history of capitalism has been investigating U.S. capitalism as an economic system, but also as an institutional, juridical, financial and proprietary order, in the attempt to de-naturalize it and to historicize it. This literature has brought forward several findings that are crucial to this reading of Carey³¹. Among others, the assessment of the centrality of transatlantic slavery in the emergence and development of U.S. capitalism, both in the North and in the South, as well as of the continuity between slavery and wage labor as forms of labor exploitation, are relevant to a re-examination of Carey's vision of slavery's role within capitalism³². Third, revisionist histories of the U.S. state have tried to bring the federal government out of the historiographic shadow in which American exceptionalism had confined it. This historiography has shown that, while operating differently from European ones, the United States had since the very beginning its own form of state, provided with a growing administrative capacity which, despite its weaknesses in certain areas, was crucial in shaping economic, political and territorial development³³. Having reconstructed the federal government's central role in infrastructural investments, in territorial expansion, in land distribution

Democratic. New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850 (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers. Labor in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1989); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London-New York: Verso, 1991); Ronald Schultz, *The Republic of Labor: Philadelphia Artisans and the Politics of Class, 1720-1830* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

³¹ Seth Rockman, "The Unfree Origins of American Capitalism," in *The Economy of Early America: Historical Perspectives & New Directions*, ed. Cathy D. Matson (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 335–61; Rockman, *Scraping By*; Michael Zakim and Gary J. Kornblith, eds., *Capitalism Takes Command: The Social Transformation of Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012); Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton. A Global History* (New York: Knopf, 2014); Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, eds., *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2016); Sven Beckert and Christine Desan, eds., *American Capitalism: New Histories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); James Parisot, *How America Became Capitalist: Imperial Expansion and the Conquest of the West* (London: Pluto Press, 2019); Jonathan Levy, *Ages of American Capitalism: A History of the United States* (New York: Random House, 2021).

³² For reviews of this literature, see: Jeffrey Sklansky, "The Elusive Sovereign: New Intellectual and Social Histories of Capitalism," *Modern Intellectual History* 9, no. 1 (April 2012): 233–48; Nicolas Barreyre and Alexia Blin, "À la redécouverte du capitalisme américain," *Revue d'histoire Du XIXe Siècle*, no. 54 (August 1, 2017): 135–48; Noam Maggor, "Bringing (The History of) Capitalism Back In," *Reviews in American History* 47, no. 1 (2019): 140–47; John Lauritz Larson, "American Capitalism: New Histories," *Labor* 16, no. 3 (September 1, 2019): 108–11.

³³ Richard R. John, *Spreading the News. The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995); William J. Novak, *The People's Welfare. Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); John Lauritz Larson, *Internal Improvement. National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Max M. Edling, *A Revolution in Favor of Government. The Origins of the United States Constitution and the Making of the American State* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); William J. Novak, "The Myth of the 'Weak' American State," *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 3 (June 2008): 752–72; Raffaella Baritono, "Uno Stato a 'bassa intensità'? L'esperienza storica statunitense," in *Lo Stato globale*, ed. Raffaella Gherardi and Maurizio Ricciardi (Bologna: CLUEB, 2009), 81–110; Brian Balogh, *A Government Out of Sight. The Mystery of National Authority in Nineteenth-Century America* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Gary Gerstle, *Liberty and Coercion: The Paradox of American Government from the Founding to the Present* (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015).

and in market regulation, this literature is essential to understand Carey's protectionism and his vision of the state's economic role³⁴.

Fourth, the scholarship that in the past decades has been stressing the need to study U.S. history within the framework of imperial history, is also relevant to this dissertation. This historiography has reconstructed on the one hand the nineteenth-century U.S. territorial enlargement as an imperial and specifically colonial expansion and on the other hand the nineteenth-century U.S. State-building, capitalist development and market-building processes as part of an anti-imperial and anti-colonial struggle for independence within the world market. A struggle against empire and for independence, but also for a specific form of empire, to build an American global power³⁵. This literature is crucial to understand the inherent colonial and imperial dimensions of Carey's protectionism and economic theory.

Moreover, new historiographic accounts of emancipation, stressing the labor conflicts it entailed and the radical, interracial character of the abolitionist movement have helped this research in distinguishing between different kinds of Northern anti-slavery, allowing to better grasp Carey's anti-abolitionist vision of slavery³⁶. Finally, histories of the Civil War and Reconstruction stressing

³⁴ In recent years, from the encounter between the scholarship on capitalism and the scholarship on the State, some historians have started depicting the State's nineteenth-century economic role through the concept of developmental state, which can also be useful to reinterpret Carey. Stefan Link and Noam Maggor, "The United States As A Developing Nation: Revisiting The Peculiarities Of American History," *Past & Present* 246, no. 1 (February 1, 2020): 269–306.

³⁵ William Appleman Williams, "The Age of Mercantilism: An Interpretation of the American Political Economy, 1763 to 1828," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (October 1958): 419–37; Piero Bairati, ed., *I profeti dell'impero americano. Dal periodo coloniale ai nostri giorni* (Torino: Einaudi, 1975); John G. A. Pocock, "Empire, State and Confederation: The War of American Independence as a Crisis in Multiple Monarchy," in *A Union for Empire. Political Thought and the British Union of 1707*, ed. John Robertson (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny. American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996); Charles S. Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006); Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History. Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010); Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011); Marco Mariano, *L'America nell'Occidente. Storia della dottrina Monroe (1823-1963)* (Roma: Carocci, 2013); Paul Frymer, *Building an American Empire. The Era of Territorial and Political Expansion* (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017); Adam Dahl, *Empire of the People. Settler Colonialism and the Foundations of Modern Democratic Thought* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018); A. G. Hopkins, *American Empire. A Global History* (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018); Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire. A Short History of the Greater United States* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019).

³⁶ Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1969); Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman, eds., *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979); Eric Foner, "Abolitionism and the Labor Movement in Ante-Bellum America," in *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 57–76; James Oakes, "The Political Significance of Slave Resistance," *History Workshop*, 89-107, XXII (1986); Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London-New York: Verso, 1988); Eric Foner, *Nothing but Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989); Ira Berlin, "Who Freed the Slaves? Emancipation and Its Meaning," in *Union and Emancipation: Essays on Politics and Race in the Civil War Era*, ed. David W. Blight and Brooks D. Simpson (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1997), 105–21; James L. Huston, "Abolitionists, Political Economists, and Capitalism," *Journal of the Early Republic* 20, no. 3 (2000): 487; Phillip W. Magness and Sebastian N. Page, *Colonization after Emancipation: Lincoln and the Movement for Black Resettlement* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011); Andrew Delbanco, ed., *The Abolitionist Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012); David R. Roediger, *Seizing Freedom: Slave*

the central and inescapable role of slavery have been crucial to situate Carey's reflection within the sectional conflict³⁷.

It is in the light of this historiography that Carey's political economy can be re-read in a new way today, no longer simply as an unorthodox episode in the history of economic and social thought, nor solely as the reflection of a monothematic protectionist advocate, but as a relevant moment in the nineteenth-century history of U.S. capitalism, state and empire. In particular, this dissertation aims to contribute to the intellectual history of the state by showing that its developmental role in the making of capitalism was not simply the outcome of a practical response to contingent obstacles, but was explicitly theorized by the nascent U.S. economic thought, later becoming influential on the Republican Party's economic policy since the Civil War. Then, it endeavors to contribute to the history of U.S. empire, by showing that the global projection of U.S. imperial power was charted by protectionist economists since the first half of the century, arguing for the need to ground such rise within capital accumulation. Most crucially, it aims to contribute to the history of U.S. capitalism not only by highlighting a largely neglected and yet relevant episode in its intellectual history, but also by showing that the theorization and legitimation of capitalism was never formulated on a merely intellectual level, emerging instead out of an ideological conflict with the subjects that struggled not to be dominated by capital's command.

In fact, despite its several merits, the history of capitalism has often tended to study capitalism as a system of circulation rather than as a mode of production, focusing on commodities, exchange networks and finance rather than on the organization of labor and on power relations in the workplace. From this point of view, the historiography on capitalism has tended to erase not only the role of labor, but more broadly the contribution of class conflict to the development and transformation of American capitalism, as several critical reviews have highlighted³⁸. By reconstructing how Carey's theory was elaborated out of a conflict with the movements of U.S. labor, both black and white, this dissertation argues that the historicization and de-naturalization

Emancipation and Liberty for All (London-New York: Verso, 2014); David Williams, *I Freed Myself: African American Self-Emancipation in the Civil War Era* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Ira Berlin, *The Long Emancipation: The Demise of Slavery in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015); Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

³⁷ Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*; Bruce C. Levine, *The Fall of the House of Dixie: the Civil War and the Social Revolution that Transformed the South* (New York: Random House, 2013); Eric Foner, *Reconstruction. America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863 - 1877*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2014); Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*.

³⁸ Jeffrey Sklansky, "Labor, Money, and the Financial Turn in the History of Capitalism," *Labor Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 11, no. 1 (March 1, 2014): 23–46; Seth Rockman, "What Makes the History of Capitalism Newsworthy?," *Journal of the Early Republic* 34, no. 3 (2014): 439–66; James Oakes, "Capitalism and Slavery and the Civil War," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 89 (Spring 2016): 195–220; Matteo Battistini, "Un progetto in movimento: il capitale in azione nella nuova storia (politica) del capitalismo americano," *Ricerche Di Storia Politica*, no. 3 (2022): 179–93.

of capitalism, which this historiography supposedly aimed to do, cannot be done by detaching its institutional and intellectual history from the history of labor and of social movements. On the contrary, it was precisely by fighting social conflict that thinkers like Carey could naturalize and legitimize capitalism, concealing the social hierarchies and the coercive relations of exploitation that underpinned it, while presenting it as a harmonic system of market interactions capable of guaranteeing increasing opportunities and social mobility.

The first chapter focuses on Carey's first economic writings, particularly the *Essay on the Rate of Wages* (1835) and the three-volume *Principles of Political Economy* (1837-1840), as well as his newly-found journalistic interventions between the late 1820s and the late 1830s, on the *Mechanics' Free Press* in 1828 and on the *Pennsylvanian* in 1836. The chapter argues that Carey's economic science was elaborated out of a long political and scientific battle against the Philadelphia labor movement, that involved both a clash around the problem of class and a clash around different visions of republicanism, which historians had so far failed to see. It was in fact against the workers' denunciation of tightening class boundaries, against their critique of wage labor and against their radical understanding of republicanism, that Carey elaborated his scientific vision of individual improvement, his conception of a classless society and his capitalist reinterpretation of republicanism and democracy. This scientific response to the labor movement, the chapter shows, involved a mystification of wage labor as a form of free labor, a rejection of social conflict and a legitimation of U.S. society's class, racial and sexual hierarchies. The chapter also argues that Carey was part of a broader anti-labor reaction brought forward by U.S. political economists in the 1830s to counter the labor movement's discourse on class, that stood at the very origins of economic science in the United States.

The second chapter reconstructs Carey's protectionism between the late-1840s and the mid-1850s, taking into account his main works, *The Past, the Present, and the Future* (1848) and *The Harmony of Interests* (1851) but also his several pamphlets and articles on protection and money. The chapter aims to show how, in the context of the British free-trade hegemony and of an accelerated westward migration, Carey conceived the state's economic intervention as the condition of possibility for the government of labor's movements and for the unfolding of his small-scale, localized vision of accumulation, which had to be organized around the principles of «association» and «concentration». The chapter thus details his vision of protectionism as the instrument through which the state could place itself within capital, fostering development and accumulation by defending national producers, but also by guaranteeing the simultaneous growth of consumption and production. At the same time, taking into account Carey's writings on money, the chapter

shows how protection was also conceived as a means of allowing a constant expansion of the monetary supply and of building a positive trade balance. Finally, the chapter argues that Carey's theory of protectionism was not only aimed at affirming capitalism through the state within the nation but also at projecting U.S. imperial power within the world market.

The third chapter deals with Carey's vision of slavery and emancipation between the 1830s and the mid-1850s, taking into account both pamphlets and treatises, particularly *The Slave Trade* (1853). The chapter argues that Carey's reflection on slavery and emancipation moved from the attempt to guarantee the command over black labor against the threat posed by the abolitionist movement and the slaves' increasing insubordination. Against the specter of an immediate, radical and revolutionary emancipation that risked jeopardizing cotton production and the plantation economy, as happened in the West Indies, Carey identified protectionism as the sole instruments to realize a gradual and ordered process of emancipation, controlled by the slaveowners' interests and limited to the establishment of wage labor. By taking into account other economists' writings in the 1850s, the chapter argues that this vision, which conditioned the end of slavery upon the slaves' «preparation for freedom», ended up theorizing the need to suspend emancipation and defending the persistence of slavery in the present. The chapter also reconstructs how, in the second half of the 1850s, Carey directly engaged in politics in the attempt to affirm his anti-abolitionist vision of emancipation within the Republican Party by prioritizing protection and economic policies over anti-slavery tendencies. In the end, the chapter shows how Carey's attempt to prevent abolition and disunion failed in front of a deepening sectional crisis and in front of black labor's growing insubordination, which during the Civil War forced emancipation in consequence of what W. E. B. Du Bois called a «general strike against slavery».

The fourth chapter centers on Carey's three-volume *Principles of Social Science* (1858-1860) as the crucial culminating point of his theoretical reflection and as his highest attempt to scientifically ground the legitimation of U.S. capitalism through a new understanding of society, of the state and of individual freedom, made compelling by a deepening crisis of the U.S. social order in the 1850s. First, the chapter argues that Carey moved from political economy to social science under the influence of Comte's thought, which was spreading in the United States, and in the attempt to find a stronger epistemological and methodological foundation for his theory. Second, it shows that Carey elaborated a new vision of society as a dynamic and constantly accelerating order, that is as a «societary machine» regulated by a law of social gravitation that governed the movements and interactions of individuals just like gravity governed the movement of bodies in space. Third, it maintains that Carey strengthened his vision of the state, presenting it as the «political head of

society» vested with the task of coordinating and governing its movements, thus imagining a social order that could not function without a political direction. Finally, the chapter shows how Carey's social science involved a reinterpretation of the role of the individual as a «societary man» and as a «molecule of society», as well as a restriction of the meaning of freedom as a market freedom which could only be achieved by submitting to the order of society.

The fifth and last chapter follows Carey's scientific and political interventions during Reconstruction. The chapter argues that, through his vision of an «industrial reconstruction», Carey attempted to rethink the post-slavery conditions of capitalist accumulation in the United States by reproposing a vision of a locally-oriented development that, in an economic scenario radically transformed by the war, proved increasingly anachronistic and increasingly at dire with the exigencies of the firmly established industrial and financial capital of the North, as well as with its increasing hegemony over the Republican Party. First, the chapter deals with Carey's attacks against Hugh McCulloch's contractionist policy and in defence of the greenbacks and protection, showing how they contributed to the emergence of a broader conflict within the North and within the Republican Party between opposing visions of money and capitalism. Second, it focuses on Carey's writings on Reconstruction in the South, arguing that his vision of «industrial reconstruction» through protection constituted an attack against Radical Reconstruction, a critique of wartime immediate emancipation and a retrospective defense of slavery. Then, the chapter analyzes Carey's speeches and interventions during the 1873 Constitutional Convention of Pennsylvania, showing how he specified his understanding of the state's role within capitalism as a regulator of financial capital but not of industrial capital. Finally, the chapter takes into account Carey's very last writings, arguing that his vision of money and capitalist development was first and foremost aimed at building American independence within the world market and at laying the grounds for the global projection of U.S. economic and political power.

Throughout the five chapters, this dissertation thus aims to show the different scientific and political tools that Carey elaborated and deployed in the attempt to tackle the several crises that shaped and shackled the nineteenth-century rise of U.S. capitalism and the long transformation of the United States from colony into empire. It is only within this long and complicated history that Carey's relevance can be grasped, as a political thinker that tenaciously, albeit not always consistently, tried to conceive and foster the conditions to overcome the obstacles to capital.

Chapter 1

The Classless Society: Philadelphia Workers and the Anti-Labor Origins of U.S. Economic Science (1827-1840)

In fall 1835, Henry Charles Carey, the most prominent Philadelphia publisher, recently retired from the family business, issued his first book. Reversing the main conclusions of British political economy, Carey argued that the accumulation of capital had an inherent propensity to outpace the growth of population and that therefore wages naturally tended to rise, allowing for widespread opportunities of social mobility. By diligently toiling with «industry and economy» workers could thus hope, at some day, to cross class boundaries by accessing ownership and economic independence. In the United States, Carey explained, today's wage workers could become tomorrow's employers¹. Simultaneously, however, in the same city, a very different picture of U.S. society and its class structure was being depicted by workers themselves. Journeymen mechanics and textile operatives were denouncing their condition «as a class» to be «gradually sinking», having to work «a greater number of hours and for less wages»². Despite being «the sole producers of wealth», they argued, they were deprived of the fruits of their labor through a systematic extortion which at the same time was hollowing out the meaning of their republican citizenship. To reaffirm their rights as a class and as republican citizens, on June 3rd 1835, thousands of journeymen crowded Independence Square in Philadelphia, claiming «that ten hours shall constitute a day's work»³. In the following days, the journeymen's protest paralyzed the city and was soon joined by textile operatives from the cotton factories of Manayunk, by Irish coal heavers from the Schuylkill docks and by public workers. It was the first general strike in the history of the United States, the culmination of a labor movement that since the late 1820s had been denouncing the increasing impoverishment, the widening of class distinctions and the economic dependency brought by capitalism.

This chapter moves from the assumption that these two opposed visions cannot be understood separately. On the contrary, it will read Carey's political economy in the 1830s precisely as a response to this first American labor movement and to the fracture it had revealed within Northern society. A response that deployed the tools of economic science to counter the notion that workers could improve their condition through strikes and trades' unions. The chapter's thesis is that

¹ Henry Charles Carey, *Essay on the Rate of Wages* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1835).

² «The Pennsylvanian», April 4, 1835, July 7, 1835.

³ «The Pennsylvanian», June 3, 5, 9, 1835.

Carey's political economy was elaborated precisely within an intellectual and political battle against the Philadelphia labor movement and its politicization of class, as a scientific response aimed at legitimizing the emerging capitalist social relations. In this respect, it was the need to counter the labor movement's discourse and claims that prompted Carey to rethink the natural economic laws and to reject Malthus's and Ricardo's principles of scarcity, in order to outline the vision of a harmonic and classless society in which social boundaries were only temporary and in which generalized opportunities for accumulation allowed every individual to follow a path of improvement and upward mobility. Such vision allowed Carey to delegitimize social conflict, denying labor's exploitation as well as the existence of class, racial and sexual hierarchies, while reinterpreting in a capitalist sense the concepts of equality, democracy and republicanism. This chapter aims to show this anti-labor foundation of Carey's political economy by investigating not only his first scientific works but also by connecting them to his several anonymous public interventions in newspapers between the 1820s and the 1830s, until now unknown.

This kind of reading has never been attempted by historiography, which has failed to seriously investigate the context in which Carey forged his scientific reflection, as well as the polemical target of his writings. This failure to understand the political, anti-labor meaning of Carey's economic thought in the 1830s is largely due to historiography's long-lasting tendency to downplay and overlook the relevance of social conflict and specifically black and white labor's movements in U.S. history. A tendency that often involves the "new" histories of capitalism as well. Historians of U.S. economic thought in particular have been consistently resistant to study the underlying social and political conflicts within which Carey's ideas were elaborated⁴. As a result, some could write that Carey failed to address the issue of class, when his goal was precisely that of concealing class⁵. More broadly, this has allowed his political economy to be interpreted as an optimistic, albeit naïve representation of American economy, or, at best, as an anachronistic, romantic depiction of a fading reality, and his critique of Malthus and Ricardo as an anti-British, nationalist reaction, when instead his representation of U.S. society had the precise political goal of overturning the labor movement's discourse on class. It is therefore not by chance that only labor historians such as Sean Wilentz and Bruce Laurie have been able to catch the ideological and anti-labor dimension of Carey's and contemporary political economists' discourse on classlessness and free labor in the

⁴ For a few examples among several: Ernest Teilhac, *Histoire de La Pensée Économique Aux États-Unis Au XIXe Siècle* (Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1928); Joseph Dorfman, "The Carey-Colwell School," in *The Economic Mind in American Civilization*, vol. 2 (New York: Kelley, 1946), 789–825; Paul K. Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity. America's First Political Economists* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980); Stephen Meardon, "Reciprocity and Henry C. Carey's Traversies 'On the Road to Perfect Freedom of Trade,'" *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 33, no. 3 (September 2011): 307–33; Christopher W. Calvo, *The Emergence of Capitalism in Early America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2020).

⁵ Andrew Dawson, «Reassessing Henry Carey (1793-1879): The Problems of Writing Political Economy in Nineteenth-Century America», *Journal of American Studies* 34, fasc. 3 (dicembre 2000): 482.

1830s⁶. However, even those who went the furthest in recognizing the conservative character of Carey's vision of class, most crucially Martin Burke's book on nineteenth-century conceptions of class, could not trace it back to his direct fight against the labor movement⁷. Historiography has thus failed to see the history that Carey concealed within his theory and that this chapter seeks to uncover, both by taking into account his anonymous articles on newspapers and by rereading his scientific economic texts. Without its history, in fact, the political meaning of Carey's economic theory cannot be understood.

After an introduction reconstructing the economic transformations that had underpinned the emergence of a social and political conflict around class in the early-nineteenth-century United States, the first part of the chapter traces the long confrontation between Carey and the Philadelphia labor movement between the late-1820s and the mid-1830s. This first part highlights in particular how Carey's economic science was born precisely out of this intellectual and political battle, which involved both a clash between different visions of class and social structure and a clash between different understanding of the meaning of republicanism and republican equality. The second part focuses instead on Carey's writings in the second half on the 1830s, which aimed at systematizing on a scientific level his reaction against the labor movement, reconstructing his political economy of improvement and his vision of a classless society, as well as showing how it involved a mystification of wage labor, a defense of class, racial and sexual hierarchies and a capitalist, conservative reinterpretation of equality, democracy and republicanism. Finally, the conclusion of the chapter will broaden the perspective by taking into account the writing of other contemporary U.S. economists from the 1830s, to show how Carey was part of a broader anti-labor reaction around the problem of class that stood at the very origins of economic science in the United States.

Introduction: The Coming of Capitalism and the Problem of Class

Between the 1820s and the 1830s, Philadelphia was a commercial center of primary importance, second in size only to New York, fully integrated in the Atlantic trade and with a growing, though still limited, manufacturing capacity, fueled by a diverse and heterogeneous working class increasingly dependent upon wage labor for subsistence. In fact, as shown by labor history, in large

⁶ Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic. New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers. Labor in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1989).

⁷ Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Martin J. Burke, *The Conundrum of Class: Public Discourse on the Social Order in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Jeffrey Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy. Market Society and Selfhood in American Thought, 1820-1920* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2002).

Northeastern urban centers the capitalist transformation of labor and exchange relations was already underway in the 1780s, with the growth of market production and the growing affirmation of wage over other forms of dependent labor⁸. Therefore, in Northeastern cities wage labor was increasingly common many decades before the emergence of a factory system and a large-scale industrial production. In Philadelphia in particular, a system of capitalist labor had already taken root at the end of the eighteenth century, with the spread of detailed contracts, with the decline of forms of slave and indentured labour (which until the 1750s represented 40% of the workforce), with the growth of mobility rates and with an increase in job insecurity even for craft apprentices⁹. This change had been triggered by the commercialization of agriculture that had followed the deeper integration of the former colonial economy into the world market after independence, with the growth of agricultural production for export due to the increasing prices of wheat and cotton. While in the South this process resulted in a strengthening of slavery as an institution, in Northern rural areas it had intensified competition, forcing many agricultural producers to increase production, to get into debt through loans and mortgages and finally to leave the market¹⁰. Thus, the generalization of market relations, together with the growing centrality of money as a means of exchange, had led to a process of expropriation and proletarianization of small landowners that had compelled them to enter the urban labor market¹¹. Already during the second half of the eighteenth century, therefore, the coming of capitalism had begun to destroy “landed independence” and to achieve a general separation of American peasants from the means of production¹².

Since the early-nineteenth century, and particularly since the 1820s, such process was further accelerated by the construction of canals and railways. The increasing prices of lands, the declining prices of agricultural products and the enhanced competition forced a mass of Northern farmers to sell their land and move westward in search of cheaper land or eastward in search of a wage in larger cities, in artisan workshops or early manufacturing. In Pennsylvania, such process of urbanization was particularly pronounced, with Philadelphia County rising from 81,000 to 408,000

⁸ Laurie, *Artisans into Workers*; Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*; David R. Roediger e Philip Sheldon Foner, *Our Own Time: a history of American labor and the working day* (London-New York: Verso, 1989).

⁹ Sharon V. Salinger, “Artisans, Journeymen, and the Transformation of Labor in Late Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (January 1983): 62–77.

¹⁰ Laurie, *Artisans into Workers*, 15–25.

¹¹ Sharon V. Salinger, “Artisans, Journeymen, and the Transformation of Labor in Late Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia,” 62–84; Laurie, *Artisans into Workers*, 15–25; Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 4–33; Michael Zakim and Gary J. Kornblith, eds., *Capitalism Takes Command: The Social Transformation of Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).

inhabitants between 1800 and 1850¹³. This expanding urban labor pool and the growing competition triggered a transformation of Philadelphia artisan workplaces, with the concentration of laborers in larger workshops, the division of tasks, the spread of outwork, the increasing recourse to semi-skilled labor and to the cheap labor of women and children¹⁴. These labor-intensive changes in small shops, more than the appearance of textile manufactories along the Schuylkill valley, marked the beginning of Philadelphia's peculiarly metropolitan industrialization¹⁵. Having become little more than contractors for merchant capitalists who imposed decreasing prices, master craftsmen could maintain their profits only by compressing wages and production costs. As a consequence, masters had started to look for new and cheaper methods of production, by dividing tasks, increasing rhythms and workloads, reducing piecework rates, enforcing a more stringent time-discipline, removing breaks and abandoning task-oriented work habits¹⁶. The division of tasks in particular allowed masters not to depend upon skilled workers, substituting them with apprentices, half-trained journeymen and sometimes women¹⁷. Masters started to abdicate their customary obligations towards apprentices, increasingly teaching them only the simpler tasks, paying them in cash and dismissing them after some time¹⁸. Thus, this segmentation and hierarchization of the workforce not only resulted in an overall wage reduction that forced laborers to work longer hours for the same pay, but it also disrupted the traditional artisan rules that had allowed apprentices to become journeymen and finally masters of the craft. In other words, the coming of the capitalist relations had transformed the relationship between masters, journeymen and apprentices, who did not appear in the process as artisans any longer: the wage relation had become the only bond between them¹⁹. Such transformation had therefore hardened social distinctions, separating the interests of masters and journeymen and making any form of upward mobility increasingly difficult, if not impossible. In the first three decades of the nineteenth century, then, while masters experienced unprecedented possibilities of accumulation, beginning to act as «masters of men rather than of crafts»²⁰, Philadelphia journeymen had thus become dependent

¹³ Bruce Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 6–10; Christopher Clark, “The Many Faces of Rural Capitalism,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 33, no. 1 (March 2020): 10–25.

¹⁴ Laurie, *Artisans into Workers*, 28–45.

¹⁵ Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 32.

¹⁶ Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 8–9. See also: Edward P. Thompson, “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism,” *Past & Present*, no. 38 (1967): 56–97; Herbert George Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (New York: Knopf, 1976).

¹⁷ Philip Sheldon Foner, *William Heighton: pioneer labor leader of Jacksonian Philadelphia: with selections from Heighton's writings and speeches* (New York: International Publishers, 1991), 4–5; Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 31.

¹⁸ Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850*, 5.

¹⁹ Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 34.

²⁰ David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London-New York: Verso, 1991), 53.

upon wage labor for life²¹. Simultaneously, the legal restriction of economic alternatives, through wage forfeitures, criminalization of strikes and vagrancy laws, was consolidating power asymmetries in a highly hierarchical labor market, adding to the coercive nature of wage labor²².

Since the late-1820s, Philadelphia workers, both journeymen mechanics and factory operatives, were ready to interpret this transformation in terms of class, denouncing the increasingly oppressive character of their own condition, describing it as a direct threat to their republican citizenship and starting to collectively organize «as a class». Their vision of the U.S. social order as an increasingly classed, hierarchical and exploitative structure, thus incompatible with their radical understanding of republicanism as a democratic form of government necessarily resting on an equality of conditions and political participation, was soon countered by artisan masters, employers and, since the 1830s, political economists. To them, instead, U.S. society represented a mobile, harmonious and essentially classless structure that guaranteed social rise to industrious individuals and republicanism had to be understood as an institutional configuration which simply had to guarantee an equality of opportunity²³. In their perspective, classes did not exist as a permanent criterion of social distinction. Actually, until the early-nineteenth century, U.S. political discourse had mostly described the United States as a classed society, using social classification and taxonomy as a tool to scientifically understand society in order to govern it. Thus, U.S. thinkers had not contended about the existence of classes, but rather about where to draw the line among them, about what kind of relations connected them and about the political consequences of such classification²⁴. In the *Federalist Papers*, for example, James Madison had explicitly taken for granted the division of society into classes with opposed interests, precisely facing the problem of how to build political institutions that could moderate such conflict²⁵. However, since the 1820s, U.S. workers in the North, observing their changing condition, reversed the meaning of social classification, politicizing it and turning it into a vehicle of contestation of the coming capitalist order. This, in turn, as this chapter tries to show, forced the first generation of U.S. political economists to propose a different representation of U.S. society and in some cases to reject classification entirely in the

²¹ See also: Stephan Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964); David Montgomery, “The Working Classes of the Pre-Industrial American City,” *Labor History* 9 (1968): 3–22; Edward Pessen, *Riches, Class, and Power: America before the Civil War* (Lexington, Mass.: Heath, 1973).

²² Robert J. Steinfeld, *The Invention of Free Labor. The Employment Relation in English and American Law and Culture, 1350-1870* (Chapel Hill-London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Robert J. Steinfeld, *Coercion, Contract, and Free Labor in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Seth Rockman, “The Unfree Origins of American Capitalism,” in *The Economy of Early America: Historical Perspectives & New Directions*, ed. Cathy D. Matson (University Park, Pa: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 51–60.

²³ For a broader understanding of nineteenth-century U.S. conceptions of class and social order, see: Burke, *The Conundrum of Class*.

²⁴ Burke, 52.

²⁵ Burke, 24.

attempt to remove any theoretical ground for social conflict. Thus, the coming of capitalism triggered a social, political and ideological conflict, in Philadelphia as well as in several other Northern cities, around the problem of class, around its definition, around the degree of division of U.S. society into classes, around the kind of relation existing among them and around the consequences of this division and this relation upon republican government. In this conflict, Henry Charles Carey played a crucial role between the 1820s and the 1830s. Until then the most prominent publisher in Philadelphia and the son of one of the first U.S. economic writers, Carey engaged an intellectual and political strife against the labor movement, in the attempt to re-legitimize the U.S. social order and its hierarchies: a strife that decisively shaped the elaboration of his economic thought.

1. Henry Carey, Philadelphia Workers and the Conflict over Class (1827-1836)

1.1. Heighton v. “Franklin”: the Politics of Class and the Fight over Classification

In Philadelphia, tensions between masters and journeymen dated back to the 1780s, when journeymen had started going on strike and creating their own, separate trade societies, spelling out a fracture within craft solidarity. Among the first and most radical, and not only in Philadelphia²⁶, was the journeymen cordwainers’ society, which carried on a series of strikes that cost them a conviction for a «combination to raise wages» in the notorious trial of 1806²⁷. In the early-nineteenth century, this deepening opposition of interests between masters and journeymen increasingly translated into an ideological and political strife over the meaning of republicanism. Since the Revolution, urban craftsmen, influenced by Thomas Paine, had developed their own egalitarian interpretation of what it meant to be an American republican. Vindicating their contribution to the revolutionary war, artisans had demanded to participate in the new republican order on an equal footing with other social classes, making equality into a powerful political weapon to attack privileges²⁸. Against conservative federalists such as James Madison and Alexander Hamilton explicitly describing republican government as an anti-egalitarian antidote to democracy²⁹, artisans viewed equality and democracy as the foundations of republicanism³⁰.

²⁶ Eric J. Hobsbawm and Joan Wallach Scott, “Political Shoemakers,” in E. Hobsbawm, *Workers: Worlds of Labor*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 103–30.

²⁷ John R. Commons, «American Shoemakers, 1648-1895: A Sketch of Industrial Evolution», *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 24, fasc. 1 (novembre 1909): 39–84; Leonard Bernstein, «The Working People of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the General Strike of 1835», *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 74, fasc. 3 (luglio 1950): 322–39.

²⁸ On labor during the American Revolution, see; Philip Sheldon Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States. Volume 1. From Colonial Times to the Founding of the American Federation of Labor* (New York: International Publishers, 1947), 32–47. On the radical uses of equality, see; Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 123–24.

²⁹ For one example among others, see Madison’s Federalist n. 10: James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (London-New York: Penguin, 1987), 123–28.

³⁰ Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850*, 33–83; Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 14, 70.

However, since the 1820s, masters and journeymen started to develop increasingly opposed interpretations of equality itself, splitting artisan republicanism along class lines. Masters saw republican equality as the defense of entrepreneurial rights and opportunities for everyone, and thus as the legitimate foundation of their growing wealth, while journeymen began to foster an understanding of republican equality as the guarantee of economic and political independence, which therefore grounded a radical critique of the new capitalist order³¹. Thus, radical republicanism, together with the labor theory of value spread by Ricardian socialists, gave journeymen the political lexicon to expose the incompatibility between wage labor and republican citizenship and to denounce their condition as a class³². In their perspective, by making their labor into a market commodity, by denying them control over its fruits and by lengthening their working day, the coming of capitalism was hollowing out their economic independence and their right to politically participate, which constituted the two pillars of their radical understanding of republicanism as a democratic form of government necessarily resting on an equality of conditions. Republicanism thus became the language of Philadelphia workers' new consciousness of being a class with a specific social position³³.

If strikes and social conflict had punctuated U.S. history since its very founding, it was only in the second half of the 1820s that journeymen and factory operatives started to organize on a larger scale in what became the first U.S. white labor movement. In Philadelphia, a crucial organizational and intellectual role was played by William Heighton. An English immigrant shoemaker, influenced by the theory of labor-value as exposed by the Ricardian socialist John Gray, Heighton offered the most powerful expression of Philadelphia workers' understanding of class, as well as of republicanism³⁴. In April 1827, Heighton published an *Address to the Members of Trade Societies and to the Working Classes Generally* denouncing that the conditions of Philadelphia workers were «growing harder and more oppressive than formerly» and that the «difficulty of obtaining a subsistence» was

³¹ Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 145–71.

³² On equality, independence and the labor theory of value as the three pillars of the labor movement's republicanism, see: Eric Foner, "Abolitionism and the Labor Movement in Ante-Bellum America," in *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 73.

³³ Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 244–45.

³⁴ The most relevant secondary source about Heighton and his political activity remains Louis H. Arky, "The Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations and the Formation of the Philadelphia Workingmen's Movement", *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 76, fasc. 2 (aprile 1952): 142–76. A useful attempt to offer a synthesis of Heighton's thought and a collection of his writings is: Philip S. Foner, *William Heighton: Pioneer Labor Leader of Jacksonian Philadelphia: With Selections from Heighton's Writings and Speeches* (New York: International Publishers, 1991). On Heighton and his role in the Philadelphia labor movement, see also: David Harris, *Socialist Origins in the United States. American Forerunners of Marx 1817-1832* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp., 1966), 82–90; Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850*, 67–83; Laurie, *Artisans into Workers*, 68–83; Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 51–53; Ronald Schultz, *The Republic of Labor: Philadelphia Artisans and the Politics of Class, 1720-1830* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 221–33; Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: Norton, 2005), 282–86.

«every year *increasing*»³⁵. Despite being «the only producers of wealth», he attacked, workers «as a *class* [...] have no prospect before them, but the gloomy one of endless toil and hopeless poverty»³⁶. To Heighton, the cause of this coexistence of abundance and misery was to be found precisely in the nature of the «relation» among the two classes in which U.S. society was divided. On the one hand, «the working or productive class», made up of «those alone, who actually put their hands to productive or official labor, and not those who employ them», thus farmers and journeymen mechanics, but also factory operatives and unskilled workers³⁷. On the other, «the non productive or accumulating class», made up of capitalists, merchants and landowners, but also legislators, judges, soldiers and priests, which «produce nothing valuable, but grow rich by accumulating the productions of the former»³⁸.

The accumulating class could thus live upon the labour of the working class thanks to what Heighton defined as a «legalized extortion» which had its root in the exchange of money for labour (of «the shadow for the substance of wealth»), an exchange that the working class had «no other alternative than to accept»³⁹ because of the need to earn a subsistence. Without calling it so, Heighton was essentially describing the coercive, albeit legally sanctioned, nature of wage labor. «Necessity compels us to work for such prices as are offered, and pay such prices as are demanded for everything we need; we must either do this – resort to fraud or theft, or perish by hunger and nakedness». Workers were therefore free to accept this extortive exchange just as a man with a loaded gun to his head was free to give his money to a robber, with the only difference, Heighton noted, that «our robbers are legally authorized to rob us»⁴⁰. Wage labor was therefore described by Heighton as an extortive relation among classes formally free but substantially similar to «never-ending slavery»⁴¹, thus following the inclination of white workers in the North to resort to the lexicon of slavery and servitude to describe their worsening conditions, ignoring, if not explicitly accepting, the reality of chattel slavery for black workers in the South⁴².

³⁵ William Heighton, *An Address to the Members of Trade Societies and to the Working Classes Generally, by a Fellow-Labourer* (Philadelphia: Young, 1827), 3.

³⁶ Heighton, *An Address to the Members of Trade Societies*, 4. Robert Owen, during one of his visits to Philadelphia, read Heighton's address, describing it as «more valuable knowledge than all the writings on political economy that I have met with» and republishing it in England the following year. Arky, «The Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations», 151.

³⁷ William Heighton, *An Address, Delivered Before the Mechanics and Working Classes Generally, by the Unlettered Mechanic* (Philadelphia: Office of the Mechanics' Gazette, 1827), 4.

³⁸ Heighton, *An Address, Delivered Before the Mechanics*, 4.

³⁹ Heighton, *An Address to the Members of Trade Societies*, 4.

⁴⁰ Heighton, *An Address, Delivered Before the Mechanics*, 8–9.

⁴¹ Heighton, *An Address to the Members of Trade Societies*, 12.

⁴² Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, 43–64; Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 2010), 59–63. See also: Marcus Cunliffe, *Chattel Slavery and Wage Slavery: The Anglo-American Context, 1830-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979).

In Heighton's perspective, this extortive relation between classes thus made U.S. society into a «system of robbery and oppression» that, at the individual level, denying workers their freedom and independence, threatened the material foundations of republican citizenship; and that, at the institutional level, depleted the very meaning of republican government, reintroducing a form of «tyranny» and «aristocracy». Since, in Heighton's radical interpretation, only a society that guaranteed an equality of conditions could allow for the active participation of citizens to the government of the republic, the United States could no more be considered as such. Class oppression thus translated into political oppression, thanks to the «aristocratical legislation» that accumulators imposed: «the laws of this country protect the rich in taking advantage of the necessities of the poor»⁴³. In such context, Heighton concluded, «the working class of our country do not enjoy the rights of liberty and equality»⁴⁴. Accordingly, the first issue of the *Mechanics' Free Press*, Heighton's newspaper, the first to be entirely written, published and run by journeymen in the United States, opened by spelling out the contradiction between the egalitarian promise of the Declaration of Independence («all men are created equal») and the deepening of class distinctions⁴⁵. «This national motto abounds with exceptions», the first editorial declared, since «some are born to great estates, others to poverty. Some rise to existence blessed with freedom and the fondest care, while others open their astonished eyes on nought but chains, and scourges, and interminable slavery»⁴⁶.

At the same time, this description of U.S. society not only as increasingly fractured by the division between classes, but as hierarchically structured by a relation of extortion institutionally sanctioned, immediately turned into a vehicle of contestation and into a catalyst of politicization for Philadelphia workers. Having gained the consciousness of being a class, and a class systematically deprived of the product of its labour, Philadelphia workers set out to politically organize, as a class, against society and its oppressive order. The discourse on class and the act of classification had to turn into a politics of class. In order to counter this structural oppression, Heighton argued, the working class had to unite and organize on several levels. First, by learning «to *speak for themselves*» and by acquiring the habit «of *writing for themselves*»⁴⁷. Then, by fighting in the workplaces through the creation and coordination of trade societies. And finally, by bringing the struggle on the political

⁴³ Heighton, *An Address, Delivered Before the Mechanics*, 8.

⁴⁴ Heighton, 6–7.

⁴⁵ Arky, «The Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations», 150. On the *Mechanics' Free Press* see also: Rodger Streitmatter, *Voices of Revolution: The Dissident Press in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 4–10.

⁴⁶ «Mechanics' Free Press», April 12, 1828.

⁴⁷ Heighton, *An Address to the Members of Trade Societies*, 35. It was with this goal in mind that Heighton contributed to the establishment not only of the *Mechanics' Free Press*, but also of a Mechanics' Library Company, where workers could read and discuss. See: Arky, «The Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations», 150.

and institutional level, starting «to *nominate* candidates for public offices, *from among themselves*»⁴⁸. Only this way, Heighton argued, the working class could raise itself «to a level with any other class»⁴⁹, erasing the hierarchical character of class relations, affirming a social structure based on equality and therefore «a new and more exalted state of political existence»⁵⁰. His criterion of social taxonomy itself helped in conveying this politicization, since it identified the manual or non-manual character of labour, and therefore essentially the position within the wage relation, as the criterion of class distinction. Such definition allowed on the one hand to include in the working class not only farmers, skilled artisans and semi-skilled factory operatives, but also unskilled workers, usually Irish dockers or miners, laying the ground for a political connection that in the following decade constituted a specificity of the Philadelphia labor movement. On the other hand, Heighton's restriction of the concept of productive labor allowed to introduce a clear line of fracture between employers and employees at a time when the separation of their economic interests was still in flux⁵¹.

As a matter of fact, Heighton's politics of class and his use of republicanism as a language of class consciousness remained dominant in the Philadelphia labor movement's discourse and organizational efforts of the following decade. In summer 1827, it influenced a strike for shorter hours by journeymen carpenters⁵² and in the fall it undergirded the creation of the Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations, the first city-wide confederation of artisan trade societies in the United States. The central goal of the M.U.T.A. was to collect and manage a fund to support workers and their families during strikes, but in doing so it had the broader ambition to coordinate the actions of the several trade societies. Against the «unequal and very excessive accumulation of wealth» that had emerged, the preamble of the M.U.T.A.'s constitution declared, the object of the association was «to raise the mechanical and productive classes to that condition of true independence and equality» that justice demanded. «As freemen and republican», journeymen claimed that «all who toil have a natural and unalienable right to reap the fruits of their own

⁴⁸ Heighton, *An Address to the Members of Trade Societies*, 35.

⁴⁹ «It is very probable, fellow workmen, that we shall be denounced as a band of “levellers”; but let it be understood that we have no wish to bring any one down to a level with ourselves, for we are much lower in the scale of society, than we wish any of our fellow creatures to be. Our object is to bring ourselves up to a level with any other class». Heighton, *An Address, Delivered Before the Mechanics*, 11.

⁵⁰ William Heighton, *The Principles of Aristocratic Legislation, Developed in an Address Delivered to Working People, by an Operative Citizen* (Philadelphia: Coates, 1828), 16.

⁵¹ Burke, *The Conundrum of Class*, 65–66.

⁵² Denouncing their subjection to a «slave like system of labor» that allowed masters to make them work «from sun rise until dark» during summer and then fire them or squeeze their wages during winter, journeymen carpenters refused to work more than ten hours a day, claiming their right to have «sufficient time in each day for the cultivation of their mind and for self improvement». «Democratic Press», June 14, 1827, quoted in John R. Commons, ed., *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society. Volume 5* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1958), 80.

industry»⁵³. In spring 1828, however, following Heighton's call for political action, the M.U.T.A. pledged itself to nominate candidates in the following elections to regain «the political guardianship of their peculiar interests»⁵⁴. The Working Men's Party of Philadelphia thus participated to local and state elections between 1828 and 1831, with a program demanding the ten-hour working day, free public education, the abolition of imprisonment for debt and compulsory enlistment in the militia. Electoral efforts soon soaked up all the organizational resources, and the fluctuating results, together with the successful cooptation by the Democratic Party, triggered tensions and divisions that brought to the dissolution of the M.U.T.A. already in 1829⁵⁵. Nevertheless, the experience of the Working Men's Party, which was replicated in several other Northeastern cities, was evidence of the relevance of the white labor movement's politicization of class.

It was precisely to oppose Heighton's and the labor movement discourse that, in September 1828, Carey publicly intervened for the first time, albeit under the pseudonym of «Franklin», with a series of articles published precisely on the *Mechanics' Free Press*⁵⁶. The goal was to counter the several «errors», propagated by «misinformed economists», that were fueling «hostile feelings» and that threatened to trigger «a warfare between producers and non-producers, which could lead to a civil intolerance as pernicious as any other»⁵⁷. The first and most crucial error to reject was the journeymen's restrictive definition of what «productive labor» was and who the «productive classes» were, which they restricted «to those who actually make something out of something tangible». According to Carey, this was a mistake, since production as an economic process could not be limited to the performance of manual and concrete labor. On the contrary, there could be «productions and producers of many sorts», creating something «more or less tangible, or drawn

⁵³ *Preamble of the Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations*, «Mechanics' Free Press», October 25, 1828.

⁵⁴ «Mechanics' Free Press», August 16, 1828.

⁵⁵ On the Philadelphia Working Men's Party, see: Bernstein, «The Working People of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the General Strike of 1835», 330–33; Arky, «The Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations», 163–73; Laurie, *Artisans into Workers*, 79–83; Schultz, *The Republic of Labor*, 231–33.

⁵⁶ It was of course common practice, in the early nineteenth-century United States, to publish articles under pseudonyms referring to famous figures of ancient or modern history, and in Philadelphia «Franklin» must have been one of the most common, but there are three reasons for attributing Franklin's articles to Carey. First, I found a series of articles signed «Franklin», dating from 1836 (and discussed below) within the scrapbooks in which Carey collected most of his unsigned newspaper articles, so it is reasonable to think that Carey used the same pseudonym also on other occasions. Second, in an article published in 1828, Franklin claimed to be a publisher just like Carey himself, that is to be a «producer [...] of maps, landscapes, engravings and drawings of all objects of nature, [...] printed books on various subjects, literary and scientific articles, manuscripts of various kinds, tables of calculations, songs and poetry» («Mechanics' Free Press», November 1, 1828). Third, the several lexical and argumentative affinities between Franklin's articles in 1828, Franklin's articles in 1836, and Carey's later writings can serve as further proof of his authorship. Carey's scrapbooks are held within the *Miscellaneous Works of Henry C. Carey* at the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts at the University of Pennsylvania. It was William Elder, Carey's closest disciple, who argued that the four scrapbooks held at the University of Pennsylvania collected Carey's own articles: William Elder, *A Memoir of Henry C. Carey. Read Before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, January 5, 1880*. (Philadelphia: American Iron and Steel Association, 1880), 39.

⁵⁷ Franklin, *Principles and Errors No. I. Producers*, «Mechanics' Free Press», September 12, 1828.

from intellectual objects», and those who limited the term «to suit narrow ideas, or his own limited wants», acted «selfishly»⁵⁸. A second common error, Carey continued, was that of claiming that only the so-called «producers» could be considered as useful members of society. Instead, in his perspective, «every work whether manual, mental or active, is useful to society, and entitles to a reward proportionate to the extent and durability of its utility». Moreover, in order to establish the value of labor it was not enough to take into account «time», as workers had done by demanding shorter working hours, but also other factors should have been counted, such as «skill and general utility». Carey thus identified a group of «useful unproductive labours», such as those performed by «physicians, teachers, storekeepers, officers, magistrates, watchmen, jurymen, militia, firemen», but also «merchants and clerks» that had to be considered indispensable to the «preservation and distribution of productions» and therefore «indispensable to a well organized society». In this respect, Carey proposed to revise Heighon's social taxonomy.

«It has been the custom to divide society into two classes: producers and non-producers, whereby some imply that the last are all useless. This shows the need of a more correct classification into at least five classes. 1. Manual producers, or mechanics and farmers. 2. Mental producers, or inventors and authors. 3. Preservers of production, or managers and keepers. 4. Distributors of productions or helpers. 5. Idlers. None but this class are useless, and even the idlers may be made useful by giving them an occupation»⁵⁹.

Moving from this classification, Carey concluded with a warning to the readers of the *Mechanics' Free Press*, «the mechanics must remember that they are only one out of several useful classes». Thus, inaugurating a conceptual strategy that would later become extremely common among political economists, against Heighon's restriction and politicization of the definition of «productive labor» Carey proposed to re-enlarge it in the attempt to deny workers the monopoly of social utility⁶⁰. Understanding the stakes of social classification and the political threat of the workers' claim to be «the sole producers of wealth», Carey answered by diluting the idea of productive labor into a broader conception of social usefulness which included all those who participated to the productive process and all those who contributed to the ordered functioning of society, including those «non-productive classes» who legally and politically guaranteed production without being physically involved in it.

⁵⁸ «Thus an author who writes his thoughts, an orator who speaks them, a printer who prints them, a painter who paints them, are all producers although their materials are intellectual. A chemist who analyses invisible substances, a physician who produces or restores health, a contriver who lessens labour or invents a new art, and a teacher who leads the ideas of a child, are also producers of the highest order, because the benefits they confer are more lasting than a pair of shoes or a coat». Franklin, *Principles and Errors No. I. Producers*, «Mechanics' Free Press», September 12, 1828.

⁵⁹ Franklin, *Principles and Errors No. I. Producers*, «Mechanics' Free Press», September 12, 1828.

⁶⁰ Burke, *The Conundrum of Class*, 65.

Following this line of reasoning, in the following article Carey set out to highlight the relevance of «tools», machines and instrumental capital to the performance of any kind of labor and to attack the workers' «antipathy» towards them. Despite augmenting prices in the short term, in fact, machines had been crucial in causing a generalized expansion of productive powers which «all the liberal mechanics» should regard as beneficial. Of course, though, Carey continued, since the increasing productivity was determined «by the tool and not the man», it was clear that the «the tool becomes entitled to a large share of the wages of the labour, which is allowed of course to the maker or owner of the tool»⁶¹. It was therefore machines and instrumental capital that had allowed workers to become increasingly productive as a class, and as a consequence they had to accept that the capital's owners reaped a profit far higher than theirs. This meant, Carey insisted, that not all labor could be considered equally valuable and that the journeymen's manual labor far from giving them any right to claim a special role within society, had to be considered far less valuable than «mental labor» of invention, which «spurs all others». In his perspective, considering this latter less useful and deserving than manual labor amounted to «an attempt to introduce barbarism and make civilization go backwards instead of forward»⁶². Thus, by showing the increasing relevance of machines and technological innovations within production, Carey tried to devalue the journeymen's labor and remove any ground to their claim to be the sole producers of wealth, in order to make them accept their subordinate social condition with respect to capitalists.

In the following articles, written to answer the several criticisms that the first two had triggered, Carey reiterated the idea that «all the classes of society are equally useful», that inventors of machines had to be considered «benefactors of mankind» and that therefore, «for mechanics to militate against the others» was simply «unjust». In fact, while it was «the undoubted right of the mechanics to endeavour to better themselves, and to acquire by all lawful means a higher standing», this should not have been done «at the avowed expense of other useful classes», as was the case with strikes and trades' unions, but rather by endeavoring to «improve» themselves through labor⁶³. Journeymen had a right to «claiming equality, but no superiority nor exclusive claim of utility»⁶⁴. Finally, in criticizing Robert Owen's schemes of cooperation between capital and labor, and particularly the idea that the hours of labor could be used as a substitute for money in mediating exchanges, Carey vehemently attacked the labor movement's demand of equality, arguing that social differences justified social positions. «Prove then - that men, women and children, are all perfectly equal in size, weight, strength, ability and sense», Carey wrote, «prove also that the lazy,

⁶¹ Franklin, *Principles and Errors. No. II. Tools*, «Mechanics' Free Press», September 27, 1828.

⁶² Franklin, *Principles and Errors. No. II. Tools*, «Mechanics' Free Press», September 27, 1828.

⁶³ Franklin, *Explanations*, «Mechanics' Free Press», October 4, 1828.

⁶⁴ Franklin, *Errors Detected. No. IV and last – Concluded*, «Mechanics' Free Press», November 15, 1828.

ignorant, conceited and clumsy, are equal to the diligent, learned, modest and skilful». Only by proving this, could the «metaphysical equality» agitated by workers be said to have any meaning at all⁶⁵. Instead, in his view, differences in sex, talent, and willingness to work not only existed, but had to determine differences in the value of labor and to translate into social hierarchies. Carey's first answer to the labor movement in 1828, thus, already employed some of the strategies that he would later refine, systematize and theoretically ground, in the attempt to delegitimize social conflict and to legitimize the capitalist social order.

1.2. The General Strike of 1835 and the *Essay on the Rate of Wages*

After the defeat of the Workingmen's Party, which even led to Heighton's departure to Indiana, attempts to mobilize Philadelphia workers resumed already in 1833. After a strike in August⁶⁶, in the fall textile workers led by John Ferral joined journeymen craftsmen headed by William English, particularly shoemakers, tailors and bookbinders, to found the General Trades' Union of Philadelphia, modeled upon city-wide unions simultaneously created in New York and Baltimore the previous year. While the M.U.T.A., despite Heighton's attempt, had never managed to expand beyond the artisanal trades, Philadelphia's G.T.U. included both skilled journeymen and semi-skilled factory operatives, becoming in 1835 the largest of its kind, counting more than fifty member societies and representing over ten thousand workers⁶⁷. Meanwhile, a growing coordination among Northeastern unions led to the creation of the National Trades' Union, a convention of delegates from New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, Washington D.C. and Newark that met three times between 1834 and 1836. By the mid-1830s, then, the Northern labor movement had both expanded and radicalized, with its class discourse shifting from the opposition between producers and nonproducers towards that between masters and journeymen and giving increasing relevance to the fight for shorter hours⁶⁸.

This communication between cities and the new organizational scale of the G.T.U. proved crucial in laying the grounds for the Philadelphia general strike of 1835. Since January 1835, workers announced their willingness to engage a «battle for the substance of democracy» to prevent «unprincipled and aristocratic employers» from making their conditions «as wretched as the serfs of kingly Europe»⁶⁹. The following April, journeymen cordwainers denounced the halving of their

⁶⁵ Franklin, *To Brutus, Veron, Cosmopolite, & Co.*, «Mechanics' Free Press», November 29, 1828.

⁶⁶ «The Pennsylvanian», August 28, 1833.

⁶⁷ Edward Pessen, *Most Uncommon Jacksonians: The Radical Leaders of the Early Labor Movement* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1970), 84–86; Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850*, 85–87. See also «The Pennsylvanian», February 9, 1836.

⁶⁸ Roediger e Foner, *Our Own Time*, 28–30.

⁶⁹ «The Pennsylvanian», January 5, 1835.

wages due to growing competition, spelling out the existence of a widening «difference» between «the employers desirous of restraining the just demands of their journeymen - and the journeymen determined to secure their rights»⁷⁰. On several occasions, workers of a glass factory, as «descendants of those spirits who achieved for the country its independence», claimed the duty to exercise «ever-waking vigilance» against the «princely authorities» of their master⁷¹. Even republican virtue had turned into a weapon of class conflict. The ground was therefore fertile when, at the end of May, news came of Boston journeymen's strike for the ten-hour working day⁷². Boston workers had issued a *Ten-hour Circular*, written by Seth Luther, announcing a battle «between Money and Labor» to affirm their «Natural Right to dispose of our own time» and to perform their «duties» as «American Citizens», which prevented them «to dispose of more than Ten Hours for a day's work», concluding that they would «no longer be mere slaves to inhuman, insatiable and un pitying avarice»⁷³. An emblematic document of working-class radical republicanism, the *Ten-hour Circular* was immediately republished and circulated in Philadelphia. «The effect was electric; the Circular became the absorbing topic of conversation», reported John Ferral, «one motive seemed to pervade the mass»⁷⁴.

Since the first days of June, journeymen carpenters and shoemakers refused to work, crowding the city's main squares⁷⁵, soon joined by textile workers and by Irish coal heavers from the Schuylkill docks, already on strike for shorter hours since the week before. In a matter of days, journeymen from more than forty societies were involved in the strike. Thousands of workers, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled alike, took to the streets shouting «from 6 to 6, ten hours work and two hours for meals». By the time public workers joined the strike, the extent of public support was evident. «The movement has become general», the *Pennsylvanian* reported⁷⁶, while the *United States Gazette* feared that «the determination of standing out will be adopted by almost every class of workmen»⁷⁷. «Where is that liberty, and the boasted freedom of our institutions», workers asked at a meeting, «so long as the mechanic [...] is doomed to toil fourteen hours a day for a mere subsistence, which makes him little better than the slave, who serves under the lash of his task master?»⁷⁸. To

⁷⁰ *Address to the Journeymen Cordwainers of the City and County of Philadelphia*, «The Pennsylvanian», April 4, 1835.

⁷¹ «The Pennsylvanian», April 8, 24, 25, 28, May 2, 23, 1835.

⁷² Laurie, *Artisans into Workers*, 84–85; Roediger e Foner, *Our Own Time*, 30–31.

⁷³ *Ten-hour Circular*, «National Trades' Union», May 16, 1835, quoted in *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, edited by John R. Commons et al., vol. 6 (New York: Russell & Russell, 1958), 94.

⁷⁴ «The Man», June 29, 1835, quoted in Commons, 6: 39–43..

⁷⁵ «The United States Gazette», June 3, 1835.

⁷⁶ «The Pennsylvanian», June 5, 1835.

⁷⁷ «The United States Gazette», June 6, 1835.

⁷⁸ «The Pennsylvanian», June 5, 1835.

journeymen carpenters, it was a «disgrace to our employers» that they were forced to fight «for the bare privilege to dispose of that which is our own - our time and labor»⁷⁹.

On June 4th, the Whig-dominated City Council approved a law guaranteeing the ten-hour day to city employees, according to the formula «6 to 6» for the same pay⁸⁰. Nonetheless, in the following days, addresses, meetings and demonstrations continued to multiply and grow, reiterating the public support to the strike. Master carpenters were the first to yield, granting the ten-hour day⁸¹. Master cordwainers soon followed. Despite condemning the «general strike» made by «the laboring portion of this community», they accepted to comply with the journeymen's demand, but formed a masters' association to defend their own rights⁸². By the end of June, the ten-hour day or corresponding wage increases were granted throughout the city, at least to white, male and skilled workers⁸³. «If such is to be the reward of turn-outs», the *New York Journal of Commerce* predicted, «there will be no end to them»⁸⁴. As a matter of fact, such victory triggered a wave of strikes that won the ten-hour day for skilled workers in most Northern cities, except for Boston. In Philadelphia itself, the general strike boosted union membership and activities. Throughout the following summer and early autumn, strikes continued to multiply, with the workers' demands shifting towards the level of wages, in the attempt to directly negotiate bills of prices, but the general strike of 1835 had shown the new scale of workers' mobilization and the widespread hold of its republican political discourse on class.

It was precisely in such context, only a few months after the Philadelphia general strike and at the height of the ten-hour struggle throughout the North, that, in September 1835, Henry Charles Carey published his *Essay on the Rate of Wages*, aiming to investigate «the circumstances which tend to determine the rate of wages»⁸⁵. At forty-two, it was his first published work, written after having retired from the management of the family business in order to devote himself solely to the study of political economy and more specifically to the critique of British economic thought. However, it was not simply a theoretical opposition that had led him to rethink the fundamental principles of political economy, but the need to scientifically ground his reaction to the labor movement's discourse on class. Thus, it was the anti-labor political and ideological battle he had engaged since

⁷⁹ «The Pennsylvanian», June 6, 1835.

⁸⁰ «The United States Gazette», June 5, 1835.

⁸¹ «The Pennsylvanian», June 9, 1835.

⁸² «The Pennsylvanian», June 13, 1835.

⁸³ Foner, *History of the Labor Movement Vol. 1*, 115–18; Bernstein, «The Working People of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the General Strike of 1835», 336–39; Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850*, 90–92; Roediger e Foner, *Our Own Time*, 31–33.

⁸⁴ «New York Journal of Commerce», June 8, 1835, quoted in Foner, *History of the Labor Movement Vol. 1*, 118.

⁸⁵ Carey, *Essay on the Rate of Wages*. See: Abraham D. H. Kaplan, *Henry Charles Carey. A Study in American Economic Thought* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1931), 28–35.

1828, that brought Carey towards economic science, in the attempt to find natural economic laws that could ground a different vision of U.S. society. The fact that, in criticizing British classical economists, Carey's most pressing polemic target was the labor movement is manifest since the very first pages of his *Essay*, in which he attacked the notion of a fundamental conflict of interests between capital and labor. Explicitly attributing the emergence of class conflict to erroneous economic theories, Carey thus expressed the need to scientifically counter the latter in order to politically fight the former.

«*Wages and profits* have been represented by many political economists as natural antagonists, the Ormuzd and Ahriman of political economy, one of which could rise only at the expense of the other. Such has been the belief of the great mass of the people who receive wages, which belief has given rise to trades' unions, so numerous in England, and obtaining in the United States; as well as to the cry of *the poor against the rich*»⁸⁶

In particular, Carey complained, both workers and British economists had failed to understand the laws regulating the rate of wages. On the one hand, workers were mistaken in believing that the rate of wages was «altogether arbitrary, and that changes could be made at will», a notion that had originated «the numerous 'strikes', or 'turns out' we have seen, the only effect of which has been loss to both employers and workmen»⁸⁷. Instead, «workers and labourers» should understand «that the division between themselves and the capitalist, or the rate of wages, is regulated by a law immutable as are those which govern the motion of the heavenly bodies», which would offset any attempt to raise wages through strikes or through legislation⁸⁸. On the other hand, British economists, Ricardo and Malthus in particular, incorrectly maintained that, due to growing population and decreasing agricultural returns, in the long term the rate of wages could never exceed the level of subsistence required to reproduce the workforce⁸⁹. On the contrary, evidence from Great Britain and particularly from the United States proved to Carey that «*real wages, or the quantity and quality of commodities attainable by the labourer*, have steadily increased» and that there had been «a constant augmentation of the means of living»⁹⁰.

Having spelled out the scientific and political targets of the essay, Carey turned to Nassau Senior's wage-fund doctrine, which had described the rate of wages as determined by the ratio between

⁸⁶ Carey, *Essay on the Rate of Wages*, 15.

⁸⁷ Carey, 15.

⁸⁸ «[Workers and labourers] would see that all attempts on the part of the capitalist, to reduce wages below the natural rate, as well as on their part to raise it above that rate, must fail, as any such reduction must be attended with an unusual rate of profit to the employer, which must, in turn, beget competition among the possessors of capital, and raise the rate of wages; while such elevation in any employment must reduce the rate of profit so far as to drive capital therefrom, and reduce wages again to the proper standard», Carey, 17.

⁸⁹ «The *necessary* rate, [...] which is that which will enable the labourer to purchase food and clothing». Carey, 20.

⁹⁰ Carey, 24-26.

capital and population: «the fund for the maintenance of labourers, compared with the number of labourers to be maintained»⁹¹. Going beyond Ricardo's and Malthus' subsistence theory, Senior, followed by other post-Ricardian economists as John Ramsay McCulloch and John Stuart Mill, had indicated the possibility of permanent wage increases, whenever the rate of capital accumulation exceeded the rate of population growth⁹². In fact, to Senior the rate of wages did not necessarily coincide with the level of subsistence, but it could vary, depending «upon the relation which exists between the demand and the supply» of labour⁹³. If labour could be applied so effectively as to increase production and to make capital grow more rapidly than population, the demand for labour would be constantly higher than its supply and its rewards would increase. To Carey, however, capital accumulation outpacing population growth was not a mere possibility, but a natural and necessary trend, which revealed rising wages as the truth of capitalist development. Thus, he stated, «capital has a tendency to increase more rapidly than population and [...] it will do so, when not prevented by disturbing causes»⁹⁴.

Such a reinterpretation of the wage-fund doctrine allowed Carey to counter at once the labor movement's pretensions and the British economists' dim forecasts, and the former through the latter. Against the idea that wages could be modified arbitrarily through workers' organization and strikes, it showed that their rate could be determined solely by the «immutable» laws of supply and demand within the labor market. A «natural rate of wages» did exist, then, but according to those same laws, far from being stuck at the level of subsistence, it was constantly increasing, because of a demand of labor (capital) growing structurally faster than its supply (population). This conclusively proved that wages and profits could actually grow together and that therefore the interests of capital and labor had to be considered in harmony with each other. Carey thus overturned Ricardo's and Malthus's subsistence theory, while at the same time holding still the centrality and binding nature of market mechanisms against the pretense of organized workers to collectively have a say in the price of their own labor. Thus, wages would naturally grow but only according to the rules and the temporality of the market, and only as a consequence of the accumulation of capital. Moreover, this equation between wages, labour productivity and capital allowed Carey to reduce the question of the working classes' worsening conditions to a problem of low efficiency, thus shifting onto workers the responsibility for their low wages, which were «fully equal to their deserts as producers»⁹⁵. If workers had understood this, he argued, they would

⁹¹ Nassau W. Senior, *Three Lectures on the Rate of Wages*, 2nd ed. (London: Murray, 1831), III–IV.

⁹² On the subsistence theory and the wage-fund doctrine, see: Maurice Dobb, *Wages* (London: Nisbet, 1928).

⁹³ Carey, *Essay on the Rate of Wages*, 32.

⁹⁴ Carey, 81.

⁹⁵ Carey, 76.

have spared themselves and their employers «the enormous loss that has arisen out of their recent combination», working as productively as possible to fuel the increase of capital. Instead of fighting their employers, Carey warned, they should have tried to become so.

«[Workers] should see in the fact that the great majority of the master workmen have risen by their own exertions to the situation they at present occupy, abundant evidence that nothing is wanting to them but industry and economy. [...] So far should they be from entertaining feelings of jealousy towards those who, by industry and economy, succeed in making themselves independent, that they should see with pleasure the increase of capital, certain that such increase must produce new demands for their labour, accompanied by increased comfort and enjoyment for them»⁹⁶

Rising wages, then, could allow the worker to become independent, or at least they could secure him «nearly as large a share of the proceeds of [labour] as if he worked on his own account»⁹⁷. In other words, Carey implied, the increasingly higher level of wages could at least partially compensate the dependent nature of wage labor. Strikes and trades' unions, however, by slowing down production, would only impede such possibility: the only way for workers to contribute to their wages' growth was to apply themselves to productive labor⁹⁸. Thus, explicitly attacking the labor movement's denunciation of an increasingly hierarchical and oppressive social structure, Carey answered by arguing that in the United States «industry and economy» could allow workers to follow a path of social mobility. Class boundaries, then, far from being increasingly tightened, simply represented temporary criteria of social distinction, which could be easily crossed by deserving individuals. The need to counter the journeymen's politicization of class was thus shaping Carey's reflection, bringing it towards the rejection of classification and towards the elaboration of a new vision of U.S. society as a fluid, mobile and crossable structure, within which individuals could individually improve their condition through labor.

At the same time, Carey specified that the tendency of capital to outpace population was predicated upon the absence of three «disturbing causes» which could determine a «want of industry»: «insecurity of person and property», «heavy taxation» and «restrictions upon the freedom of action, or of trade» (including protective tariffs)⁹⁹. It was therefore the degree in which such disturbing

⁹⁶ Carey, 17–18.

⁹⁷ Carey, 32.

⁹⁸ In the first volume of *Capital*, Karl Marx attacked Carey's *Essay on the Rate of Wages*, deeming as «absurd» the conclusion that «wages everywhere rise and in proportion to the productivity of labour» from the fact «the level of wages more or less corresponds with the average intensity of labour». On the contrary, Marx explained, «the relative price of labour (i.e. the price of labour in relation to the product) generally varies in the inverse direction». Karl Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One.*, ed. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1976), 705. In other words, far from raising them, the increasing productivity and the growing power of capital would allow wages to be reduced more easily.

⁹⁹ Carey, *Essay on the Rate of Wages*, 81.

causes existed in every single country that could account for the differences in wages levels throughout the world. In countries blessed with security, light taxation and freedom from restrictions, economic laws would follow their natural course: production would be higher, capital would accumulate faster and therefore wages would constantly rise. Wages thus varied accordingly to variations in the «powers of production»¹⁰⁰ of the several countries. Yet, Carey asked, «what is the cause of the difference in the productive powers of the nations?». All of the disturbing causes (security, taxation and regulations) being of a political or institutional character, only the «nature of government» could ultimately explain wage differentials.

«Why is the labourer in the vicinity of Calcutta barely able to exist, while another in the neighborhood of Philadelphia or New York can accumulate capital? [...] The answer is, that the system of government of Hindostan tends to prevent the growth of capital, while that of England, and still more, that of the United States, tends to promote it. Upon capital depends production; upon production depend wages»¹⁰¹.

New York and Philadelphia workers would have hardly agreed about their own capacity of accumulating capital, but, placing the United States at the top of the global scale of wages meant, Carey seemed to suggest, that they should measure their condition not comparing it with the declining myth of republican independence, but with the reality of labor within the nineteenth-century capitalist world market. Not against the condition of late-seventeenth-century farmers and artisans, but against that of contemporary Russian, Indian, and Irish peasants. Being freer than any other country from disturbing causes, the United States enjoyed the most developed power of production and the fastest pace of capital accumulation, which allowed not only to employ the entire growing population, but to do so in ever better conditions and with constantly increasing wages: «the fund out of which the labourer is paid is larger, and his wages are consequently greater, than in any other country»¹⁰². In England, on the other hand, despite high degrees of security and relatively low taxation, productive powers could not fully unfold because of persisting regulations, such as apprentice laws and poor laws, which «obstruct the circulation of labour»¹⁰³, constituting a great incentive to «idleness» and a great hindrance to industry.

At the very opposite pole on the global wage scale, Carey found India, where «the unfortunate Hindoo labours under all these disturbing causes» and where consequently «capital cannot accumulate, and the aids of labour are of the worst kind»¹⁰⁴. A condition, Carey pointed out, which

¹⁰⁰ Carey, 62.

¹⁰¹ Carey, 80.

¹⁰² Carey, 180.

¹⁰³ Carey, 187.

¹⁰⁴ Carey, 183.

«does not arise out of any natural defect», but from a specific system of colonial government: in such conditions, «that a people so situated, should be “poor and miserable”, is not a matter of surprise, but that they are able to exist at all is wonderful»¹⁰⁵. In October 1835, a few weeks after the publication of Carey’s book, the same strategy of legitimation through comparison was attempted by Emory Washburn on the *North American Review* with the same anti-labor goal. Complaining that «the outcry about the rights of the “working men”» recently raised in the United States was due to «misconstruction and misrepresentation», Washburn engaged in a long description of the «poverty, degradation and toil» of the laboring classes of Europe in order to prove the superior condition of workers in the United States. «Such is the condition of a considerable portion of the laboring classes in the leading states of Europe», he concluded, «it would be well worth the care of those, who have turned their attention to these subjects in America, to contrast the state of things described with that which prevails in this country»¹⁰⁶.

To Carey, then, a system of government that, by maintaining security, limiting taxation and avoiding regulations, removed all obstacles to the accumulation of capital, would thus guarantee «a steady improvement of condition with the increase of population»¹⁰⁷. It would, in other words, avert the trap of population growth. «Population *may* increase with great rapidity», but capital and production could increase faster if freed from disturbances. It made no sense, Carey argued, to assess that population would necessarily outpace the production of food and that «poverty and misery» would always be «inseparable accompaniments to the human race», as Malthus had done, «while the earth is as yet, in a great measure, untouched, and is capable of supporting thousands of millions»¹⁰⁸. Malthus had mistaken the disturbances artificially and politically introduced by men for natural laws, transferring «to the Deity what should rest on our shoulders»¹⁰⁹. Striking his first blow at the principle of population, Carey subscribed to the American anti-Malthusianism that had been growing since the very moment the *Essay on the Principles of Population* was published in the United States in 1809¹¹⁰.

While some had rejected his theory as simply not applicable to the United States, others had more broadly contested the notion that production could not keep pace with population. Economists like Daniel Raymond and Friedrich List in particular had argued that «the earth is capable of being

¹⁰⁵ Carey, 129.

¹⁰⁶ Emory Washburn, *The Laboring Classes of Europe*, «North American Review», XLI, October 1835, 348-66.

¹⁰⁷ Carey, *Essay on the Rate of Wages*, 242.

¹⁰⁸ Carey, 239.

¹⁰⁹ Carey, 239.

¹¹⁰ Christopher W. Calvo, *The Emergence of Capitalism in Early America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2020), 78–82. On anti-malthusianism in the United States: Joseph J. Spengler, «Population Doctrines in the United States. I. Anti-Malthusianism», *Journal of Political Economy* 41, issue 4 (August 1933): 433–67.

made to yield an indefinite and almost unlimited quantity of food»¹¹¹ and that capital had an innate tendency to «outstrip» the growth of population¹¹². It was this anti-Malthusian argument that Carey took up in 1835, when the rise of a labor movement had made it particularly urgent to deny that poverty could be an inescapable destiny. On the contrary, to Carey, God had established «a system of checks and balances [...] far superior to that which has haunted the imagination of *some* of the writers on population», in which «population will limit itself» and the difficulty will not be «to supply food, but to find a market for it»¹¹³. In fact, not only man was granted «the power to increase in a geometrical ratio», but also «the desire of bettering his condition», which prompted him to work industriously. Far from being an obstacle to the growth of production, growing population could add a productive impulse that the principle of population did not account for: «Mr. Malthus tells us, that wherever food is abundant, population increases rapidly; but it might be as correctly said, that where population increases rapidly, food is abundant»¹¹⁴. For this to happen it was sufficient that government abstained from imposing any burden and restriction upon the freedom of action of individuals, allowing capital to accumulate undisturbed. In the following decades, Carey would have acknowledged that, as a means of removing the obstacles to accumulation, government abstention was far from sufficient. For the moment, however, he could conclude that «as in everything else, “laissez nous faire” is the true doctrine»¹¹⁵.

In the months following its publication, Carey's *Essay* received attention a broad attention among economic and political circles, both in the United States and abroad¹¹⁶, with Senior himself acknowledging the book, while stressing a point of disagreement¹¹⁷. The Southern economist Thomas Cooper, who had received a copy of the book from Francis Lieber, wrote to Carey that it had the merit of providing «something like demonstration of the main truths of political economy». Until then a supporter of the principle of population, Cooper thanked Carey «for removing from my mind the load of unreasoning that the Malthusian theory imposed on me» and for consoling

¹¹¹ Daniel Raymond, *Elements of Political Economy. Volume I*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: F. Lucas, and E. J. Coale, 1823), 11.

¹¹² Friedrich List, *Outlines of American Political Economy in a Series of Letters Addressed by Friedrich List, Esq. to Charles J. Ingersoll, Esq.* (Philadelphia: Samuel Parker, 1827), 22. In 1841, List took up the same argument: «It is not true that population increases in a larger proportion than production of the means of subsistence; it is at least foolish to assume such disproportion, or to attempt to prove it by artificial calculations or sophistical arguments, so long as on the globe a mass of natural forces still lies inert by means of which ten times or perhaps a hundred times more people than are now living can be sustained. [...] Who can tell that tomorrow, by means of a new invention or discovery, the produce of the soil may not be increased five or ten fold?». Friedrich List, *The National System of Political Economy* [1841] (Philadelphia: Lippincott & Co., 1856).

¹¹³ Carey, *Essay on the Rate of Wages*, 242–43.

¹¹⁴ Carey, 244.

¹¹⁵ Carey, 243.

¹¹⁶ See: «Niles' Weekly Register», October 24, 1835; «National Gazette and Literary Register», November 30, 1837; «The Spectator», December 12, 1835; «Journal of the American Institute», vol. 1, n. 10, July 1836.

¹¹⁷ Nassau W. Senior, *An Outline of the Science of Political Economy* (London: Clowes, 1836), 161.

him «as to future prospects»¹¹⁸. The pro-slavery advocate Thomas R. Dew, on the contrary, despite considering the book in many respects «admirable», could not agree with Carey's conclusions against the principle of population, which he considered «a most solemn warning to statesmen and legislators to beware of the danger of tampering with the sources of production and the accumulated capital of the country»¹¹⁹. More crucially, however, the *Essay on the Rate of Wages*, published in the midst of the first labor uprising in the United States, was immediately received as a contribution to the anti-trades' union reaction. In fact, describing higher wages as contingent upon increasing labor productivity and capital accumulation, reaffirming the cogency of the law of supply and demand in the determination of the reward of labor and predicting the natural capacity of capital to outpace population, Carey had attempted a first scientific rebuttal of the workingmen's claims and discourse, as well as of the political economy upon which, in his perspective, their vision of society was grounded. In fact, through Carey's theory of the rate of wages, it was possible to deny that capital and labor had conflicting interests and that workers had any right to determine the price of their labor, but also that their condition had been worsening in the past decades. It also allowed to affirm a vision of the rising American capitalism in which faster accumulation meant increasing opportunities for all, better living conditions and weakening class divisions. For this reason, Carey's arguments, which in large part reflected and gave scientific shape to what employers and industrialists were claiming, were soon taken up by several anti-labor and anti-union advocates, as the scientific foundation of a public discourse that could discipline the U.S. working class into acceptance of the new capitalist work relations. Carey himself soon had another occasion to test these theoretical tools in a new public fight over class and republicanism.

1.3. "Franklin" v. "Sherman": the Trades' Union and the Meaning of Republicanism

After the largely successful strikes of summer 1835, which forced most employers to grant the ten-hour working day or to agree upon new price lists, worker's mobilization largely retreated, weakened by the cyclical unemployment of the winter season. In early 1836, however, a long confrontation between master and journeymen bookbinders reheated public debate around the role of the trades' union and its legitimacy within a republican government. Since January, journeymen bookbinders, supported by the G.T.U., went on a strike against their masters' attempt to withdraw previous concessions and to lower wages between twenty and fifty per cent¹²⁰.

¹¹⁸ *Thomas Cooper to Henry C. Carey*, November 4, 1835, «Henry C. Carey Papers, 1825-1936» (box 12, folder 4), series 5, section b of the «Edward Carey Gardiner collection, 1673-1949» (collection 227A) held at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (from now on, simply «Henry C. Carey Papers»). On Cooper's Malthusianism, see: Calvo, *The Emergence of Capitalism in Early America*, 87.

¹¹⁹ *Thomas R. Dew letter to Henry C. Carey*, November 26, 1835, «Mss Collection AHMC», New York Historical Society. On Dew's Malthusianism, see: Calvo, *The Emergence of Capitalism in Early America*, 88–90.

¹²⁰ «The Pennsylvanian», January 15; January 26; February 3, 1836.

«Capitalists *think* they have the right to trample on the constitutional liberties and the rights of free citizenship of the laboring man», the journeymen declared, but «as American freemen and good Citizens», they affirmed that «it is undoubtedly the Working Man's right to affix what he thinks is a just remuneration for his labour»¹²¹. Such an assertion signaled a shift in the journeymen's discourse, from the question of time towards a more broad, radical and class-conscious rupture against wage labor as such. Claiming their labor as their own property and rejecting its transformation into a market commodity, journeymen were rejecting a power relationship that deprived them of any control over the fruits of their toil¹²². Master bookbinders reacted first by publishing a list of proscription¹²³ with the names of all journeymen on strike and by asking for the support of the much wealthier booksellers, who intervened, claiming that while they recognized «the right of every person to place upon his labor such a price as he conceives it to be worth», they also stood for «the right of an Employer to give it or not as he may deem it correctly as also the further right to employ whom he please». Therefore, they concluded, praising «the principles of Free Trade» and «depreciating all combinations, which affect the freedom of individual action», they committed «not place work in any establishment wherein such combinations are allowed to operate»¹²⁴. First among the signatories was Philadelphia's most important publishing company: «Carey, Lea and Blanchard», whose direction Carey had left only one year earlier.

John Ferral, who had already exposed «the war of Capital against Labor [...] waged by a majority of the Employing Bookbinders»¹²⁵, denounced the attempt of a «*free trade* gentry, the combined Booksellers and employing Binders» to make their journeymen into «subservient slaves» through «starvation or submission»¹²⁶. A «despotic attempt», William English added, worth of «liberal dictators» who wanted to bring «the feudal system of Europe» to the United States¹²⁷. The control over the fruits and the remuneration of labor, journeymen argued, was not an absurd pretense, but their most fundamental right as republican citizens: «it is no less our right than our duty to affix to the only commodity we have to dispose of (our labor) its proper price, and he who attempts to abridge this right, is a tyrant in the fullest sense of the word»¹²⁸. Trying to lower wages was simply un-republican.

¹²¹ *Address of the Journeymen Bookbinders of the City and County of Philadelphia*, «The Pennsylvania», February 4, 1836.

¹²² Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 242–43.

¹²³ Published in «The Pennsylvania», February 4, 1836.

¹²⁴ *At a Meeting of the Booksellers of this City*, «The Pennsylvania», February 11, 1836.

¹²⁵ J. F., *To the Productive Laborers of Philadelphia*, «The Pennsylvania», February 5, 1836. See also, J. F., *To the Productive Laborers of Philadelphia*, «The Pennsylvania», February 6, 1836.

¹²⁶ J. F., *To the Productive Laborers of Philadelphia*, «The Pennsylvania», February 17, 1836.

¹²⁷ W. E., *To the Mechanics and Working Men, & the Friends of Equal Rights Generally*, «The Pennsylvania», February 12, 1836.

¹²⁸ «The Pennsylvania», March 1, 1836.

With the crucial financial support of the trades' union, journeymen bookbinders carried on the strike for more than a month, until on March 8, the masters had no alternative but to withdraw the list of prices they had tried to enforce¹²⁹. Only a few days later, on March 14, an article addressed *To the Mechanics of the City and County of Philadelphia* signed «Franklin» appeared on *The Pennsylvanian*, the democratic newspaper that most closely followed the Philadelphia labor movement's activities. It was the first of seven articles in which Carey, using again the illustrious pseudonym, divested the role of the economic scientist and assumed that of the polemicist, to issue a wide-ranging attack against the trades' union, proving to what extent the arguments elaborated in the *Essay on the Rate of Wages* could be turned into political weapons¹³⁰. In the midst of a new wave of strikes, political economy had to enter the public arena in order to support a political discourse that could help delegitimizing class conflict. Carey started by addressing the relationship between employers and journeymen, which a few days earlier the journeymen cordwainers had described as «a long train of abuses, oppression and usurpation»¹³¹. Far from this being the case, he argued, the different position they occupied with respect to wage labor simply mirrored a difference in their past productive efforts.

«Who are these employers? Look around and you will see that every man of them was but a short time since, a Journeyman like yourselves. How have they become employers? By industry, and economy! [...] Why do you not exert the same industry and economy, and enable yourselves to do the same that they have done? [...] *These men were the prudent, the industrious, and the economical of their day.* How is it with the prudent, and the industrious, and the economical of the present day?»¹³²

Masters were placed on a superior social position than journeymen and could command their labor not because of permanent class distinctions, but only as the reward for their previous deployment of industry and economy. The difference between «people who live on the incomes arising out of past exertions» and «men who in various capacities depend upon their daily labor for their daily bread»¹³³ (and the power relationship it entailed) was acceptable, even in a republican society, as the result of different abilities and different propensities to work productively. Therefore, if a worker «has talents, his wages are large, and he accumulates a fortune. If he be destitute of it he continues in a subordinate station. If he be industrious and economical he becomes an employer; - if on the contrary he remains a journeymen to the end of the chapter»¹³⁴. To Carey, in other words,

¹²⁹ «The Pennsylvanian», March 8; March 9, 1836.

¹³⁰ I found this series of articles pasted within Carey's scrapbooks held in the *Miscellaneous Works of Henry C. Carey* at the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts of the University of Pennsylvania.

¹³¹ «The Pennsylvanian», March 4, 1836.

¹³² Franklin, *To the Mechanics of the City and County of Philadelphia - No. 1*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 14, 1836.

¹³³ Franklin, *To the Mechanics of Philadelphia - No. 2*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 15, 1836.

¹³⁴ Franklin, *To B. No. 1*, «The Pennsylvanian», April 6, 1836.

social hierarchy did not depend upon birth, but it reflected a natural scale of individual talents, abilities and efforts which fairly determined who would pay a wage and who would receive it. Moreover, in the United States, not only «those who get forward do so in consequence of great application and strict economy»¹³⁵, but the absence of aristocratic privileges allowed everyone to follow this path of social rise. To workers protesting and striking against their worsening living conditions, Carey thus explained that the possibility of accumulating was equally opened to everyone, implying that, as a consequence, any failure to pursue it was not to be attributed to structural injustice, but to a lack of individual talent and commitment. Those who had become rich through industry and economy had done so «by the possession of those qualities which will enable you to do the same» and therefore, he concluded, «that course is open to you as to them»¹³⁶. Moreover, if in 1828, Carey had endeavored to broaden the concept of productive labor in the attempt to defuse its politicization, here speculatively tried to widen the concept of capital so as to include not only tools and machines but even skill, in the attempt to blur class distinctions.

«What is capital, and who are the capitalists? Furniture is capital, a loom is capital, a wheelbarrow is capital, a house, a piece of land, a cotton mill, a boat, a sloop, a ship, all are capital. A man who has accumulated a little furniture is a capitalist man. [...] We are almost all capitalists, and the only difference is that some have accumulated more than others»¹³⁷.

Carey thus attempted to hide the class hierarchies that grounded wage labor behind the promise of social mobility and equal opportunities, which could compensate for its dependent and subordinate character by making it only temporary and by legitimating it as the reward of superior efforts. If all workers could become rich and journeymen could become masters, in the United States capital and labor could not be described as constituting two permanently distinct social classes, but only as different stations in the process of accumulation. Nor could wage labor be considered as a form of exploitation carried on by one class at the expense of the other. On the contrary, through «habits of industry and economy», class boundaries could be easily crossed and social hierarchies climbed.

Unfortunately, Carey deplored, far from endeavoring to improve their condition through hard labor, workers were trying to obtain higher wages through strikes and trades'-union organization. In the first place, such attempt was absurd, since «your wages are higher now than were those of your predecessors» while prices had been decreasing, so that «a larger portion goes to the workman

¹³⁵ Franklin, *To the Mechanics of the City and County of Philadelphia - No. 1*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 14, 1836.

¹³⁶ Franklin, *To the Mechanics of Philadelphia - No. 4*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 17, 1836.

¹³⁷ Franklin, *To the Mechanics of the City and County of Philadelphia - No. 6*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 23, 1836.

now than formerly»¹³⁸. Actually, while journeymen cordwainers had complained that, since the foundation of the republic, obtaining a competence had been growing increasingly harder, Carey maintained that «the conveniences and comforts that can now be obtained by the workman are three time as great as the time to which they have referred»¹³⁹. Profits were so low that many employers could do «very little more than live and pay their expenses at present». Therefore, even if employers accepted to grant higher wages, in order to survive they would be forced to increase the price of goods, thus unloading increasing costs upon consumers, that is upon workers themselves, who would have to «pay a higher price for that necessary of life». Moreover, higher wages in one city would «drive business away from this place», causing a lower demand for labor and unemployment¹⁴⁰. In other words, Carey explained, any increase in wages obtained through strikes would be compensated and nullified by market mechanisms regulated by the law of supply and demand. Demanding higher wages through trades'-union organization was not only unreasonable, but also useless.

The only real possibility to obtain permanently higher wages laid instead in an overall growth of production, which would increase capital and the demand for labor: «with every increase in the capital of the community there would be an increase in the comforts and enjoyments of every member of it». Only «increased production» could ensure that «every day sees men rising by dint of industry and economy, from the situation of journeymen to be employers»¹⁴¹. It was, Carey insisted, the «one, and only one way in which your condition can be improved». On the contrary, the trades' union had an inherent tendency «to lessen industry, and thereby to lessen your power of producing»¹⁴², thus lowering wages which, as proved in the *Essay on the Rate of Wages*, depended upon the level of production. Therefore, by driving away capital and by reducing the demand for labor, striking and organizing could do nothing but «produce poverty to you»¹⁴³. Moreover, the trades' union constituted an un-republican threat to the workers' freedom. In fact, in addition to imposing a monetary contribution, it required «that every member shall cease to have a will of his own», forcing the diligent worker «to strike at a time when he is perfectly content with the wages he receives», «to obey to the orders of irresponsible leaders»¹⁴⁴ and to pay «for the support of those

¹³⁸ Franklin, *To the Mechanics of the City and County of Philadelphia - No. 1*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 14, 1836.

¹³⁹ Franklin, *To the Mechanics of Philadelphia - No. 3*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 16, 1836.

¹⁴⁰ Franklin, *To the Mechanics of the City and County of Philadelphia - No. 1*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 14, 1836.

¹⁴¹ Franklin, *To the Mechanics of Philadelphia - No. 3*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 16, 1836.

¹⁴² Franklin, *To the Mechanics of the City and County of Philadelphia - No. 5*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 18, 1836.

¹⁴³ Franklin, *To the Mechanics of the City and County of Philadelphia - No. 6*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 23, 1836.

¹⁴⁴ Franklin, *To the Mechanics of Philadelphia - No. 2*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 15, 1836.

who are too idle to work»¹⁴⁵. This, not wage labor, was in Carey's perspective «slavery of the worst kind, and must be accompanied by wretchedness»¹⁴⁶.

Just like the trades' union, anything that tended to slow down production had to be avoided, such as «the limitation you desire to put upon the number of apprentices to be taken by employers»¹⁴⁷. Journeymen had been demanding such regulation reacting to the decline of the traditional apprenticeship system, with masters increasingly refusing to honor their customary obligations, which included educating apprentices and teaching them the craft, and increasingly using them as a precarious workforce to be employed in the simplest tasks only¹⁴⁸. Instead, according to Carey, it was essential that «every lad at the age of 13, 14, or 15, be put to work», since the quantity of goods thus produced would be «greater than if his father or widowed mother be compelled to support him in idleness»¹⁴⁹. Accordingly, any regulation to the banking system had to be regarded as injurious to all. Since «a bank is a labor-saving machine» facilitating the access to credit, «it tends to render labor productive and to increase the reward of the laborer». Through «such institutions», workers «may all become the owners of capital» and as such banks needed to be allowed to operate without hindrances of any sort¹⁵⁰.

Franklin's articles thus used Carey's theory of wages to attack the claims of organized journeymen, to hide the exploitative character of wage labor and to deny the permanent character of class divisions by affirming the existence of equal opportunities of social rise for all, as well to reject the idea that strikes and trades' union could achieve permanent wage increases. Carey's theory of wages thus proved to be a powerful scientific tool to define an anti-union political discourse that could at the same time legitimize wage labor and promote a buoyant vision of American society as free from fixed class boundaries, thus weakening the labor movement's politicization of class. «*Industry and economy*», Carey-Franklin reiterated concluding his addresses to Philadelphia workers, «are the only true guides to prosperity» and «those who adopt them will reap the benefit to which they are entitled, and will be at a future period the employers of those whose motto is “Unions and Strikes”»¹⁵¹. Workers, then, would eventually find themselves on one side or the other of the wage-labor relation depending on their will to work industriously. They could find themselves rewarded

¹⁴⁵ Franklin, *To the Mechanics of the City and County of Philadelphia - No. 5*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 18, 1836.

¹⁴⁶ Franklin, *To the Mechanics of Philadelphia - No. 4*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 17, 1836.

¹⁴⁷ Franklin, *To the Mechanics of the City and County of Philadelphia - No. 5*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 18, 1836.

¹⁴⁸ Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850*, 5; Laurie, *Artisans into Workers*, 35–37; Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 32–33.

¹⁴⁹ Franklin, *To the Mechanics of the City and County of Philadelphia - No. 5*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 18, 1836.

¹⁵⁰ Franklin, *To the Mechanics of the City and County of Philadelphia - No. 7*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 30, 1836.

¹⁵¹ Franklin, *To the Mechanics of the City and County of Philadelphia - No. 7*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 30, 1836.

with the power to command other men's labor or they could be punished with dependency and subordination. In both cases, Carey implied, power asymmetries merely reflected naturally asymmetric talents and productive efforts.

Such an attack against the trades' union waived from the pages of Philadelphia's most pro-labor newspaper, could not remain unanswered long. Since the end of March 1836, in fact, another anonymous writer, «Sherman», probably John Ferral¹⁵², endeavored to defend the trades' union against the accusations Franklin and others had moved against it. First, he started, it was «their depressed state as a portion of the body politic» that had led journeymen to organize since 1827. As a matter of fact, contrary to what Carey had stated, in the previous decade «Houses, Lands, Bread studs, and every other article of domestic consumption were enhanced in price», while «the prices of labor remained stationary, and indeed in many instances had diminished». This, together with the introduction of machinery, had forced them to work «more time», causing «in fact a reduction of the wages of labor»¹⁵³. Against all of this, journeymen had reacted by organizing: «how then can it be expected that journeymen will remain silent and inactive when all classes are striking against them. We have been “struck” to the ground by avarice and extortion, and no means left now but to “strike” back»¹⁵⁴. Trade societies and the trades' union had therefore the immediate goals of preventing further wage reductions and of trying to increase them.

More broadly, however, they aspired, first, «to break down the distinction which was assumed by one class of mechanics over another» in the belief that «no one who worked was more than a laborer, nor less than a man». Second, «to create a unity of feeling and interest between the Journeymen of all trades». Third, «to annihilate that *kingly supremacy* which in too many cases the veriest *botch* at his trade assumes to himself the very moment he becomes a “master mechanic”». Finally, to «improve the moral and intellectual condition of all mechanics and laborers, and make them in practice what they are now only in theory, free and independent citizen». Against employers «believing themselves to be a superior cast», journeymen strived «to elevate themselves in the scale of society»¹⁵⁵. It was, in other words, a full-fledged, republican attack against the class hierarchies that, with the affirmation of capitalism, had come to dominate American society and artisanal workplaces, reintroducing elements of «monarchical despotism» and hollowing out republican

¹⁵² In the first article, Sherman wrote that in October 1833 he had contributed to the appointment of a committee «to take measures in conjunction with committees from other trades to form a General Trades' Union» (Sherman, *To the Mechanics and Workingmen of Philadelphia - No. 1*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 31, 1836). In Fall 1833, John Ferral had made the first attempt to organize factory workers in Philadelphia which would lead to the creation of the G.T.U. in 1834. See, among others: Pessen, *Most Uncommon Jacksonians*, 84.

¹⁵³ Sherman, *To the Mechanics and Workingmen of Philadelphia - No. 1*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 31, 1836.

¹⁵⁴ Sherman, *To the Mechanics and Workingmen of Philadelphia - No. 3*, «The Pennsylvanian», April 4, 1836.

¹⁵⁵ Sherman, *To the Mechanics and Workingmen of Philadelphia - No. 1*, «The Pennsylvanian», March 31, 1836.

citizenship. Far from inducing men to drunkenness, causing disorders, coercing workers or being foreign in its origins, as the accusations went on, the trades' union had engaged a battle to reaffirm republican equality.

Many had accused the trades' union of destroying the regularity of contracts, Sherman reported. However, «the advantages of contracts have always been derived by one party, the journeymen having never any part or lot in their formation», while at the same time «no contract embracing labor, can be fulfilled without them». The wage-labor contract, in other words, hid an asymmetric power relationship that prevented workers to have any influence upon its terms and that allowed employers «to command the services of the journeymen [...] upon such terms as will permit him to realize considerable profit». Therefore, Sherman derived attacking Carey's discourse on social mobility, wage labor established an exploitative exchange that allowed some to get richer at the expense of all others: «one man it is true becomes rich and influential - but hundreds are impoverished and degraded»¹⁵⁶. In 1827, William Heighton had similarly attacked the masters depiction of equal opportunities as «a wilful misrepresentation» arguing that accumulation was only possible through the «legalized extortion» of the labor produced by the working classes, who «have none to accumulate from»¹⁵⁷. Therefore, Heighton had concluded, «every man who accumulates or acquires any of the means of happiness, does it at the cost of his fellows; and every man who rises at all (particularly under our commercial arrangements) rises either through the downfall, or to the manifest injury of others»¹⁵⁸.

To prevent this from happening, Sherman continued, the journeyman needed to be «consulted» upon the terms of his contract, that is upon the level of his wage. It was not only his interest, but his right: «his birthright is freedom, and if his labor, the only disposable commodity he has, is to be bartered away to enrich others while it impoverishes him, he is the veriest slave in existence, having the semblance of freedom, but none of the reality»¹⁵⁹. The right to control the fruits of labor and to fix its price ought to be the first and most fundamental right ensured by republican citizenship, without which freedom could be nothing but a mere shadow, Sherman explained, spelling out the journeymen's radically egalitarian interpretation of republicanism. On the contrary, such right had been increasingly denied by the growing class «distinctions» that had come to

¹⁵⁶ Sherman, *To the Mechanics and Workingmen of Philadelphia* - No. 3, «The Pennsylvanian», April 4, 1836.

¹⁵⁷ «There are hundreds of sober industrious men, who seek employment for weeks before they obtain it. How can such men obtain a comfortable living at all times, unless they obtain it on credit? It is true that some are so fortunate as to obtain constant employment, but their pay for the most part, is no more than sufficient for their subsistence». William Heighton, *An Address, Delivered Before the Mechanics and Working Classes Generally, by the Unlettered Mechanic* (Philadelphia: Office of the Mechanics' Gazette, 1827), 5, 7.

¹⁵⁸ Heighton, *An Address to the Members of Trade Societies*, 41.

¹⁵⁹ Sherman, *To the Mechanics and Workingmen of Philadelphia* - No. 3, «The Pennsylvanian», April 4, 1836.

permeate American workplaces. As a consequence, Sherman noticed, «the term “*Employer*” is confounded, and made synonymous with “*Master*”», someone that did not just direct and organize the work of others, but that «can *command* an implicit obedience to all his decrees, whether right or wrong». However, he warned, «if a tyrannical rule obtains in one single shop, all the other employers would claim the same prerogative». The trades’ union thus aimed to counter class distinctions as incompatible with a republican, and therefore egalitarian, form of government.

«What distinctions does the government of this country recognize? Under what law or laws do one class of citizens claim preeminence above another? Is the *constitution* which prohibits the granting of *titles* or *special privileges*, to be considered a mere piece of parchment never to be regarded? Or is it the Declaration “*that all men are created equal*”, an idle mockery? [...] I am aware of no *distinctions* [...] that *ought* to exist, and I am gully assured, from present appearances, that so far as the mechanics are concerned – none *shall* exist. If it is meant that the Trades’ Union will annihilate the *distinctions* between “*master*” and *men* – between *tyrant* and *slave* – between *oppressor* and *oppressed*, then indeed are such conclusions correct»¹⁶⁰.

According to Sherman, then, the fight for republican equality thus inevitably coincided with the fight against an increasingly classed and hierarchical society. The trades’ union, prompting its members «to think, speak and act as becomes *freemen*» would therefore prove «irresistible», not only in the journeymen’s cause, but «in the cause of human emancipation», or more precisely «of the emancipation of all who labor, from the thralldom of monied capital»¹⁶¹. The only distinctions that could be respected, Sherman added, were those deriving from «superior wisdom and virtue», while money had to be rejected as a criterion of social respectability: «the supremacy which dollar and cents alone confer, although we may be ruled for a time by its influence, can never be acknowledged»¹⁶². In a republican government, there could be no place for the «supremacy» brought by class hierarchies. Countering Carey’s anti-labor public discourse, Sherman had thus clearly set out the terms of the political and ideological clash around class and republicanism that was shaking Philadelphia in the mid-1830s. The clash between the denunciation of an increasingly classed and hierarchical society and the depiction of a society devoid of permanent boundaries, which overlapped with the clash between a radically egalitarian republicanism fostered by the journeymen’s movement and the capitalist republicanism developed by masters and political economists. It was this clash that decisively shaped Carey’s later and more systematic economic thought, which cannot be understood without grasping its anti-labor origins.

¹⁶⁰ Sherman, *To the Mechanics and Workingmen of Philadelphia - No. 4*, «The Pennsylvanian», April 5, 1836.

¹⁶¹ Sherman, *To the Mechanics and Workingmen of Philadelphia - No. 4*, «The Pennsylvanian», April 5, 1836.

¹⁶² Sherman, *To the Mechanics and Workingmen of Philadelphia - No. 4*, «The Pennsylvanian», April 5, 1836.

2. The Political Economy of Improvement and the Classless Society (1837-1840)

2.1. Value, Improvement and the Harmony of Interests

In the following years, Carey felt the urge to further widen and systematize his reflection. In 1836, he concluded and printed *The Harmony of Nature*, a four-hundred pages treatise where he expanded his previous arguments through a more in-depth engagement with British economists¹⁶³. The result, however, did not satisfy Carey, up to the point of limiting its circulation¹⁶⁴. The process of revision culminated with the three-volumes *Principles of Political Economy*, published between 1837 and 1840¹⁶⁵, which soon became one of the most important texts in early-nineteenth-century American economic thought¹⁶⁶. There, criticizing Ricardo and Malthus, Carey developed a theory of value that could ground within natural economic laws his theses on constantly rising wages as well as his arguments on the harmony between social interests. By rejecting the British economists' pessimistic outlook, he thus countered the labor movement's radical discourse through a political economy that could scientifically ground his vision of a classless society. After his first unripe attempts, forged in the middle of the fight, Carey's response to the Philadelphia labor movement and its politics of class was now fully placed upon the method of political economy as a science aimed at identifying the natural laws of production and consumption. When the *Principles of Political Economy* came out in the second half of the 1830s, however, the economic, social and political landscape had profoundly changed. The financial panic of 1837, bringing widespread unemployment, had caused an abrupt slowdown in workers' mobilization. Employers had immediately seized the opportunity to withdraw previous concessions on wage rates and hours, successfully attempting, in many cases, at dismantling union membership. By the end of the year, with workers increasingly pressed by economic crisis, the Philadelphia G.T.U., as well as several unions throughout the North, had suffered a decisive blow to its organizational capacity¹⁶⁷. In this respect, Carey's treatise, then, as well as other contemporary economic writings, also reflected the employers', industrialists' and masters' renewed confidence in front of a labor movement in disarray¹⁶⁸.

¹⁶³ Henry Charles Carey, *The Harmony of Nature* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1836).

¹⁶⁴ One of the few remaining copies is held within the *Miscellaneous Works of Henry C. Carey* at the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts at the University of Pennsylvania, where I could consult it.

¹⁶⁵ Henry Charles Carey, *Principles of Political Economy* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1837-1840).

¹⁶⁶ Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity*, 266.

¹⁶⁷ Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850*, 103; Laurie, *Artisans into Workers*, 214–15. On the effect of the panic on the New York labor movement, see: Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 299–325. For a broader picture: Alasdair Roberts, *America's first Great Depression: Economic Crisis and Political Disorder after the Panic of 1837* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012); Jessica M. Lepler, *The Many Panics of 1837: People, Politics, and the Creation of a Transatlantic Financial Crisis* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹⁶⁸ Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 302. On Potter's article, see also: Burke, *The Conundrum of Class*, 112–15.

Concluding the *Essay on the Rate of Wages*, Carey had noted that capital's permanent capacity to outpace population was essentially due to man's «desire of bettering his condition»¹⁶⁹, which pushed him to constantly increase his productive efforts. Such conclusion marked the *Principles of Political Economy's*, starting point. In fact, the «elementary proposition» of Carey's system, which identified its foundational economic law, recited that «man desires to maintain and to improve his condition»¹⁷⁰. As he had written in *The Harmony of Nature*, improvement was the «predominant desire of man», without which he would be «but a degree above the animal who eats, sleeps, reproduces himself, and dies»¹⁷¹. It was precisely this refusal of subsistence that drove men both towards individual economic initiative and towards the creation of social ties for productive purposes. If improvement was the specific desire of man, labor constituted his specific activity, since he could obtain the former only «by employing his time and his talents in the production of those commodities which are useful or agreeable to him and which constitute wealth»¹⁷². Moving from this premise, Carey rethought the very status of political economy as a science. Against those who had understood it as the science of wealth, like Senior, of values, like McCulloch, or of exchanges, like Richard Whately, Carey defined political economy as the science of improvement, with the task of tracing «the laws of those phenomena of society which arise out of the desire of mankind to maintain and to improve their condition»¹⁷³. The task of the political economist, then, «like that of the hydrographer», was to chart man's road towards improvement, describing the natural laws of production and distribution that made it possible and the «disturbing causes» that could interfere with it¹⁷⁴.

In order to do so, Carey had first to clear the field from the erroneous understandings of the relationship between capital and population brought forward by Malthus's principle of population and Ricardo's rent theory, which, taken together, had described natural scarcity, subsistence-level wages and class conflict as inescapable economic destinies. In countering them, moreover, he did not simply deny their theories' applicability to specifically American conditions, as others had tried to do¹⁷⁵, but he aimed to prove their overall fallacy in order to depict an economy of abundance, or, as later economists would have put it, a «theory of prosperity»¹⁷⁶. Only a full rebuttal of the

¹⁶⁹ Carey, *Essay on the Rate of Wages*, 243.

¹⁷⁰ Henry Charles Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Part the First: Of the Laws of the Production and Distribution of Wealth* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1837), 1.

¹⁷¹ Carey, *The Harmony of Nature*, 270.

¹⁷² Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. I*, XI–XII.

¹⁷³ Carey, X–XI; Henry Charles Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Part the Second: Of the Causes Which Retard Increase in the Production of Wealth, and Improvement in the Physical and Moral Condition of Man* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1838), 13.

¹⁷⁴ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. I*, XII.

¹⁷⁵ Calvo, *The Emergence of Capitalism in Early America*, 75–102.

¹⁷⁶ Simon Patten, *The Theory of Prosperity* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1902).

notion of natural scarcity, Carey believed, could debase the arguments advanced by the advocates of social conflict¹⁷⁷.

Through the principle of diminishing returns, Ricardo had described a general tendency, with the growth of population, to a decrease in labor productivity, on the one hand because of the limited availability of land and on the other because of its naturally limited fertility. Not only men gradually passed on to cultivate lands of lower quality in order to satisfy the increasing demand for food of an increasing population, but even the subsequent applications of labor on fertile lands yielded decreasing results¹⁷⁸. It was this agronomic principle that gave rise to a differential rent, since the owners of fertile lands could obtain from capitalists a higher price for the use of the «original and indestructible powers of the soil»¹⁷⁹. To Ricardo, with the further growth of population and extension of cultivation, increasing rents would determine a tendential fall in the rate of agricultural profit, and therefore in the general rate of profit. Moving from the observation of settlement patterns in the American West, Carey started to doubt Ricardo's conclusion, noting that there, «the soils first cultivated are very frequently not those of highest fertility». The richest soils, being covered with trees or swamps, were often «not those most sought after» at the beginning, as «the settler prefers that which is somewhat inferior, but which is clear and ready for cultivation»¹⁸⁰. According to Carey's reasoning, then, the first lands to be cultivated were in many cases those free of obstacles, but also the most arid, since nothing had grown spontaneously upon them. For this reason, «the history of all early settlements is one of great wretchedness and discomfort»¹⁸¹. Only later, and only after having cleared them thanks to the increasing availability of capital and of infrastructures such as canals and railroads, could the most fertile and yet «valueless» lands be cultivated. At the same time, having improved their cultivation techniques, they could also obtain more from the already cultivated land.

Consequently, Carey noted, land possessed no natural productivity of its own that could be made profitable without the aid of capital. Even when a tract of land developed up to the point of becoming home to a flourishing agricultural and manufacturing production, he explained, «the natural agent has nothing that it did not possess forty, or four hundred, years before, but capital

¹⁷⁷ Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy*, 83.

¹⁷⁸ David Ricardo, *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* [1817] (London: Dent & Sons, 1973), 35–37. On Ricardo, see: Claudio Napoleoni, *Smith Ricardo Marx. Considerazioni sulla storia del pensiero economico*, 2nd ed. (Torino: Boringhieri, 1973), 85–129; Maurice Dobb, *Storia del pensiero economico: teorie del valore e della distribuzione da Adam Smith ad oggi* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1974), 63–94; Harry Landreth and David Colander, *Storia del pensiero economico* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996), 180–90; Giorgio Lunghini, *Confitto crisi incertezza. La teoria economica dominante e le teorie alternative* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2012).

¹⁷⁹ Ricardo, *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, 33.

¹⁸⁰ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. I*, 38.

¹⁸¹ Carey, 49.

has rendered its powers productive»¹⁸². Thus, what Ricardo had called «advantages of situation» were therefore «dependant for their value wholly upon the application of labour and capital, and we cannot attribute to them the payment of rent»¹⁸³. If land did not possess natural properties, then, to Carey it had to be regarded not as a specific productive factor, but as a form of capital no different from others, acquiring value only to the extent that capital and labor transformed it¹⁸⁴. In this perspective, rent was therefore nothing but a form of profit, paid «for the use of capital invested in the property»¹⁸⁵ and for the transformation of land into «a marketable commodity»¹⁸⁶. If other post-Ricardian economists like MacCulloch had already downplayed the relevance of rent in their economic thought, Carey thus banished it entirely as part of his denial of natural scarcity¹⁸⁷.

The critique to Ricardo's theory of rent, which he would further strengthen and generalize in the following decade, thus substantiated Carey's recognition of the unlimited productive potential of the earth, which since the *Essay on the Rate of Wages* had led him to attack the principle of population. In fact, because of its quantitative abundance in the United States, but most crucially because of the possibility of increasing agricultural returns, to Carey land could «be said to exist in boundless quantity». Just as air and water (and capital), land had thus to be considered a *de facto* unlimited good: «we possess no means of measuring the extent of its powers»¹⁸⁸. Malthus had assumed an insurmountable imbalance between the possibilities of agricultural production and the geometrical increase of population, describing a social mechanism that stabilized real wages at the level of subsistence. «No possible form of society», Malthus had written, «could prevent the almost constant action of misery, upon a great part of mankind»¹⁸⁹. Instead, Carey countered, understanding the true relationship between the productive powers of the earth and the reproductive powers of man could allow to see that improvements in the condition of the working

¹⁸² Carey, 42.

¹⁸³ Carey, 46.

¹⁸⁴ «If the views we have thus submitted are correct, landed property must be subject to the same laws which govern the accumulated product of labour invested in the form of axes, ploughs, and other implements» Carey, 48.

¹⁸⁵ Carey, *The Harmony of Nature*, 39.

¹⁸⁶ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. I*, 48.

¹⁸⁷ John R. Turner, *The Ricardian Rent Theory in Early American Economics* (New York: The New York University Press, 1921), 118; Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity*, 267.

¹⁸⁸ Carey, *The Harmony of Nature*, 61.

¹⁸⁹ Thomas R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population and Other Writings* [1798] (London: Penguin Random House, 2015), 24. On Malthus, see also: Samuel Hollander, *The Economics of Thomas Robert Malthus* (Toronto-Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Jacopo Bonasera, «Una scienza plausibile per un oggetto sfuggente. Popolazione, società e governo nel pensiero politico Di T. R. Malthus» (PhD Dissertation, Bologna, Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna, 2022).

classes were not only possible, but inevitable and that existence of poverty, in other words, could not be attributed to the earth's inability to meet the growing population's demand¹⁹⁰.

«When we cast our eyes over the surface of the globe, and see how large is the portion that is yet *totally unoccupied* [...] - that twice, or thrice, ten, or twenty, or fifty times the population could be supported, even with our present agricultural knowledge, on land that is now partially cultivated - and that there is a great extension of production as science is brought to the aid of the agriculturist, we cannot hesitate to admit that the productive power of land exists in *measureless* quantity»¹⁹¹.

Scarcity and poverty, then, were not natural, nor imputable to God, but merely an artificial product of men and their institutions. On the contrary, «“God hath made man upright”» and every obstacle to prosperity could be traced back to human «inventions»¹⁹². Moreover, Carey continued, in addition to underestimating the productive powers of the earth, Malthus had not grasped the productive potential of population itself, which, by multiplying the possibilities of cooperation, could fuel the overall production. Demographic growth did not only involve an increase in consumers, but also and most crucially an increase in producers. If such was the case, Carey later concluded, «we may safely leave it to future generations to settle the questions as to when population will press upon subsistence»¹⁹³. Furthermore, increasing returns and growing cooperation marked the possibility that the growth of production could permanently exceed the increase of population, thus causing a slow but certain increase of wage levels. The rejection of Ricardo and Malthus thus allowed Carey to more firmly ground his claim that capital had an innate tendency to outpace population and that therefore the fundamental laws of nature depicted an economy of abundance and prosperity¹⁹⁴. It was this conclusion that grounded Carey's theory of value, which allowed him to show not only how the working classes' condition could be bettered on a structural level, but also how individuals could pursue a path of improvement through labor.

Following a common *topos* of contemporary economic literature¹⁹⁵, Carey started with the hypothesis of a Robinsonian individual «thrown upon and sole occupant of an island, or of an extensive body of land»¹⁹⁶. The starting hypothesis, however, could not hold long, since only by

¹⁹⁰ «There can be no doubt that man may increase in a geometrical ratio; as little can there be that there is great poverty; but it does not follow that the latter is the result of inability of the earth to meet any demands that may be made upon it». Carey, *The Harmony of Nature*, 1–2.

¹⁹¹ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. I*, 130.

¹⁹² Carey, XVI.

¹⁹³ Henry Charles Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Part the Third: Of the Causes which Retard Increase in the Numbers of Mankind. Part the Fourth: Of the Causes which Retard Improvement in the Political Condition of Man* (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1840), 62.

¹⁹⁴ Carey, *Essay on the Rate of Wages*, 81.

¹⁹⁵ «Political economists are fond of Robinson Crusoe stories». Marx, *Capital. Volume One*, 1976, 169.

¹⁹⁶ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. I*, 7.

combining his own work with that of others could the individual emerge from subsistence. As a matter of fact, «the desire of improving his condition impels man to desire the aid and cooperation of his fellow men»¹⁹⁷ and to establish relationships of exchange. By cooperating, on the one hand the individual would begin to attribute values to things, calculating them through their cost of production: «by the quantity of labour which he has been obliged to give *in exchange* for them»¹⁹⁸. On the other, individuals would develop tools, such as axes or spades, thus obtaining «the aid of *capital*, the product of previous labour»¹⁹⁹. The introduction of capital, Carey argued, produced a change in the value of all existing commodities, which would be exchanged no more for the amount of labor necessary to produce them in the past, but for that necessary to produce them in the present considering the existing availability of instruments. Commodities would thus exchange according to their cost of reproduction: «the cost of *production* would no longer be the measure of value, the cost at which they could be *reproduced* having fallen. Value would be estimated by the cost of production under existing circumstances»²⁰⁰. The value of a commodity would no longer be measured through the quantity of labor contained within it, but through the quantity of labor hypothetically necessary to recreate given a certain level of technical capacities: «not by quantity alone, but by *quantity and quality of labour*»²⁰¹. This meant relocating the measurement of value from past actions to future expectations and, in a certain measure, from producers to consumers. In this respect, Carey's cost-of-reproduction theory of value marked a shift from the classical economists' labor theory of value towards a "utility" theory of value²⁰², particularly according to the interpretation offered by the Italian economist Francesco Ferrara²⁰³. By fostering the productivity of labor, the «constant improvement in the machinery of production»²⁰⁴ would thus trigger a double dynamic of value, gradually lessening the value of commodities in terms of labor, while simultaneously increasing the value of labor in terms of the commodities it could produce.

To Carey, the changing relation between labor value and commodity value, while allowing economic development, had a broader social consequence, as it involved an alteration of the power relation between capital and labour. Since capital was itself a commodity, the amelioration of

¹⁹⁷ Carey, 340.

¹⁹⁸ Labor was therefore to Carey «the *nature and measure* of value». Carey, 8.

¹⁹⁹ Carey, 10.

²⁰⁰ Carey, 11.

²⁰¹ Carey, 14.

²⁰² Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy*, 84.

²⁰³ In 1853, Ferrara translated in Italian, published and commented in a lengthy introduction Carey's *Principles of Political Economy* within the *Biblioteca dell'Economista* which he edited in the central decades of the nineteenth century: Henry Charles Carey, *Principii d'Economia Politica*, ed. Francesco Ferrara, vol. XIII, Biblioteca dell'Economista. Prima Serie (Torino: Cugini Pompa e Comp. Editori-Librari, 1853). On Ferrara, see: Riccardo Faucci, *L'economista scomodo. vita e opere di Francesco Ferrara* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1995); Piero Barucci, "Francesco Ferrara e la Biblioteca dell'economista," *Il pensiero economico italiano* XVII, no. 1 (2009).

²⁰⁴ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. I*, 15.

productive techniques would reduce its value in terms of labor, since less and less labor would be needed to reproduce it. As a consequence, according to Carey, the owner of this devalued capital could claim, in exchange for its use, a smaller share of the product of labor²⁰⁵. Labor's increasing value in terms of capital, thus, granted by its increasing productivity, thus allowed the worker not only to consume more, because of the decreasing value of commodities, not only to appropriate a larger share of the product, but, for the same reason, to have easier access to the ownership of capital (both machines and land). Thence, the laborer could realize the «predominant desire» of improvement that had initially driven him to work, by leaving his class and transfiguring into a capitalist. Therefore, the dynamic of value triggered by the growing productivity of labor, by increasing returns and by growing cooperation could therefore allow social mobility and the crossing of class boundaries for industrious and diligent workers. To Carey, then, as has been noted, property relations did not pre-exist and structure the functioning of economic exchange, but rather market relations determined the distribution of property relations and therefore class distinctions²⁰⁶. Class structure could thus appear as a result of relations of exchange and cooperation among individuals.

«With the increase of population and of capital, and with the extension of cultivation, there is a steady improvement in the condition of both labourer and capitalist. That the former, while enjoying a constantly increasing measure of the comforts and conveniences of life, experiences a constantly increasing facility in becoming himself a capitalist, [...] in return for the industry, prudence, and integrity which enabled him to become so»²⁰⁷.

At the same time, to Carey, the social rise of the worker would not be attended with a corresponding impoverishment of the capitalist. Overall wealth, in fact, would still grow at such a pace so as to guarantee increasing profits to the capitalist: «although the *proportion* of the capitalist is constantly diminishing with the increased productiveness of labour», Carey explained, «this diminished share gives him a constantly increasing *quantity* of commodities, enabling him to increase his consumption, while he rapidly increases his capital»²⁰⁸. In other words, the fall in the rate of profit would nonetheless correspond to an increase in absolute profits. The interests of capitalist and worker would thus be «in perfect harmony with each other», as both would derive advantage

²⁰⁵ «Improvement in the machinery by which production is aided, is attended not only by a reduction in the labour value of previously existing capital but by a diminution in the proportion of the product of labour that can be demanded in return for permitting it to be used». Carey, 16.

²⁰⁶ Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy*, 80–86.

²⁰⁷ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. I*, 142.

²⁰⁸ Carey, 339.

«from every measure that tends to facilitate the growth of capital, and to render labour productive, while every measure that tends to produce the opposite effect is injurious to both»²⁰⁹.

Thus, Carey did not limit himself to argue that the interest of the laborer and that of the capitalist were compatible, or at least not conflicting, as American political and economic thought had done until then²¹⁰. Instead, he went as far as to contest that those interests could actually be considered as separate, attacking the very notion of society's permanent division into classes. If, because of the dynamic of values and of his own industry, the worker could turn into a capitalist, their interest could not be seen as distinct. The possibility of individual improvement, in other terms, did not simply mean, against Malthus, that the condition of laborers could somehow ameliorate, but that no one was destined to be a laborer for life. While the *Essay on the Rate of Wages* had still described the possibility of improvement for laborers as a class, in the *Principles of Political Economy* Carey presented individual improvement as proof of the fluid, temporary and easily crossable character of its class boundaries. Or, in other words, by abstracting class relations from relations of property²¹¹ in the context of a natural economic abundance that naturally assured increasing returns and technological innovation, Carey could present the United States as a fundamentally classless society.

A redefinition of economic concepts helped in implicitly removing every theoretical ground for class distinctions. Reproposing the conceptual strategies already deployed in his articles as «Franklin», on the one hand Carey broadened the meaning of productive labor so as to include all those who contributed, in any capacity, to the process of production and exchange of goods, thus contesting the manual laborers' claim of a monopoly of social utility²¹². If producing meant causing a transformation of form or place of existing matter, «all who are engaged in occasioning that alteration are *producers*»²¹³. On the other hand, Carey symmetrically broadened the concept of capital to encompass «*all articles possessing exchangeable value, the accumulated results of past labour*»²¹⁴. As such, not only land and all instruments of production, but even the worker's «skill» gained through experience had to be considered as a form of capital. «There are daily examples of this fact», he had written in *Essay on the Rate of Wages*, «that skill in any department of business is deemed equivalent

²⁰⁹ Carey, 339.

²¹⁰ Burke, *The Conundrum of Class*, 52.

²¹¹ Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy*, 87.

²¹² Burke, *The Conundrum of Class*, 108–10.

²¹³ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. I*, 3.

²¹⁴ Carey, 294.

to capital»²¹⁵, in an anticipation of the much later concept of human capital²¹⁶. Capitalists were therefore producers on the same footing of workers, while workers were to some extent capitalists themselves. Moreover, this convergence between the two figures allowed Carey to even conflate the remunerations of what classical economists had treated as different factors of production. In fact, if even manual labor could be regarded as the use of the individual's capital of skill and experience, thus the wages of such labor were nothing but a different form of profit. In addition to equating rents and profits, then, Carey could argue that, between profits and wages as well «the only difference is in the degree of compensation», since «both are the reward of risk to be incurred, and differ only in amount»²¹⁷. Both profits and wages, then, could be said to be a reward of labor, the former for the use «of the accumulated labour of past times» and the latter for the use of «present labour», which meant that «the first is paid *for the aid of things*, and the last for *the service of men*»²¹⁸.

At the same time, and conversely, both could be equally said to be a reward of capital, and precisely a form of «interest» upon credit, paid for the borrowing of machines and tools, in the case of profits, and for the borrowing of skill, in the case of wages²¹⁹. Hiding the power differentials that made them possible, labor relations could thus be presented as relations of exchange and borrowing between autonomous producers which stood upon the same footing on the market. Thus, Carey's economic science programmatically blurred class boundaries, not only by explicitly theorizing a process of equalization and a «law of distribution», as he would later call it²²⁰, rooted in the dynamic of value, but also implicitly in the way it deployed economic concepts, thus turning capitalist and laborer into largely overlapping figures and denying that they could be distinguished, albeit temporarily²²¹. More precisely, capitalists and laborer thus appeared as different phases of the same path of individual improvement within a classless society in which each individual could accumulate by deploying his own individual capital made up of skills, in which social positions reflected a scale

²¹⁵ Carey, *Essay on the Rate of Wages*, 22.

²¹⁶ Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy*, 86; James L. Huston, *Securing the Fruits of Labor: The American Concept of Wealth Distribution, 1765-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 179–80.

²¹⁷ Carey, *The Harmony of Nature*, 249–50.

²¹⁸ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. I*, 336.

²¹⁹ «The owner of the rail road, or of the ship, or of the wagon, *lends* his capital to the man who wishes his commodities transported to market, and the labour of the latter is thereby rendered more productive, or is improved in its quality. For the use of the capital so lent he receives a portion of the commodities transported, or the value in money of that portion. The owner of a house lends it to another, and receives payment for its use, in the form of rent - as does the owner of a farm from a third who desires to cultivate it. The owner of woollen or cotton machinery lends it to the workman, who leaves in the hands of the proprietor a certain proportion of the product, as compensation for its use; or the owner agrees to take the whole product and to pay him for his share, in money, what are termed *wages*». Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. II*, 231.

²²⁰ Henry Charles Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Volume I* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1858), VI.

²²¹ Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity*, 264.

of merit and talent and in which, therefore, social conflict and the politics of class simply had no reason to exist. Not only a harmony of class interests, then, but their fundamental unity.

However, the unfolding of such vision of economic abundance and social harmony required precise institutional preconditions, such as the «security of persons and property» and, most crucially, the guarantee of «perfect freedom in the employment of capital». In fact, as Carey explained in his pages on banks and corporations in the second volume of the *Principles of Political Economy* and in a pamphlet on the credit system published in the aftermath of the Panic of 1837²²², only the existence of an absolute right to borrow, lend and invest capital, as well as to associate for economic purposes could lay the ground for the individual enterprise and industry required to successfully follow a path of accumulation and individual improvement. To Carey, guaranteeing such right meant on the one hand opening up the possibility of creating banks, with the establishment of a free-banking system. In his perspective, even after the abolition of the Second Bank of the United States, an excessive amount of banking regulations was trammeling opportunities of investment and causing the «unsteadiness» that had been at the roots of the financial crisis of 1837²²³. In fact, since «trade in money is like all other trades», it had to be left to itself just like the trade of all other commodities. Accordingly, despite the credit system constituted a fundamental infrastructure for the functioning of the market, the government should have abstained from regulating the number, the size and the operations of banks, or «money shops», which would have spontaneously adjusted according to the needs of production²²⁴.

On the other hand, guaranteeing freedom in the employment of capital meant liberalizing the possibility of creating corporations aimed at private economic profit through general acts of incorporation. Until then, the right to associate for economic purposes had been limited by the need to obtain «monopolies» or «special charters» by legislative assemblies, and only to the extent

²²² *The Credit System in France, Great Britain and the United States* was published in 1838 with the goal of defending the conduct of U.S. banks during the financial crisis. To Carey, banks had been unjustly made into «scape-goats» responsible for the financial crisis, but in his perspective it was the Bank of England and the U.S. Treasury, as well as President Jackson's monetary and banking policies, that had to be blamed for the eruption of the panic. Henry Charles Carey, *The Credit System in France, Great Britain, and the United States* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1838), 108–10. Kaplan, *Henry Charles Carey*, 43–44.

²²³ Carey, *The Credit System in France, Great Britain, and the United States*, 130; Henry Charles Carey, *Answers to the Questions: What Constitutes Currency? What Are the Causes of Unsteadiness of the Currency? And What Is the Remedy?* (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1840), 28.

²²⁴ «Money is used for facilitating exchanges. So are wagons. When the facilities of intercourse are small, a large quantity of money is required for performing a small amount of exchanges. When the roads are bad many wagons are required for transporting a small quantity of commodities. As the facilities of intercourse are increased - as shops for dealing in money increase in number - there is a constant decrease in the quantity of money required, attended with a constant increase in the quantity of exchanges to be performed; and as turnpikes and rail roads appear, there is a constant decrease in the quantity of wagons employed in transportation, and an equally constant increase in the quantity of merchandise transported». Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. II*, 234–35.

that the enterprise served some kind of public purpose or service²²⁵. To Carey, however, such «system of monopoly, restriction and exclusion» violated the security of property, since it prevented individuals from using it «in the manner they deemed most advantageous». In this perspective, the approval of acts of general incorporation would simply be «*re-grants of a right* the exercise of which has been forbidden for purposes of monopoly». Preferably, Carey continued, such laws should also guarantee respect for the principle of «limited liability», according to which every investor would be bound to contribute «his share, and his share only», thus limiting individual risks and incentivizing investments²²⁶. This way, legislatures would finally recognize «the right possessed by every man of seeking in his own way the means of improving his condition» and thus a perfect freedom in the employment of capital, which, Carey stressed, «tends to benefit both labourer and capitalist, and is therefore dictated by an enlightened self-interest»²²⁷. As a matter of fact, since the following decade, pushed by the need to concentrate capital in an economic environment in which there were not yet sufficient assets to finance the most expensive investments, states would start to pass general incorporation laws, removing the public purpose of corporations as a requirement for their formation and paving the way for the possibility of creating private enterprises solely aimed at making a profit²²⁸.

Carey thus identified the liberalization of the banking system and of limited-liability corporations as necessary conditions for a generalization and democratization of investment opportunities that could undergird individual improvement in a classless society. In fact, only through these two instrument, it would have been possible to establish and maintain a credit system, like that of New England, in which even «small amounts of capital», that would normally remain «idle and unproductive», could be profitably invested or lent for financing economic enterprises, while assuring interest rates to their owners. Only this way, even workers, servants and women to Carey could «become stockholders» and associate with wealthy capitalists in the pursuit of one common pursuit²²⁹. Within such system, capital could be «accumulated by slow degrees and in small quantities» by laborers and mechanics, who placed in the savings' banks their «weekly earnings of one, one, two, or three dollars, for safe-keeping, until he shall be able to invest it more advantageously, having amassed a capital of one, two, or three hundred dollars». Then, they would

²²⁵ Pauline Maier, «The Revolutionary Origins of the American Corporation,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (January 1993).

²²⁶ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. II*, 250.

²²⁷ Carey, 255–57.

²²⁸ «Incorporating the Republic: The Corporation in Antebellum Political Culture,” *Harvard Law Review* 102, no. 8 (June 1989): 1883–1903; Richard E. Wright, «Capitalism and the Rise of the Corporation Nation,” in *Capitalism Takes Command: The Social Transformation of Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Michael Zakim and Gary J. Kornblith (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 146–68; Jonathan Levy, *Ages of American Capitalism: A History of the United States* (New York: Random House, 2021), 123–25.

²²⁹ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. II*, 261–62.

be able to «purchase a share or shares of stock, while waiting to accumulate the means of purchasing a house or farm, or of increasing the extent of their operations» up to the point when they become themselves «capitalists», having «accumulated a certain sum» and being finally able «of managing their own business»²³⁰.

The right to freely invest through banks and corporations would thus spread the opportunities of accumulation, resulting for both capitalists and workers «in a constant increase of reward for their time, their talents, and their capital». It was impossible, Carey concluded, «to conceive of a system more purely democratic»²³¹. Thus, Carey envisioned how could individual improvement concretely take place, thanks to a generalization of the access to credit and investment that allowed for widespread, small-scale opportunities of accumulation, but also for the inclusion in the process of valorization even of those capitals normally too small to be invested. In his vision, banks and corporations represented the fundamental economic institutions of a society without class boundaries, in that they could democratize accumulation and foster upward mobility, thus preventing the emergence of class struggle, while at the same time extending the reach and penetration of market relations. However, this vision of a democracy of capital as the foundation of a classless society, being forged out of Carey's scientific attempt to delegitimize social conflict, still concealed and justified the persistence of class, sexual and racial hierarchies for those who could not follow the path of individual improvement.

2.2. Wage Labor and Social Hierarchies in the Classless Society

First, the mystified representation of wage labor as a form of exchange and association proved instrumental to a scientific legitimation of the power asymmetries that structured the labor market. This way, Carey laid the intellectual and ideological grounds for the metamorphosis of wage labor into “free labor”. The first step in this direction was the depiction of the product of labor as divided between a portion due to the capitalist and one due to the laborer, whose size depended upon the relative prices of the productive factors²³². In fact, such representation of the compensations of

²³⁰ «Capital is accumulated by slow degrees and in small quantities, and savings' banks are necessary to promote its accumulation. The labourer seeks the office of the saving fund society, that he may deposite his weekly earnings of one, two, or three dollars, for safe-keeping, until he shall be able to invest it more advantageously, having amassed a capital of one, two, or three hundred dollars. The trader and the mechanic, the merchant and the landlord, purchase a share or shares of stock, while waiting to accumulate the means of purchasing a house or farm, or of increasing the extent of their operations. [...] Exemption from liability, on the part of the manager, tends therefore to promote both the interests of the depositor and the steadiness of the currency. When these depositors have accumulated a certain sum, they are supposed capable of managing their own business, and the managers decline receiving further deposites. They are now capitalists, and have their choice: I. To invest it in the purchase of a share or shares of stock. II. To lend it out themselves. III. To place it in a bank for safe-keeping, yielding no interest, or at small interest. IV. To hoard it». Carey, *Answers to the Questions: What Constitutes Currency?*, 56.

²³¹ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. II*, 261–64.

²³² Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. I*, 141–42; Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. II*, 231.

capital and labor as fractions of the product's value, concealed the fact that wages did not represent the monetary equivalent of the worker's contribution, but on the contrary the price paid to the worker for being excluded from it. According to Karl Marx, it was only through this representation that political economists could present wage labor «under the false semblance of a relation of association»: a «trick» that, in his perspective, Carey could perform also in the case of slavery²³³.

Moreover, Carey depicted the proportion of the laborer as bound to increase with the growing productivity of labor granted by improved machines, up to the point that he could buy those same machines. A conclusion based on his theory of value, according to which growing productivity would lower the cost of reproducing every other commodities, including machines themselves. However, Marx objected in a lengthy critique to Carey's harmony-of-interests doctrine in the *Grundrisse*, the fact that capital could be reproduced with less labor did not mean that the laborer could work less or, as Carey had derived that «the worker needs fewer working days to appropriate capital for himself». This reduced time, in fact, was not «gained *for* the worker». To Marx, increased productivity simply altered the proportion between the parts of the working day, whose duration remained unaltered, increasing the part in which the laborer worked for capital and decreasing the one in which he worked for his own subsistence. In other words, increased productivity meant an increase in surplus labor, that is intensified exploitation²³⁴. Far from giving control to workers, the development of machines worsened their condition, making them more easily replaceable, thus decreasing their bargaining power and their wages²³⁵. Growing productivity and improved machines, then, only made the worker increasingly dependent upon wage labor for his subsistence, which could only be gained within the relation with capital.

Moreover, if increasing productivity reduced the cost of reproducing all commodities, as Carey argued, this meant that the reproduction and subsistence of the workforce itself would become cheaper, basically allowing capitalists to reduce wages²³⁶. Far from increasing the wages and relative power of workers, then, capitalist development resulted in their increasing dependence and reduction to the level of subsistence. As shown by labor historiography, even in the early-nineteenth century North, both the market, by fostering competition, and the law, by restricting

²³³ In the first book of his *Capital*, Marx wrote: «When the political economists treat surplus-value and the value of labour-power as fractions of the value-product - a mode of presentation which arises, by the way, out of the capitalist mode of production itself, and whose significance we shall unearth later on - they conceal the specific character of the capital-relation, namely the fact that variable capital is exchanged for living labour-power, and that the worker is accordingly excluded from the product. Instead of revealing the capital-relation they show us the false semblance of a relation of association». In a footnote he added that «H. Carey, the Yankee, occasionally performs this conjuring trick, with similar success, even with the relations prevailing under slavery». Marx, *Capital. Volume One*, 1976, 670–71.

²³⁴ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, ed. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1978), 579.

²³⁵ Marx, 580–81. See also: Marx, *Capital. Volume One*, 1976, 705.

²³⁶ Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy*, 85.

alternative sources of subsistence and by criminalizing exit from the labor market, were increasingly compelling workers to enter a structurally unequal and coercive relation²³⁷. Therefore, it was only by abstracting from the social hierarchies and the power asymmetries that grounded capitalism as a system, that Carey could conceal the coercive and exploitative nature of the wage relation, while presenting it as a voluntary and temporary station along the path of improvement that industrious individuals could follow in a society devoid of fixed class boundaries.

It was through this mystified representation that, in the *Principles of Political Economy*'s third volume, Carey could also overturn the labor movement's discourse on «wage slavery» by presenting the Northern laborer as a «freeman». Against the denunciation, particularly common among Philadelphia workers, of wage labor as a form of dependency substantially similar to «never-ending slavery»²³⁸, a denunciation clearly full of racial ambiguities²³⁹, Carey described Northern workers as the very opposite of slaves, enjoying a degree of freedom unparalleled in the world. Only there, he argued, «does man enjoy so fully the right to employ his time, his talent, and his capital, in such way as he may deem to be most productive»²⁴⁰. Not only the Northern worker, exercising a perfect control over the conditions of his labor, could not be equaled to a slave, but their conditions represented the two opposite poles within the spectrum of freedom, constituting «the highest and lowest political condition»²⁴¹. While workers had been consistently assimilating wage labor and slavery in the attempt to show their common core of exploitation, through his mystification of wage labor Carey could thus reject such comparison, redrawing a sharp contrast between slave labor and what would soon be called «free labor». While not providing yet a full apology of the commodification of labor, which he would embrace only later, and implicitly holding to a republican understanding of economic dependence as incompatible with freedom, Carey still contributed to reconcile wage labor and freedom against the labor movement's critique. If his political economy seemed to suggest that only at the end of the path of improvement, only by accessing property of land or machines, could the worker become entirely free, still it indicated wage labor as a necessary condition for freedom. It was only through a diligent submission to dependent labor that improvement could be reached. Thus, by offering a definition of freedom compatible with wage labor and market relations, Carey contributed to the conceptual shift from republican conceptions of freedom as independence towards capitalist definitions of freedom

²³⁷ Steinfeld, *Coercion, Contract, and Free labor in the Nineteenth Century*; Rockman, «The Unfree Origins of American Capitalism».

²³⁸ Heighton, *An Address to the Members of Trade Societies*, 12.

²³⁹ Foner, «Abolitionism and the Labor Movement in Ante-bellum America»; Roediger, *The wages of whiteness*, 65–92.

²⁴⁰ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. III*, 191–92.

²⁴¹ Carey, 95.

as self-ownership²⁴². In this respect, his political economy in the 1830s largely anticipated the emergence of a free-labor ideology in the North in the following decades, through which employers, political economists and later the Republican Party agitated the horrors of slavery to reconcile Northern workers with their own condition²⁴³. Only through such comparison with slavery, in fact, could wage labor become free.

In addition to legitimizing wage labor and the power relations that underpinned it, Carey's political economy assumed that the path of social improvement, while being formally open to everyone, could actually be realized only by a specific social group, namely white and male workers. To Carey, in fact, improvement was undoubtedly precluded to women and slaves. Since the *Essay on the Rate of Wages*, Carey had described in very different terms the consequences of economic development on male and female labor. For sure, introduction of new machines made women's work «much more productive, and they receive higher wages», allowing it to be employed in mechanized factories and freeing men from the need «to compete with machinery». Thus, being «enabled to apply their powers in other ways that are more productive», men could improve their condition so that «when they marry, the necessity for the employment of their wives and young children in factories is unknown»²⁴⁴. With increased machinery, then, «the labour of men is so much more valuable, that none are employed except as superintendents, mechanics, &c., and thus nearly the whole of factory employment is left for females»²⁴⁵. Carey thus combined a discourse on the separation of spheres, which deepened with increasing productivity, with an explicit devaluation of female labor, aimed at justifying its employment in the more exhausting, repetitious and less-paid factory jobs. This prevalence of women in manufacturing, however, was even presented as one of the symptoms of American superior civilization.

«Every man [...] endeavours to improve his own mode of operation [...], the consequence of which is, that machinery is rapidly improved, the labour of females is substituted for that of males, and the latter are required only in those higher employments, where everything tends to induce habits of reflection, and to produce that desire of improving his condition which most stimulates the inventive faculties of the labourer»²⁴⁶.

²⁴² Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 285; Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, 58–63; James Parisot, *How America Became Capitalist: Imperial Expansion and the Conquest of the West* (London: Pluto Press, 2019), 176.

²⁴³ Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*; Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 271–86; Laurie, *Artisans into Workers*, 47–74; Rockman, “The Unfree Origins of American Capitalism”, 350.

²⁴⁴ Carey, *Essay on the Rate of Wages*, 88.

²⁴⁵ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. II*, 153.

²⁴⁶ Carey, 155–56.

Therefore, while allowing the economic and intellectual improvement of men, the introduction of machines favored women's work in the most degrading jobs before marriage, only to make it unnecessary afterwards, thus guaranteeing both women's contribution to capital accumulation and their subjection to male domination within the family. Far from granting equal opportunities to all, Carey's improvement proved to be a sexed concept, justifying on the one hand married women's confinement to the domestic space, and on the other the stratification and hierarchization of manufacturing labor on a sexual basis, upon which in those same decades U.S. capitalism was grounding its accumulation in the Northeast in particular²⁴⁷. To Carey, then, the economic improvement of men ultimately rested upon women's increasing subordination.

At the same time, while theoretically admitting the possibility of improvement for slaves, Carey always subordinated the possibility of their emancipation to the interests and the authority of slaveholders. While acknowledging the need to gradually extinguish slavery as an institution, Carey opposed any attempt towards abolition, arguing that sudden emancipation would inevitably result in idleness on the part of black laborers, whose only desire was «exemption from work». Far from immediately emancipating them, therefore, slaves had to keep working productively for their masters. Only through an increase of production, in fact, slaves could hope to see the value of their own labor increase up to the time when slaveholders would find it economically convenient to grant them freedom. «The man who really desires to benefit the race», Carey warned «must retain his control over them, seeking constantly the means of improving *their condition and his own*, by rendering them more valuable, [...] increasing their wages, and fitting them gradually for freedom». Only this way, the slaveowner's «desire of obtaining wealth» could «lead to emancipation, gradual, sure, and safe», while «immediate emancipation is to be deprecated»²⁴⁸. Gradual emancipation had thus to take place «under the control of the master» and within the social relationship between slaves and masters and without questioning it, at the moment when the latter realized how it was in their interest to begin remunerating the former, buying the use of their labor power from time to time instead of owning it once and for all. Only by remaining slaves could they emancipate from slavery. Carey thus postponed to an undetermined future the possibility of improvement for black laborers. In the meantime, far from improving, they had to be kept at work. Already in the 1830s,

²⁴⁷ Alice Kessler-Harris, *A Woman's Wage: Historical Meanings and Social Consequences*. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989); Rockman, "The Unfree Origins of American Capitalism," 355–59; Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton. A Global History* (New York: Knopf, 2014), 188–90.

²⁴⁸ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. III*, 204.

then, Carey advocated the need for eradicating slavery while at the same time warning about the need to preserve the racial subordination of black workers²⁴⁹.

Overall, then, Carey's political economy accepted as necessary the racial and sexual hierarchies that structured U.S. society, while at the same time justifying those same class hierarchies that it represented as mobile, fluid and crossable. The fact itself that opportunities for social mobility were open to every (white, male) individual made the persistence of social distinctions and power differentials acceptable insofar as they did not derive from birth but reflected differences in individual talents, capacities and productive efforts. Since in a classless society existed no institutional barrier to improvement, this meant that those who could not actually achieve independence and ownership could only blame themselves and their lack of «industry and economy», and not some structural oppression as the labor movement had done, for having remained in a subordinate station. The very depiction of U.S. classlessness thus proved functional to scientifically prove the fairness of existing social differences. Carey's political economy, then, not only legitimized but also tended to naturalize class hierarchies. Thus, the classless society envisioned by Carey still corresponded to a structure organized around relations of dominion and subordination, in which it was irrelevant which specific individual occupied which position, as long as social hierarchies as such were preserved. Class lines, then, might be crossed, but never levelled or abolished. Improvement itself, declining historical progress within individual biographies, could be a story of individual emancipation precisely because it denied the possibility of emancipation to workers as a class, leaving untouched a vertical social structure that individuals had literally to climb. And, in any respect, improvement could individually happen only through a subordination to wage labor. Carey's idea of classlessness, then, entailed a fundamentally non-egalitarian, as well as anti-labor, vision of society²⁵⁰.

It is therefore not surprising that, even in his scientific economic treatise, Carey went back to attack the labor movement and particularly two of its most relevant demands: the right to set the price of labor and the shortening of the working day. Both of them, in his perspective, had emerged «from a misconception of rights and duties», according to which «every member of a community claims for himself the *right* of fixing the value of his own labour». However, in doing so, workers had forgot that such right was «accompanied by *the duty* of permitting all others to exercise the same right for themselves». While «labourers have an unquestionable right to combine for the purpose

²⁴⁹ For a detailed account of Carey's writings on slavery and emancipation between the 1830s and the 1860s, see Chapter 3.

²⁵⁰ For an explanation of the difference between «egalitarian» and «non egalitarian» understandings of «classlessness», see: Stanislaw Ossowski, *Class Structure in the Social Consciousness* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1963), 100–118.

of raising wages», Carey added reiterating an accusation already used in the Franklin articles, they had no right to «compel men who are fully satisfied with their wages to quit work»²⁵¹. Nonetheless, he continued, dismissing the relevance of the American labor movement, «in the United States, such combinations have existed at various times, but to a small extent compared with England», without ever gaining such a dimension «to entitle them to much consideration». A reason for this, was the greater mobility of American workers and the greater demand for labor, which guaranteed that «men do not remain long in the town in which a strike has taken place»²⁵². In England, instead, because of trades' unions, many districts had been «for years in a state of confusion and excitement». There, it had been «scarcely possible for decent people to walk the streets» and «assassinations have taken place on several occasions»²⁵³. Moreover, by asking a restriction of the hours of labor, English trades' unions had directly slowed down the possibilities of production and damaged workers themselves. In fact, Carey attacked, shorter hours would inevitably lead to lower wages²⁵⁴. In fact, being wages «estimated by the quantity of commodities they will command», Carey insisted that by working less, laborers would produce less and thus obtain «a diminished share of a diminished quantity», whereas «with increased application» he could obtain «an increased proportion of an increased quantity»²⁵⁵. Only by working industriously, then, workers could hope to improve their condition within a classless society.

2.3. Equality, Democracy and the Republic of Capital

Finally, Carey's depiction of improvement involved a broader attempt to rethink republicanism, particularly through a redefinition of the concepts of equality and democracy. In the previous decade, the labor movement had been denouncing the «aristocratic» and «tyrannical» transformation of U.S. republican institutions that had accompanied the widening of class distinctions, which were hollowing out the Declaration of Independence's egalitarian promise. Workers in Philadelphia as throughout the North had argued that the true meaning of republicanism laid in the guarantee of an equality of conditions that allowed access to property and the possibility to participate to the government of publica affairs. Only by granting democracy and an equality of conditions, in their perspective, the United States could persist as a republican government. Against such a radical understanding of republicanism, in the last part of the *Principles*

²⁵¹ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy. Vol. II*, 31.

²⁵² Carey, 31.

²⁵³ Carey, 31–32.

²⁵⁴ «At the present time efforts are being made to obtain the passage of a law limiting all factories to ten hours, the workmen believing most absurdly that they can earn as much by ten hours' labour as they now do by that of twelve. They have, most unquestionably, a right to limit their own hours, but not content therewith they are anxious to compel others to do the same». Carey, 35–36.

²⁵⁵ Carey, 35–36.

of *Political Economy*, Carey engaged a semantic battle to prove that democracy and equality had to be understood as mere consequences of capitalist development.

He did so through a confrontation with one of the most important nineteenth-century works on democracy, that is Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, recently published in France and translated in the United States. «His views», Carey warned, «differ in many respects from those which we have submitted to the reader»²⁵⁶. In his perspective, while Tocqueville had the merit of grasping the central role of equality in the United States, he had mistaken an effect for a cause, writing that in American society «the equality of conditions is the fundamental fact from which all others seem to be derived»²⁵⁷. Moreover, Tocqueville had erroneously treated the advent of equality as a «providential fact» and as such irresistible, describing it as «the most uniform, the most ancient, and the most permanent tendency which is to be found in history»²⁵⁸. To Carey, instead, equality had to be understood not as a cause but rather as an effect of the functioning of American society, which individuals could obstacle or accelerate with their actions. «A further examination», in fact, would have satisfied Tocqueville «that instead of equality being a “fundamental”, it was a *consequential* fact»²⁵⁹. Therefore, the greater equality of American society, then, could not be attributed to a providential and superhuman process, nor to its accidental geographic position, since South American peoples were placed in similar conditions, without having obtained the same results.

Instead, Carey explained, it had to be attributed to the superiority of American economic growth: to a superior capacity to increase production and wealth by guaranteeing the security of property. In this respect, equality and democracy, just like freedom, had to be understood as a consequence of capitalist development. In fact, development did not only entail a progressive emancipation of individuals, but also their gradual equalization: «with every increase in the productive power, there is therefore a tendency to the establishment of political equality»²⁶⁰. The degree of equality and democracy in every country thus corresponded to their respective capacity to favor the conditions for economic development. The United States, for example, to Carey was not born as an equal country, but as British colonies subject to British unequal laws and privileges. It was not equality that had made the nation's economic development possible, but rather the contrary. Tocqueville had therefore confused the effect for the cause. The fundamental fact of American society was not equality, but its capacity for improvement. More than other nations, the United States «have reaped

²⁵⁶ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy*. Vol. III, 231.

²⁵⁷ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, translated by Henry Reeve (New York: Adlard, 1838), IX.

²⁵⁸ Tocqueville, X.

²⁵⁹ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy*. Vol. III, 231.

²⁶⁰ Carey, 109.

the advantage in the enjoyment of security, in the rapid growth of wealth, and in the great improvement of physical, moral, and political condition»²⁶¹.

«The tendency to equality» was thus to Carey a «result» of the same natural law «in accordance to which the labourer receives, with every increase of production, an increasing *proportion of the product*»²⁶². As a consequence of improvement, equality was therefore a condition accessed only by those who had successfully followed the path of social mobility through labor. Not an equality of conditions in the access to property, as demanded by workers, but at most an equality of opportunities, in which individual success was predicated upon labor, and upon possession of some specific characteristics. Only diligent, white, male workers could thus be equal in the American republic. At the same time, the development of productive forces created the conditions not only for equality as a social condition, but also for democracy as a political form. The maintenance of peace, cheap government and security of property stood as the «“fundamental” causes of the increase of wealth among individuals», but also of the growth of democracy in communities»²⁶³. In this respect, democracy was yet another consequence of improvement: a form of collective self-government resting upon each man’s individual self-government. Having become independent and equal, freemen could thus fully govern themselves, their time and the product of their labor, both individually and collectively as a nation. In this respect, Carey explained, true democracy was neither majority rule, nor representative government, nor an institutional mechanism to take collective decisions, but the political form in which every freeman, having labored to accumulate wealth and property, could govern himself, so that no general government would be necessary.

The full affirmation of self-government, in fact, marked to Carey the end of politics, opening the way to mere administration: «the right of self-government being fully established, there can arise no questions but those of administration, and thus the people of the United States are exempt from discussions such as now agitate England and every other part of Europe»²⁶⁴. In this respect, to guarantee equality and democracy, republican institutions simply had to maintain the security of persons and property and the freedom of capital, so as to guarantee the possibilities of improvement for those who could pursue them. In this specific sense, the United States could be considered democratic and egalitarian: as a republic of capital that guaranteed generalized opportunities of investment and accumulations for white and male individuals, particularly through the limited-liability corporation and through a system of free banking.

²⁶¹ Carey, 231.

²⁶² Carey, 238.

²⁶³ Carey, 250.

²⁶⁴ Carey, 220.

Moreover, the widespread growth of wealth brought by this generalized, small-scale system of accumulation would also assure political order, since those who had gained a stake in the growth of capital would develop an interest in stability to protect their property: «equality of rights being now established, and all now having property to be preserved, all contribute towards the maintenance of order»²⁶⁵. Order, the security of property and the freedom of capital thus came to define central features of Carey's reinterpretation of democracy and equality. American republican institutions were democratic and egalitarian insofar as they protected capitalist development and improvement so as to guarantee the reproduction of a classless society. This way, they could enjoy extraordinary political stability. Thus, having reduced democracy to a function of capitalist development, Carey could ultimately make it into an antidote against revolution. This time agreeing with Tocqueville, Carey argued that «in no country is the tendency to revolution so small as in the United States» and that this was due to the fact that «every man enjoys an equal share of rights with his fellow men» and that «the great mass of those who control the action of government are possessed of property, and desire the maintenance of perfect security»²⁶⁶. In this sense «in the noisy Republic of the United States, there is infinitely less reason to anticipate change than in the quiet monarchy of Austria»²⁶⁷. The possibility of improvement and the classlessness of U.S. society, alongside specific constitutional mechanisms, allowed the prevalence in the United States of a conservative spirit: «in no part of the world does the state of feeling termed radicalism, implying thereby a hostility to all existing institutions, so little exist. In none is that which is termed conservatism so universal»²⁶⁸.

Carey thus concluded his *Principles of Political Economy* with an anti-revolutionary, conservative defense of republican institutions against the labor movement's radicalism, which had revealed the existence of a deep class partition within Northern society. Even if defeated at the ballot box and crushed by a financial panic, then, in 1840 the Northern labor upsurge still represented a threat that needed to be exorcised, in order to cast its discourse and politics of class as an illegitimate interpretation of American republicanism. In order to fight both politically and scientifically this threat of disorder, Carey had thus built a system of political economy, while also reinterpreting the fundamental concepts of American political thought, praising the conservative nature of American institutions, to argue that freedom, democracy and equality could be possible only within the limits and at the conditions of the new capitalist order of society and by guaranteeing existing social hierarchies. Workers had to understand that, within the republic of capital, improvement could

²⁶⁵ Carey, 106.

²⁶⁶ Carey, 219.

²⁶⁷ Carey, 228.

²⁶⁸ Carey, 219–20.

only be individual, never collective, and predicated upon their submission to wage labor, that democracy could only mean self-government and that equality could only imply unequal opportunities. Within these strict limits only could they be freemen, as Carey reiterated addressing workers in the last pages of the *Principles*.

«LABOURERS, [should be satisfied] that every interference with the rights of others - [...] tends to diminish not only the *quantity* of commodities produced, but their own *proportion* of that diminished quantity [...] - to diminish their power of accumulation - their control over their own actions [...] and thus to impair their power of improving their physical, moral, intellectual, and political condition. FREEMEN, if they desire improvement of political condition for any portion of the human race, whether their own or of any other nation, their object will be best accomplished by uniting in every measure tending to increase the value of their labour, and by avoiding every thing tending to incite them to rebellion or revolution, war and massacre, or in any other way to lessen the perfect security of person and property»²⁶⁹

However, while Carey's economic thought was forged through a particularly long, direct and explicit confrontation with the labor movement, in the 1830s his reflection was part of a broader intellectual and political reaction against the emergence of class conflict in the United States carried on by the first generation of U.S. political economists, in Philadelphia as well as throughout the North. This reaction, aimed at concealing the existence of class in the United States, while legitimizing class hierarchies, stood as the very origins of U.S. political economy as a science.

3. Class and the Anti-Labor Origins of U.S. Political Economy

In the second half of the 1830s, in fact, the retreat of the first U.S. white labor movement coincided with the emergence of a specifically American economic science and with the publication of several treatises written by the first generation of systematic U.S. economic thinkers. In most cases, economists repeatedly engaged a semantic strife with the labor movement over class and classification, over the definition of «working classes» or «productive classes» and over the applicability of such terms to the United States, often rejecting them as foreign importations only applicable to European, aristocratic societies. In particular, the labor movement's restriction of the idea of productive labor stood as a recurring point of attack for political economists, in the attempt to re-broaden the concept as a way of defusing its politicization. More broadly, their depiction of U.S. society as a fluid structure devoid of fixed class boundaries thus systematically emerged in the context of attacks against organized workers, their claims, their self-definition and their representation of class.

²⁶⁹ Carey, 256.

A first example in this respect was offered by the jurist, turned political economist, Theodore Sedgwick in 1836 in his *Private and Public Economy*, in which, endeavoring to prove that «labour is a different thing in the United States, from what it is in most other countries», he rejected social classifications imported from Europe²⁷⁰. In this respect, he opposed the idea that those who lived by manual labor could be considered «the only producers of wealth», a «lamentable error, that creates heart-burnings in different classes» and that therefore had to be «wholly rooted out of the country»²⁷¹. On the contrary, all those who were paid for services, including lawyers, physicians and merchants had to be considered as «laborers», despite of course being differentiated by the level of their wages, paid according to the level of «intelligence» required to perform their specific labor²⁷². Sedgwick thus accepted the existence of classes and social differences as «natural», something against which revolt was useless and to which U.S. workers had to «submit to»²⁷³. In his perspective the division between «higher and lower classes» according to differences in «knowledge», «property» and «power» was necessary and incontestable». At the same time, while assigning specific places to individuals, in Sedgwick's vision «Providence» did not impose them «to remain there», instead directing them «to be careful and diligent to get wisdom and education, so that we may advance»²⁷⁴.

Here laid the specificity of the U.S. social order. While in Europe social positions were permanent throughout life, in the United States individuals enjoyed a «power of *self-elevation*» that granted to all, «without distinction, [...] many opportunities of elevating themselves, of passing from one business to another, from one class to another» through the acquisition of «property» and «knowledge». Precisely in this guarantee of an equality of opportunities consisted, according to Sedgwick «the true plan of a free government», according to which «in the law all are equal, and that there shall be no institutions by law that shall make men unequal»²⁷⁵. Thus, to those who had «combined» in trades' unions in the attempt to raise wages and limit working hours, Sedgwick reminded that the only «combination» that could improve their condition was the one which allowed them to profit from the possibility of «self-elevation» through labor granted by American specific social order. The people ascribed an «undue importance» to the laws, he concluded, while to get forward they had rather to «look to themselves; they must be a law unto themselves»²⁷⁶. Thus,

²⁷⁰ Theodore Sedgwick, *Public and Private Economy. Part First* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1836), 219.

²⁷¹ Sedgwick, 235.

²⁷² Sedgwick, 221–23.

²⁷³ «It is natural that men should be divided into different professions and employments. This is one form of nature. [...] It is idle, then, for the people of the United States to revolt against what is natural and proper – they must submit to it. It is as certain that there must be higher and lower classes, as that there are hills and valleys, small trees and great ones. If one man gets more knowledge than another, he will be greater, he will be more powerful; he will get more property, and property is power; common sense teaches that, and no one will deny it». Sedgwick, 224.

²⁷⁴ Sedgwick, 224.

²⁷⁵ Sedgwick, 225.

²⁷⁶ Sedgwick, 242–43.

Sedgwick argued against a restrictive understanding of productive labor to vindicate the social relevance of professional and entrepreneurial classes and, without denying the existence of classes, described them as crossable through labor and intellectual improvement, while at the same time strongly legitimizing the persistence of a class hierarchy and delegitimizing the workers' collective organization.

A similar line of reasoning was offered in 1837, when Francis Wayland published his *Elements of Political Economy* which became, together with Carey's *Principles*, the most widely read and influential economic work in the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century²⁷⁷. A Baptist minister, president of Brown University, two years before Wayland had published a treatise on moral science, which largely influenced his following understanding of political economy. Without going as far as Carey in the scientific denial of class, Wayland still endeavored to prove the mutual interdependence of classes, arguing that class distinctions did not entail conflicting interests. Since the very first pages, he felt the need to attack the labor movement's politicization of productive labor, and particularly the notion that «all the wealth» was produced only by one class. On the contrary, he explained, all forms of «human industry» had to be considered of «essential importance to the sustenance of the human race»²⁷⁸. In other words, he insisted, «the capitalist and the laborer are equally necessary to each other» and, above all, «the *accumulation* of capital, is as much for the interest of the laborer as of the capitalist himself». Therefore, «all attempts to excite the prejudices of the poor against the rich», currently fostered by «unprincipled men», could only prove «injurious to the interests of both classes»²⁷⁹. Thus, in order to better their condition, instead of protesting through trades' unions, workers should have diligently applied to labor. In fact, he wrote, thanks to the opportunities guaranteed in the United States, «the common laborer, if industrious, virtuous and frugal, may not only support himself, but, in a few years, accumulate a valuable little capital»²⁸⁰.

In the same year, Henry Vethake, a professor of mathematics and later provost of the University of Pennsylvania, used similar arguments in his *Principles of Political Economy*, published in Philadelphia. Very close to Carey despite being a follower of Ricardo, Vethake issued a new attack against the trades' union attempts to raise wages through strikes, coupled with a scientific attempt to blur class distinctions through a reinterpretation of economic concepts. In particular, once more against the labor movement's restriction of the concept of productive labor, Vethake argued for

²⁷⁷ On Wayland, see: Joseph Dorfman, *The Economic Mind in American Civilization. Volume II* (New York: Kelley, 1946), 758–70; Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity*, 116–23. On Wayland's understanding of class: Burke, *The Conundrum of Class*, 1995, 109–10.

²⁷⁸ Francis Wayland, *The Elements of Political Economy* (New York: Leavitt, Lord and Company, 1837), 37–38.

²⁷⁹ Wayland, 405–6.

²⁸⁰ Wayland, 340; Burke, *The Conundrum of Class*, 109.

the need to broaden its meaning so as to include the labor that produced both material and immaterial results²⁸¹, with the explicit goal of denying the workers' claim to be the only producers of wealth²⁸². By eliminating any distinction between producers and non-producers, Vethake argued, political economy would thus allow to recover the correct view of society as a unitary whole.

«It may here be mentioned that a practical and moral advantage cannot fail to result from getting rid of the distinction between the productive and unproductive labourers. Mankind, instead of being separated into two classes having occupations essentially differing, and liable on this account to an interference with each other's interests, will come to be regarded as constituting one and the same great family. The political economist, [...] if he shall succeed in banishing from the popular language such phrases as “the productive classes” and “the unproductive classes”, he will have done more to prevent the “workmen” of a country from esteeming themselves to be the only *useful* portion of society»²⁸³.

Thus, pushing beyond Wayland's vision of class interdependence, Vethake argued that, in order to counter the workers' claims, not only a semantic, but even a terminological change was necessary. In fact, he lamented, as long as political economists kept writing «of the *separate* classes of landlords, capitalists, and labourers», they would keep justifying the laborer «in his estimation» of the relevance of his labor. On the contrary, economists should endeavor to remove any theoretical and lexical ground for the politicization of class, showing that, in the United States, «the same person may unite in himself the characters of landlord, of capitalist, and of labourer, or of any two of them». They should explain that «instances are continually presented of capitalists who labour themselves in superintending the application of their capital to production». And that «the farmer, who is the owner of the land which he cultivates, is manifestly at once both landlord and capitalist»²⁸⁴. Only by scientifically showing the classlessness of U.S. society, in his perspective, could economists fulfill their duty in refuting the representation of U.S. society forwarded by the labor movement in the previous decade and in delegitimizing class struggle itself. Only «by inculcating upon the rich and the poor that their interests, properly understood, are not in opposition to each other», Vethake argued in the conclusion of his treatise, and only by explaining that the preservation of property is beneficial to both, «the political economist contributes effectually to remove the grounds of controversy between them, and to secure the internal tranquility of society». Only this way, he concluded, «the revolutionary temper of the times can be allayed»²⁸⁵. Thus, in tackling the problem of class and social classification, Vethake spelled out the political and ideological function of

²⁸¹ Henry Vethake, *Principles of Political Economy* (Philadelphia: Nicklin & Johnson, 1838), 37. On Vethake, see: Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity*, 123–34.

²⁸² On Vethake's understanding of class, see: Burke, *The Conundrum of Class*, 108–12.

²⁸³ Vethake, *Principles of Political Economy*, 38–39.

²⁸⁴ Vethake, 73.

²⁸⁵ Vethake, 405.

political economy as a science that through the representation of society had the declared goal of legitimizing its order, through a representation of society that denied the existence of classes.

Then, in January 1838, the *New-York Review* published a lengthy review of Carey's *Essay on the Rate of Wages* by Alonzo Potter, a professor of philosophy at Union College in Schenectady, New York, who had lived in Philadelphia in the 1820s. The article, later included in Potter's *Political Economy*²⁸⁶, was significantly titled *Trades' Unions*, since the notice of Carey's book was only a pretext for a systematic exposition of the dangers that trades' unions posed to economic improvement, equal rights and morality²⁸⁷. One year and a half after the Franklin-Sherman debate on *The Pennsylvanian*, then, Carey's theory of wages was once again understood as an anti-labor tool and deployed as the scientific foundation of a broad political attack against organized workers. To Potter, the condition of those classes, «usually, but in this country very inaptly denominated the Working classes», presented «a subject for profound and anxious consideration», particularly with respect to the problem of the distribution of property, about which «Republics have always been agitated»²⁸⁸. In the United States, he explained, where «hereditary distinction and privileges» had been abolished, property was neither disrespected nor appropriated by a caste, but it could be gained or lost according to everyone's merit. The republican character of American government thus defined a fluid social structure with no fixed class distinction, that allowed both for upward and downward mobility.

«Property can be perpetuated in no family, except by enterprise and virtue; while there is nothing in theory, and but little in the practical operation of our laws, to prevent the humblest citizen from reaching the highest eminence of wealth or power. There is no *class* of rich or poor. Through improvidence and vice, the children of the opulent are perpetually descending from their elevation, [...] while at the same time the indigent and unfriended rise to occupy their places. In such a state of things, industry and thrift cease to be derogatory; they become associated in the minds of the people with merit»²⁸⁹.

The full realization of such picture, however, to Potter was currently obstructed by the «untiring spirit of change» advanced by trades' unionists, who «can talk of nothing but the social and political degradation of their brother workmen, the enormous profits of capital and the growing aristocracy of wealth». They supported «a new principle of division, by which the labourer is to share in the

²⁸⁶ Alonzo Potter, *Political Economy. Its Objects, Uses, and Principles: Considered with Reference to the Condition of the American People* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1840), 233–302.

²⁸⁷ Alonzo Potter, «Trades' Unions», *New-York Review* 2, no. 3 (January 1838): 5–48. On Potter: Dorfman, *The Economic Mind in American Civilization. Volume II*, 826–33. On Potter's conception of class: Burke, *The Conundrum of Class*, 1995, 112–15.

²⁸⁸ Potter, «Trades' Unions», 5,7.

²⁸⁹ Potter, 9–10.

gains of trade, without sharing either in its hazards or in its losses». A pretense, Potter attacked, arising from an erroneous conception of republican equality: «with such men, *equal rights* mean not an equal title to the protection of law – not equality of privilege, but equality of condition»²⁹⁰. However, «so long as the natural endowments of men are entirely unequal», it would be necessary «more than the skill of a Marat or a Robespierre to equalize their condition». To banish inequality from civil society, Potter explained, it would be necessary to eradicate it «from the constitution of Nature»²⁹¹. In his perspective, a republican government ought not to guarantee property to everyone, but to assure that, from the start, everyone had the same chances of getting it, so that social inequalities reflected inequalities of talent, industry and parsimony. In Potter's perspective, such was the true and only meaning of «equal rights» granted by republics: not an equality of conditions, but merely an equality of opportunities.

In this respect, the «organized combination» of workers, causing a «struggle between capital and labour», constituted the main obstacle to the full establishment of republican classlessness²⁹². The trades' union, in fact, tended «to arrest among journeymen the spirit of improvement, and to fix them in a condition of permanent inferiority». Reversing the labor movement's denunciation of worsening conditions, Potter thus attributed the tightening of class boundaries to the spread of trades' unions itself. If a worker stayed a journeyman for life, it was not because of a system's malfunctioning, but because of his lack of industry, which had led him to join the union instead of endeavoring to become an employer. It was the spread of class hostility that had divided American society «into classes separated by barriers almost impassable»²⁹³. The main grievance of the trades' union being the «inadequacy of wages», its main object was to force employers to raise them through the instrument of the «*strike* – i. e. a general and protracted refusal to labour»²⁹⁴. However, as «Mr. Carey» had shown through his global comparison of wage levels, «the condition of American workmen is such as to render them the envy and admiration of their brethren in every other land», with their condition having further improved in the past forty years. Far from being «fast sinking to a condition of “white slavery”», as the union's orators had been trying to persuade him, the American worker should see that «he is participating in the progress of the ages». To Potter, the recent expansion of the worker's right of suffrage and «political influence» should be

²⁹⁰ Potter, 10–12.

²⁹¹ Potter, 12.

²⁹² Potter, 17–18.

²⁹³ Potter, 23.

²⁹⁴ Potter, 25.

«an index to the increased facilities which he enjoys for improving his social and moral condition»²⁹⁵.

Refusing to accept such truth, the trades' union had instead endeavored to raise wages through strikes. In doing so, however, they had interfered with the rights of employers, of the «agricultural class», of «non-associated workmen», often compelled to strike with violent threats, and of apprentices, because of the restrictions they wanted to impose upon their employment. In short, trades' unions tended «to destroy this freedom, which is the birthright of our people and the great spring of their prosperity», substituting it with «a system of restrictions»²⁹⁶. Then, even if they could advance the journeymen's condition, they would do it at the expense of all other classes. In any respect, Potter insisted closely following the wage-fund doctrine, they were simply unable to achieve their most fundamental goal, since the level of wages could only be determined by the inescapable laws of the market.

«The great law which must regulate the wages of all labour, is found *in the proportion between supply and demand*, or, in other words, *between the number of labourers and the quantity of employment*. If there be many labourers and little employment, as in some older countries, wages will be low. [...] If, on the other hand, there be much employment and but few labourers, wages must, for a corresponding reason, be high. [...] If the number of labourers should be sufficient to meet the demand, wages in such case would be high or low according to the productiveness of the employment. [...] This law must govern the rate of wages, in spite alike of masters and men»²⁹⁷.

At the same time, this law did not necessarily mean that wages would be destined to remain unaltered. On the contrary, wherever capital increased faster than population, the demand for labor would constantly rise faster than the supply, «and the rate of wages [...] will gradually though perhaps slowly increase». It was therefore an error «to imagine that large profits are incompatible with high wages, and that we can maintain the latter only by depressing the former». Contrary to what Ricardo had argued, wages and profits could grow together. Or at least, Potter continued, «such has been the case in this country, as Mr. Carey has shown at length in his work on wages»²⁹⁸. Only the natural functioning of the laws of the market could therefore guarantee a constant increase of wages, predicated upon the increase of capital. Moreover, even if the trades' unions happened to be successful, «combinations and strikes» would trigger a double tendency that would nullify any gain in wage levels and further compress them. On the one hand, they would increase the supply

²⁹⁵ Potter, 27–28.

²⁹⁶ Potter, 29–34.

²⁹⁷ Potter, 36–37.

²⁹⁸ Potter, 41.

of labor, since they would attract workers from abroad and on the other would lessen the demand for labor. First because, as Carey had also argued on *The Pennsylvanian*, higher wages would compel employers to raise prices, thus lessening the community's power of consumption. Second, because they would reduce the number of employers willing to hire and invest. Third, because they would push employers to introduce «labour-saving machines» that in the short term could substitute workers and produce unemployment. Finally, because combinations among workers would trigger «hostile combinations» among masters, deepening social conflict into a «deadly feud»²⁹⁹. Then, even if «it is not to be denied, that strikes do give to workmen a great and fearful power over the welfare and prosperity of employers» to Potter «it is a power which they no sooner wield, than it recoils with redoubled and fatal violence upon themselves»³⁰⁰. The trades' union's success, then, would necessarily lower the workers' wages, in addition to producing a «moral debasement» among the working classes, to destroy «habits of improvement» and any «spirit of independence»³⁰¹. Thus, reiterating many of his arguments, Potter further exposed the fundamentally anti-labor character of Carey's political economy and the extent to which it could be used as a scientific tool to prove the economically dangerous and counterproductive character of strikes, and thus to wield a strictly political attack against the labor movement, depicted as the main obstacle to the coming of a fully classless society.

One final example of the U.S. economic thinkers' reaction against the labor movement was offered by Francis Lieber, arguably the most influential jurist in the nineteenth-century United States, in his *Essays on Property and Labor* published in 1841. Here, he directly deals with the labor movement's denunciation of the growing «inequality of property» and of the «unduly share which the workman has in the ultimate profits derived from the product»³⁰². To this problem workers had tried to answer by creating trades' unions, that is «associations to enforce higher wages», and by establishing cooperatives to hold profits as «common property» with the goal of the «abolition of wages». Both of them, in Lieber's perspective constitute an attempt at an «equalization of property» that, if implemented, risked causing «the destruction of property and prevention of its accumulation», up the point of depriving labor of its «only support», capital, thus producing «infinitely more misery». Cooperatives, in particular, were hopeless in that they tried to counter the most fundamental elements of human nature, that is the affirmation of «individuality» through accumulation³⁰³.

²⁹⁹ Potter, 37–45.

³⁰⁰ Potter, 41–42.

³⁰¹ Potter, 47.

³⁰² Francis Lieber, *Essays on Property and Labor, As Connected with natural Law and the Constitution of Society*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1841), 179–80.

³⁰³ Lieber, 180–84.

Even if it was sometimes true that wages were too low, Lieber recognized, the remedy to this could not imply «a change in the nature of things», that is in the fact that commodities, included labor, receive their prices on the market according to their «desirableness». Wages, therefore, could not be artificially heightened without causing «ruin and mischief», since they represented a «natural and necessary effect of the state of things of the relation of man to the things around him»³⁰⁴. As an objective result of market forces, then, the level of wages would be fundamentally unresponsive to the actions of the trades' unions that, even if successful, would soon be counterbalanced by a decreasing demand for labor. Thus, «strikes of Trades' Unions are very apt to drive whole branches of industry into foreign regions, and always drive capital, that is, the support of labour, from the places where they happen»³⁰⁵. To Lieber, then, the fact that private property might be unequally divided should not hide the fact that it represented «the very tie of society»³⁰⁶, and as such had to be defended against all attempts to abolish it. Moreover, he added in the essay's conclusion, those who had attacked property had done so moving from an arbitrary definition of the «working classes», which included only those who worked «physically». In his perspective, this was a mistake since no laborer could actually be said to employ only pure brute force without using at some degree his intellectual faculties or without using an instrument that was the result of invention. Therefore, both «intellect» and «capital», and those who owned them, had to be considered as crucial component of production and of the labor process. Therefore, it was simply wrong «to draw a distinct line fit to divide society into two antagonistic parts», since several intermediate positions existed between «the poorest woodsman» and «the richest manufacturer»³⁰⁷. Lieber as well, then, coupled a strong attack against the labor movement in the name of the inescapable laws of the market, with a contestation of its classification of U.S. society.

Between the 1820s and the 1830s, then, a conflict over class and social classification emerged in the North, in the aftermath of the first mobilization of white labor in the United States. Against the labor movement's denunciation of the increasingly classed, hierarchical and oppressive character of the U.S. social structure, the first generation of systematic U.S. political economists answered by redrawing class boundaries and by affirming their essential porosity. Since the second half of the 1830s, economists felt the increasing urge to couple their attacks against strikes and the trades' unions with a broader vision of U.S. society as devoid of class boundaries that could scientifically and ideologically legitimize existing class hierarchies and disqualify social conflict.

³⁰⁴ Lieber, 186–87. Or, as he wrote in the conclusions: «There is no such thing as forcing wages up by legislation; and, though hundreds and thousands should die, legislation cannot raise wages by law». Lieber, 211.

³⁰⁵ Lieber, *Essays on Property and Labor*, 188.

³⁰⁶ Lieber, 192.

³⁰⁷ Lieber, 207–8.

Thus, the urge to answer the labor movement's politics of class marked the very foundation of U.S. political economy and shaped a representation of the U.S. social structure that in the following decades (and perhaps century) would become a fundamental ideological pillar in the legitimation and naturalization of American capitalism.

Henry Carey played a crucial part in this story. Not only because his economic science was among the most radical in theoretically denying class boundaries and in blurring distinctions among social figures, nor just because of his following intellectual and political influence in the nineteenth-century United States. Rather, because more explicitly and directly than in most other cases, his economic reflection was forged in the very middle of the class clash that was shaking the 1830s Philadelphia, and out of a decade-long personal fight against the labor movement, which this chapter reconstructed. A fight over class and republicanism that started from the pages of labor newspapers, in a heated dialogue with Philadelphia worker's discourses and claims, only to move on gradually towards the pages of economic treatises, which were profoundly shaped by this intellectual and political battle.

Thus, reading Carey's political economy as a reaction to the labor movement, as well as studying the strife around class in the early-nineteenth-century United States has allowed to show how the strategies for legitimizing capitalism were never formulated in a vacuum, nor at a merely intellectual level, but how they always emerged out of a concrete conflict with the subjects that refused to be dominated by its command. Such conclusion should prove the need to study the history of economic thought not only through the tools of intellectual history, but by diving it in the social history of capitalism. Only by reversing the perspective on Carey's thought, in fact, by looking at it from the viewpoint of the movements and conflicts to which it attempted to respond, it has been possible to grasp the anti-labor political core that grounded not only his economic science in the 1830s, but most of his following economic reflection. The need to legitimize U.S. capitalism against the movements of labor, in fact, would continue to shape his reflection throughout the following decades.

Chapter 2

The State within Capital: Protection, Money and Empire (1848-1855)

«Why is it that men are everywhere seen flying from their fellow men [...] to seek in Texas and Iowa, Oregon and California, new homes and new relations?»¹. In 1848 Carey faced the problem of a further and different kind of labor insubordination. No longer that of workers on strike in Northeastern cities, against which he had politically and scientifically battled in the 1830s, but that enacted by workers migrating in growing numbers to seek a piece of land in the West. In fact, while the first U.S. labor movement had lost its momentum, since the 1830s the Westward migration of white workers had been accelerating, provoking a process of «depopulation» and «dispersion» in the main economic centers of the East that Carey blamed upon the United States' increasing economic dependency from Great Britain. It was therefore the observation of the obstacles to U.S. development posed by the undisciplined movements of U.S. workers and by a hierarchical world market that led Carey to rethink, in the span of a decade, the political prerequisites of his economic theory. In fact, if in the 1830s Carey had described *laissez faire* as the only «true doctrine», since the late 1840s he started advocating protectionism as a means of restoring the natural laws of development distorted by British free trade. Only through an equal and opposite intervention, then, Carey argued, could the United States gain their economic independence, slow down Westward migration and foster the overall accumulation of capital.

Carey's protectionist turn in the 1840s represented the starting point for the elaboration of a broader conception of the state as an engine of capitalist development, which this chapter seeks to highlight, by investigating his writings on protection and on money between 1848 and 1855. The chapter argues that out of these writings emerged, although never explicitly, a vision of the state as an indispensable political tool to stimulate capitalist development, to affirm U.S. economic independence and later to project U.S. imperial power. More precisely, Carey vested the state with the role of supporting the affirmation of capital as a social relation within the national market in order to reshape the position of the United States within the world market. To do so, the state had to shape a localized, small-scale form of accumulation, to discipline the movements of labor and to guarantee the equation between production and consumption, so as to prevent both dispersion and class conflict. Thus, by depicting protectionism and its effects on production, consumption and money as the foundation of development and of its ordered unfolding, Carey placed the state's

¹ Henry Charles Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1848), 431–32.

economic role at the very center of capitalism and of its the mechanisms of production and reproduction, and not only in its dawning phase but also in its ordinary functioning. A state, therefore, immersed within capital so as to foster its accumulation.

In recent decades, historiography has removed the American state from the shadow in which exceptionalism had relegated it, reconstructing its decisive role in nineteenth-century economic development. Both histories of the state and histories of capitalism have proven the centrality of state intervention in the growth of manufacturing, in territorial enlargement and in infrastructure building through the grant of monopolies, the regulation of trade and markets, the legal protection of property, the use of violence and the disciplining of labor, both black and white². At the same time, it has only rarely studied how this developmental role of the state was theorized by contemporary U.S. economic thought, even when taking into account the conceptual dimension of state-building³. Thus, this chapter aims to contribute to an intellectual history of the state within the history of capitalism, by showing that the emergence of the American state's developmental role in the early nineteenth century, was not only a practical response to contingent obstacles, but also the object of a theoretical reflection on the relationship between state and capital brought forward by the nascent U.S. economic science, by Carey but also by Daniel Raymond and Friedrich List before him.

The introduction reconstructs the early-nineteenth-century U.S. economic context observed by Carey, mainly the problems of Westward movement and of U.S. economic dependency, as well as the ideas of his predecessors in imagining the state's developmental role, mainly Daniel Raymond, Friedrich List and his father Mathew Carey. The first part focuses on *The Past, the Present, and the Future* (1848), in which Carey deepened his vision of the natural laws of development and called for a tariff in order to allow their functioning. This first part argues that, by calling for protection against the unrestrained westward movement and against British free trade, Carey understood the state's intervention as the condition of possibility for the government of labor's movements and for the realization of his concentrated, integrated, small-scale, but nonetheless hierarchical vision

² Among a vast literature see in particular: Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); William J. Novak, *The People's Welfare. Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Max M. Edling, *A Revolution in Favor of Government. The Origins of the United States Constitution and the Making of the American State* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton. A Global History* (New York: Knopf, 2014); Gary Gerstle, *Liberty and Coercion: The Paradox of American Government from the Founding to the Present* (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015); Ariel Ron, *Grassroots Leviathan: Northern Agricultural Reform in the Slaveholding Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020).

³ William J. Novak, "The Myth of the 'Weak' American State," *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 3 (June 2008): 752–72; Brian Balogh, *A Government Out of Sight. The Mystery of National Authority in Nineteenth-Century America* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 18–150.

of development. The second part takes into account both *The Harmony of Interests* (1851) and Carey's following newspaper articles on protection and on money, reconstructing his critique of British free trade and his protectionist argument that described the tariff as a fundamental instrument for stimulating production, for building U.S. independence, for increasing wages and for guaranteeing monetary abundance. Here, the chapter argues that Carey's protectionism revealed a vision of the state as an engine of development, but also as an instrument for balancing the economic system, by determining the simultaneous growth of consumption and production through the constant expansion of the money supply to guarantee the reproduction of capital as a social relation. The state thus appeared as a fundamental actor in guaranteeing the conditions of accumulation on an ever-expanding scale. Finally, the last part shows the imperial and expansionist meaning of Carey's theories of protection and money, arguing that the state's economic role he envisioned was not only aimed at affirming capitalism within the nation and at building U.S. independence, but also, by creating a positive balance of trade through industrial development, at projecting U.S. imperial power within the world market.

Introduction: U.S. Capitalism, the World Market and the Problem of Independence.

Since the last decades of the seventeenth century, the integration of U.S. economy into the world market had been accelerating, driven by the increasing prices of wheat and cotton and by the ensuing growth of agricultural production for export. Slavery had played a crucial role in this integration, particularly after the explosion in demand for cotton by British industries, which had transformed it into a highly profitable and rationalized system of labor exploitation, reinforcing it as the racial, legal and financial institution that grounded transatlantic industrial capitalism⁴. While a "second slavery" emerged in the South, in Northern rural areas the increasing global integration of local markets had triggered a commercialization of agricultural production for exportation that resulted in a progressive expropriation and proletarianization of small landowners. On the one hand, as already shown in chapter 1, this brought a process of urbanization that allowed for the affirmation of wage labor in the artisanal workshops of Northeastern cities, soon triggering the organization of the impoverished and increasingly exploited journeymen mechanics. On the other hand, and at the same time, the commercialization of agriculture resulted in an increasing westward flow of workers who sought to escape capitalist labor relations. In the central decades of the

⁴ Robin Blackburn, *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights* (London: Verso, 2011); Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton. A Global History* (New York: Knopf, 2014); Javier Laviña and Michael Zeuske, eds., *The Second Slavery: Mass Slavery and Modernity in the Americas and in the Atlantic Basin* (Zürich-Berlin: Lit, 2013); Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2016); Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, eds., *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

nineteenth century, such an unrestrained movement, further fueled by European immigration, reached a scale so massive as to often produce a scarcity of workforce in Eastern manufacture, incentivizing the introduction of technological innovations and the recourse to female and child labor⁵. Thus, while the coming of capitalist labor and exchange relations had sufficed to create an urban class of workers dependent on wage labor in Northeastern cities, it was not enough to give way to a full-fledged industrialization, since the almost unlimited availability of land in the West had contributed to slow down industrial development in Eastern manufacturing centers, which were still predominantly rural. Even within a process of pauperization of the American working class, then, the poverty of labor was still not enough to stabilize industrial growth.

Other factors contributed to prevent U.S. manufactures from competing with the lower prices and higher quality of British and European finished commodities⁶. Despite a decided move of merchant capital into industrial production in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, particularly in the Northeast and around Boston⁷, early U.S. manufacturing still proceeded on heterogeneous paths in different contexts, creating a variety of manufacturing systems, from small mills in the countryside, to industries in cities like Lowell, to diversified manufactures in New York and Philadelphia, to some attempts of slavery-based industry in the South, which struggled to connect to each other and to gain market segments⁸. Most crucially, the specific shape of the U.S. integration into the world market, driven by exportations of raw materials, had made U.S. economy further reliant on British markets and their demand. In fact, the increase in exportations of grain from Midwestern prairies and of cotton from slavery plantations on one side and the growing reliance upon British capital investments for funding U.S. public debt, manufactures, infrastructures and banks on the other had been making U.S. economy extremely vulnerable to fluctuations in British demand, to global variations of prices and to instabilities on foreign markets⁹. In addition, U.S. economy was largely made up of regionalized and disconnected markets, which had been opening to international trade at different paces and on different grounds, following increasingly incompatible routes of economic development¹⁰. In the first decades of the nineteenth century,

⁵ Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 188–98.

⁶ A. G. Hopkins, *American Empire. A Global History* (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 162–67.

⁷ Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 147.

⁸ Walter Licht, *Industrializing America: The Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

⁹ Hopkins, *American Empire*, 165–72.

¹⁰ Marc Egnal, *Clash of Extremes. The Economic Origins of the Civil War* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009); Brian Schoen, *The Fragile Fabric of Union. Cotton, Federal Politics, and the Global Origins of the Civil War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

then, the United States still struggled to assert its autonomous manufacturing production, while being increasingly exposed to financial instability¹¹.

All such problems had precipitated after the end of the Anglo-American war in 1815, when the restoration of commerce with Great Britain flooded the U.S. market with British products, crushing those U.S. manufactures that had started to grow under the embargo and provoking an economic crisis that would result in the financial panic of 1819, which further exposed the frailties of the U.S. banking system and the reliance of its domestic market on foreign demand¹². In the following decade, the ensuing recession had triggered a movement of Northern manufacturers in favor of increased duties on imports to protect and stabilize domestic production, but also to reshape the U.S. position within the world market¹³. Henry's father, Mathew Carey, an Irish immigrant, publisher and protectionist advocate, assumed a prominent role as the movement's spokesman and public intellectual¹⁴. Framing the manufacturer's demands as a national urgency, he had argued that «the mighty question» was «whether we shall be really or nominally independent»: whether the United States should continue supporting a system that enriched and empowered foreign nations or whether it should build its own wealth and power¹⁵. Already Alexander Hamilton in his *Report on Manufactures* (1791), and several others after him, had warned about the political relevance of manufacturing development, which was crucial to guarantee «not only the wealth; but the independence and security of a Country»¹⁶. Thirty years later, Mathew Carey and Northern manufacturers insisted that the building of economic independence could not be left to the spontaneous action of the market, but had to be built politically by the state. It was therefore the government's «sacred duty» to regulate commerce so as to «guard the interests of the nation»¹⁷.

¹¹ Hopkins, *American Empire*, 142–90.

¹² Douglas A. Irwin, *Clashing over Commerce: A History of U.S. Trade Policy*, Markets and Governments in Economic History (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 126–30.

¹³ Irwin, 137.

¹⁴ On Mathew Carey (1760–1839), see: Kenneth W. Rowe, *Mathew Carey: A Study in American Economic Development* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1933); James N. Green, ““I Was Always Dispos'd to Be Serviceable to You, Tho' It Seems I Was Once Unlucky”: Mathew Carey's Relationship with Benjamin Franklin,” *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 11, no. 3 (2013): 545–56; Cathy Matson, “Mathew Carey's Learning Experience: Commerce, Manufacturing, and the Panic of 1819,” *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 11, no. 3 (2013): 455–85; Martin Öhman, “The Statistical Turn in Early American Political Economy: Mathew Carey and the Authority of Numbers,” *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 11, no. 3 (2013): 486–515; Phillip W. Magness, “The American System and the Political Economy of Black Colonization,” *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 37, no. 2 (June 2015): 187–202; Andrew Shankman, “Capitalism, Slavery, and the New Epoch: Mathew Carey's 1819,” in *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development*, ed. Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 243–61; Drew E. Vandecreek, “Strong Language: Mathew Carey, Sensibility, and the American State, 1819–1835,” *Journal of Policy History* 33, no. 2 (April 2021): 113–42.

¹⁵ Mathew Carey, *Addresses of the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of National Industry*, 6th ed. (Philadelphia: H. C. Carey & I. Lea, 1822), 9.

¹⁶ Alexander Hamilton, “Report on the Subject of Manufactures,” in *Writings*, ed. Joanne B. Freeman (New York: The Library of America, 2001), 647–735.

¹⁷ Carey, *Addresses of the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of National Industry*, 87.

In those same years the idea that development called into question the state's economic role was more explicitly and systematically theorized by two of the first economic thinkers in the United States, who had close ties to Mathew Carey and the protectionist movement. On the one hand, Daniel Raymond, who in 1820 published the first U.S. systematic economic treatise¹⁸ and on the other Friedrich List who, despite being of German origins, was self-trained as an economist in Philadelphia, where he lived between 1825 and 1832¹⁹. Moving from a critique to Adam Smith and to *laissez-faire*, Raymond and List had identified the state's «interfering social power»²⁰ as a fundamental tool in transforming the economic system towards industrialization and in unleashing the productive potential of national capitalism. Against the idea that the pursue of individual interests coincided with collective gains, Raymond and List had argued that the nation had its own specific economic interest, coinciding with the overall growth and diversification of national productive powers, that is with capitalist development²¹. In their perspective, it was the state's task to pursue the nation's interest by assuming both a regulative function, to restrict and discipline individual actions and commerce²², and a properly developmental function, to directly stimulate the increase and diversification of the nation's productive capacity, through protectionist duties, incentives for the introduction of machinery, and even public works²³. To List, this state-supported development, particularly through the growth of manufactures, was crucial in order to overcome that state of «economic vassalage» from Great Britain in which the United States had remained, to affirm its «full independence» and finally to exercise «an unexampled degree of power» in the world market²⁴. Inheriting and innovating the traditions of Anglo-Saxon republicanism on the one hand and German cameralism on the other, Raymond and List conceived the state's economic role not

¹⁸ On Daniel Raymond (1786-1849) see: Charles Patrick Neill, *Daniel Raymond. An Early Chapter in the History of Economic Theory in the United States* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1897); Paul K. Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity. America's First Political Economists* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 77–107; Allen Kaufman, *Capitalism, Slavery, and Republican Values: Antebellum Political Economists, 1819-1848* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982); Frank Petrella, “Daniel Raymond, Adam Smith, and Classical Growth Theory: An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of America,” *History of Political Economy* 19, no. 2 (June 1, 1987): 239–59.

¹⁹ On Friedrich List (1789-1846), see in particular: William Notz, “Frederick List in America,” *The American Economic Review* 16, no. 2 (June 1926): 249–65; Meuccio Ruini, *Federico List* (Milano: Giuffrè, 1961); Giovanni Zalin, “Protezionismo e sviluppo economico accelerato nel pensiero di Friedrich List e di Alessandro Rossi,” *Rassegna Economica* 44, no. 6 (1980): 1363–1407; W. O. Henderson, *Friedrich List, Economist and Visionary, 1789-1846* (London-Totowa: Cass, 1983); Keith Tribe, *Strategies of Economic Order. German Economic Discourse, 1750–1950* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 32–65; Onur U. Ince, “Friedrich List and the Imperial Origins of the National Economy,” *New Political Economy* 21, no. 4 (April 2016): 380–400; Flávio dos Santos Oliveira, “Friedrich List and the Political Foundations of the National Economy,” *History of Economic Ideas*, no. XXVI (2018); Harald Hagemann, Stephan Seiter, and Eugen Wendler, eds., *The Economic Thought of Friedrich List* (Abingdon-New York: Routledge, 2019).

²⁰ List, *Outlines of American Political Economy*, 27.

²¹ Raymond, *Elements of Political Economy. Volume I*, 33–46; List, *Outlines of American Political Economy*, 88–11.

²² Raymond, *Elements of Political Economy. Volume I*, 204–5; List, *Outlines of American Political Economy*, 28–29.

²³ Raymond, *Elements of Political Economy. Volume I*, 91–95; List, *Outlines of American Political Economy*, 19–20.

²⁴ List, 11-12.

simply as a principle of order, but also as a means to unleash the nation's productive potential so as to redefine its position in the international division of labor.

Raymond's, List's and Mathew Carey's vision was soon taken up by Henry Clay in formulating the Whig Party's American System program in 1824²⁵, which envisioned a program of protectionist duties, internal improvements and state-controlled Westward expansion that sought to overcome the obstacles to U.S. development. In the following years, the protectionist mobilization, particularly after the Harrisburg Convention of 1827, led to the passage of the tariff of 1828, which brought an unprecedented rise in import duties²⁶. Denounced by the South as a "tariff of abominations", it soon triggered the constitutional crisis over nullification with South Carolina in 1832, solved by a compromise, sponsored by Henry Clay, which envisaged a gradual tariff reduction. While the compromise allowed for the question to be excluded from public debates for almost a decade, even in the aftermath of the Panic of 1837, as soon as the final reduction went into force in 1842 the Whig majority in Congress reacted by passing a new tariff that reintroduced differential duties for manufactured goods, raising the level of overall duties and reopening a political clash over trade policy²⁷. Only four years later, however, a new reversal occurred. In 1846, in fact, the U.S. Congress, this time led by a Democratic majority, passed the tariff proposed by Treasury Secretary Robert Walker setting the lowest tariffs ever.

The decision was justified as a necessary adjustment in the attempt to cope with a major change happened a few months before. In January 1846, in fact, the British Parliament had abolished the Corn Laws, ending two centuries of agrarian protectionism and allowing national markets to be opened to the importation of foreign grain, thus definitively imposing British trade policy on a world scale, in the attempt to foster an international division of labor based on productive specialization²⁸. The Walker Tariff was therefore aimed at facilitating the full integration of U.S. economy into the new free-trade order. The combination of the two measures contributed to fueling agricultural production in the United States, but it further oriented U.S. economy toward the export of agricultural commodities, particularly cotton from the slaveholding South and wheat from the Mid-West, where farmers supported the tariff reduction in the context of rising demand and lower transportation costs. At the same time, the complete openness to global markets

²⁵ Henry Clay, *On American Industry. In the House of Representatives, March 30 and 31, 1824*, in *The Speeches of Henry Clay*, ed. By Calvin Colton, (New York, A. S. Barnes & Co., 1857), 254-294.

²⁶ Irwin, *Clashing over Commerce*, 145-47. *Proceedings of the General Convention, of Agriculturists and Manufacturers, and Others Friendly to the Encouragement and Support of the Domestic Industry of the United States* (1827).

²⁷ Irwin, 125-202.

²⁸ The Walker Tariff imposed the conversion of all specific duties into ad valorem duties, which therefore changed with prices and could easily be circumvented by underreporting prices. Walker's proposal was explicitly linked to the possible abolition of Corn Laws in Britain. Irwin, 189-91.

represented a further obstacle to the U.S. industrial take-off. While manufacturing production kept growing, overall in 1860 raw materials still accounted for 85% of U.S. exportations, while manufactured goods, particularly British, still represented approximately 66% of U.S. imports²⁹.

It was precisely observing these economic and political transformations, the increasingly subordinate U.S. integration into the world market, the obstacles to manufacturing development, the growing exposure of U.S. economy to financial instabilities, the massive Westward migration and the reopening of the conflict over trade policy, that during the 1840s Carey incubated his turn towards protectionism. If in his first writings he had ignored the problem of international trade, professing a generically *laissez-faire* and free-trade stand, in the following decade he profoundly reconsidered his positions. Already in the aftermath of the Panic of 1837 he had started to reflect on the crucial role assumed by Great Britain as the global «center of capital»³⁰ and on its growing influence on the U.S. financial stability, arguing that the Bank of England had played a crucial role in accelerating the crisis. Since «England is to the monetary system of the world what the heart is to the body», he wrote in 1838, «if London go wrong, the error is propagated throughout the world»³¹. Thus, it was a new understanding of the hierarchical and centralized structure of the world market that led Carey to rethink his vision of development and most crucially the role of the state within it. In doing so, he recovered the intellectual and political heritage of Raymond's, List's and his father's political economy, and more broadly of the protectionist *milieu* of Philadelphia in which he had grown up but which he had ignored in his first writings of the 1830s, when the labor movement represented the most immediate threat to U.S. capitalism and its social order.

While the chapter focuses on Carey's vision of the state's economic role, it should be said that in this phase the word «state» does not appear as such in his writings, albeit to refer to the «States» of the American Union. In fact, the historiographic tendency to overlook the state's decisive presence throughout U.S. history had its roots in nineteenth-century sources themselves, which for the most part refused to call the state by its own name, considering it too strongly associated to the European experience. The U.S. prevailing self-narrative, on the contrary, was precisely based on the idea of building a new experiment even from the point of view of political forms. However, the fact that the state was not called by its name does not mean that there was no U.S. concept of the state. On the contrary, a number of other concepts were deployed by Carey, as well as by other contemporary economic and political thinkers, to implicitly refer to the state even without naming it. Or, more

²⁹ Irwin, 191–93.

³⁰ Henry Charles Carey, *Answers to the Questions: What Constitutes Currency? What Are the Causes of Unsteadiness of the Currency? And What Is the Remedy?* (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1840), 3.

³¹ Henry Charles Carey, *The Credit System in France, Great Britain, and the United States* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1838), 115.

precisely, to conceal the problem of statehood while theorizing its necessity within capitalist development. In addition to «government», «general government» or «general home», there are two terms in particular that signal the question of statehood in Carey. The first one is «union», which was used to describe both the Union of the States and the increasing productive association among individuals, thus standing at the crossroads between the semantics of the state and of society, while showing their connection. The second is of course «protection», which in the course of Carey's reflection expanded its meaning from indicating a specific commercial policy to referring more broadly to the state's function of defending its citizens from external threats in exchange for their submission. It is therefore only by looking at other political concepts that a semantics of the state can be found in Carey's writings.

1. Natural Laws, Development and the State

1.1. The Natural Laws of Development: Increasing Returns, Concentration and Association

In 1848, after almost a decade of silence, Carey published *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, marking a turning point in his economic reflection. Since the preface, he declared that the purpose of the volume was to demonstrate the existence of a «simple and beautiful law of nature, governing man in all his efforts for the maintenance and improvement of his condition»³². An hitherto unknown law, as he wrote to John Calhoun in December 1847, «as universal, and as powerful as that of gravitation»³³. At the same time, he also acknowledged that the «operation of the laws of God» was currently prevented by several artificial obstacles, the «inventions' of man»³⁴. Before identifying the solution to the latter, however, to Carey it was necessary to present his new and more ambitious understanding of economic development and its natural laws, which occupied the large part of the volume.

The new law, whose «discovery» he claimed, consisted in a complete reversal of the principle of diminishing returns upon which classical political economy, Ricardo's in particular, had rested³⁵. While mainly focusing his attacks on the Malthusian principle of population, in the 1830s Carey had already criticized Ricardo moving from examples taken from the settlement of the West and doubting the idea that cultivation always started on the best soils, as well as that the land's productivity could not be increased³⁶. Here, however, Carey came to a full rejection of Ricardo and

³² Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 5.

³³ Henry C. Carey to John C. Calhoun, December 5, 1847, «Henry Charles Carey correspondence, 1824, 1846-1848» (collection 3671, folder 32), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

³⁴ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 5–6.

³⁵ Carey described his discovery as a sort of Copernican revolution in political economy, immodestly declaring that: «As Ptolemy was ultimately proved to be in error, so may Mr. Ricardo, at some time, be». Carey, 21.

³⁶ See Chapter 1.

of the agronomic principles that had grounded his theory of rent. In his perspective, in fact, individuals always and invariably passed from the poorer to the richer soils and could even constantly improve the productive capacity of the already cultivated ones. Through an allegory of progress, Carey thus described «the first settler, the Robison Crusoe of his day» who started working «alone», lacking instrumental capital but «provided however with a wife», in a context marked by an abundance of fertile land, which however he could not cultivate as it was covered «with immense trees that he cannot fell» or «swamps that he cannot drain»³⁷. Thus, to Carey the first settler was forced to commence «the work of cultivation far up the hill», on those lands so bare and poor that nothing had grown upon them spontaneously, but which at the same time were free from obstacles, and therefore immediately available³⁸. However, these lands could only guarantee him a «wretched and precarious subsistence»³⁹, which caused him to live «in constant dread of starvation»⁴⁰ and in which all the little he could produce was consumed⁴¹. In the poverty of isolation, there could be no surplus to exchange, let alone anything to accumulate.

Over time, however, in Carey's perspective, two factors, one technical and the other social, enabled the early settler to emerge from subsistence. The first consisted in the acquisition of instrumental capital and of the technical ability to build tools that enabled him to cut down trees and thus to bring «into activity a new soil» previously covered by a forest, or to dig deeper and thus take advantage of the greater fertility of the lower layers of the soil. «With each step down the hill», Carey explained, «he obtains still greater rewards for his labor, and at each he returns, with increased power, to the cultivation of the original poor soil»⁴². Not only, then, could capital enable the settler to obtain increasing returns extensively, with the move to more fertile soils, but to Carey it also enabled him to obtain increasing returns intensively, because of the enhanced productivity of the land initially cultivated. In both cases, he got a «larger return with less labor». The second factor consisted in the appearance of other individuals to cooperate with. Indeed, to Carey the settler's wife would start to give him children, and these children would begin to grow, up to the point where they could help him «in removing the obstacles by which his progress is impeded»⁴³. Thus, the settler would acquire the crucial advantage of «combination of exertion», thanks to which those jobs «to one man impracticable, become simple and easy when now attempted by himself and his half dozen sons». At the same time, the increasing productivity of land and labor allowed the father

³⁷ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 9.

³⁸ Carey, 10.

³⁹ Carey, 274.

⁴⁰ Carey, 247.

⁴¹ Carey, 157.

⁴² Carey, 94.

⁴³ Carey, 10–11.

to give each son «far more food than he alone could at first command», thus solving the problem of the increasing mouths to be fed through the increase in the number of arms to be put to work⁴⁴. At every step in the process, then, to Carey there was an overall increase in the «power of accumulation»⁴⁵.

Continuing his allegory, Carey depicted the heirs of the first settler as engaged in bringing constantly «new powers to their aid», further exploiting the nature around them, up to the point that «the water no longer is allowed to run to waste: the air itself is made to work»⁴⁶. At this point, the increasingly dense population of the «original settlement» could begin to expand along the valleys to create «new settlements», connected by roads to allow «intercourse» and «exchange». This, could trigger further infrastructural and technological development, leading to the construction of railroads and machines that could further facilitate production and exchange, increasing labor productivity and the power of accumulation on an ever-growing scale. Thus, the process of development described by Carey, grounded in the gradual but necessary transition to increasingly fertile soils, coincided with a process of colonization, in his view faithfully followed by the history of the «early settlement» of the United States, where, in fact, the first colonists had settled on the «rocky lands» of Massachusetts, that is, on the «soils of the Union least calculated for the production of food»⁴⁷, and then had gradually moved on to cultivate the more fertile soils of the interior. To Carey, the same happened in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, where, «with every step of our progress, we find cultivation descending the hills»⁴⁸. In some ways, Carey thus aimed at reversing Ricardo by naturalizing and universalizing the course of U.S. history. According to John Stuart Mill, it was precisely this attempt at generalizing his otherwise grounded critique that led Carey into a specular error⁴⁹.

Thus, in Carey's perspective, technological innovation and productive cooperation, or in other words capital and population, grounded the growing human power to extend cultivation to more

⁴⁴ Carey, 12.

⁴⁵ Carey, 13.

⁴⁶ Carey, 14.

⁴⁷ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 25.

⁴⁸ Carey, 30.

⁴⁹ Defending Ricardo against Carey's criticism in his *Principles of Political Economy*, John Stuart Mill acknowledged that «Mr. Carey has a good case against several of the highest authorities in political economy», Ricardo in particular, who enunciated the principle of diminishing returns «in too universal a manner» not taking into account the fact that «it is not true of the first cultivation in a newly settled country». Indeed, in this case, but only in this one, it was true for Mill that «land which requires a large outlay to render it fit for tillage must remain untilled». Thus, to Mill, Carey's critique captured a weakness in the Ricardian argument, but his «law of agricultural industry», under which labor would obtain «a perpetually increasing return» could in its turn constitute only a specific case of first settlements and could not be generalized. Moreover, Mill added, Ricardo did not really claim that the law of diminishing returns was operative «from the very beginning of society». John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy with Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy* [1871] (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909), 181–82.

fertile soils and to increase indefinitely the land's productive capacity, thus solving the Malthusian trap of population. Land and population, in other words, did not represent natural limits to accumulation but on the contrary its very foundations. Indeed, the existence of increasing returns further proved that «wealth tends to grow more rapidly than population»⁵⁰. Consequently, Carey concluded, «the time may arrive when the world will be so fully occupied that there will not be even standing room, but we may safely leave that distant future to the benevolent care of the Deity»⁵¹. Overturning Ricardo's and Malthus's economy of scarcity, then, Carey described development as a process of unlimited growth that could be constantly deepened intensively and extensively over time and space, with accumulated wealth becoming the foundation of further accumulation, made possible by a «constantly increasing return» achieved through a «decreasing severity of application»⁵². In the words of his disciple Erasmus Peshine Smith, in the first pages of *The Past, the Present, and the Future* Carey had the ambition to uncover «the permanent, inflexible, law of human progress»⁵³. More precisely, behind the allegory of settlement, Carey outlined a general theory of capital accumulation.

The discovery of increasing returns also allowed Carey to deepen his conception of land as a form of capital, already advanced in the 1830s, and more precisely as «a great machine» in the service of man, but an exceptional machine in that it was the only one that «improves by its use», while others tended to deteriorate⁵⁴. In fact, he argued, «the more an engine can be made to yield the worse it will become», while «the more the earth can be made to yield the better it will become»⁵⁵. The productive powers of the earth were thus the result of the «past labor» of all successive generations of individuals who had worked to improve it, and not of the «original and indestructible powers of the soil»⁵⁶ as Ricardo had argued. Therefore, Carey could also deny that a differential rent could emerge because of the scarcity of fertile land. On the contrary, it was only because of the steady increase in yields that the owner of land could claim a rent, which therefore coincided with a form of profit, with a remuneration for the labor and capital employed upon the land-machine⁵⁷.

⁵⁰ Carey, 66.

⁵¹ Carey, 77.

⁵² Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 14.

⁵³ Erasmus Peshine Smith, «Political Economists. Henry C. Carey», *American Whig Review* XII, n. 31 (July 1850): 377.

⁵⁴ Carey, 131. See also: «The earth is a great machine, given to man to be fashioned to his purpose. The more he fashions it, the better it feeds him, because each step is but preparatory to a new one more productive than the last; requiring less labor and yielding larger return. [...] With every operation connected with the fashioning of the earth, the result is the same. The first step is, invariably, the most costly one, and the least productive». Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 95.

⁵⁵ Carey, 129.

⁵⁶ David Ricardo, *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* [1817] (London: Dent & Sons, 1973), 33.

⁵⁷ «Rent is paid for the use of the improvements which labor has accomplished for, or on, land, and which constitute items of wealth. Wealth tends to augment with population, and the power of accumulating further wealth increases with constantly accelerating pace as new soils are brought into cultivation, each yielding in succession a larger return

Accordingly, but following a different metaphor, Carey described land as a «great labor savings' bank», whose value increased to the extent that man deposited labor and capital in it: «the only bank whose dividends are perpetually increasing, while its capital is perpetually doubling»⁵⁸. While reducing rent to profit and land to capital, Carey nevertheless described agriculture as the sole truly productive branch of economy. «The earth is the sole producer», he stated, while manufacturing and trade merely processed and circulated its products⁵⁹. Therefore, agriculture was also «the science that requires the greatest knowledge, and the one that pays best for it», Carey claimed, contributing to the spread of the discourse on scientific agriculture throughout the North⁶⁰. Thus, in Carey's theory of progress, land was not only decisive as a «great food producing machine», but as the very foundation of the «machinery of production» and of the process of capital accumulation in general.

The presence of the two factors, technical innovation and cooperation, that allowed to obtain increasing returns from the land, however, depended upon the affirmation of two principles that defined the social and spatial framework of development: the «concentration» of production, consumption and exchange on a local scale and the increasing «association» among individuals. In other words, to Carey only a local division and diversification of labor and only a growingly thick and cogent network of social relations could make development possible. What Carey called «concentration» consisted in a local-scale agglomeration of production and consumption, but also of agriculture and manufacturing. On the one hand, concentration had an agronomic relevance. In fact, by «placing the consumer by the side of the producer», it would allow a recycling process to give back to the soil «the refuse of its produce: the manure», that is the organic elements taken away from it by cultivation⁶¹. On the other hand, concentration had an economic and technical relevance. In fact, by placing manufactures by the side of agriculture, it would guarantee to the latter a supply of instruments and technological innovations indispensable to constantly improve the productivity of the machine-land. To Carey, it was only the presence of manufactures that, by providing farmers with increasingly technologically advanced working tools and chemically processed fertilizers, could make agriculture scientific⁶². Moreover, the presence of manufactures would guarantee the emergence of a «market at home» for agricultural producers, avoiding the need

to labor. Rent tends, therefore, to increase in amount with the growth of wealth and population». Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 62.

⁵⁸ Carey, 99.

⁵⁹ Carey, 98.

⁶⁰ Ariel Ron, *Grassroots Leviathan: Northern Agricultural Reform in the Slaveholding Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020).

⁶¹ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 99–103. On Carey's «manure theory»: Ron, *Grassroots Leviathan*, 98–103; Ariel Ron, «Henry Carey's Rural Roots, 'Scientific Agriculture,' and Economic Development in the Antebellum North», *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 37, no. 2 (June 2015): 263–75.

⁶² Ron, *Grassroots Leviathan*, 96–98.

to resort to long-distance trade, with all its transportation costs and uncertainties. Against Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage and of an international division of labor that required each country to specialize into one or a few forms of production, according to Carey's principle of «concentration» the division and diversification of labor had to happen on a local scale, in every small urban and rural center. This would establish a balanced relationship of interdependence between agriculture and manufacturing, allowing both to produce more. Concentration was thus the localized form that the economy had to take to ensure an ever-increasing accumulation of wealth.

Carey thus imagined a developing economy centered on a myriad of diversified local markets interacting within themselves and among each other, but without ever forming a center. This vision brought a redefinition of the relationship between the time and the space of development. The speed of the accumulation process, in fact, to Carey appeared inversely proportional to the distance that separated production, exchange and consumption. Conversely, the more localized the economic process became, the less the recourse to the «machinery of exchange» and the greater the growth of the «machinery of production» would thus be⁶³. While the «solitary settler» had to transport his products «to the place of exchange, distant, perhaps, fifty miles», as production diversified the place of exchange came closer to him, creating an «on the spot» market that could make his labor more productive, allowing him to devote more time to the further improvement of the land⁶⁴. Accumulation thus accelerated insofar as it was possible to nullify the space that divided production, exchange and consumption.

To Carey, the temporal dimension of development had the priority over its spatial dimension. In other words, development and accumulation constituted a problem of time, with respect to which space stood as an interference to be removed as much as possible. The more the economic process could take place within a limited space, the more it could grow and project itself over time. This prioritization of time over space also meant that the process of colonization, which in Carey's perspective was coextensive with development, had to proceed according to the time dictated by accumulation. Any move towards the cultivation of new lands had in fact to take place only and exclusively when the attainment of a certain threshold of wealth and population would have made it possible and advantageous. Thus, to Carey, the movement of colonization could not be the

⁶³ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 103.

⁶⁴ «With each year there is an increasing tendency toward having the consumer placed side by side with the producer; and with each he can devote more and more of his time and mind to the business of fashioning the great instrument; and thus the increase of consuming population is essential to the progress of production. [...] The nearer the place of exchange or conversion can be brought to the place of production, the less is the loss in the process, and the greater the power of accumulating wealth for the production of further wealth». Carey, 99–100.

engine of accumulation, but it had necessarily to be its consequence. Even in the American West, colonization had thus to proceed slowly and gradually so as not to undermine the concentrated character of development. Wealth growth acted as an «attractive power of prodigious force»⁶⁵, like a gravitational force that was both centripetal and centrifugal, on the one hand attracting individuals around communities where population and wealth existed in order to concentrate production and consumption locally, and on the other hand pushing them out of them the moment it was possible and advantageous to cultivate new lands⁶⁶.

At the same time, the increase of production required an intensification of cooperative interactions among individuals, what Carey defined as «association», or «voluntary union»⁶⁷. In the previous decade, the term «association» had had a wide circulation in the United States, thanks to cooperative experiments in the Northern countryside fostered by the followers of Charles Fourier's doctrines, particularly Albert Brisbane and Horace Greeley⁶⁸. To Carey, «association» indicated first and foremost the creation of a social bond aimed at productive cooperation. In his perspective, the interactions that took place in the sphere of the market and production were not merely economic transactions devoid of constraints between separate and indifferent subjects, but on the contrary relations that established a social tie. As development progressed, individuals thus found themselves embedded in an increasingly dense and cogent network of relations that strengthened their own individuality, their wealth and their freedom⁶⁹. To Carey, in others words, in the course of development, individuality became increasingly social. While the «first settler» was poor precisely because he was «isolated» and thus constantly in danger of being «enslaved by any other stronger than himself»⁷⁰, it was through an intensifying exchange and «combination of exertions» with other

⁶⁵ Carey, 320.

⁶⁶ «Such is the course of man. He stops and labours; and wealth begins to grow. He builds houses; and population and wealth increase. He sends forth the little shoots, while the few houses become a town. Wealth and population again increase, and he is enabled to descend deeper into the earth, from which he derives increased supplies. The town becomes a city, whose wealth exerts a force of attraction upon the population around, in the ratio which its own mass bears to the mass to be acted upon. [...] Man, therefore, like all other matter, once in motion, tends to continue his onward course, but is invariably attracted by wealth: and thus is he subjected to forces similar to those which keep in order the great planetary system: the centripetal and the centrifugal: and find him where we may, he will be seen advancing toward civilization more or less rapidly, precisely in the ratio of the existence and perfect balance of these opposing forces». Carey, 316.

⁶⁷ «With the growth of population and wealth, the better soils are cultivated, and men are enabled to live closer to each other: and voluntary union tends gradually to supersede the involuntary». Carey, 213.

⁶⁸ On Fourierism in the United States, see: Luther L. Bernard and Jessie Bernard, *Origins of American Sociology. The Social Science Movement in the United States* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1943).

⁶⁹ «With every step in the growth of wealth and population, we see evidence of an increasing tendency to union among the people, because of the constant augmentation of the means of production, intercourse, and exchange: and freedom follows union. With every such step, the power of the laborer over the product of his labor [...] has increased, while the power of the land and its representatives to control the movement of society, has diminished». Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 218.

⁷⁰ Carey, 212.

individuals that he could gradually emerge from poverty and subsistence⁷¹. The growth of population, then, by nurturing the possibilities of association, stood as a fundamental stepstone of development and the attitude toward it represented an index of the degree of civilization achieved by a certain community. In fact, while the «insignificant tribe of savages» who cultivated the poorest land looked «with jealous eyes on every intruder, knowing that each mouth requiring to be fed tends to increase the difficulty of obtaining a subsistence», in contrast the «farmer» rejoiced at each new arrival. «Give to the poor tribe spades», Carey concluded, «and the power of association will begin»⁷².

To Carey, however, the economic relevance of the process of association also had a more specific meaning. In fact, revisiting Tocqueville's depiction of «voluntary associations» as «the essential characteristic of self-government» in America⁷³, Carey argued that development in the United States was made possible by the exceptional possibility to create collective enterprises for the purpose of investment in banks, manufactures or railroads. A possibility that was open to «all the little capitalists of the neighborhood, shoemakers and sempstresses, farmers and lawyers, widows and orphans»⁷⁴. Carey's «association» and the «tendency to union», then, did not only take the form of productive cooperation between individuals, but also that of joint-stock companies to combine and aggregate of capital for investment. Behind the term «association» thus emerged the profile of the «corporation», that Carey had already indicated as a fundamentally democratic instrument of individual accumulation and improvement in the 1830s, calling for general acts of incorporation to guarantee a perfect freedom of capital. Here, corporations, particularly because of the limited liability they granted to investors, were presented by Carey as fundamental institutional instruments of development, since they allowed to concentrate capitals for investment and to involve in the process of accumulation even the smallest owners, thus both democratizing the access to credit and investment and extending the reach and penetration of market relations⁷⁵. This way, the corporation could not only foster the accumulation of wealth, but also keep individuals materially

⁷¹ It should be noted here that Carey began to construct a conceptual opposition between the lexicon of poverty, slavery, barbarism and isolation on the one hand, and the lexicon of wealth, freedom, civilization, population and society on the other. On the basis of this dichotomy, slavery, a necessary outcome of poverty and isolation, could be presented by Carey as a problem of backwardness in development, that is, as a strictly economic, universal and therefore not specifically U.S. problem. This vision would ground his opposition to the abolitionists. For a treatment of Carey's vision of slavery, see Chapter 3.

⁷² Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 80.

⁷³ Carey, 227.

⁷⁴ Carey, 229.

⁷⁵ «The great merchant, the little capitalist, the skilful manufacturer, the foundry-master, the engineer, the workman, and the girl who tends the loom, unite in the ownership of the immense mill: and millions of yards of cloth are furnished to the world by this combined effort on the part of individuals who, if they worked alone, could not have supplied thousands. The property-holders of the city, and the little capitalists, are everywhere seen combining their exertions for the construction of roads and the building of steamboats, by the use of which the habit of union is increased». Carey, 288–89.

united on a local scale, since, he argued, «wealth thus produces union» just as «union in turn produces wealth». Thus, in a phase when many state legislatures were removing obstacles and requirements to the creation of corporations (such as the performance of public purposes), not only Carey contributed to the shift towards an understanding of the corporation as a purely capitalist enterprise solely aimed at making a profit⁷⁶, but he also presented the access to it as a fundamental «democratic right». In fact, describing the collective investment possibilities of New England's «little capitalists», Carey commented that «such is democracy»⁷⁷. Thus, the corporation appeared as a fundamental institution of his vision of a locally concentrated and integrated development, but also as a crucial pillar of his reinterpretation of the United States as a democracy of capital.

In this respect, Carey attributed to the term «association» a broader, political meaning, by systematically equating it to the term «union», which in the mid-nineteenth century was commonly used to refer to the Union of American States. In fact, describing the process of association that fostered development through cooperation and that at the same time was strengthened by it, Carey also depicted the emergence of a political «union» among individuals. Indeed, with the growth of «daily intercourse», individuals would start to interact with each other even in matters different from production and exchange, collectively addressing problems and needs that they could not solve by themselves. A church, school and library could be established «for their own joint use», arrangements could be made «for the maintenance of perfect security of person and property» and «for the settlement of differences», and «contributions» could be collected in order to meet the necessary expenses of all. A «community» would emerge, in which «all work and all pay, and hence the work and the pay fall lightly upon each»⁷⁸. Over time, with the further spread of cultivation, the various communities themselves would come into contact with each other to establish exchange relationships, to build infrastructure that connected them, and finally to give themselves common rules, entering into an ever closer form of «union», up to the point when «a government is formed»⁷⁹. This political association, in Carey's perspective, would have the shape of a «pyramid»

⁷⁶ Pauline Maier, «The Revolutionary Origins of the American Corporation», *The William and Mary Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (January 1993): 51–84; Richard E. Wright, «Capitalism and the Rise of the Corporation Nation», in *Capitalism Takes Command: The Social Transformation of Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Michael Zakim and Gary J. Kornblith (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 146–68; Naomi R. Lamoreaux and William J. Novak, eds., *Corporations and American Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017).

⁷⁷ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 230–31.

⁷⁸ Carey, 285.

⁷⁹ «With the establishment of intercourse among these little communities, the tendency to union, so well begun in each, is seen to spread. Each grows in wealth and population, and intercourse becomes more frequent; and next we find them all combining for the making of roads, or canals, the founding of colleges, and other works calculated to promote the common good. The union becomes more complete: and rules are adopted for the determination of the relations of the several communities, and of those of the members of each, with each other: and thus by degrees a government

that in many ways resembled the federal shape of the American State, in which each level had a decreasing relevance for individuals: «first stands the home. Next the common home of the original community: and, lastly, the general home of the several communities». If in the first man could find «its chief source of happiness» and in the second «the means of augmenting that happiness», in the third he could find only the instruments for the «regulation of affairs of general interest»⁸⁰. Consequently, although «general laws are formed», nevertheless «local regulations remain untouched», so that each small community preserved «its perfect individuality» which was strengthened by union with its neighbors, since «the union of all adds to the *power* of each». Each community thus had «its own government for all matters appertaining to its members», while submitting «to the general rules» to manage relations with its neighbors.

«In time, twenty, thirty, fifty, or a hundred of these little communities, at first scattered over the land, and separated by broad tracts of forest [...] are brought into connection with each other: and these numerous little pyramids now form a great pyramid, or State. Perfect concentration, however, still exists. Local rules still govern local interests, and local judges decide local differences. [...] The State, thus formed, is neighbour to another little State: and with the further growth of population and wealth intercourse arises, and a new union is now formed; each, however, still preserving its local organization and its laws. [...] Each grows again: and within each the little pyramids rise, increasing in height and breadth and density: and again arise new unions with other and more distant little States: and with each step wealth and population advance more rapidly. The great union acquires strength from the increasing strength of the various parts of which it is composed; and the little unions acquire it, because of the perfect concentration of their local concerns»⁸¹

Thus, to Carey development would give rise to a state organized according to the same principles that simultaneously shaped the economy and society. Most crucially, a state grounded on «self-government», in which almost everything could be managed at the individual or local level, where «each man minds his own business, and superintends the application of the proceeds of his own labor». Thus, a social and political «machine» which «moves itself, for each man moves his share» and in which therefore «the work is done, yet it is difficult to see by whom»⁸². The state described by Carey thus appeared rooted in the dynamics of «concentration» and «association», interpenetrated into society and co-extensive with it, and for that very reason scarcely visible, but nonetheless present at every level. Thus, if association was to Carey indispensable to guarantee the constant increase of accumulation, the state, as the «general association»⁸³, also emerged as a

is formed. General laws now embrace the whole of the various societies constituting this new pyramid, which now surmounts the whole». Carey, 287.

⁸⁰ Carey, 287.

⁸¹ Carey, 288–89.

⁸² Carey, 431–32.

⁸³ Carey, 296.

necessary condition of that same development. Or, more precisely, if the concentrated and integrated shape of development required an ever closer social tie among individuals, to Carey the state represented the ultimate form to guarantee it. Carey thus conceived economic development as a process that did not only bring about the accumulation of capital, but at the same time had to produce a specific form of social and political relations. In particular, it had to continuously produce and reproduce «union», both in the sense of unity among individuals who associated for productive purposes and in the sense of political unity in the State, in order to ensure the continuation of accumulation on an increasing scale. In this respect, Carey, while describing the natural laws that spontaneously and necessarily determined economic development, at the same time posed the problem of the extra-economic conditions of accumulation, grasping how it required a specific form of social and political relations in order to take place and expand. Social and political conditions that, however, to Carey could not actually be reproduced spontaneously by themselves, but had to be artificially guaranteed by the state itself.

1.2. The Hierarchies of Development: Labor, Dispossession and Separate Spheres.

The discovery of increasing returns allowed Carey to further ground his vision of a harmony of social interests, as well as his legitimation of social hierarchies. «Mr. Ricardo's system is one of discords», he attacked, tending «to the production of hostility among classes and nations». A system that had the demerit of «teaching the laborer that the interests of the land-owner are to be promoted by every measure tending to produce starvation and misery»⁸⁴, and that for this reason could be read, as workers in the 1820s and 1830s had done, as a «manual of the demagogue»⁸⁵. On the contrary, the existence of increasing returns in Carey's perspective eroded the «single fact» on which the entire Ricardian theoretical edifice had been based⁸⁶, thus denying the existence of social conflict⁸⁷. More broadly, Carey's vision of development allowed him to describe man not as «the victim of a sad necessity», as Ricardo and Malthus had done, but as a being enjoying an «increasing power»⁸⁸. However, in Carey's perspective development, despite being represented as a process of increasing prosperity and individual power, still rested upon the strengthening of class, racial and sexual hierarchies.

First, while describing increasing returns and growing accumulation as the foundation of individual improvement within a classless society, as he had already done in the 1830s, he more explicitly than

⁸⁴ Carey, 74-75.

⁸⁵ Carey, 75.

⁸⁶ Carey, 23.

⁸⁷ Carey, 57-76.

⁸⁸ Carey, 24.

ever affirmed that such path of social mobility was predicated on the workers' submission to the command of labor. Carey once again portrayed U.S. society as a structure characterized by fluid hierarchies and continuous social mobility, both upward for those who worked diligently and downward for those who did not work hard enough. «In America», he wrote, «every one feels that he can “go ahead” if he *will*, and everybody, therefore, does», warning that «those who are “ahead” must work to keep so. If they pause but for moment they are left behind; and this is equally true, intellectually and physically»⁸⁹. It was this generalized possibility of improvement and the consequent incentive to work that for Carey made U.S. workers «the greatest accumulators of the world»⁹⁰. In other words, according to E. P. Smith, Carey's «law of distribution», engrained within the dynamics of value, allowed the «middle class» to grow «by accessions from below, by persons climbing up from the *status* of laborers without capital to that of laborers with little capital, and then with more»⁹¹. However, Carey explained, the same providential benevolence that had given mankind such opportunities for social mobility, provided by a land endowed with potentially unlimited productive powers, had also forced it to productive labor.

«The Deity has given him [man] the command of a great laboratory, in which exist all the elements of production, waiting only the application of the physical and mental powers with which he has been endowed, to render them available for his purpose. The gift was accompanied with the command to labour, that he might have food for himself and his children: to labour, that he might have clothing and shelter: to labour, that he might acquire knowledge: to labour, that he might enjoy leisure and repose»⁹².

If man wanted to improve his condition, Carey concluded, «he must work»⁹³. Thus, acceptance of labor and of the existing class hierarchies represented the fundamental condition of possibility for rising within society, since labor, in the mid-nineteenth-century United States increasingly meant wage labor. Moreover, since *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, began to gradually abandon the republican conception of self-employment that was still dominant in his 1830s writings, and a gradual shift toward a liberal conception of labor as a commodity to be traded on the market. Thus, the description of U.S. classlessness began to be joined with that of a capitalist labor market, in which the individual's freedom no longer coincided with his autonomy outside the market and its relations of dependence, but with the possibility of choosing to which master he would sell his labor. In this respect, Carey started to describe the exceptional character of U.S. society as

⁸⁹ Carey, 151.

⁹⁰ Carey, 151-52.

⁹¹ Erasmus Peshine Smith, “Protection vs. Free Trade. The Law of Progress in the Relations of Capital and Labor”, *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine & Commercial Review* XXV, n. 5 (November 1851): 545.

⁹² Carey, 139.

⁹³ «The laws of nature require that if man would improve his condition he must work, and he must let others work in peace». Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 38.

consisting not only in the possibility of improvement, but in a labor market unfettered by regulations. In no other country in the world, he wrote, «is the capitalist, large and small, so free to invest his accumulations at his pleasure». And again, «in none is the laborer so free to select his employer. In none is the employer so free to discharge his laborer. In none is the reward of labor so great»⁹⁴. Such vision, however, concealed that the «association» between capital and labor was actually grounded on a hierarchical power relation that allowed for the latter's exploitation.

Second, the process of development, involving a process of colonization through which settlers slowly but steadily imposed «civilization» on the «wilderness» of the North American continent, had a strong racial connotation in presupposing the dispossession and removal of Native Americans and previous inhabitants. «In their progress west», he wrote, settlers «have encountered decaying tribes of savages, whose vanity has sometimes produced war»⁹⁵. These «occasional difficulties», however, did not prevent «the change of occupants» from taking place «with less trouble and less effusion of blood, than has been witnessed in any other portion of the world»⁹⁶. Carey thus concealed the systematic recourse to violence, genocide, deportations and population control by U.S. settlers and the federal government in the attempt to dispossess Natives from their land⁹⁷, while justifying their removal upon the grounds of the white man's superior labor productivity and capacity for accumulation. Indeed, he argued, while «the white man brought with him the love of labor; the habit of order and economy, and the consequent power of accumulating wealth», in contrast «the habits of the savage are [...] wasteful. He hates labor, and he loves rum and war; and he cannot avail himself of the advantages that are offered to him by civilization»⁹⁸.

Following a recurring argument in the modern legitimization of colonization, Carey thus justified the dispossession of native land by describing their supposed inability to cultivate it through labor and asserting their inability to legitimately claim title to its property: «the millions of acres belonging to the savage are valueless. He starves, surrounded by rich meadows, covered with the finest timber. The white man approaches, and roads are made: and land acquires some value»⁹⁹. It was this process of violent dispossession of natives, legitimized as a necessary outcome of progress, that constituted for Carey the specificity of the U.S. form of colonization. Unlike Britain and France, in fact, he maintained that the United States «desire no subject», expanding by creating sub-units in which «the colonists are equal with the people of the States from which they sprang, and hence the quiet

⁹⁴ Carey, 259.

⁹⁵ Carey, 223.

⁹⁶ Carey, 116.

⁹⁷ Paul Frymer, *Building an American Empire. The Era of Territorial and Political Expansion* (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017), 128–71.

⁹⁸ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 346–47.

⁹⁹ Carey, 347.

and beautiful action of the system». The dispossession of natives was thus also the material precondition for the legal equality granted to the states by the federal form in its expansion¹⁰⁰. Unlike Britain and France, then, to Carey the United States, true to its anti-colonial foundation, did not impose a subordinate relationship to natives, but rather removed them. That is, they did not attempt to govern differences, cultivating the ambition, always frustrated, to erase them and build a racially homogeneous national community¹⁰¹.

Finally, Carey's vision of development involved an increasing subordination of women within the family and thus the strengthening of sexual hierarchies as indispensable to increased accumulation. The family was the basic element of the social and political edifice described by Carey, enclosed in the space of the «home», in which the «man» possessed «*his own* land, and his *own* house, upon which he concentrates his exertions for *his own* physical improvement; and *his own* wife, and his *own* children, in whom center his hopes of happiness»¹⁰². To Carey, «concentration» precisely meant prioritizing this space above all others, which consequently took on a foundational character for the development process. As Carey wrote in an article from 1850, the family stood «at the beginning of trade» and in this sense «long precedes the nation». The «home» in which the family lived was thus the space of an exchange between the husband, who offered «his services in the raising of food and the materials of clothing» and the wife «employed in the preparation of food for the table, and the conversion of raw materials into clothing»¹⁰³. It was this sexual division of labor that grounded, in Carey's perspective, the social division of labor within the community. The home in which this division took place, however, was described by Carey as a separate, hierarchical space grounded upon the subordination of women to men. Carey's political economy was in fact part of that ideological reinterpretation of the social role of women through which, in the first half of the nineteenth century, liberal political thought outlined a doctrine of separate spheres that, starting from the biological differences between men and women, aimed at naturalizing their distinct social roles and, in particular, at naturalizing the home as a feminine space, as well as at re-legitimizing her dependence on the husband and her subordination to male domination, at the very moment when women's employment outside the home threatened to challenge them¹⁰⁴. This

¹⁰⁰ Adam Dahl, *Empire of the People. Settler Colonialism and the Foundations of Modern Democratic Thought*, American Political Thought (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018), 24–26.

¹⁰¹ Paul Frymer has explained that the government used land policies to regulate the pace and scale of settlement in order to build white majorities in contested territories in order to secure political control before expanding compactly. In this respect, to Frymer «the building of an American empire, therefore, was a project of population control and settlement with land policy very much at the center». Frymer, *Building an American Empire*, 9–10.

¹⁰² Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 289.

¹⁰³ Henry Charles Carey, «What Constitute Real Freedom of Trade?», *American Whig Review* XII, n. 32 (August 1850): 130.

¹⁰⁴ On domesticity and the doctrine of separate spheres in the nineteenth-century United States, see: Barbara L. Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan

reinterpretation was urged by the capitalist transformation of U.S. economy, in which the processes of industrialization and commercialization were destroying the household as a productive nucleus, on the one hand turning the home into a merely reproductive workplace, but at the same time forcing working-class women to go to work outside the home in order to supplement the family income. It was precisely this twofold process of constructing the home as a specifically feminine place and simultaneously putting women to work outside the home that made an ideological redefinition of their role all the more compelling.

The founding element of the doctrine of separate spheres thus lied in the ideological construction of the home as a physical space and of domesticity as a set of occupations to which women would be more naturally inclined, as well as the opposition of the home as a private space to the public-political space of society and the State. The most clearcut formulation of this doctrine had been proposed by Alexis de Tocqueville in describing the American woman in the second part of *Démocratie en Amérique*. «The Americans», Tocqueville had written, «have applied to the two sexes the great principle of political economy which reigns today in industry. They carefully distinguished the functions of man and woman in order that the great social work might be better performed»¹⁰⁵. To Tocqueville, Americans understood that equality could not erase a difference that seemed to have «its eternal foundations in nature», but had instead to value it by separating the social roles of men and women. If the establishment of democracy brought for Tocqueville a general transformation of power relations in the family, erasing the political mediating role proper to the father-husband in aristocratic societies, it was the democratization of society itself that confined the American woman to the domestic space and subordinated her to the husband. In fact, in addition to being functionally separated, to Tocqueville the spheres also had to be carefully ordered hierarchically. In this respect, democracy must not bring «the overthrow of marital power», since «in the small society composed of husband and wife, as in the large political society, the purpose of democracy is to regulate and legitimize the necessary powers, not to destroy all power»¹⁰⁶. Thus, as it crossed the threshold of the home, far from challenging patriarchy as a form of domination,

University Press, 1986); Nancy Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood. "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Mary P. Ryan, *The Empire of the Mother. American Writing about Domesticity 1830-1860* (New York: Institute for Research in History and Haworth Press, 1982); Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," *American Literature* 70, no. 3 "No More Separate Spheres!" (September 1998): 581–606; Alice Kessler-Harris, *A Woman's Wage: Historical Meanings and Social Consequences*. (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1989); Raffaella Baritono, "Introduzione," in *Il Sentimento delle libertà. la dichiarazione di Seneca Falls e il dibattito sui diritti delle donne negli Stati Uniti di metà Ottocento* (Torino: La Rosa, 2001); Paola Rudan, *Donna. Storia e critica di un concetto polemico* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2020).

¹⁰⁵ A. de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* [1835-1840], it. tr. *La democrazia en America*, in Id., *Scritti politici*, (ed. N. Matteucci), vol. 2, Torino, UTET, 1968, pp. 704-705.

¹⁰⁶ A. de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, cit. p. 707.

American democracy had to appropriate it as a necessary power, to regulate and legitimize it, naturalizing the social roles of men and women¹⁰⁷.

Echoing these Tocquevillian pages, Carey also described the space of the home as the site of a separation and hierarchy between men and women. If in Tocqueville it was the affirmation of a specifically American equality that produced man and woman as functionally distinct and hierarchically ordered individuals, to Carey, it was economic development that distinguished the spheres and progressively deepened their separation. Carey thus identified man's improvement as a process that allowed him simultaneously to enrich himself, acquiring power, and to confine his wife to the domestic space. Thus, while the «savage» forced the woman to work, making her a productive partner, a mere «helpmate» of whom the man was «provided»¹⁰⁸, in contrast the civilized man could see in the woman an exclusively moral and affective partner who, thanks to his improvement, may not perform degrading work, limiting herself to domesticity. «He labours, that she may rest», Carey declared, «he economizes, that she may enjoy the comforts and luxuries of life»¹⁰⁹. In a period of increasing involvement of women in the capitalist labor market outside the home and in the same year of the Seneca Falls Convention¹¹⁰, through the doctrine of separate spheres Carey could thus conceal the reality of women's productive labor and rejected their claim for equality, by legitimizing their subordination in the space of the home. Man's labor outside the home was thus literally what maintained the woman in the home, both in the sense that it ensured her subsistence and in the sense that it ensured that the woman did not have to leave it. The man's work was what locked up the woman in the home, what produced a domesticity, a dependence and subjugation of the woman that would grow the more binding the more man could become free and enrich himself. Thus, if the United States was exceptional for their advancement in economic development, to Carey they were also exceptional because of the depth of the separation of the spheres and because of the strength of their hierarchical order.

In the United States, in fact, differently than in Europe, «the marriage tie is held sacred, and all because each man has, or can have, his own home, within which he is sole master: except so far as he defers its management to its mistress, whose control, within doors, is most complete; but there she stops»¹¹¹. Domesticity was thus the domain of specifically and naturally feminine occupations, but not even the home could be a space of women's power, since they had to manage and govern

¹⁰⁷ On family and the role of women in Tocqueville: Delba Winthrop, «Tocqueville's American Woman and 'The True Conception of Democratic Progress,'» *Political Theory* 14, no. 2 (May 1986): 239–61; Brunella Casalini, «Tocqueville e la famiglia nella costruzione dell'ordine politico liberale,» in *Patologie della politica* (Roma: Donzelli, 2003).

¹⁰⁸ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 9.

¹⁰⁹ Carey, 262.

¹¹⁰ Kessler-Harris, *A Woman's Wage*, Baritono, «Introduzione».

¹¹¹ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 276.

a home of which the man remained the sole owner and master. The home thus resulted to Carey at once the space of man's freedom and independence and the space of woman's submission and dependence, and it was the former insofar as it was the latter. The capitalist development described by Carey, then, far from producing increasing equality between men and women, stiffened sexual hierarchies within the home and thus throughout society as a whole. Indeed, it was precisely because of its separated and hierarchical character that the home could become, in Carey's view, the foundational element in the construction of society and the State, projecting onto them the power relations that existed within it. It is therefore relevant that the lexicon of home and domesticity entered powerfully into the political semantics with which Carey conceptualized the construction of society and the State through the principle of «concentration». Indeed, it can be said that in Carey's writings the lexicon of «home» largely prevailed over the lexicon of «nation» to denote the space within borders as opposed to the international space, in a recurring domestic analogy of political space¹¹². Carey thus deepened a semantic interpenetration between the political and the domestic space, between the lexicon of politics and the lexicon of domesticity, since the order and power hierarchy that reigned in the home had to represent a model for the construction and maintenance of order in the political space. In this respect as well, Carey posited the family and its home, with their hierarchical patriarchal order, as the fundamental unit of the pyramidal construction of American federalism, which started precisely from the «home» as a brick in the building of the «general home»¹¹³: the State.

1.3. Colonization, Dispersion and the State

In the final chapters of *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, Carey finally came to face the contemporary obstacles of development that he had been observing in the previous years. In his view, in the decades after U.S. independence the course of development had unfolded as naturally as possible and the colonization of North America had proceeded slowly and gradually according to the rhythm of accumulation and to the principle of concentration. In the previous decades, however, Carey noted, the settlement of new lands had unduly accelerated because of the prevalence of an «external action» that had produced an overwhelming «centrifugal force», pushing settlers to leave the East and move West at increasing speed. If initially «their movement westward was of the most gradual kind», now «the people of the United States are now far more widely

¹¹² Comparisons between the State and the home were frequent in the mid-nineteenth-century United States. One need only think of Lincoln's discourse on the «house divided» as a metaphor for the American nation torn apart by sectional conflict (add reference). But also to Erasmus Peshine Smith who, a few years later, and taking his cue from Carey himself, wrote that: «the true conception of a State is that of a Household, whose members have undivided interests». Erasmus Peshine Smith, *A Manual for Political Economy* (New York: Putnam, 1853), 149.

¹¹³ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 287–88.

scattered, and far less wealthy, than they would otherwise have been»¹¹⁴. In contradiction to the principle of concentration, he warned, «men are seen flying from their fellow men». While knowing that «two can roll, and four can lift, a log, that one alone could neither roll nor lift», individuals were seen moving to places where they would work alone, and where each would be forced «to roll his own log, for lift it he cannot». This way, «the labor of each is thus wasted on the road», Carey lamented¹¹⁵. The emergence of an «effect so contrary to the laws of nature», in Carey's view, could only be due to the interference of a «powerful repulsive force» capable of hindering the natural unfolding of the laws of development.

«Why is it that men should fly from western New York, where railroads run through rich lands, covered with dense forests: through swamps that need drainage alone to give to cultivation the richest soils in the world: to seek the West, where they must cultivate poor soils distant from market? [...] Why is it that rich meadow-lands on the Schuylkill remain unimproved, while men seek Oregon and California? [...] Why is it that men are everywhere seen flying from their fellow men: from those destined by the Deity to be their helpmates: from parents and relations [...] to seek in Texas and Iowa, Oregon and California, new homes and new relations, amidst woods that they cannot fell, and swamps that they cannot drain, and upon the poor soils that yield, invariably, the smallest return to labor?»¹¹⁶

This acceleration of an unrestrained westward movement, in Carey's perspective, had to be blamed upon the British free-trade commercial policies established in the previous years, particularly with the abolition of the Corn Laws in 1846, which prevented the emergence of adequate labor opportunities in the East, thus compelling workers «to scatter themselves over poor soils»¹¹⁷. If workers were forced to move, he explained, it was «because they want a market at which the labor, male and female, the food and the wool, can be exchanged for each other». The accelerated westward migration was thus driven by the lack of a localized and diversified market. To Carey, then, in the «English policy» laid «the secret of dispersion» and the reason of the present «impossibility of concentration»¹¹⁸. In fact, he explained, the British trade policy imposed an economic «centralization» based on an international division of labor aimed at making England «the workshop of the world at any cost»¹¹⁹. This forced other countries to specialize in the production of raw materials, particularly agricultural ones, to be exported cheaply to the British metropolis. By imposing specialization in agriculture, «centralization» thus hindered any national or local division of labor, preventing manufacturing development on a local scale and incentivizing

¹¹⁴ Carey, 116–18.

¹¹⁵ Carey, 430.

¹¹⁶ Carey, 431–32.

¹¹⁷ Carey, 118, 300.

¹¹⁸ Carey, 442.

¹¹⁹ Carey, 111.

workers to seek land in the West before the time when it would be economically beneficial for the overall process of accumulation, thus determining a tendency toward «dispersion». In this context, in fact, settlements did not proceed in a gradual manner in the proximity of already existing communities and thus relying on the wealth of capital, productive technology and population already accumulated, but it proceeded by leaps and bounds over long distances.

«The English policy», Carey explained, «forces men to scatter themselves over the thin soils of new states, while leaving untouched the rich soils of older ones»¹²⁰. Thus, the development process risked being reset and individuals to find themselves in the same situation of the first settler, scattered and bereft of labor tools in facing a wild nature in which to restart cultivation from the less fertile soils. In this context, «the labor of man», which could have been applied more productively in already technologically advanced settings, was instead «on an average, but half as productive as it would be for the consumer and the producer to be near neighbors to each other»¹²¹. The problem posed by British free trade was thus in the first instance a problem of labor productivity. The westward movement forced labor to be applied so unproductively that it could provide nothing more than subsistence, while simultaneously slowing down the process of development in the East as it took away population and thus productive potential. Conceiving development as a matter of time rather than of space, which had to extend before extending spatially¹²², then Carey understood the accelerated westward movement imposed by British free trade as an obstacle to accumulation: an anticipation of time and an overextension in space, without which the colonization of the North American continent would have proceeded at a much slower pace¹²³. Moreover, dispersion not only posed an economic threat, but also a political one, in that it risked loosening that social bond between individuals that founded the family, the community and the state.

¹²⁰ Carey, 227.

¹²¹ Carey, 463.

¹²² It could be said that to Carey's reflection on the relationship between the space and time of development stood at the very opposite of the "spatialization of time" promoted by proponents of manifest destiny and expansion, according to which «time is subordinated to space, or rather derived from space such that historical progress rests on settler colonial expansion». Dahl, *Empire of the People*, 107. On manifest destiny see: Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny. American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996).

¹²³ «The people of the United States are now scattered over a million of square miles, [...] whereas, had they been permitted to follow the bent of their inclinations they would not, at this time, have passed the Mississippi . [...] The tendency of man is to combine his exertions with those of his fellow men; and when we find him doing otherwise the cause will be found, invariably, in the existence of some essential error in the course of policy. Self-interest prompts him to this union. He feels that two, ten, or twelve, acting together, can accomplish that which would be impossible to a thousand men, each acting alone: yet is he seen flying off to the wilderness, abandoning his home, his parents, and his friends, while meadows uncleared exist in unlimited quantity, soliciting his acceptance of their gifts» Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 299–300.

«Men are everywhere seen flying from their fellow men, from those destined by the Deity to be their helpmates: from parents and relations: from old houses, and old churches, and old school-houses; old comforts, and old feelings: [...] to seek in Texas and Iowa, Oregon and California, new homes and new relations, amidst woods that they cannot fell, and swamps that they cannot drain, and upon the poor soils that yield, invariably, the smallest return to labor»¹²⁴.

In posing the problem of westward movement as an obstacle to accumulation, Carey could not avoid to come to terms with Edward Gibbon Wakefield who, in *England and America*¹²⁵, had faced the problem of the limits to capital accumulation posed, in colonial contexts, by the presence of an abundance of «waste lands» that guaranteed workers an independent subsistence, thus preventing the formation of a mass of individuals forced to sell their labor in exchange for wages¹²⁶. The same problem, in Wakefield's perspective, existed in the United States, *de facto* «still colonies»¹²⁷, since the «excess of land in proportion to capital and labor»¹²⁸, combined with the ease with which American workers could obtain ownership of land, resulted in a structural scarcity of labor-power. The «superabundance of land», then, to Wakefield could not bring prosperity «without some kind of slavery»¹²⁹ that artificially forced individuals to work for wages. In his view, this could be accomplished through a State-run «systematic colonization» that would slow the movement of workers through an increase in land prices. This way, the worker would be forced to work for wages for a certain period of time before being able to afford to purchase a piece of land in the West. In the meantime, the capitalist would earn enough to afford to finance the immigration of new poor workers from England, so that a wage-dependent labor force would always be available. As Marx would note in the first book of his *Capital*, the scheme of systematic colonization proposed by Wakefield constituted a strategy aimed at «the manufacture in the colonies of wage laborers», and more precisely at the transformation of the self-employed producer into a worker «forced to sell himself voluntarily». If Wakefield had thus uncovered «in the colonies, the truth about capitalist

¹²⁴ Carey, 432.

¹²⁵ Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *England and America. A Comparison of the Social and Political State of Both Nations*, 2 voll. (London: Bentley, 1833).

¹²⁶ On Wakefield, see: D. N. Winch, «Classical Economics and the Case for Colonization», *Economica* 30, no. 120 (November 1963): 387; Edward R. Kittrell, «The Development of the Theory of Colonization in English Classical Political Economy», *Southern Economic Journal* 31, no. 3 (January 1965): 189; Edward R. Kittrell, «Wakefield's Scheme of Systematic Colonization and Classical Economics», *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 32, no. 1 (January 1973): 87–112; Matilde Cazzola, «Edward Gibbon Wakefield and the Political Economy of Emancipation», *Intellectual History Review* 31, no. 4 (October 2, 2021): 651–69; Paola Rudan, «The Artificial Nature and the Genetic History of Capital. Marx and the Modern Theory of Colonization», in *Global Marx: History and Critique of the Social Movement in the World Market*, ed. Matteo Battistini, Eleonora Cappuccilli, and Maurizio Ricciardi (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2023).

¹²⁷ Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *England and America. A Comparison of the Social and Political State of Both Nations*, vol. 2 (London: Bentley, 1833), 109.

¹²⁸ Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *England and America. A Comparison of the Social and Political State of Both Nations*, vol. 1 (London: Bentley, 1833), VI.

¹²⁹ Wakefield, *England and America*, 1833, 2: 22.

relations in the motherland»¹³⁰, however, Carey's purpose in confronting his theory of systematic colonization was precisely to deny that truth and to hide it back.

While harshly criticizing the colonization scheme of Australia, Carey praised Wakefield for seeing «in the tendency of the people of the United States to scatter themselves over the wild lands of the west», not a reason for wealth, but a «cause of poverty». In other words, «he saw that concentration was needed, but he erred in regard to the means by which it should be sought». In particular, Carey criticized Wakefield for attributing «the waste of labor» to an excess of the workers' «self-government». In fact, according to Wakefield, to solve the problem of labor scarcity, «men were to be deprived of the right of selecting for themselves, and to that end land was to be fixed high», thus charging «twenty or forty shillings an acre» for land never previously worked. In contrast, to Carey the problem with the accelerated westward movement was precisely that it was driven by an «almost total absence» of self-government. In fact, if it wasn't for the «repulsive force» produced by British free trade, American workers would never have chosen to leave, preferring to remain «at home with their relatives and friends»¹³¹. By mystifyingly reversing the terms of the question, Carey could thus re-conceal what Wakefield had implicitly shown, namely that the westward movement constituted a form of rejection of the working conditions imposed by capitalist relations in the East, which were increasingly approximating those of England¹³². Carey, on the contrary, denied any subjective dimension to this movement, tracing it back to a compulsion objectively imposed by the British interference in the world market, in the absence of which workers would have chosen to remain tied to the home and would have moved only at the pace naturally set by accumulation. In this sense, to Carey, «systematic colonization» would only make the problem worse, as it would reduce the wealth available to workers and further limit their self-government¹³³. In his perspective, the problem of accelerated westward movement was not to be solved by restricting access to land, but by setting conditions to make it unnecessary, namely by expanding the demand for labor in the

¹³⁰ Karl Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One.*, ed. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1976), 932.

¹³¹ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 331–32.

¹³² Recently, James Parisot has emphasized the subjective class dimension of the movement Westward as a form of rejection of the conditions of dependency in Eastern manufactures. More specifically, he has shown how in the first half of the nineteenth century the movement westward was the result of three instances often in conflict with each other: first, the drive of speculators that helped extend capitalist relations into the unincorporated territories; second, the movement of workers in search of land and subsistence opportunities unrelated to the wage relationship; and finally, the attempt to govern both processes by the federal State, which acted on the one hand by attempting to regulate and harness the movement of settlers through land policies and on the other by financing the construction of the transportation infrastructures essential to the westward expansion of the market. James Parisot, *How America Became Capitalist: Imperial Expansion and the Conquest of the West* (London: Pluto Press, 2019), 49–111.

¹³³ «Systematic colonization means nothing but the forced export of men who would live at home if they could [...] and its advocates will invariably be found among those who derive their means of support from the proceeds of taxation, regulation, and monopoly», Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 340.

East¹³⁴. Carey concluded that the solution consisted in the establishment of a «market for his further accumulations» in which each individual could sell «his time and talent»¹³⁵. Only when such a diversified local market was reestablished could «natural colonization» reassert itself over «systematic colonization». The market, not the state, was Carey's solution to the obstacle to accumulation posed by the Westward movement.

However, Carey recognized that, in the context of a world market dominated by British free-trade policy, such locally diversified market could not form spontaneously, but had to be politically built through protectionism. In the end, the solution to the problem of westward movement lied not in a restrictive land policy, but in a tariff policy that, by protecting the home market from international competition, could promote its diversification. Actually, Wakefield himself, observing the effects of the Tariff of 1828, had argued in favor of protectionism as a means of producing concentration and limiting westward movement. Noting that «in America, whatever tends to keep people together is of inestimable advantage», Wakefield had argued that «the tariff, by inducing so many people to become manufacturers, has prevented so many people from becoming backwoodsmen»¹³⁶. The tariff, in this sense, as «an act of combination», had made it possible to develop «the great advantage of social intercourse» thus counteracting «the barbarizing tendency of dispersion»¹³⁷. Thus, if Carey had criticized Wakefield for prescribing a system of colonization entirely managed by the state, he nevertheless ended up admitting that the presence of artificial obstacles to natural development required an equally artificial intervention by the state itself. Against the «dispersion» imposed by British «interferences», Carey concluded, the United States had to introduce a protectionist tariff as a «necessary act of self-defense»¹³⁸, as an exercise of its «right of resistance». Specifically, it had to introduce not a tariff aimed at «the raising of revenue», as most tariffs approved up to that point did, since it would offer only «incidental protection», but instead a tariff based on specific, high duties to encourage market diversification, especially favoring manufacturing development¹³⁹.

¹³⁴ Paul Frymer has reconstructed the conflict between the federal government and settlers, particularly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as well as the federal government's often unsuccessful attempts to slow down the movement westward in order to control it. Frymer, *Building an American Empire*, 32–71. On this, see also: Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire. A Short History of the Greater United States* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019), 25–35; John Robert Van Atta, *Securing the West: Politics, Public Lands, and the Fate of the Old Republic, 1785–1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014). Carey was undoubtedly heir to the tradition that, from Washington, Jefferson and Hamilton onward, had pushed for greater political control over the expansion process, but he believed that such control should not be exercised through a land policy. On this, see also: Lorenzo Veracini, “Henry Carey’s ‘Entire Bad Joke’ and Henry George’s ‘Idle Taunt’: Displacement, Settler Colonialism and Revolution in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 10, no. 3 (July 2, 2020): 422–41.

¹³⁵ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 337–38.

¹³⁶ Wakefield, *England and America*, 1833, 2: 51.

¹³⁷ Wakefield, 2: 55.

¹³⁸ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 118.

¹³⁹ *Ad valorem* duties, used primarily to secure «revenue» for the federal government, were calculated as a percentage of the price of the imported good and thus varied with it, and could therefore be circumvented by declaring a lower price. Specific duties, on the other hand, imposed a fixed tax per unit of the imported good, and thus did not vary with the

Indeed, Carey admitted, «war is an evil, and so are tariffs of protection: yet both may be necessary, and both are sometimes necessary»¹⁴⁰. Only such a tariff could, in Carey's perspective, make it possible to bring producer and consumer closer together, re-initiate the process of collective wealth accumulation and thus ensure individual self-government.

«Concentration, even to its present extent, cannot be maintained without protection. [...] If we desire to preserve peace, we must arrest the progress of depopulation, and promote concentration upon rich soils, and that can be done only by increased protection, by aid of a tariff that is not for revenue - a tariff whose direct object shall be that of establishing the right of every man to determine for himself where he will live, and how he will employ his labor, or his capital, or both. What is needed is a distinct declaration of a determination on the part of the whole nation, farmers and planters, to pursue the course necessary for bringing the consumer of cotton, and wool, and food, to the side of the producers of those commodities»¹⁴¹

The introduction of a protectionist tariff would thus constitute «a declaration of war for the establishment of peace and free trade»¹⁴², thanks to which individuals could finally stop «to disperse themselves so widely over the west» and thanks to which «colonization would proceed naturally» that is, gradually and with settlers «in union with each other»¹⁴³. This way, the United States could recover «the truest grandeur», which consisted «in the most perfect power over ourselves, our thoughts, and actions, and in conceding to all men the exercise of the same powers that we desire for ourselves». At mid-century, Carey denounced, «the people of the United States do not exercise that power», but «they may do so» thanks to protection¹⁴⁴. Moreover, by taking «the lead» in challenging British commercial dominance globally, the United States could fulfill what Carey described as a truly universal mission: to ensure economic development and accumulation for itself and for the world by taking upon itself the historical legacy of empire and civilization.

While Carey had started *The Past, the Present and the Future* by describing supposedly natural and necessary laws of development, he ended up maintaining that only through the state could the unfolding of such laws be guaranteed in the context of a structurally unequal and hierarchical world market. As Karl Marx later wrote in his *Grundrisse*, Carey, who had started in the 1830s by describing the state «as the sole disturber of the *harmonies économiques*», ended up calling «for State intervention»

price. Irwin, *Clashing over Commerce*, 5. To Carey, only specific duties were capable of introducing a real protectionist barrier against the import of foreign goods.

¹⁴⁰ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 302.

¹⁴¹ Carey, 469.

¹⁴² Carey, 471.

¹⁴³ Carey, 472.

¹⁴⁴ Carey, 450.

as the «sole refuge» of a natural functioning of society»¹⁴⁵. Only the state, through protection, could guarantee the concentration and diversification of labor on a local scale and the close-knit productive cooperation among individuals, arresting the unrestrained westward movement and tying workers to their «home» and to their work in the East. Only the state, in other words, could establish and maintain those social relations and those power hierarchies that were indispensable for the reproduction and accumulation of capital, which workers sought to escape by moving West. Only the state intervention could thus give shape to a localized, small-scale form of development that could prevent both social conflict and undisciplined movements, by involving, at least in some degrees, every white male worker in the process of accumulation, on the condition that he diligently submitted to wage labor. Having realized to what extent the U.S. integration within the world market threatened to disrupt his vision of a boundless, harmonic development, Carey had to vest the state with the role of fostering and governing that same development so as to foster accumulation while at the same guaranteeing social harmony.

In doing so, he thus recovered Raymond's and List's reflection on the state's developmental scope, albeit without replicating their critique to *laissez-faire* and their invocation of a power directly «interfering» within economic matters. To Carey, the state simply had to intervene to guarantee the conditions of a «natural» form of development insofar as they were artificially obstructed by external forces, and to do so from the borders of the national market, while leaving individuals freely interacting within it. However, by having to constantly establish and re-establish such conditions, in Carey's vision the state's intervention still became an inescapable instrument of development and accumulation. Thus, in the last pages of *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, calling for protection against the unrestrained westward movement and against British free trade, Carey began to envision the state's intervention as the condition of possibility for the implementation of his concentrated, integrated, small-scale, but nonetheless hierarchical vision of development, as well as for the government of labor's movements. In the following years, Carey devoted himself to detailing the specific ways in which the state could fulfill its crucial role within capital and its development: on the one hand by affirming a protectionist commercial policy and on the other by guaranteeing monetary abundance.

¹⁴⁵ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, ed. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1978), 885–87.

2. Protection, Consumption and Money

2.1. The British Colonial System, Dependency and Cheap Labor

«Why is protection needed? Why cannot trade with foreign nations be carried on without the intervention of custom-house officers?». With such questions, Carey opened *The Harmony of Interests*, a series of articles published between 1849 and 1850 in the protectionist journal *The Plough, the Loom, and the Anvil* (founded by Carey himself together with John Skinner) and then re-published as a volume in 1851. Questioning the discrepancy between the theory and practice of free trade, Carey acknowledged that «of the advantage of perfect freedom of trade, theoretically considered, there could be no doubt»¹⁴⁶. However, he argued that all attempts to extend a perfect freedom of trade to international exchanges had proven unsuccessful, leading several States to adopt protectionist measures in order not to be overwhelmed by its economically destructive effects. Around this question, Carey noted, in the mid-century United States a conflict had emerged, with «free trade» and «protection» having become the watchwords of «two parties» pitted against each other. This clash, in his perspective, represented «the great question for the nation», since «in it are included all others»: from the «discord» between North and South over slavery to that between East and West over infrastructures, to that «between the employer and the employed, the capitalist and the laborer, the banker and its customers». Resolving the dispute over trade policy would thus, according to Carey, heal all the lines of political fracture and social confrontation running through the mid-century United States, showing beneath them the existence of a «perfect harmony of interests throughout the Union».

In *The Harmony of Interests*, as well as in another series published on the *American Whig Review* and on the *New York Tribune* in the same period, Carey precisely set out to solve this question, by elaborating an original argument for protection, partly different himself from previous protectionist thinkers, which further proved the broad relevance of the state's economic role in his vision of development, as well as his persistent attention to the threat of class conflict. Moreover, Carey's protectionist turn also marked the opening of a new phase of public interventions. In fact, in the decade following 1848 most of his reflection on the state's economic role was elaborated through articles published on newspapers, journals and reviews, with the explicit ambition of using political economy to influence economic policies. Particularly relevant in this phase was his collaboration with the most widely-read newspaper of the time, the *New York Daily Tribune*, edited by Horace Greeley and directed by Charles Dana, with whom Carey. Such collaboration between 1849 and

¹⁴⁶ Henry Charles Carey, *The Harmony of Interests, Agricultural, Manufacturing, and Commercial* (Philadelphia: J. S. Skinner, 1851), 3.

1857, granted Carey's economic ideas an unprecedented audience and influence in political debates, as well as on the formation of the Republican Party¹⁴⁷.

Carey's critique of free trade, as well as his argument for protection, showed an inextricable connection between the question of trade, which the British policy actually restricted, the question of independence, which it denied, and the question of labor, which it devalued. First of all, Carey reiterated that the United States was undergoing a process of «depopulation», due to the acceleration of the Westward movement, to a decrease in the natural rate of population growth, and finally to a sharp decline in immigration. In fact, the «unnatural division of labor»¹⁴⁸ brought about by the British trade policy, by incentivizing production for exportation «in distant markets», resulted in an increase of long-distance exchanges and consequently in the higher number of unproductive merchants, transporters and middlemen intervening «between the producer and the consumer»¹⁴⁹. This tendency prevented «concentration», «association» and «combination» on a national and local scale, imposing an «unnatural» state of things, aimed at making Great Britain into «the work-shop of the world»¹⁵⁰. Thus, he denounced, «the mask of free trade» concealed «the maintenance of British power and influence»¹⁵¹. British free trade was thus not simply a trade policy, Carey explained, but a «colonial system» that, consistent with the teachings of the «English school of political economists», imposed a productive specialization in agriculture on the rest of the world, in order to centralize and monopolize manufacturing production. It was to this end that in his perspective Britain had always prevented the development of manufactures in its North American colonies.

«The whole legislation of Great Britain, on this subject, has been directed to the one great object of preventing the people of her colonies, and those of independent nations, from obtaining the machinery necessary to enable them to combine their exertions for the purpose of obtaining cloth or iron, and thus compelling them to bring her their raw materials, that she might convert them into the forms that fitted them for consumption, and then return to the producers a portion of them, burdened with great cost for transportation, and heavy charges for the work of conversion»¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Michael Perelman, *Marx's Crises Theory. Scarcity, Labor and Finance* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1987); Adam-Max Tuchinsky, *Horace Greeley's New-York Tribune: Civil War-Era Socialism and the Crisis of Free Labor* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2009); Simon Vézina, «Henry C. Carey, le New York Tribune et la formation de l'opinion économique américaine», *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 27, no. 3 (2019): 28–61.

¹⁴⁸ Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 46.

¹⁴⁹ Carey, 61.

¹⁵⁰ Carey, 52–53.

¹⁵¹ [Henry C. Carey], *Fallacies and Frauds of British Free Trade I*, «New-York Daily Tribune», August 13, 1851.

¹⁵² Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 53.

In this regard, Carey recalled how, prior to the Revolution, Lord Chatham had declared his intention to prevent the colonists from independently manufacturing even a «shoe nail», and how several English industrialists admitted to exporting their products to the United States at such a low price that they would go at a loss just to maintain «foreign competition at bay»¹⁵³. This way, «England had monopolized machinery for so long a time that she had acquired skills that could not readily be rivalled». This colonial policy thus allowed for the construction of an economic power gap that permitted Britain to economically «sink» those who dared competing with her.¹⁵⁴ From this point of view, Carey noted, the U.S. experience did not differ from that of the other British colonies, except for the fact that they succeeded, in 1776, in breaking the link with the mother country. However, the end of that political and legal bond had not brought about the end of economic subordination: «and when the day of nominal independence arrived, that of real independence was still far distant»¹⁵⁵. By continuing to flood the North American market with cheap, high-quality finished commodities, Great Britain had thus succeeded in hindering the emergence of a U.S. manufacturing capacity, thus maintaining colonial dominance by other means even after U.S. independence. Thus, to Carey, at mid-century the United States was still «but little more than a colony», devoid of «control over their own actions»¹⁵⁶ because of the absence of a home market that kept it dependent on British demand and thus vulnerable to economic and financial instability¹⁵⁷. In the United States, he lamented, «the value of every thing, and the movement of every thing [...] are settled by the movement of the Bank of England». To it and to the British government, «now floundering in a sea of troubles, is this Union attached by aid of the system now known by the name of free trade»¹⁵⁸. Through protectionism, then, the state had not only to re-establish the natural conditions of development, but at the same time engage itself in a process of economic decolonization to achieve «real independence» within the world market¹⁵⁹. Heir to the U.S. protectionist tradition, Carey thus grasped the immediately political dimension of the problem of manufacturing, assuming the anti-British polemic, as well as the explicitly anti-colonial discourse, typical of Daniel Raymond, Friedrich List and his father Mathew, but placing it

¹⁵³ Carey, 95.

¹⁵⁴ Carey, 54.

¹⁵⁵ Carey, 79.

¹⁵⁶ Carey, 224.

¹⁵⁷ «So long as a nation is dependent on England for any portion of its supply, so long must prices continue to be thus variable», Carey, 83.

¹⁵⁸ Carey, 225.

¹⁵⁹ Carey, 53. For an interpretation of U.S. nineteenth-century development as a struggle for decolonization, see: Hopkins, *American Empire*, 143–87.

in the context of mid-nineteenth-century capitalism and grafting upon it two other criticisms of free trade¹⁶⁰.

Not only, in fact, was the British trade policy aimed at imposing dependence on the nations subjected to it, but to Carey it also prevented the unfolding of a true freedom of trade itself. Insisting on this point, in a series of articles titled *What Constitute Real Freedom of Trade?*, published between August and November 1850 in the *American Whig Review*, Carey engaged in a semantic battle over the meaning of freedom of trade. Like all terms pertaining to the «condition of man», he noted, «free trade» proved difficult to define, as everyone appeared to agree on its desirability, but proposing very different ways to achieve it¹⁶¹. The one theorized by Ricardo and practiced by the British government in his perspective was only a «nominally free-trade system» that, far from setting the conditions for a truly free exchange among nations and individuals, prevented the very existence of a «free market for either labor or capital», producing on the contrary «a general paralysis of trade». Indeed, Carey explained how four levels of trade existed: the one happening in the family between husband and wife, based on a sexual division of labor; the one happening in the local community, based on a social division of labor among different sectors; the one happening nationally between local communities; and the one happening between nations. Carey assumed that in a natural economic condition, 55% of trade should occur at the household level, 25% at the community level, 15% at the national level, and only 5% at the international level, because as distance increased, «trade» encountered more and more obstacles, thus reducing the volume and intensity of exchanges¹⁶².

According to the principle of concentration, increasing the distance over which trade took place reduced the productive power and increased the need for trade, due to the absence of a diversified local market in which to sell one's products. Thus, to Carey, «the great trade is the home trade», as «the *power* to trade grows with the power to produce, while the power to produce diminishes with

¹⁶⁰ On the problem of manufactures as a fundamental element in the conflict between the colonies and the motherland, see, among others: Piero Bairati, *Benjamin Franklin e il dio operaio: alle origini del pensiero industriale americano* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1979); Tiziano Bonazzi, *La rivoluzione americana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2018).

¹⁶¹ Interestingly enough, in this article Carey posed a general problem of political semantics, complaining that «throughout the world, at all ages, men have been disputing about words to which they attached no distinct ideas». This was the case, for example, with the term «democracy», which to Carey denoted a «government of the people» in which «there can be no subjects», but which was employed to describe the most diverse situations and which was misunderstood also by Tocqueville. It was also the case with the term «civilization», invoked by writers like Guizot and by nations like France to describe their own acts of «war and barbarism». The term «slavery» was also difficult to define, since those who declared to be formally «free» were often substantially less so than «slaves». In discussions around the «condition of man», it was therefore difficult to agree on definitions, ending up discussing «about words instead of things», which was not the case in the other sciences, where, for example, «the word *gravitation*, whenever and however used, conveys always the same idea». Henry Charles Carey, «What Constitute Real Freedom of Trade?», *American Whig Review* XII, no. 32 (August 1850): 127–28.

¹⁶² Carey, 130–31.

every increase in the *necessity* for trade». Instead, the British system by prioritizing which long-distance trade, which «is now King», and favoring «the substitution of the distant market for the near one», ended up limiting the very possibility of exchanges and interactions¹⁶³. Thus, in Carey's perspective, «the real freedom of trade» could only be grounded upon the individuals' «power to trade» made possible by their «power of production» of individuals, which could only be achieved by bringing the producer closer to the consumer and by fostering a «diversity of employments». In other words, by creating a «home market» that could make the export of agricultural products unnecessary, increasing the productivity of labor, and thus making trade an activity that the producer could pursue only voluntarily. To Carey, therefore, trade could be considered free only to the extent that the individual had the power to exchange the product of his labor. Thus, contrary to what British economists had suggested, protection represented «the only means of arriving at a large trade»¹⁶⁴.

To support his argument, Carey reclaimed Adam Smith against the Ricardians, highlighting the priority Smith had assigned to production, and particularly agricultural production, over trade and manufacturing. Smith had understood that «the natural tendency of man was toward agriculture, which could be improved only by bringing the mechanic and manufacturer to his aid, the place of exchange being thus brought to the neighborhood of the place of production»¹⁶⁵. In Carey's reading, while the Ricardian school had argued for «the *territorial* division of labor», thus for «*centralization* and *monopoly* of *machinery* in the island of Great Britain», Smith had instead argued in favor of «the concentration of man and the *local* division of labor», of a «localization of manufactures», of a «local application of labor and capital»¹⁶⁶. Truly free trade, then, coincided for Carey with «commerce» on a local scale, involving closer «intercourse» with other individuals and satisfying «'man's natural inclination' for association», not long-distance «trade» that made man a «mere pedlar who buys in the cheapest market and sells in the dearest one»¹⁶⁷. In other words, trade could only be truly free insofar as it coincided with a process of concentration and association that could not occur in international trade. By imposing trade on an international scale, on the contrary, British trade policy tended to weaken social ties, harming trade and making the individual a «creature of necessity»¹⁶⁸. According to the *New York Daily Tribune*, in this series of articles Carey

¹⁶³ Carey, 131–32.

¹⁶⁴ [Henry C. Carey], *Fallacies and Frauds of British Free Trade VII*, «New-York Daily Tribune», August 20, 1851.

¹⁶⁵ Henry Charles Carey, «What Constitute Real Freedom of Trade? Chapter II,» *American Whig Review* XII, no. 33 (September 1850): 229.

¹⁶⁶ Carey, 232–40.

¹⁶⁷ Carey, 240. We find here the first terminological distinction made by Carey between *trade* and *commerce*, a distinction to which historiography has attributed, in the reconstruction of his thought, an arguably excessive importance.

¹⁶⁸ Henry Charles Carey, «What Constitute Real Freedom of Trade? Chapter III,» *American Whig Review* XII, no. 34 (October 1850): 353.

did not only argue, but proved conclusively how Smith's self-styled disciples completely distorted his conception of free trade: «Free Trade is a very different thing from what they have christened by that title»¹⁶⁹.

Furthermore, by displacing production and consumption, and subjecting nations to a colonial rule that enforced productive specialization in agriculture, in Carey's vision, British free trade also resulted in a devaluation of labor and of its compensation. More precisely, he argued, the degradation of labor was a foundational and necessary element of the British colonial system, not only around the world, but in England itself: «the British system is built upon cheap labor, by which is meant low priced and worthless labor»¹⁷⁰. In order to maintain its manufacturing monopoly, Britain had thus to keep the price of English labor «at a point so low as to enable her to underwork the Hindoo, the German, and the American»¹⁷¹, imposing a competition that dragged down the price of labor on a global scale. In England, «the exchanger, owner of machinery, thus stands between the laborer who produces, and the laborer who consumes the cotton» and could impose the price on both, «taking for himself the largest share». This way, Carey charged, «men accumulate colossal fortunes, while surrounded by men, women, and children living in poverty and clothed in rags»¹⁷². Carey then lengthily commented articles and government reports about the miserable conditions of factory workers in England, as well as farmers in India and Ireland, pointing to them as the cause of growing immigration to the United States.

«The Irishman is compelled to waste much labor. He works with poor machinery. He gives half the product of his labor for the use of wagons and ships. He eats his crop of potatoes and goes into rags. He has nothing to exchange. He flies to America, and the number of exchanges to be made in Ireland, and from Ireland, is thus diminished. The Hindoo [...] works with poor machinery and his miserable product of fifty pounds of cotton to the acre is transported to Manchester, thence to be returned to him in the form of cloth, getting one pound for ten; and thus giving nine-tenths of his labor for the use of ships and wagons. [...] Men are everywhere flying from British commerce»¹⁷³

Carey's scathing critique of the effects of British trade policy in terms of the impoverishment and labor exploitation, however, appeared primarily and predominantly geared toward delineating a stark contrast with labor conditions in the United States. In fact, by describing the conditions of British, Irish and Indian labor, Carey aimed to legitimize, by contrast, the conditions of labor in the

¹⁶⁹ «New York Daily Tribune», August 15, 1850.

¹⁷⁰ Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 72.

¹⁷¹ Carey, 66.

¹⁷² Carey, 75.

¹⁷³ Carey, 71.

United States, and not only of wage labor in the North, but even of slave labor in the South. In particular, his denunciation of the conditions imposed by Britain on workers in India repeatedly became a pretext for attacking the abolitionist movement, much more than the British government itself, as well as for defending American slaveholders. Thus, Carey attacked the hypocrisy of the British government that «emancipate the black man in the West, and enslaves the brown one in the East»¹⁷⁴ and that threatened slaveholders «to substitute the *free* labor of the wretched Hindoo for that of the well-fed, well-clothed, and well-housed laborer of the South»¹⁷⁵. The Indian laborer, described as a victim of «tyranny and oppression so universal and complete» up to the point «his skin alone is left him»¹⁷⁶, thus became to Carey the touchstone through which comparing and legitimizing the condition of slaves in the South against the claims of the abolitionists, as well as the condition of Northern workers against the attacks of the labor movement¹⁷⁷.

Nevertheless, despite the persistent superiority of U.S. working conditions, Carey warned, British trade policy had started to produce effects even in the United States, leading to an overall worsening of working conditions and to a reduction in wages. It was precisely these effects, according to Carey, that had given rise in previous decades to an increase in the «discords [...] between the employers and the employed, accompanied by strikes, combinations, &c». For this reason, each period of trade openness corresponded to an increase in social conflict, while each period of protectionism saw the return of «harmony». Thus, Carey recalled, «the years from 1836 to 1839 were distinguished for disturbances of this kind», precisely because of a reduction in the production and consumption possibilities of the workers, who «desired a rise of money-wages to meet the rise in the price of food, but the employer could not give it, and hence arose combinations for the purpose of compelling him to do so». More than a decade later, then, Carey went back to face the claims of the 1830s labor movement, this time blaming them upon to the return of free trade after the Compromise of 1833. It was therefore British trade policy and its devaluation of labor that had caused the unnatural class struggle that had swept through the Northern United States in the 1830s. A conflict that, in the presence of a protectionist tariff, in his vision, would not have occurred. Indeed, he continued, between 1844 and 1848 «harmony was restored» thanks to the effects on

¹⁷⁴ Carey, “What Constitute Real Freedom of Trade?” 128. Also: Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 117.

¹⁷⁵ Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 117.

¹⁷⁶ Carey, “What Constitute Real Freedom of Trade?” 128.

¹⁷⁷ «The workman of this country is infinitely the superior of the workman of Manchester, and the reason is, that he is not treated as a mere machine. The object of what is called free trade is to degrade the one to the level of the other. The object of protection is that of enabling the poor workman of Manchester or Leeds, Birmingham or Sheffield, to transfer himself to a country in which he will not be so treated, and in which he may have books and newspapers, and his children may be educated». Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 211–12.

production of the tariff of 1842, while after the free-trade Walker tariff of 1846 had soon brought a new increase in labor unrest, particularly in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.

«The last year has been marked by a succession of combinations. In the coal region of Pennsylvania, at Pittsburgh, Lowell, and various other places, there have been strikes and turn-outs, some of them long-continued; and everywhere there have been clamors for the passage of laws restricting the hours of labor; but those who thus clamored desired that wages should remain as they were. These things all result from the one great fact that the productiveness of labor is diminishing, and that wages are tending toward the European level»¹⁷⁸.

Carey thus noted the return of a workers' mobilization, but he externalized its cause to the foreign influence of British trade policy, thus reconciling his description of a harmonious, local-scale development with the reality of a conflictual capitalist society increasingly integrated into the world market. In describing the Pittsburgh and Lowell strikes, however, Carey omitted that they were mostly carried out by women, often young, textile mill workers, who had staged a series of riots between 1845 and 1848, demanding adherence to a workday that did not go beyond ten hours¹⁷⁹. Women in the United States were therefore forcefully rejecting the devaluation of their labor imposed by capitalist development, as well as the subordination of their social role envisioned by the doctrine of separate spheres. By dislocating the cause of the strikes in British free trade, Carey thus attempted to come to terms with the persistence of class conflict in the U.S. of the 1840s, while trying to conceal its extension to new subjects. Against such an artificial, conflictual and impoverishing form of development, against such an «unnatural division of labor», therefore, to Carey «the object of protection has been, and is, to restore the natural one»¹⁸⁰.

2.2. Protection, Production and Consumption

Carey's protectionist argument built on this critique to free trade, stressing the tariff's beneficial effects both on production and on labor, this way shifting the protectionist discourse in a new direction, while also broadening his conception of the state's economic role. Since the opening pages of *The Harmony of Interests*, in fact, Carey claimed that the most fundamental criterion for judging commercial systems and trade policies was not only their consequences upon productive

¹⁷⁸ Carey, 161.

¹⁷⁹ On women's strikes in Lowell and Pittsburgh, see: David R. Roediger and Philip Sheldon Foner, *Our Own Time: A History of American Labor and the Working Day* (London-New York: Verso, 1989), 44–64; Monte A. Calvert, "The Allegheny City Cotton Mill Riot of 1848," *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 46, no. 2 (April 1963): 97–133; Jason D. Martinek, "The Amazons of Allegheny the Fire the Riot and the Textile Strike of 1845," *Western Pennsylvania History*, Spring 2011, 38–48.

¹⁸⁰ Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 46, 53.

powers, but also upon the «rewards of labor» in terms of wages and consumption¹⁸¹. «The road to freedom», he wrote on the *New York Daily Tribune* «lies in the direction that gives the greatest power of consumption».¹⁸² Protection, then, was deemed fundamental to counter the evils of free trade because it allowed the building of a «home market» and thus of «real independence», but most crucially because it looked «to raising the value of labor» by increasing wages and expanding the workers' ability to consume.

In order to prove this, however, Carey first showed that protection could affect the very structure of the market, by favoring its diversification and therefore an overall increase in production. In fact, by reestablishing the principle of concentration, the tariff could enable the natural development dynamic to be re-initiated. Specifically, protection could affect all the crucial factors of production, by increasing the amount of capital and labor applied, by bringing the locus of production closer to the locus of exchange in the home market, by encouraging greater constancy in the application of capital and labor, as well as a refinement of machinery¹⁸³. More crucially, by excluding foreign, already-established producers from the national market, the protectionist tariff allowed national manufactures to gradually grow and establish themselves. This, however, would prove beneficial also to farmers, since the presence of manufacture «by the side of agriculture» would fuel land returns by supplying tools and by improving cultivating techniques, triggering a spiral of growing productivity¹⁸⁴. Moreover, the growth of manufactures would attract workers that needed to consume food without producing it, thus creating «a demand at home» for agricultural products and increasing their prices, thus lessening the farmers' need to sell their products abroad or on distant markets and removing their need to move West¹⁸⁵.

Thus, in Carey's perspective, the manufacturing development brought by protection would favor agricultural producers, both independent farmers in the North and slaveowners cotton planters in the South, the main adversaries of tariff policies, in guaranteeing them an inexhaustible and reliable demand for their product in the domestic market, making them less dependent on exports to Britain¹⁸⁶. In the slaveowners case, as Carey argued in a pamphlet on slavery, this would also

¹⁸¹ «One or other of the systems is true, and that is true under which labour is most largely rewarded: that under which the labourer is enabled to consume most largely of food, fuel, clothing, and all other of those good things for the attainment of which men are willing to labour. If, then, we can ascertain the power of consumption at various periods, and the result be to show that it has invariably increased under one course of action, and as invariably diminished under another, it will be equivalent to a demonstration of the truth of the one and the falsehood of the other». Carey, 4–5.

¹⁸² [Henry C. Carey], *Fallacies and Frauds of British Free Trade III*, «New-York Daily Tribune», August 15, 1851.

¹⁸³ Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 68–69.

¹⁸⁴ «Every increase in production at home, consequent upon protection, has been but the preparation for a new and larger increase». Carey, 43.

¹⁸⁵ Carey, 97–98.

¹⁸⁶ Carey, 102–3.

encourage the employment of slaves in manufactures, increasing the demand for their labor and leading to its overall valorization, up to the point that it would become convenient for masters to free them¹⁸⁷. As the next chapter will show, to Carey this also meant identifying protection as the sole politics of emancipation possible, while opposing the claims of the abolitionist movement. By allowing agricultural products to be consumed «on the spot», then, protectionism would thus represent «emphatically a planter and farmer’s measure» as they «need protection against the endless fluctuations of foreign policy»¹⁸⁸. Thus, by combining agriculture and manufacture on a local level, allowing «the loom and the anvil to take their place by the side of the plough and the harrow», protection could bring a «a diversification of pursuits, that enables men to economize much time and many things that would otherwise be wasted»¹⁸⁹ and this way, through this saving of labor, guarantee an overall increase in productivity beneficial to all sectors.

«It is not so much that coal needs protection for itself – or that iron or cotton need it for themselves – but that each needs it for the other. The producer of coal suffer because the furnace is closed, and the producer of iron suffers because the factories are no longer built, and the maker of cloth suffers because labour is everywhere being wasted, and the power to buy cloth is diminished. The harmony of interests – agricultural and manufacturing – is as perfect as is that of the movements of a watch, and no one can suffer without producing injury among all around. The grower of cotton suffers when the operatives in cotton factories and the workers in mines and furnaces are unemployed, and the latter suffer when adverse circumstances diminish the return to the labour of the farmer and the planter»¹⁹⁰

For this very reason, protection could heal all the lines of political fractures and social clash that crossed the mid-century United States, solving the «discords» existing between North and South over slavery, between East and West over infrastructures, «between the employer and the employed, the capitalist and the laborer, the banker and its customers»¹⁹¹. Meanwhile, Carey found confirmation for his hypothesis about the effects of protection on production in the results of U.S. trade policies during the three preceding decades¹⁹². Through a very rough data analysis, Carey identified a direct correlation on the one hand between the introduction of protectionist tariffs (in 1828 and 1842), the development of manufacturing and growth in overall output, including agricultural output, and on the other hand between the reduction of tariffs (after 1833 gradual and

¹⁸⁷ Henry Charles Carey, “The Slave Question,” *The Plough, the Loom, and the Anvil* 1, no. VII (January 1849): 402–5.

¹⁸⁸ Carey, 411. For a detailed treatment of Carey’s vision of slavery, see chapter 3.

¹⁸⁹ Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 91.

¹⁹⁰ Carey, 49.

¹⁹¹ Carey, 41.

¹⁹² It should be noted that while Carey claimed the intention to investigate the effects of trade policies on real wages, he calculated the benefits of protectionism not too differently from previous protectionists. He merely investigated data on imports and exports, treating the former as a reliable estimate of national consumption.

after 1846 drastic), the decline of manufacturing, declining output and economic instability¹⁹³. Having shown how protectionism increased outputs, and having summarized this result in a series of pioneering statistical «diagrams»¹⁹⁴, Carey then turned to demonstrating the causal relationship between protectionist tariffs, high wages and increased consumption. In his writings at this stage, he did so through two different explanations, the first based on the relationship between population growth and growth in consumption opportunities, and the second on the relationship between wages and competition for the purchase of labor.

First, taking up Say's law of outlets¹⁹⁵, Carey argued that given the necessary co-extensiveness of production and consumption, thus the automatic adjustment of demand to supply, an increase in the former necessarily led to an increase in the latter. Indeed, according to Carey, «every producer is a consumer to the whole extent of his production», on the one hand because workers tended to consume all wages and capitalists to reinvest all profit. On the other, because through credit even savings deposited in banks ended up being fed back into the economic cycle, used for investment or wage payments, and therefore consumed. Thus, if all the value produced was consumed, it followed that «the more that is produced, the more *must* be consumed»¹⁹⁶. This increase in overall consumption immediately translated, Carey argued, into the workers' increasing power of consumption. More specifically, since protectionism resulted in increasing labor productivity, which heightened the value of labor while devaluing individual commodities, it allowed individuals to buy and consume more: «where production is large, the labor-price of commodities is low, and consumption is great»¹⁹⁷. The growth in production guaranteed by protectionism, then, would result in an increase in real wages due to the expansion of consumption possibilities. Carey thus used the equality between production and consumption to reiterate, in another form, the equation between labor productivity and the level of wages he had already argued for in 1835, according to which the worker's real wage was a function of overall production and in particular the productivity of his labor¹⁹⁸.

Second, Carey argued that by allowing the «diversification of pursuits» and by multiplying the possibilities for the employment of capital, the tariff resulted in an increase in output that could make the demand for labor permanently superior to its supply, thus «enabling the laborer to obtain larger wages»¹⁹⁹. This second argument was further specified in an article entitled *How to Increase the*

¹⁹³ Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 10–32.

¹⁹⁴ Carey, 32–40.

¹⁹⁵ Aurelio Macchioro, *Studi di storia del pensiero economico e altri saggi* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1970), 103–13.

¹⁹⁶ Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 45.

¹⁹⁷ Carey, 78.

¹⁹⁸ See chapter 1.

¹⁹⁹ Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 88.

Competition for the Purchase of Labor, and How to Raise the Wages of the Laborer published in 1852, in which Carey argued that protectionism raised wages because it increased «competition» among capitalists for the purchase of labor. Indeed, while in a «purely agricultural neighborhood» the demand for labor was limited to agriculture and subject to seasonal fluctuations, with labor therefore struggling to be sold, where a «diversification of employments» could emerge thanks to protection, demand for labor would outstrip supply. In other words, in the former a «competition for the sale of labor» tended to drag wages down, while in the latter a «competition for the purchase of labor» among capitalists forced them to raise wages²⁰⁰. «Labor», in fact, was nothing but «a commodity that some desire to sell, and that others desire to buy, precisely as is the case with peaches», with the only difference that it had to be sold instantly otherwise it risked being wasted, Carey argued operating a further shift towards a fully liberal and capitalist understanding of labor²⁰¹. While British free trade, by forcing nations around the world to specialize in agricultural production, aimed at keeping them in the former situation, protectionism was, to Carey, the main instrument for making labor artificially scarce and forcing capitalists to compete to buy it.

The next chapter will highlight how this competition had, in Carey's perspective, a broader impact in defining the workers' freedom or enslavement within the market²⁰². Here, however, what matters is that in the same article, observing the consequences of U.S. trade openness after 1846, Carey warned that only by returning to raising the tariff and making it «*thoroughly and completely protective*» could the United States hope to reduce the labor competition imposed globally by Britain. If therefore the «*Manchester* free trade paralyzes trade everywhere», harming in particular «the man who has labor to sell», on the contrary «the object of *American* free trade, [...] is to *protect* the laborer from being compelled to compete with men who 'the cheap labor'»²⁰³. Protectionism, then, by accelerating development, diversifying production to and multiply opportunities for capital investment could thus create a demand for labor sufficient to guarantee permanent wage increases. Implicitly attacking the trades' unions attempts to raise wages through strikes, then, Carey reiterated once more that the only way laid in fostering the accumulation of capital, this time through protection.

²⁰⁰ Henry Charles Carey, "How to Increase the Competition for the Purchase of Labour, and How to Raise the Wages of the Labourer," *The Plough, the Loom, and the Anvil* V, no. 5 (November 1852): 258.

²⁰¹ «The prices of all commodities are affected by excess of supply over demand, or of demand over supply. [...] Now, labor is a commodity that some desire to sell, and that others desire to buy, precisely as is the case with peaches; but it has this disadvantage, that it is less easily transferred from the place where it exists to that at which it is needed, and that the loss resulting from *the absence of demand on the spot* is greater than in reference to *any other commodity whatsoever*». Carey, 257.

²⁰² See Chapter 3.

²⁰³ Carey, "How to Increase the Competition for the Purchase of Labour", 267.

«The way to bring about an increase of wages is to increase the number of competitors for the purchase of labor. How, we may be asked, is this to be done? The answer is, build mills, and make demand for quarry men, masons, and carpenters. Build furnaces, and make demand for miners and laborers. Build machine-shops, and make demand for mechanics. Build steam-engines, and make spinning-jennies, and power-looms, and make demand for men and women to attend them. The more of these things that are done, the larger will be the competition for the purchase of labor»²⁰⁴

Thus, through increasing production and productivity or through increasing competition, in both ways Carey used the increase of wages and consumption as his central argument in favor of protection, which could not only guarantee the building of a «home market» through the diversification of production, but most crucially «protection for the laboree». This shift towards a labor argument for protection, often ignored by historiography²⁰⁵, marked the distance between Carey and earlier protectionism. Since Alexander Hamilton onward, protectionist thinkers had mostly argued in favor of tariffs arguing that they could guarantee «protection for infant industries». Friedrich List in particular had explained that since a «manufacturing power» could be acquired only after a prolonged period of time during which investing in manufactures would be scarcely profitable. In particular, in the context of a world market dominated by British industry «new establishments» would surely fail «if let alone» and «old manufacturing countries» would always prevail «in a free intercourse», over a «rising manufacturing power»²⁰⁶. Therefore, protectionism was indispensable to defend rising manufactures from international competition. Others, like Mathew Carey and Henry Clay had instead focused on the tariff as a way of building a diversified «home market». In both respects, earlier protectionism had thus defended the tariff mainly as a measure to stimulate the nation's «productive powers» and to accelerate the accumulation of capital.

By mid-century, instead, after the emergence of a labor movement that had contested the increasing exploitation brought by development, Carey had to find new ways of legitimizing protectionism and the state's role in support of development, having to deal no longer simply with the problem of U.S. competition in the world market but also with the problem of class conflict between capital and labor. More precisely, Carey could no longer simply justify protectionism as a means of increasing the nation's «productive powers», without at the same time justifying its consequences on the «power of consumption» of U.S. workers. The rift brought about by the labor movement had thus made it impossible to argue for the increase of an abstract productive power of the nation without asking the question of how much the producers of that power could themselves could

²⁰⁴ Carey, 258.

²⁰⁵ Most recently by Ron, *Grassroots Leviathan*, 96–117.

²⁰⁶ List, *Outlines of American Political Economy*, 32.

profit from it. For this reason, Carey had to present higher wages and expanding consumption as necessary consequences of the development fostered by protectionism and thus, in some ways, as a form of compensation for the increasing exploitation and dependency from wage labor that the labor movement had denounced. In this shift from infant-industry or home-market arguments to labor arguments for protection, however, Carey was part of a more general shift in the lexicon of U.S. protectionism, which since the 1830s, and precisely in response to the emergence of a labor movement, had begun to argue for tariffs as a means of defending American labor against competition with poor European labor²⁰⁷. Unlike contemporary protectionists, however, Carey did not limit himself to a defensive argument in support of the tariff as a shield against degradation from foreign pauper labor, but directly argued for its capacity to cause permanent wage increases. The same increases that, in the 1830s, he had thought possible through the simple and natural unfolding of the laws of production and distribution. In many ways, then, the idea of «protection for American labor» represented a response to class struggle, instrumental in legitimizing wage labor as the foundation of capitalist development.

However, that the tariff could actually increase wages and opportunities of consumption in the 1850s United States can be easily doubted. As Carey himself admitted, in order to protect the laborer, protection had first and foremost to protect capital's «the power of accumulating wealth»²⁰⁸, something that, however, in the mid-nineteenth century stood materially at odds with the possibility of higher wages. Since the 1820s, U.S. workers had not surprisingly contested the idea that what advantaged their employers could be of any advantage to themselves²⁰⁹. Moreover, Carey's argument itself in this respect was mystifying. When, in 1851, trying to anticipate some possible objections, he published an article entitled *Who Pays the Duty?*, Carey argued that far from determining an increase in prices, by increasing the overall supply of commodities, protection tended to reduce prices and thus compensate the duty. In this case, he explained, «the whole amount of duty falls upon the foreign producer, and the domestic consumer pays nothing», while at the same time «profiting largely by the domestic market furnished him by the men whose competition has compelled the reduction in the foreign prices»²¹⁰. Such a conclusion could hardly hold in the short term, since the economic rationale of protectionism was precisely that of cutting out foreign competitors, thus drastically reducing the overall supply, so as to allow national

²⁰⁷ Jonathan A. Glickstein, *American Exceptionalism, American Anxiety: Wages, Competition, and Degraded Labor in the Antebellum United States* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 194–95.

²⁰⁸ Carey, “How to Increase the Competition for the Purchase of Labour”, 141.

²⁰⁹ For a clear example, see: William Heighton, *An Address, Delivered Before the Mechanics and Working Classes Generally, by the Unlettered Mechanic* (Philadelphia: Office of the Mechanics' Gazette, 1827), 11.

²¹⁰ Henry C. Carey, “Who Pays the Duty? – The Producer or the Consumer?”, *The Plough, the Loom, and the Anvil*, vol. III, no. XII, June, 1851, 723. Later republished in «New-York Daily Tribune», June 24, 1851.

manufacturers to keep high prices, indispensable in the first phases of their growth, without being expelled from the market. Thus, protectionism had the precise goal of unloading the cost of tariffs upon consumers, in the end indirectly curtailing workers' wages and their power of purchase, the very opposite effect of what Carey claimed.

However, his invocation of higher wages as the result of protection, while being clearly ideological and mystifying, also expressed a broader understanding of the needs of capitalist development and specifically the need to guarantee the equation between production and consumption as a way of maintaining a solid basis to capital accumulation, while also avoiding crises of overproduction. Protection, then, was presented by Carey not only as an instrument to accelerate development, but also as an instrument through which the state could in some ways balance and equilibrate it. The same exigency had been expressed almost three decades before by Daniel Raymond, who had explicitly theorized the state's role in ensuring that increasing production could always be fully consumed²¹¹. When there was a «surplus of the product of industry», Raymond had explained, «it is as much the duty of the legislator to make provision, if possible, for its immediate consumption», even at the cost of destroying it, in the same way that it would be his duty to «adopt measures for the purpose of supplying the nation with food, in case it should be in want»²¹². Otherwise, growth in production would result in a «glut» that would harm the nation as a whole²¹³. Carey similarly thought of protection as a means of guaranteeing a balanced, politically governed capitalist development that through the simultaneous increase of production and consumption could both stabilize accumulation and prevent social conflict. According to E. P. Smith's synthesis, Carey's «American system» rested upon the belief that in order to guarantee increasing productivity, «the laborer must be well fed, well clothed, well lodged, well instructed»²¹⁴. Or, more precisely, that in order to increase production it was also necessary to «extending the circle of consumers», by giving «giving a larger share to producers» and by «opening a wide road to the operative for the acquisition of wealth and property»²¹⁵.

This way, Carey also began to broaden the meaning of «protection» which, from referring to a specific trade policy in his writings increasingly came to indicate a broader role of the state within capitalism and within society, as the political actor vested with the task of guaranteeing their functioning and their economic development. Thus, even if Carey did not explicitly reject *laissez-*

²¹¹ Raymond, *Elements of Political Economy. Volume I*, 219.

²¹² Raymond, 123.

²¹³ Raymond, 131-32.

²¹⁴ Erasmus Peshine Smith, «Protection vs. Free Trade. The Law of Progress in the Relations of Capital and Labor,» *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine & Commercial Review* XXVI, no. 1 (January 1852): 42.

²¹⁵ Erasmus Peshine Smith, «Protection vs. Free Trade. The Law of Progress in the Relations of Capital and Labor,» *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine & Commercial Review* XXVII, no. 2 (August 1852): 182.

faire as List, Raymond and his father had done, his vision of capitalism and its functioning constantly called into question the role of the state not only in shaping markets and in fostering accumulation through protection, but also in governing society and in balancing the economic system. Against the undisciplined movements of labor and against the persistent U.S. dependency within the world market, then, Carey conceived the state as a power at the service of capitalist development, charged with the task of constantly guaranteeing the social and political conditions of the expanding production and reproduction of capital and of the association between capital and labor. Capitalism thus appeared as a social and economic system that could not work, and even less grow, without a political power immersed within its dynamics and capable of shaping them.

2.3. Protection, Money and the Balance of Trade

In the first half of the 1850s Carey mainly focused on spreading his protectionist ideas through pamphlets and newspaper articles, largely repeating the arguments elaborated in *The Past, the Present, and the Future* and *The Harmony of Interests*. However, in 1855, in a series of articles on money published on the *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, Carey added a further element to his protectionist argument, but more broadly to his understanding of capitalism as well as to his critique to British economic thought²¹⁶. Offering an original depiction of money as a fundamental institution for the functioning of the market and of society itself, Carey argued that, against the monetary centralization imposed by free trade, protection could guarantee a permanent increase in its supply, by reshaping the nation's balance of trade, and that such increase would represent a further boost to capitalist development. In his previous writings, Carey had only occasionally discussed the problem of money. In his pamphlet on the credit system in the late 1830s, arguing in favor of free banking, he had treated money as a commodity similar to all others, whose market had therefore to be left free from interferences just like markets of all others²¹⁷. There, in addition to criticizing the centralization of gold and silver operated by the Bank of England and the consequent financial instability it imposed worldwide, he had also depicted economic development as a process of refinement of the banking system and consequently as a process of abstraction in the means of payment, that is as a gradual substitution of precious metals for paper money, checks and banknotes²¹⁸. Then, in *The Harmony of Interests*, Carey had argued that protection could guarantee

²¹⁶ Carey's 1855 articles have rarely been taken into account by historians, who have instead focused on his writings on money during Reconstruction. For a brief mention of Carey's 1850s vision of money: Jeffrey Sklansky, *Sovereign of the Market: The Money Question in Early America* (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 196–97. On Carey's monetary thought during Reconstruction, see: Sofia Valeonti, "Henry C. Carey's Monetary Thought and American Industrialization in the Greenback Debate," *History of Political Economy* 54, no. 2 (April 1, 2022): 189–216.

²¹⁷ Carey, *The Credit System in France, Great Britain, and the United States*, 117; Carey, *Answers to the Questions: What Constitutes Currency?*, 28.

²¹⁸ Carey, *The Credit System in France, Great Britain, and the United States*, 10.3

«that steadiness of the currency» indispensable to the unfolding of economic growth and denied by the structural instability imposed by British free trade²¹⁹.

In 1855, however, Carey broadened his conception of money and of its effects upon development, arguing that it did not simply represent a means of exchange and a «general medium of circulation», but had a wider relevance in allowing the recomposition of the plurality of actions that made up the economic process. In fact, he explained, in every moment a myriad of disconnected individuals produced some commodities while at the same time wanting to consume others. The process of production and consumption of every single commodity thus required the simultaneous combination and distribution of the «labor power» of those who produced the raw materials, of those who transported it, of those who transformed it into a finished commodity and of those who sold it, but also of the «power of profitable consumption» of those who consumed it. Thus, since labor in particular represented the most perishable commodity, which had to be used instantly in order not to be wasted, the realization of such process required an instrument that allowed to connect all its different phases, by representing unitarily the value and the labor expended in it. The coincidence between production and consumption required «incessant combination, followed by incessant division and subdivision, and that in turn followed by as incessant recomposition»²²⁰. The instrument to realize this, Carey explained, was money. In fact, thanks to its capacity of minute subdivision, money allowed to represent even the smallest unities of labor and value, allowing each individual to buy the fraction of social product corresponding to his own contribution and then to recompose all interactions and exchanges in a unitary process²²¹. This way, money thus allowed each quantity of labor to be used, giving «utility to thousands of millions of minutes that would be wasted did not a demand exist for them at the moment the power to labor was produced»²²².

Therefore, to Carey money represented a fundamental «*saving fund* for labor» that allowed the synchronization in time and space of the myriad individual wills of consumption with the myriad

²¹⁹ Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 185–91.

²²⁰ Carey used the example of the production of a newspaper: «This is seen in the case referred to, where coal, iron ore, and lead miners, furnace men, machine makers, rag gatherers, carters, bleachers and makers of bleaching powders, paper makers, railroad and canal men, type makers, compositors, pressmen, authors, editors, publishers, newsboys, and hosts of others, combine their efforts for the production in market of a heap of newspapers that has, at the instant of production, to be divided off into portions fitting the pockets of hundreds of thousands of consumers. Each of these pays one cent, and then perhaps subdivides it among half a dozen others, so that the cost to each of its readers is perhaps no more than a single cent per week; and yet, each obtains his share of the labors of each and all of the persons by whom it was produced». Henry Charles Carey, «Money», *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine* XXXII, no. 1 (January 1855): 22.

²²¹ «A medium of circulation fitted to gather up and divide and subdivide the fruits of the efforts of thousands, tens of thousands, and even millions of men, so that each may be enabled to obtain his share of the joint product, is one of the master wants of man. Without that, combination of effort to any great extent can have no existence». Henry Charles Carey, «Money. Chapter II», *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine* XXXII, no. 2 (February 1855): 176.

²²² Henry Charles Carey, «Money», *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine* XXXII, no. 1 (January 1855): 19–21.

individual acts of production. In this respect, the social relevance of «each dollar's worth of money» and of its service «in economizing labor» was greater than that of «tens of thousands» dollars «employed in manufactures, or tens of thousands in ships or railroads»²²³. Money, in fact, having allowed society to go beyond barter, had afforded a qualitative step forward in its possibilities of organization and production that had made it central and indispensable. Thus, by creating the conditions for the encounter between production and consumption, money allowed not only the functioning of the market, but that of society itself. In Carey's perspective, then, money constituted a fundamental element in the representation and mediation of social relations, having the role of materially connecting individuals and their actions, thus holding society together. Money was indispensable «to enable man to associate» as the instrument «by help of which the process of composition, decomposition, and recomposition of the various forces may readily be effected»²²⁴. It was not only a «machinery of exchange» but most crucially a «machinery of association» indispensable in the production and reproduction of capital and of society.

«Of all the machinery in use among men there is none that exercises upon their actions so great an influence as that which - as money - gathers up and divides and subdivides, and then gathers up again to be on the instant divided and subdivided again, the minutes and quarter hours of a community. It is the machinery of association, and the indispensable machinery of progress»²²⁵.

In this respect, Carey presented money as the social institution that allowed to transform the separate and independent actions and interactions of individuals into a dynamic movement of society. «Money is to society what fuel is to the locomotive and food to the man», he wrote, «the cause of motion, whence results power». Therefore, the absence of «the necessary supply of money» within society would have the same effect of withdrawal of food from man, that is «paralysis and death». In some ways, then, contrary to previous economic thinkers, who had represented money as an instrument of exchange without which the market could find a balance anyway, Carey presented capitalism as an intrinsically monetary economy, as an economic system in which money allowed to produce and consume, but also to maintain social relations among disconnected individuals. In his perspective, in the absence of money, the market would not simply go back to barter, but it would collapse. Consequently, Carey argued that a certain level of money in circulation was indispensable to the very existence of society, but also to support economic development. In fact, the increase in production, the acceleration of accumulation and the intensification of exchanges brought by development required the supply of money to grow accordingly in order to

²²³ Carey, 22.

²²⁴ Carey, 37.

²²⁵ Carey, 22.

be able to fulfill the needs of an expanding economy. On the contrary, scarcity of money always coincided with poverty, such as in the American West, where there existed «an unceasing effort to obtain something that can be used as currency», even of «questionable character», like the notes expressly issued by Eastern banks for Western circulation, since «any money is better than none»²²⁶.

More precisely, Carey depicted a reciprocal relationship between the quantity of money in circulation and the level development. On the one hand, in fact, he maintained that money tended to follow wealth, concentrating in rich and developing countries. Outlining a sort of gravitational law of monetary flows, Carey argued that «money gravitates towards money» and therefore «the faster the accumulation of the precious metals in any country, the greater is there the power to purchase more»²²⁷. Or, according to a different metaphor, «money thus obeys the same law as water», constantly falling towards greater masses of water and never stopping «until it reaches the ocean». In the mid-nineteenth century this meant that «the gold of California or the silver of Mexico» never stopped moving until it reached Great Britain, «the great ocean of trade, where interest on money is always low»²²⁸. Just as every other commodity tended to move towards the places in which it could enjoy «the highest utility», money moved towards the places in which it could be more profitably invested, usually those countries in which industrial development had reached a certain threshold and in which interest rates were low, giving money a greater purchasing power. Every country's productive power was directly proportional to the quantity of money that it could attract and maintain²²⁹. Thus, as Carey had already argued in his previous writings, accumulation was a process in which the first steps were the most difficult, but that after having reached a certain level tended to grow geometrically. For this very reason, he concluded, «the tendency of the gold of the world is towards England», which represented the world market's industrial and financial center, while in the American West money was the scarcest in the whole Union²³⁰. The flow of money, in other words, tended to follow and to reinforce national and international economic hierarchies.

On the other hand, Carey continued, while the quantity of money was a consequence of the level of development, at the same time its variations could foster it or slow it down. In other words, variations in the supply of circulating money could have a real effect upon one country's economic condition. Most crucially, as a «machine» capable of economizing labor, increasing quantities of money represented a boost to development and accumulation. In order to ground this conclusion,

²²⁶ Carey, 24.

²²⁷ Carey, 23.

²²⁸ Carey, 25.

²²⁹ Carey, "Money. Chapter II", 166–67.

²³⁰ Carey, "Money", 24.

Carey had to deal with previous economic reflections upon the subject and particularly with those quantitative theories of money that, from David Hume onwards, had considered the quantity of money in circulation as essentially neutral in the determination of “real” economic indicators, from prices to levels of production. According to such vision, which was entirely dominant in nineteenth-century economic theory, variations in the supply of money could only influence the general level of prices without changing relations among them²³¹. In his 1855 articles, however, acknowledging that his vision differed «widely from those commonly taught in our schools and in our journals», Carey devoted a lengthy critique to Hume’s monetary theories, which had strongly influenced both Smith and Ricardo. In the British economists’ vision, the quantity of circulating money was «of no consequence» since the prices of all commodities would always vary according to its variations. To Carey, instead «the very reverse is the fact», since an additional supply of money could act as a stimulus to production and therefore could also have an impact on the structure of prices²³². «When money flows in», he wrote, «everything is animated and every man can sell his labor, because exchanges are then rapid. When, on the contrary, it flows out motion diminishes and labor is wasted»²³³.

In fact, money being the most relevant and effective economic infrastructure, its increase tended to «diminish the obstacles interposed between the producer and the consumer, precisely as do railroads and mills, and all of them tend to the raising of the value of labor and land, while cheapening all the finished products of labor»²³⁴. In this respect, to Carey greater quantities of money would not produce inflation, that is an increase in prices of all commodities without effects on outputs. On the contrary, by expanding the opportunities to access credit for investment, money could increase the nation’s «power of association» and therefore its productive power. This way, precisely as a vehicle of development, increasing money would allow to reduce production costs and thus, in the long term, to reduce prices of manufactured goods, while at the same time increasing the workers’ power of consumption thanks to their labor’s increasing productivity²³⁵. This was proved, Carey added, by the fact that in the past century, in countries like France and Great Britain, the supply of money had greatly increased but the individuals’ power of purchase had not remained the same. Thus, in Hume’s case, as in that of many other British economists that

²³¹ Carluccio Bianchi, “Moneta,” in *Dizionario di economia politica*, ed. Giorgio Lunghini and Mariano D’Antonio, vol. 5 (Torino: Boringhieri, 1982).

²³² Carey, “Money. Chapter II”, 169.

²³³ Carey, “Money”, 24.

²³⁴ Carey, 26.

²³⁵ «Increase in the supply of money, so far from having the effect of causing men to give two pieces for an article that could before have been had for one, has, on the contrary, that of enabling them to obtain for one piece the commodity that before had cost them two, and that such is the case can readily be shown». Carey, 26.

Carey had been attacking in the previous years, «the theory and the facts are thus directly at war with each other»²³⁶.

«While the supply of the precious metals tends steadily to increase, and to raise prices, the steadily increasing power of association in all the manufacturing communities of the world causes so large an increase of the supply of manufactures and of food, that the tendency to rise in their price is counteracted, and prices fall instead of rising - and the only real advance is in labor and land»²³⁷

Consequently, «every increase in the supply of money» also contributed to the affirmation of a «highly equalizing and democratic tendency», since it lowered interest rates and reduced the weight of mortgages, of debts and of taxes, leading to an increase in a greater facility of consumption and access to credit, and more broadly «in the power of man over those great deposits of the only commodities capable of being used with advantage in the transfer of property from hand to hand»²³⁸. In other words, in Carey's perspective, monetary abundance constituted a fundamental pillar of the democracy of capital that he had been envisioning since the 1830s to guarantee broader opportunities of accumulation to every industrious workers, as well as to prevent social conflict. A broader availability of money, in fact, allowed to generalize the individuals' power of consumption and their opportunities for investment and accumulation. Against those economists like Smith, Hume and Bastiat who had downplayed the economic relevance of money, refusing to consider it as «real wealth», Carey thus countered that, being capable of satisfying all human «wants», its increase had to be considered from every point of view as increase of wealth, as «the common sense of mankind» seemed to have spontaneously understood²³⁹. As a form of wealth, as a foundation of power and as the fundamental «machinery of association», then, money emerged in Carey's vision as a crucial institution of development, whose supply the state, through protection, had the goal of increasing.

The unveiling of money's centrality in the organization of society and in the course of development had the goal of showing a further crucial effect of protectionism, and therefore of indicating a further goal of the state within capital. In fact, by showing the tendency of monetary concentration within British financial markets, Carey aimed at highlighting another consequence of the colonial

²³⁶ Carey, "Money. Chapter II", 170.

²³⁷ Carey, "Money", 28.

²³⁸ Carey, 34.

²³⁹ Henry Charles Carey, "Money. Chapter III," *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine* XXXII, no. 4 (April 1855): 413. Also: «Hume, Smith, and their successors to the present time, teach that it is of no importance whether there be much or little money in a community, and that the question whether the trade of a country be such as to promote the influx or efflux of the precious metals, is entirely undeserving of the attention of the legislator; and yet among their readers there is not even a single one who does not feel and know that with the influx of money there is increased life and motion, while with its efflux there is a decrease of both». Carey, 419.

system that protectionism had to overturn. The United States, he denounced, particularly in its poorest parts such as the West, suffered from a chronic scarcity of money that hindered production and exchanges, while paradoxically California contained one of the most relevant global sources of gold, whose product was however drained toward Great Britain by the world market's economic structure. This way, in the previous decade in particular, the United States had suffered a constant loss of money, «the machine by help of which the products of labor and capital are kept in motion, and without which they cannot move», leading to the interruption of many enterprises, investments and infrastructural works. For this reason, he explained, «we see in all directions roads half finished and unlikely soon to be finished although laborers are seeking employment»²⁴⁰. Despite the large availability of capital and labor, then, the United States were struggling to move them and put them to productive use because of a structural monetary scarcity. Thus, Carey argued, such situation could be overturned only by finding a way to stop the U.S. exportation of gold. Through such decision, «money would almost at once again become abundant, motion would recommence, and prosperity would reign throughout the land»²⁴¹.

In order to do so, the United States needed the introduction of a protectionist policy that could attract money, and specifically precious metals, by stimulating national manufacturing production and discouraging importations, thus gaining «power to increase their stock of coin by establishing a balance in their favor». Protectionism, in other words, would allow the United States to start to sell abroad more and more valuable commodities than those bought, thus paying less than what it gained, overall attracting money. Precisely the strategy, Carey noted, that Adam Smith had depicted as «so unphilosophical» while criticizing, in his *Wealth of Nations*, «what is commonly denominated the Mercantile System»²⁴². Recovering and adapting the mercantilist argument in order to support protection, Carey thus maintained that only those countries who had «resisted» the British system and its tendency towards monetary concentration had been able to retain a sufficient supply. In particular, European countries like Germany, who at mid-century were «advancing», could do so precisely because they had chosen to follow «a course directly the opposite of that advocated by Dr. Smith, and all have a balance of trade in their favor enabling them steadily to increase their import of the precious metals»²⁴³. Only by developing an industrial power capable to «supply cheaply the commodities required by the people who have gold to sell» could the United States

²⁴⁰ Carey, “Money”, 29.

²⁴¹ Carey, 30.

²⁴² Carey, “Money. Chapter II”, 177.

²⁴³ Carey, 180–81.

attract money and establish a favorable balance of trade, and only through protection could it achieve industrial power²⁴⁴.

«As manufactures take their place by the side of agriculture, there arises a power of association that brings into activity not only the physical and mental powers of man, but also the wonderful powers of the great machine given to him for his use. [...] In order, however, that they may so combine their exertions, there must be a medium of exchange infinitely divisible and universally acceptable, such as is presented by the precious metals, and by nothing else. Take them away and the power of combination ceases to exist. Restore them, and the power is restored. Increase their quantity, and motion increases, and with the increased motion there will be increased economy of labor power, with constant increase of force. The more the power of combined action, the greater is the power to obtain new machinery - whether in the form of steam - engines, railroads, or money - by help of which further to combine; and the less their power of combination, the greater is the difficulty of obtaining machinery of any kind, and particularly money»²⁴⁵.

As a matter of fact, in Carey's perspective, in the United States periods of commercial closure had largely corresponded to periods of monetary abundance and therefore of economic and infrastructural development: «whenever we have had efficient protection, we have made roads, built mills, and increased our stock of money, even when wholly dependent on foreign countries for our supplies of it». On the contrary, each time protective policies had been abandoned, improvements had stopped «to a ruinous extent» as in his perspective was happening in the 1850s. Despite the fact that «California still yields from forty to fifty millions a year», he denounced, its gold had «ceased to render service to the community that owns the State by which it is produced» being expelled towards Great Britain in a sort of monetary «dysentery»²⁴⁶. Thus, if the United States did not react to the present situation, it risked becoming poorer and poorer «under a system that closes the mills and furnaces of the country - that destroys the power of association - and that causes a demand for exportation of all the gold that we receive»²⁴⁷. In order to react, the United States had to affirm a protectionist policy capable of attracting money, which, far from diminishing the power to maintain foreign trade, as Hume had argued, would allow the country to increase commercial exchanges thanks to an increase in its productive powers, and to do so from a position of strength and not of weakness²⁴⁸.

²⁴⁴ Carey, "Money. Chapter III", 418.

²⁴⁵ Carey, 419.

²⁴⁶ Carey, 430–31.

²⁴⁷ Carey, 431.

²⁴⁸ «Further, we are told that increase of the precious metals tends to diminish the power to maintain foreign trade; but, reasoning *a priori*, it might safely be assumed that the country which possessed the power to attract them must have something with which to pay for them - something that was required by the producers of gold that it could supply more cheaply than other countries, and that it would continue so to do. Reasoning *a posteriori*, we have the fact that the

Carey's 1855 articles made a strong impression on Horace Greeley²⁴⁹ and were immediately celebrated on the *New York Daily Tribune* as a long-awaited critique to those political economists who, «with a steady determination never to admit a fact», kept denying «that the scarcity of money is a matter of any material consequence». On the contrary, according to the *Tribune*, Carey had proven that monetary scarcity damaged in particular «farmers, mechanics, merchants, everybody, in fact, who rubs his own muscular integuments against the hinderances and through the tight places of the working-day world»²⁵⁰. In the following years Carey periodically returned to the problem of money, repropounding his arguments first in a speech issued in New York in 1857²⁵¹ and then broadening them in the second volume of his *Principles of Social Science*²⁵². Most crucially, however, Carey's original reflection on the centrality of money as the «machinery of association» elaborated in the 1855 articles, one of the very rare nineteenth-century critiques to the quantitative theory of money, would become the foundation of his reflection and political action on monetary issues during Reconstruction, when he identified the “greenbacks” as an indispensable instrument for affirming his own vision of capitalist development and of the state's role within it²⁵³.

Overall, then, through protection, since the 1850s, Carey charged the state not only with the role of favoring a localized diversification of production, with the emergence of manufactures by the side of agriculture, not only with the role of guaranteeing a simultaneous growth of production and consumption so as to avoid crises of overproduction and to prevent social conflict, but also with the role of favoring a constant flow of money in the country so as to assure that its supply was always sufficiently abundant to support the financial needs of capitalist development. In short, to Carey the state had to act within capital and within development to constantly broaden the foundations of an ever-expanding accumulation. In doing so, however, the state also had to reshape the U.S. position within the world market.

3. The State, Development and Empire

In conceiving the state's role within the national market, Carey had at the same time to reflect upon its role within the world market. Since protection was aimed at countering the obstacles to

power to maintain foreign trade increases in all those countries in which the supply increases, while it declines in all those in which it diminishes». Carey, “Money. Chapter II”, 170.

²⁴⁹ Charles Dana, the *New York Tribune's* director, wrote to Carey that «Greeley is enthusiastic in admiration of your article on money. [...] He thinks it the best of all your writings, and as soon as I can get half a day, I am going to study it thoroughly». *Charles Dana to Henry C. Carey*, February 23, 1855, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 12, folder 5), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²⁵⁰ *Money*, «New York Tribune», January 9, 1855.

²⁵¹ Henry Charles Carey, *Money. A Lecture Delivered Before the New York Geographical and Statistical Society, Thursday, February 1857* (Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, 1860).

²⁵² Henry Charles Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Volume II* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1860).

²⁵³ See chapter 5.

development imposed on the United States by the «British colonial system», it immediately had not only an internal relevance in affirming capitalism within the nation but also an external meaning in transforming the U.S. position in the world market's power structure. Thus, Carey did not conceive protectionism merely as a reactive and defensive shield to affirm U.S. economic independence, but simultaneously as the foundation of an expansive strategy to globally project U.S. imperial power. The idea itself of endeavoring to establish a favorable «balance of trade» already went, at least implicitly, in this direction. The affirmation of an industrial power that could attract monetary supplies, in fact, would necessarily require the increasing capacity to export manufactured commodities to foreign markets and, at some point, the expanding production would require the more or less voluntary opening of new markets. While Friedrich List had explicitly theorized the need for building a structurally hierarchical and colonial world market divided between countries of the «temperate zones», that is Europe and North America, which exported industrial products, and those of the «hot zones», which exported raw materials²⁵⁴, Carey rejected such vision of an unequal and international division of labor. In his perspective, productive diversification had to happen on a local or at least national scale, which meant that every country had to be allowed the same chance of developing. Nonetheless, through the concept of «annexation», Carey made it clear that only the U.S. economic and political expansion could shape such an egalitarian world market. Only an American empire could, in other words, solve the problems posed by the British colonial system.

The starting point of Carey's vision of U.S. empire was once more the question of labor. In his perspective, that protectionism could enhance labor and raise wages had been indisputably proven by the fact that, during periods of tariff closure, immigration had systematically tended to increase, as «men go from low wages to seek high ones»²⁵⁵. Both between 1828 and 1833 and between 1842 and 1846, the level of wages, not the «troubles in Europe» as claimed by many, had determined more and more European workers to move to the United States. It was therefore to high wages that «so large an import of the most valuable of commodities – man»²⁵⁶ had to be attributed, as well as to the attempt by the owners of the commodity-labor to sell it at the highest price possible. Indeed, «all commodities tend to seek the best market, and to this rule labor forms no exception». For this reason, Carey believed that European workers were «anxious to transfer themselves here because man is here a commodity of more value than in Europe» and because in the United States

²⁵⁴ Friedrich List, *Appendix to The Outlines of American Political Economy in a Series of Letters Addressed by Professor Friedrich List to Charles J. Ingersoll Esq.* (Philadelphia: Samuel Parker, 1827); List, *The National System of Political Economy*, 46–47.

²⁵⁵ Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 50.

²⁵⁶ Carey, 90.

they could consume more for the same amount of labor²⁵⁷. U.S. protectionism could thus trigger such a growth in wealth and wages as to attract from around the world masses of workers, who would further contribute to development and accumulation, bringing population and productive skills. Moreover, Carey predicted, such a massive attraction of workers as individuals would soon be coupled by the attraction of those nations currently subjected, formally or informally, to British colonial rule. Those nations would wish not only to imitate, but to share in the development and wealth guaranteed by U.S. trade policy. Protectionism would thus have the effect of increasing domestic production and consumption, facilitating «the exportation of the surplus to foreign markets», but more crucially that «of producing among our neighbours a strong desire for the establishment of the same perfect freedom of trade that now exists among the several States, by becoming themselves a part of the Union»²⁵⁸. Thus, «every colony of England would gladly separate from her» as subject to dependence, impoverishment and devaluation of labor, while «every one would gladly unite its fortunes with those of our Union, feeling that connection with us is synonymous with improvement»²⁵⁹. If to Carey protectionism was «the road to absolute freedom of trade»²⁶⁰, that road necessarily passed through the annexation of individuals and nations to the American Union.

«The colonies are ruined by free trade, and they desire annexation, that they may have protection. [...] Protection looks to raising the value of labor, and thus promoting the annexation of individuals, and the establishment of perfect free trade between ourselves and the people of Europe by inducing them to transfer themselves to our shores. It is a bounty on the importation of the machine we need – man – to give value to the machine we have in such abundance – land. It leads to perfect free trade – the annexation of nations – by raising the value of man throughout the world»²⁶¹

More precisely, to Carey, a real freedom of trade appeared not to be conceivable within the world market, inevitably traversed by hierarchies and asymmetries of power, but only within the nation's borders, in the politically united space of the national market, or rather in the space made smooth and homogeneous by the unifying work of the state. In this sense, protectionism was conceived by Carey not simply as a means of asserting U.S. independence in the world market, but as a means of making the world market to coincide as far as possible with the domestic market of the American Union²⁶². It was not only a policy of economic decolonization to emancipate the United

²⁵⁷ Carey, 88.

²⁵⁸ Carey, 93.

²⁵⁹ Carey, 129.

²⁶⁰ Carey, 67.

²⁶¹ Carey, 130.

²⁶² That is, to make the United States into an «economy-world» in Fernand Braudel's terms. See: Fernand Braudel, *La dinamica del capitalismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1981), 76.

States from commercial dependence, but also and simultaneously an imperial policy. The process of «annexation» thus connected protectionism, the building of economic independence and imperial expansion, as well as the maintenance of social order within the nation thanks to high wages. In this respect, U.S. expansion was presented by Carey as a universal mission of emancipation for other nations and other peoples, which would consequently voluntarily adhere to it. It was a «great work» reserved for the American people. Already in the final pages of *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, Carey had written that the United States owed the resistance against Great Britain «to themselves and to the world», and that in doing so they would confirm the historical truth according to which «westward, the star of empire wends its way»²⁶³. In *The Harmony of Interests*, he reiterated that nations subservient to Britain had to look to the United States, which would soon control the entire North American continent and that, through the «*national*, not party or sectional, adoption of the protective policy», would soon be able to end the colonial system. Thus, first «the British provinces» of Canada would be «speedily incorporated into the Union» followed by Cuba and Mexico, then by Ireland and finally by England itself, although, Carey specified, the annexation of the latter two would require a radical «change of their political system». The annexation of nations would meanwhile be accompanied by the immigration of millions of European workers. Thus, «the colonial system would gradually pass out, and with it the power of the exchangers over the laborers and land-owners»²⁶⁴.

«The annexation of a million of people, emigrants from Europe, to our community, establishes free trade with them. The annexation of the land and the people of Canada, and the other British possessions, would enlarge the domain of perfect free trade. So would that of Cuba, Mexico, Ireland, or even England, and free trade thus established would be beneficial to all, the annexers and the annexed»

In the final pages of *The Harmony of Interests*, it clearly emerged how at stake in Carey's protectionism was not the freedom of trade, let alone the freedom of labor, but empire, and more precisely the building of an «American free trade» that required the expansion of the Union. Thus, he stated, «the object of protection is the establishment of perfect free trade, by the annexation of men and of nations»²⁶⁵. In this respect, protection constituted a counter-hegemonic challenge to British commercial dominance in the world market: a challenge both against empire and for empire. In fact, the approval of a tariff would allow the United States to communicate to the world its intention to become the seat of world manufacturing: «that the people of this country, North,

²⁶³ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 446.

²⁶⁴ Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 133–35.

²⁶⁵ Carey, 208.

South, East, and West, are determined that the seat of the cotton and iron manufactures of the world is to be here»²⁶⁶.

«Two systems are before the world [...] One looks to the underworking of the Hindoo, and sinking the rest of the world to his level; the other to raising the standard of man throughout the world to our level. One looks to pauperism, ignorance, depopulation, and barbarism; the other to increasing wealth, comfort, intelligence, combination of action, and civilization. One looks toward universal war; the other toward universal peace. One is the English system; the other we may be proud to call the American system, for it is the only one ever devised the tendency of which was that of elevating while equalizing the condition of man throughout the world»²⁶⁷.

It was therefore in the context of this struggle between two opposing systems that the meaning of the U.S. «mission» had to be understood. Carey criticized those who argued that it coincided with the conquest by force of neighboring countries such as Mexico or Cuba that «in the natural course of events» would be annexed to the Union anyway, «in reasonable time, without the cost of a dollar or a life». He also polemicized with those who claimed that the mission of the United States was «that of monopolizing the commerce of the world», reproducing «the English doctrine of ‘ships, colonies, and commerce’» and its consequences in terms of poverty and degradation of labor²⁶⁸. On the contrary, the «true “mission”» of the United States consisted «in elevating the condition of men» through the protection of capital accumulation and in doing so «throughout the world» through the annexation of nations and through immigration. A mission that was universal, but which primarily required its fulfillment within the nation, as the interests of the United States coincided with those of humanity: «to raise the value of labor throughout the world, we need only to raise the value of our own». In Carey’s perspective, therefore, the United States could not simply replace Britain in its commercial dominance, but had to build a U.S. empire in the world market that had an entirely new form, one that did not replicate colonial subordination, economic centralization and the international division of labor. Envisioning an empire that extended American federalism globally, therefore, Carey was among those who, in mid-nineteenth century, started to outline the vision of a hegemonic role for the United States not only towards the rest of the American continent, but towards the world²⁶⁹.

²⁶⁶ Carey, 168–69.

²⁶⁷ Carey, 228–29.

²⁶⁸ Carey, 227.

²⁶⁹ Piero Bairati included the ending pages of *The Harmony of Interests* in his anthology on U.S. imperial thought, highlighting Carey as one of the thinkers who in the mid-nineteenth century began to delineate a global role for U.S. imperial power: Piero Bairati, ed., *I profeti dell’impero americano. Dal periodo coloniale ai nostri giorni* (Torino: Einaudi, 1975), 178–80. On the transition of the United States during the nineteenth century from an exclusively continental expansion to an Atlantic and fully global projection, see: Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century*

«Doing these things, the addition to our population by immigration will speedily rise to millions, and with each and every year the desire for that perfect freedom of trade which results from incorporation within the Union, will be seen to spread and to increase in its intensity, leading gradually to the establishment of an empire, the most extensive and magnificent the world has yet seen, based upon the principle of maintaining peace itself, and strong enough to insist upon the maintenance of peace by others, yet carried on without the aid of fleets, or armies, or taxes, the sales of public lands alone sufficing to pay the expenses of government. To establish such an empire - to prove among the people of the world, whether agriculturists, manufacturers, or merchants, there is perfect harmony of interests [...] - is the object and will be the result of that mission»²⁷⁰

The mission of the United States then consisted in overcoming the nature of power relations on a global scale, and colonial relations in particular. In Carey's view, it amounted to the creation of a new and specifically American form of empire, without colonies and egalitarian, based on voluntary annexation and not conquest, maintained peacefully and without the need for fleets, armies or taxes, and financed by the sale of public lands. A form of empire that could extend the Union globally according to the same legal and constitutional model that had been governing the U.S. continental expansion, that is federalism, as a strategy of incorporating new territories on an equal footing. Protectionism would therefore allow the Union to expand according to a model based on the replication of equal imperial units, not founded on the hierarchical separation between metropolises and peripheries, but on the incorporation of nations into the Union with equal constitutional rights. Thus, through the replication of an imperial equality that, however, at least on the North American continent, had been possible only on the condition of the erasure of the differences present in the territories, of their racial subordination and of the violent dispossession of natives²⁷¹. An empire whose anti-colonial and egalitarian character would be made possible by a specific constitutional form, federalism, which already contained in itself a hierarchical and imperial relationship between the federal government and the States, at least in Carey's vision.

Protectionism, from this perspective, did not constitute a form of isolationism, but on the contrary a strategy to redefine existing global power relations that would first guarantee the independence of the United States and then enable a global projection of U.S. political and economic power. In this respect, protectionism could become the tool to establish the United States as a finally postcolonial state and empire within the Atlantic system of states. The imperial and postcolonial state of a former colony, emerged against a colonial relationship, that had to annex and emancipate

America (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011); Marco Mariano, *L'America nell'Occidente". Storia della dottrina Monroe (1823-1963)* (Roma: Carocci, 2013).

²⁷⁰ Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 229.

²⁷¹ Dahl, *Empire of the People*, 25.

other former colonies, and therefore to expand without reproducing forms of colonial subordination, while continuing to carry within itself its colonial origin. Carey's vision of a state within capital, therefore, ended up not only theorizing its role as the engine of development through protection and monetary abundance, but at the same time as the engine of empire within the world market. In fact, by fostering local diversification of production, higher consumption and monetary abundance through protection, the state had to allow the affirmation of a specific shape of capitalist development at the same time capable of grounding an ever-increasing accumulation, at preventing social conflict and at expanding the U.S. model throughout the world. At the same time, however, in the 1850s, Carey's state-led, buoyant model of development had to deal with the contradictions posed by the existence of slavery, by the increasing insubordination of black labor and by the deepening division of the United States into two economic and political sections.

Chapter 3

The Conundrum of Emancipation: Slavery, Protection and the Coming of the Civil War (1848-1865)

«The great question of the day is that of Slavery, its extension or its limitation, its perpetuation or its extinction». With these words, in 1849 Carey inaugurated a series of pamphlets devoted to the problem of slavery, emancipation and the sectional conflict, posing a question that would return repeatedly in his following writings: «how shall we free ourselves from the curse of slavery?»¹. In a context marked by the reopening of the clash between the North and the South over the form of labor to be introduced in the West, by a growing slave insubordination, and by the advance of abolitionism, to Carey political economy had to face «the slave question» in order to understand how to deal with the constitutional crisis it was causing. While it had only been briefly treated in his previous writings, beginning in the late 1840s slavery became a central and unescapable theme of Carey's reflection, to which he devoted several pamphlets, newspaper articles and one book in 1853, in the attempt to understand the social and economic conditions for black workers' emancipation, as well as the threats it posed to the accumulation of capital.

While historiography have tended to uncritically recruit Carey in the anti-slavery camp as the foremost Northern economist of “free labor”, this chapter aims to show that Carey's reflection on emancipation did not emerge from an opposition to Southern slavery, but rather from an intellectual and political fight against the abolitionist movement and against black workers' insubordination. As a matter of fact, it is hard to find, within Carey's writings on slavery, a critique to the Southern racial labor regime, even a merely economic one, while they are filled with attacks against abolitionists and in many cases with explicit defenses of Southern slavery as a humane and caring institution, which that historians have tended to overlook. More precisely, the chapter argues that, against the demand of an immediate and radical emancipation fostered by abolitionists and put into practice by slaves themselves, Carey's reflection, like that of most Northern economists, moved from the need to maintain, even after the end of slavery, the subordination of black labor, as well as those racial and class hierarchies that had allowed the plantation economy and U.S. capitalism more broadly to thrive. It was with this goal in mind that he elaborated the vision of a gradual, limited and ordered emancipation, which since the mid-1850s he endeavored to affirm

¹ Henry Charles Carey, “The Slave Question”, *The Plough, the Loom, and the Anvil* 1, no. VII (January 1849): 401.

within the Republican Party, affirming the need to realize it through the institution of wage labor, according to the rules of the market, following the slaveholders' interests, and only after an adequate preparation of slaves for freedom. In order to do so, the emancipation of black workers had to be suspended up to the point when it could happen orderly and their freedom had to be limited to the possibility to sell their labor on the market. In Carey's perspective, only protectionism could guarantee all of these conditions, thus amounting to the «true anti-slavery policy», while at the same time allowing to defuse the sectional conflict by connecting the Northern and Southern economies into an integrated, developing national capitalism capable of competing with Great Britain within the world market. Only the state, without directly intervening but simply by favoring development through protection, could prevent emancipation from happening as a crisis that threatened to break the continuity of labor command in the South and endanger national accumulation, just like it had happened in the West Indies in the 1830s. However, the chapter argues that, in the context of the 1850s, Carey's political economy of emancipation through protection meant postponing emancipation to an undetermined future and *de facto* defending slavery as a necessary institution to govern black labor.

The first part of the chapter, drawing on his pamphlets and articles between the late-1840s and the mid-1850s, as well as on his book *The Slave Trade* (1853), shows how, against abolitionism, Carey identified protectionism and industrial development as the main conditions of possibility for overcoming slavery and how he indicated wage labor as the instrument to realize a gradual, ordered, controlled and limited emancipation that could equate the freedom of black workers with the possibility to sell their labor in the marketplace. This first part argues that Carey's vision of emancipation was grounded in the observation of the emancipation process in the West Indies in the 1830s and that it was such threat of black labor insubordination that pushed Carey, as well as several other Northern economists, to call for a suspension of emancipation. The second part of the chapter uses a wide variety of sources to trace Carey's public and political engagement in the second half of the 1850s and during the Civil War, his attempts to impose protectionism within the Republican Party since 1856 and at finding a compromise between Northern and Southern moderates between 1857 and 1859 and later his support for the Lincoln administration during the Civil War, his pressure for the Morrill Tariff and his involvement in the scheme of the American Emigrant Company. This part argues that Carey's insistence on protectionism represented a strategy for imposing his own anti-abolitionist vision of emancipation and slavery within the Republican Party and for marginalizing the views of the party's most radical anti-slavery components, in the attempt to avoid disunion between the North and the South. Finally, the chapter concludes by showing that, during the Civil War, emancipation precisely happened as a

crisis that produced a fracture in the command over black labor in consequence of what W. E. B. Du Bois called a general strike against slavery, realizing the worst nightmares of Northern political economists.

Introduction: Abolition and Disunion

Since the Revolution, the problem of slavery had been approached through an underlying consensus between Northern and Southern elites about the need for its gradual abolition, governed by the States and based on respect for the economic interests of slaveholders. In the wake of the Revolution and the role that blacks had played in it, between the late-eighteenth and the early-nineteenth century, Northern States had therefore abolished slavery through legal mechanisms that harnessed and slowed down the transition, compensating masters through a period of apprenticeship during which the children of slaves were forced to work to acquire their freedom. In most cases, with the exception of New England, following the example of Pennsylvania's Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery of 1780, States had passed *post nati* emancipation laws, stipulating the liberation not of living slaves but of their children, and only from the age of twenty-five or twenty-eighth². At the same time, the long process of Northern emancipation had been accompanied, on the one hand, by a disfranchisement of free blacks, with the restriction of voting and citizenship rights to the white population³, and on the other, by a growing support for the idea that emancipation should necessarily be coupled with the colonization of free blacks to Africa. To this purpose, in 1816, a group of Southern politicians led by Henry Clay had founded the American Colonization Society to encourage the more or less voluntary deportation of former slaves outside the United States, a project that in the following decades enjoyed great support by the Whig and then the Republican Party, but largely failing⁴. Simultaneously, in the South, by the 1790s the explosion in demand for cotton from English industries had started the capitalist transformation of slavery, reinforcing it not only as a racial, but also as a legal and financial institution. In addition to intensifying exploitation on the plantations and making any form of emancipation unthinkable, the emergence of this "second slavery" had enabled an unprecedented growth of Southern economy, of its exports and accumulation possibilities. This had prompted the Southern ruling classes to demand a Westward expansion of the plantation system and a constitutional protection

² Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 65-96; Ira Berlin, *The Long Emancipation: The Demise of Slavery in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015), 13-14.

³ Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, 74.

⁴ On the American Colonization Society, see: Eric Burin, *Slavery and the peculiar solution: a history of the American Colonization Society*, Southern dissent (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005); Phillip W. Magness and Sebastian N. Page, *Colonization after Emancipation: Lincoln and the Movement for Black Resettlement* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011).

for slavery, leading to a conflict that was resolved by the Missouri Compromise in 1820, but also to the elaboration of an increasingly sophisticated pro-slavery ideology⁵.

By the 1830s, however, the outcome of the emancipation process in the Caribbean British colonies, the emergence of a radical abolitionist movement in the North, and the growing insubordination of slaves in the South, which increasingly resulted in open rebellions and escapes from plantations, had challenged the perspective with which the problem of slavery had been approached by U.S. elites in previous decades. The year 1831, opening in January with the publication of *The Liberator*, William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper, continued in August with Nat Turner's violent uprising in Virginia, ending in December with the uprising of more than sixty thousand slaves in Jamaica⁶. Two years later, in the aftermath of this revolt, the British Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act, which established, beginning August 1, 1834, the gradual emancipation of slaves after a six-year program of paid but rigidly controlled apprenticeship. However, slave revolts and escapes from plantations soon forced colonial assemblies to abolish this transitional system ahead of time, granting full emancipation as early as 1838⁷. Meanwhile, also in the wake of British antislavery, a U.S. abolitionist movement based on the watchword of «immediate and unconditional emancipation» started to take shape since the late 1820s. This “second wave” of U.S. abolitionism was made particularly radical by its claim that emancipation had to be coupled by the granting of a full self-determination, including access to land and political rights⁸, by its interracial composition,

⁵ Over the past two decades, the new history of capitalism has shown the centrality of slavery in the emergence of capitalism on a global scale, but also the transformative impact of the English Industrial Revolution on Atlantic slavery, reconstructing the highly rationalized and industrial character of plantation labor. In this sense, some historians have spoken of a “new slavery” or “second slavery”. An insight already held by Karl Marx, who in the first book of *Capital* had noted the transformation of American slavery into a capitalist, «calculated and calculating system» of exploitation geared to the production of surplus value: Karl Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One.*, ed. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1976), 345.. See: Dale W. Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital, and World Economy*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004); Robin Blackburn, *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights* (London: Verso, 2011); Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton. A Global History* (New York: Knopf, 2014); Javier Laviña and Michael Zeuske, eds., *The Second Slavery: Mass Slavery and Modernity in the Americas and in the Atlantic Basin* (Zürich-Berlin: Lit, 2013); Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2016); Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, eds., *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Caitlin Rosenthal, *Accounting for Slavery: Masters and Management* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2018). For critical reviews of the new history of capitalism: Jeffrey Sklansky, “Labor, Money, and the Financial Turn in the History of Capitalism,” *Labor Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 11, no. 1 (March 1, 2014): 23–46; James Oakes, “Capitalism and Slavery and the Civil War,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 89 (Spring 2016): 195–220.; Matteo Battistini, “Un progetto in movimento: il capitale in azione nella nuova storia (politica) del capitalismo americano,” *Ricerche di storia politica*, no. 3 (2022): 179–93.

⁶ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 211-12.

⁷ Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery: 1776 - 1848* (London: Verso, 1988), 419-72; Claudius K. Fergus, *Revolutionary Emancipation: Slavery and Abolitionism in the British West Indies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013). For a different interpretation of the emancipation process in the Caribbean, see: Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 246-66.

⁸ For Manisha Sinha, the discourse of radical abolitionism denounced not only slavery, but all forms of labor exploitation, and thus also implied a critique of capitalism (*The Slave's Cause*, 339-48). In this sense, as already argued by W. E. B. Du Bois in *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*, edited by D. L. Lewis, New York, The Free Press,

being animated in particular by free blacks in the North, who since the early 1830s began gathering annually in national black conventions, and most crucially by its support for slave resistance in the South⁹. An emblematic voice of this phase was David Walker, a black abolitionist from New York, whose widely-circulated *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* (1829) forcefully denounced U.S. racism and demanded full citizenship for blacks in the United States, inciting them to resist, even by force, against white abuse¹⁰. From the coming together of black abolitionism, religious abolitionism, and white reform movements, the American Anti-Slavery Society was thus founded in 1833, under Garrison's leadership. Since its *Declaration of Sentiments*, the AAS rejected all forms of gradualism, colonization, and compensation for slaveholders¹¹. Over the next decade, the abolitionist movement was further strengthened and radicalized by the contribution of slaves themselves, who, in addition to daily opposing the masters on the plantations and fleeing the South in increasing numbers and in an increasingly organized manner, tended to become militant abolitionists themselves once they arrived in the North. This was the case, among others, of Frederick Douglass, who from 1845 onward became the most powerful voice of the movement¹².

Abolitionism, slave resistance, and emancipation in the Caribbean had thus raised the specter of a radical and revolutionary emancipation that threatened to overthrow the class and race relations on which the plantation economy had hitherto been based. Moreover, in the 1840s, twenty years after the Missouri Compromise, slavery went back to divide national politics. In fact, the opening of a new expansionist phase with the annexation of Texas in 1845, the invasion of Mexico in 1846, and the conquest of more than half of its territory, in fact resurfaced the clash between the North and the South over what form of labor should be introduced into Western territories. A clash that,

1992, 20-30, abolitionism must be considered as an integral part of the U.S. labor movement. For the debate on abolitionism and capitalism see: Jonathan A. Glickstein, "Poverty Is Not Slavery": American Abolitionists and the Competitive Labor Market," in *Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists*, ed. Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 195-218; James L. Huston, "Abolitionists, Political Economists, and Capitalism," *Journal of the Early Republic* 20, no. 3 (2000): 487.

⁹ On the political connection between abolitionism and slave resistance, see: Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 1-2. John Ashworth argued how it was precisely slave resistance in the South that made Northern abolitionism threatening and how it was the driving force behind the whole sectional controversy. John Ashworth, *Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic. Volume 1: Commerce and Compromise, 1820-1850* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 5-6. See also: James Oakes, "The Political Significance of Slave Resistance," *History Workshop*, 89-107, XXII (1986).

¹⁰ David Walker, "An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World," in *Unsung. Unheralded Narratives of American Slavery & Abolition* [1829], ed. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York-London: Penguin Books, 2021), 67-87.

¹¹ *Declaration of the National Antislavery Convention* (1833), in Mason Lowance, ed., *Against Slavery. An Abolitionist Reader* (New York-London: Penguin Books, 2000), 119-20.

¹² Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 420-21. On the escape of slaves from the South, see: John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Eric Foner, *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Norton, 2015); Richard J. M. Blackett, *The Captive's Quest for Freedom: Fugitive Slaves, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, and the Politics of Slavery* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

in addition to being increasingly difficult to compose, was fragmenting the national party system along sectional lines, as shown by the vote in Congress on the Wilmot Proviso in 1846 and by the emergence in 1848 of the Free Soil Party, born out of a coalition of Liberty Party abolitionists, ex-Whigs and ex-Democrats united by opposition to the extension of slavery into the West. Although temporarily resolved by the fragile compromise of 1850, whereby California was admitted as a “free” state in exchange for the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, the clash over slavery in the West signaled the increasingly difficult coexistence between the two divergent forms of capitalist development that existed in the United States: the industrial one of the North based on wage labor and the agrarian one of the South based on slavery and cotton plantations¹³. Indeed, in the previous two decades, the Northern and Southern economies had developed in different directions, with the former beginning a slow and difficult journey toward industrialization and the latter becoming more and more firmly anchored to the slave plantation system and cotton exports. Most importantly, the economy of the North, increasingly integrated with the Great Lakes region through the spread of railroads and canals, was becoming less and less dependent on that of the South¹⁴. The two U.S. forms of capitalist development, then, having grown in inextricable connection between the late eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth century, now appeared less and less compatible.

It was in the wake of this context that Carey placed slavery at the center of his reflection, in the attempt to react to the double threat that was undermining the economic and political stability of the mid-century United States: the specter of abolition and that of disunion. Indeed, since 1850 he denounced with alarm how Americans had become «more and more sectional in our feelings»¹⁵ due to the spread of two opposing extremisms: «Anti-slavery and Pro-slavery»¹⁶. On the one hand, in fact, Carey noted «a total revolution of the southern feeling on this subject» that led many Southern planters to see slavery no longer as a necessary evil to be gradually overcome, as Washington, Jefferson and Madison had done, but as «a blessing» and as a superior model of subjugation and government of labor, as George Fitzhugh was arguing in those years¹⁷. On the other hand, however, in Carey’s view, it was abolitionism and the rise of a «political anti-slavery», particularly in the form of «free-soilism», that had aggravated «the present excitement between the

¹³ Sven Beckert distinguished between «industrial capitalism» and «war capitalism».

¹⁴ Marc Egnal, *Clash of Extremes. The Economic Origins of the Civil War* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009); Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*.

¹⁵ Henry Charles Carey, “On the True Causes of Existing Difficulties. From a Friend of the Union in Pennsylvania, to a Friend of the Union in South Carolina,” *The Plough, the Loom, and the Anvil* 3, no. I (July 1850): 37.

¹⁶ Henry Charles Carey, “Letter to a Distinguished Patriot of the South,” *The Plough, the Loom, and the Anvil* 3, no. II (August 1850): 91.

¹⁷ Harvey Wish, *George Fitzhugh. Propagandist of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943); Comer Vann Woodward, “George Fitzhugh, Sui Generis,” in *Cannibals All! Or, Slaves Without Masters* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960), VII-XXXIX.

North and the South», up to the point of threatening the Union's hold¹⁸. To him, abolitionists had turned the opposition to slavery into an unacceptable assault on the property rights of Southerners. «The agitators of the North», Carey denounced, «would impair the value of property and destroy the peace of the South, while deteriorating the condition of the objects of their sympathy»¹⁹. The opposing extremes were thus not equivalent, according to Carey, who continually attacked abolitionists as a threat to the constitutional compromise over slavery, while being very careful to defend slaveholders as careful masters. Thus, he pointed out, «I am no abolitionist. I have no unkind feeling toward the South. [...] I cannot but respect that only people under whom the negro race has increased in number», arguing accordingly that «the true friend of the negro race is therefore bound to urge the most perfect respect for the rights of Southern men, and the most entire abstinence from interference with their institutions»²⁰.

Therefore, beginning in the late 1840s, Carey started to reflect on the problem of slavery and moving from the risks its end might pose to the American state and to capitalism. On the one hand, he faced the problem of how to integrate the two sections into a national economy capable of growing industrially and of challenging Britain's hegemony over the world market, identifying the protectionist tariff as the means of developing the economy of the South in harmony with that of the North. On the other hand, and at the same time, he engaged in a political and ideological battle to challenge the meaning that the abolitionist movement had attributed to emancipation in previous decades, in order to rethink it in a gradual, orderly and limited form compatible with the continuation of national economic and political development. In other words, against the increasingly undisciplined movements of slaves, against the demands of abolitionism and against the growing sectional divide, Carey tried to identify an economic policy capable of recomposing sectional interests, safeguarding capital accumulation, and ensuring the unity of the state, putting the United States simultaneously on the road to industrial development and on the road to slave emancipation, to be carried out in a limited and controlled form that would not harm the plantation economy, nor infringe on the property rights of slaveholders. In this respect, the problem of slavery, Carey declared programmatically in 1851, was then to be treated as a matter not of morals or politics, but «of dollars and cents merely»²¹: a problem that only the science of economics could successfully address, with the goal of ensuring capital accumulation and the integrity of the state.

¹⁸ Henry Charles Carey, *The Prospect: Agricultural, Manufacturing, Commercial, and Financial. At the Opening of the Year 1851* (Philadelphia: J. S. Skinner, 1851), 29.

¹⁹ Henry Charles Carey, *The Harmony of Interests, Agricultural, Manufacturing, and Commercial* (Philadelphia: J. S. Skinner, 1851), 164.

²⁰ Carey, «On the True Causes of Existing Difficulties,” 37.

²¹ Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 164-65.

1. The Political Economy of Emancipation

1.1. «The True Anti-Slavery Policy»: Emancipation and Protection

Since the 1830s, Carey had provided a depiction of slavery not as a racial regime of labor command, but as a metahistorical condition of backwardness typical of the «early stages of society», in which individuals, working in isolation and lacking technical instrumentation, could only reproduce their subsistence. A condition of labor poverty, then, that concerned American slaves as much as Indian or Irish peasants, persisting anachronistically in the present because of man-made obstacles to the unfolding of natural economic laws²². In particular, the existence and persistence of Southern slavery in the United States was attributed by Carey to an inversion of the natural order of cultivation imposed in the colonial era by members of the English aristocracy seeking «wealth without labor». In this view, aristocrats had started cultivation not from the immediately available and less fertile lands, but from the more fertile lands covered with swamps and forests, and being unable to find «free laborers» willing to work upon them, they had to start «purchasing negroes» through the transatlantic slave trade²³. In this respect, Carey clarified, «had no aristocracy existed in England, no negro slavery could have arisen in America»²⁴. Human bondage, in other words, in his perspective represented one of the many evils that the United States had inherited from their colonial relationship with Great Britain.

Accordingly, from his earliest writings, Carey had identified capital accumulation, technological innovation and the intensification of association among individuals as the conditions of possibility for the overcoming of slavery²⁵. If slavery coincided with poverty and backwardness, the growth of wealth could result in a process of liberation of individuals. From the outset, the emancipation of slaves was thus presented by Carey as a natural and necessary outcome of a process of development that was in itself inherently liberating and that enabled individuals to move, as he would later write, from the condition of «slaves of nature» to that of «masters of nature»²⁶. Indeed, he argued, with the accumulation of capital individuals passed «gradually from a state of slavery to that of perfect freedom»²⁷. Against the claims of the abolitionist movement, then, as early as 1836 Carey had stated how only the force of «self-interest» and the «desire of accumulation» could spontaneously and progressively lead toward a «gradual, sure, and safe emancipation; a result as much to be desired as immediate emancipation is to be deprecated»²⁸. While in no way wishing to

²² Henry Charles Carey, *Principles of Political Economy Vol.3* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1840), 95-97.

²³ Henry Charles Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1848), 35, 350-60.

²⁴ Carey, 360.

²⁵ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy Vol.3*, 95-97.

²⁶ Henry Charles Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Volume I* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1858), 35.

²⁷ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy Vol.3*, 99-101.

²⁸ Henry Charles Carey, *The Harmony of Nature* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1836), 88.

be considered «friendly to the continuance of slavery», Carey had cautioned against any attempt to bring about a «sudden change» in the condition of slaves. Criticizing any form of «interference» with the institution of slavery (such as immediate abolition but also colonization), in the mid-1830s Carey had reassured that there was «a power at work that will free the United States from slavery», but that should in no way be artificially accelerated²⁹. The United States, in his perspective, by abolishing the transatlantic trade had already done everything politically and morally necessary to set slavery on the path of a gradual and natural extinction, for which it would be sufficient to let the natural course of development run undisturbed.

«Let the United States continue at peace, and let the growth of capital continue at its present rate, and it is not more certain that the sun will rise, than it is that it will become the interest of the owners to pursue a course that will lead ultimately to the abolition of slavery. By it the slaves will be gradually prepared for freedom, and when it comes, they will appreciate its advantages»³⁰.

As a matter of fact, when Carey wrote these lines in 1836, the Southern slave plantations were reaching the climax of an unprecedented productive boom that, starting at the end of the seventeenth century, had made the United States into the main global producer of cotton, while fueling the English industrial take off. Slavery, then, far from declining or giving way to emancipation, in the previous four decades had been materially and ideologically strengthened by capitalist development, which it was now sustaining both in the United States and globally³¹. Nonetheless, between the late 1840s and the early 1850s, in his *The Harmony of Interests*, as well as in a series of pamphlets on slavery published on *The Plough, the Loom and the Anvil*, Carey reiterated that the road to emancipation was predicated upon the fostering of economic growth, both North and South, and not upon the choking of Southern economy as the abolitionists and the “free-produce” movement aimed to do by boycotting slave products³². This stance, in Carey’s perspective, was not only hypocritical, as abolitionists refused to consume cotton or sugar produced by Southern slaves only to consume those produced by Indian farmers who were «nominally free» while working under worse conditions, but also economically fallacious³³. In his view, in fact, the path from slavery to freedom necessarily had to coincide with the one that took

²⁹ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy Vol.3*, 95-97; Carey, *The Harmony of Nature*, 84.

³⁰ Carey, *The Harmony of Nature*, 90-91.

³¹ Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 115–21.

³² George W. Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1951), 13; Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 178-79. In its founding document, the American Anti-Slavery Society had stated that it wanted to encourage «the labor of freemen over that of slaves, by giving a preference to their productions». *Declaration of the National Antislavery Convention (1833)*, in Lowance, *Against Slavery*, 119.

³³ Carey, “The Slave Question,” 401. «The abolitionist rejects the cotton of the well-fed, well-clothed, and well-lodged laborer of Tennessee, preferring that of the *free* Hindoo, who perishes of pestilence. [...] It emancipates the black man in the West, and enslaves the brown one in the East». Henry Charles Carey, “What Constitute Real Freedom of Trade?,” *American Whig Review* XII, no. 32 (August 1850): 128.

individuals from poverty to wealth. «The course toward freedom lies in the direction of measures tending to enhance the value of the negro»³⁴, Carey wrote in this sense, again ignoring the fact that in previous years the dramatic increase in the price of slaves had not even remotely been coupled with their liberation³⁵. However, he insisted that only an overall growth of wealth could liberate slaves, since «the amount of freedom is everywhere in the ratio of wealth to population, i.e. in the ratio which the machinery of production, seeking labor for its employments bears to the labor seeking to be employed»³⁶.

Thus, by fostering an increased demand for labor, to Carey economic growth and capital accumulation could have the effect of increasing competition for the purchase of labor, providing individuals with higher wages and a choice between different employers³⁷. «Two men competing for its purchase [of human force], its owner becomes a freeman. The two, competing for its sale, become enslaved», Carey would later write, concluding that «the whole question of freedom or slavery for man is, therefore, embraced in that of competition»³⁸. Freedom and slavery were thus presented not as conditions materially determined by the social relations, and specifically labor relations, in which individuals happened to be embedded, but rather as consequences of the price of their labor, contingently established in the marketplace by the interaction of supply and demand. By abstracting from the coercive social relations of property that founded it, Carey could thus make slavery, as well as wage labor, appear as a form of «free association» in which the value of labor and its remuneration were determined in the marketplace³⁹. Moreover, by erasing the political, institutional and even constitutional dimensions of American slavery, and thus denying its specificity, Carey presented it as a condition that could change according to variations in the relationship between supply and demand. The market alone, then, through the development of productive forces that allowed increased competition, could free the slaves, just as it could ensure the upward social mobility of wage workers⁴⁰. Consequently, Carey could conclude that «if we would desire that he [the slave] acquire that complete control over his actions, and over the fruits of his labor, which constitutes freedom», it was indispensable to follow «that course which must tend most to the augmentation of wealth, and consequently to the increase of the value of the slave to his master, because of the increased productiveness of his labor»⁴¹. Only the enrichment of the

³⁴ Carey, «The Slave Question», 402.

³⁵ Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 117–18.

³⁶ Carey, «The Slave Question», 404.

³⁷ Henry Charles Carey, «How to Increase the Competition for the Purchase of Labor, and How to Raise the Wages of the Laborer», *The Plough, the Loom, and the Anvil* V, no. 5 (November 1852): 259.

³⁸ Henry Charles Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Volume III* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1860), 234.

³⁹ Marx, *Capital. Volume One*, 1976, 686.

⁴⁰ Jeffrey Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy. Market Society and Selfhood in American Thought, 1820-1920* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2002), 87.

⁴¹ Carey, «The Slave Question», 404.

South could thus bring the end of slavery, according to the terms set by the market and according to the pace set by development.

Above all, it was a matter of overcoming the agricultural specialization of Southern economy that Carey saw as its main economic weakness, encouraging instead a productive diversification through the spread of manufacturing. Indeed, in his perspective, «when men are limited to the single pursuit of agriculture they are necessarily poor, and they must become poorer everyday»⁴². The lack of «mills» and «furnaces» for processing the products of the land on the one hand prevented the growth of the demand for labor in general and on the other constituted a hindrance to agricultural production itself, which, in the absence of a demand «at home» on which to rely, was forced to depend on exports to foreign countries, and in particular to Great Britain. This also determined a form of intensive farming, particularly of cotton, and thus «the exhaustion of the land», which forced slaveholders to constantly move their plantations and slaves Westward, resulting in the «depopulation» of States such as Virginia and South Carolina. To Carey, such situation had been exacerbated especially after the establishment of the British free-trade dominance on a global scale. Britain, then, in addition to being responsible for the introduction of slavery in America, was also fostering its persistence and expansion through its trade policies.

Indeed, the advance of British free trade in the United States represented, in Carey's view, the real cause of the conflict between the North and the South. «Pro-slavery» and «anti-slavery», the two evils that plagued the Union, had in fact emerged as a consequence of the abandonment of protectionism in 1833, when a «compromise tariff» had replaced the tariff of 1828⁴³. Before then, according to Carey, Americans North and South were united in the belief «that gradual abolition was indispensable to their progress in population, wealth, and happiness»⁴⁴. Beginning in 1833, however, the Southern dependence on cotton and exports and the absence of manufacturing development in the North had triggered a simultaneous process of westward «dispersion» of free *settlers* and *planters*, which eventually resulted in a sectional clash over the form of labor to be introduced into the new territories and thus in a battle for hegemony in the Senate and in the federal government⁴⁵. «The whole difficulty, be assured, lies in this question of commercial policy», Carey then concluded, in an attempt to tone down the sectional conflict by denying the centrality of

⁴² Carey, 405.

⁴³ Carey, *The Prospect: Agricultural, Manufacturing, Commercial, and Financial. At the Opening of the Year 1851*, 29.

⁴⁴ Carey, «Letter to a Distinguished Patriot of the South», 91.

⁴⁵ Carey, «On the True Causes of Existing Difficulties», 38-39.

slavery. A conflict that, if not stopped, risked producing not only «dissolution», but even, he wrote in 1852, «war between the two sections of the Union»⁴⁶.

The subordinated and persistently colonial U.S. integration into the world market as an exporting country, in addition to impeding manufacturing development in the North, had thus reinforced slavery in the South, where «the apparent freedom of “trade” and the real freedom of man, do not, therefore, harmonize with each other»⁴⁷. The free-trade policy pursued by the South, therefore, was not only detrimental to the development of the North, but also «suicidal», since, due to the dependence on foreign demand and the absence of reliable domestic demand, cotton production was systematically in excess of the market’s capacity to absorb it, leading to constantly fluctuating prices and increasingly unfavorable terms of trade for Southern planters, as well as a further need to increase the scale of production by planting more and more land in the West and producing further land exhaustion. British free trade thus constituted a colonial system contrary to Southern interests themselves in that it forced planters to suffer the fluctuating prices set in the British market while at the same time being the object of a moral stigma fueled by Northern and British abolitionists, as slave owners.

«Such are the inevitable results of a system that forces almost all the cotton of the world into a market in which there is but a given amount to be exchanged against it. [...] It is a constantly shrinking Procrustean bed. While thus destroying the planter, and lessening his power to provide for his people, there is an unceasing abuse of him as an owner of slaves, and an unceasing threat to substitute the *free* labor of the wretched Hindoo for that of the well-fed, well-clothed, and well-housed laborer of the South, and the lower the price of cotton, the stronger is the determination to keep it low»⁴⁸.

Because of this system, Carey denounced, it could happen that cotton growers found themselves hoping for a poor harvest that would nonetheless allow them to sell at higher prices and thus guarantee them a higher revenue⁴⁹. In British free trade, in short, to Carey the planter appeared squeezed «between the slave, whom he was obliged to support, on the one hand, and the mortgagee, the merchants, and the government, whom he was also obliged to support, on the other», being able to keep for himself «only what was left», with the constant risk of bankruptcy if prices fell. In this context, «the planter could exist, himself, only by overworking his people», a consequence with respect to which he was «a mere instrument», exercising «no volition whatsoever». In this sense, the planter appeared to Carey himself dependent from British

⁴⁶ Carey, “Letter to a Distinguished Patriot of the South,” 98-99.

⁴⁷ Carey, “The Slave Question,” 410.

⁴⁸ Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 117.

⁴⁹ Henry Charles Carey, *Two Letters to a Cotton Planter of Tennessee* (New York: Myron Finch, 1852), 1.

commercial rule: «master of slaves, he was himself a slave to those by whom the labors of himself and his workmen were directed»⁵⁰. Reversing the lexicon of abolitionism to defend slaveowners, Carey then concluded that the priority for solving the sectional conflict was not the emancipation of blacks, but, incredibly, the «emancipation of the planter» from British commercial rule. Not the abolition of slavery, but the abolition of free trade⁵¹.

In order to achieve this, to Carey it was essential to trigger a diversification of production in the South, with the spread of manufactures, that would enable the raw products of the land to be processed locally and thus ensure that the demand for cotton would increase to such an extent as to absorb the increasing supply and to counteract the risk of overproduction⁵². It was necessary, he explained, to place «the cotton mill among the cotton fields» and «to bring the machinery to the land, instead of taking the product of the land to the machinery», as the South had done up to that point, being forced «to send all their cotton to England» with great waste of resources in transportation and trade costs. Against the «commercial centralization» imposed by Britain, it was then a matter of applying the principle of «concentration» theorized by Carey, bringing cotton production and consumption together at a local level in the South, to accomplish «the work of converting it into cloth [...] on the ground where it was raised», thus multiplying the demand for raw cotton by Southern manufactures and consequently stimulating its cultivation⁵³. The spread of cotton manufactures in the South would enable, in Carey's vision, a restructuring of U.S. textile production, by transferring to the South «the coarse machinery of Lowell» and by replacing it with «finer machinery» for in New England manufactories. According to Carey, such a national system of textile manufacturing would allow the North to develop the capacity to produce at home and at progressively lower prices the final goods hitherto imported from Britain, and the South to find at home an inexhaustible demand for the cotton produced on plantations without the need to export it any longer, thus making the United States as a whole less and less dependent on Britain and its market, both for imports and exports.

Furthermore, to Carey, manufacturing development in the South would have a decisive impact on the condition of slaves, who would be put to work in textile factories as well as on plantations. This would tend «to increase the productiveness of labor»⁵⁴, of free as well as slave, while at the same time increasing its value, since «the direct effect of the location of machinery for the production of

⁵⁰ Henry Charles Carey, *The Slave Trade, Domestic and Foreign: Why It Exists and How It May Be Extinguished* (Philadelphia: Hart, 1853), 75-86.

⁵¹ Carey, *Two Letters to a Cotton Planter of Tennessee*, 14; Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 164.

⁵² Carey, «The Slave Question», 406-8.

⁵³ Carey, *Two Letters to a Cotton Planter of Tennessee*, 3-6.

⁵⁴ Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 161.

cloth and iron in any neighborhood is to produce an increased demand for labor and a rise in its price»⁵⁵. This way, through the spread of machinery, the slave himself would gradually but inexorably end up becoming «a seller of his own time, and a receiver of wages»⁵⁶ and thus «the involuntary laboreur» would be transformed «gradually into the voluntary one»⁵⁷. Indeed, as Carey's disciple William Elder wrote a few years later, «machines and science, combined with labor, have a general and irresistible tendency to abolish slavery everywhere»⁵⁸. Or, as Carey's close friend Stephen Colwell put it, «the better adjusted the industrial system of the South, the more rapidly will the Africans be prepared for freedom, and the more willingly will their masters set them free»⁵⁹. On the one hand, then, to Carey manufacturing development in the South would provide new investment opportunities for planters and guarantee them an inexhaustible and reliable demand for cotton in the domestic market, making them less dependent on exports to Britain. On the other hand, it would encourage the employment of slaves in manufactures, increasing the demand for their labor and leading to its overall valorization, up to the point that it would become convenient for masters to free them⁶⁰.

In Carey's perspective, then, those who wanted to accelerate the emancipation process should not support legislative measures to prohibit or restrict slavery, which would be an unacceptable interference with the property rights of slaveholders⁶¹, but should rather favor measures to support industrial development in the South. In particular, they should support the introduction of a protectionist tariff to protect U.S. manufacturers from international competition and price fluctuations. A tariff that, in the context of a world market still dominated by British free trade, was a *sine qua non* of manufacturing development. By allowing cotton to be processed in the South, moreover, protectionism would benefit not only industrialists but also slave planters themselves, as it would guarantee them a steady and reliable demand for cotton at home that would make exportation less and less necessary. The tariff would represent from this point of view «emphatically a planter and farmer's measure» as they «need protection against the endless fluctuations of foreign policy»⁶². Thus, protectionism and manufacturing development could be presented by Carey as the

⁵⁵ Carey, "The Slave Question," 405.

⁵⁶ Carey, 405.

⁵⁷ Carey, "Letter to a Distinguished Patriot of the South," 92-93.

⁵⁸ William Elder, *Emancipation: Its Conditions and Policy. A Lecture by Dr. Elder of Philadelphia, at the Tremont Temple, Boston.* (Philadelphia: McLaughlin Brothers, 1856), 11.

⁵⁹ Stephen Colwell, *The South: a Letter from a Friend in the North. With Special Reference to the Effects of Disunion upon Slavery* (Philadelphia: Sherman & Son, 1856), 13.

⁶⁰ Carey, "The Slave Question," 402-5.

⁶¹ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 366.

⁶² Carey, "The Slave Question," 411.

only possible solutions to solve the puzzle of the sectional conflict: to overcome slavery in the long run without harming the interests of slaveholders.

In addition to being the tool to emancipate slaves in the long run, to Carey protectionism also represented the instrument to reconcile the nation. Through tariffs, in fact, the South and the North could eventually make themselves independent and establish «direct trade with the world»⁶³. Indeed, if the South decided «to mine its own coal, smelt its own ore, and make its own cloth, in harmony with the North», this would result not only in a political strengthening of the «planting interest» and in a great increase «in the value of Southern property», but also in «the annihilation of abolitionism and free-soilism – and to accomplish all this there is needed only protection»⁶⁴. Protectionism then represented to Carey the political-economic instrument through which solving the conflict around slavery, while reconciling the two U.S. forms of capitalist development into a truly national economy capable of challenging Britain for commercial and industrial hegemony in the world market. The instrument, in other words, through which the federal government could intervene to synchronize Northern and Southern development. The adoption of an avowedly protectionist policy would thus enable the «landholder to grow rich as his slaves become more free», so that any reason for the sectional crisis would be cured: «pro-slavery and anti-slavery agitation will pass away, as they came – together»⁶⁵. Thus, Carey could conclude that «ten years of efficient protection» would do more toward solving the problem of slavery «than “free-soil” votes and Wilmot “Provisos” could accomplish in a century»⁶⁶. Thus, the identification of protectionism as «the true anti-slavery policy»⁶⁷ to Carey had not only an explicit anti-abolitionist meaning, that historians have largely failed to highlight, but it also brought Carey to oppose the most moderate anti-slavery proposals, such as those aimed at prohibiting slavery’s extension to the West. In the first half of the 1850s, then, to Carey arguing that protection could in itself suffice to bring emancipation meant leaving slavery untouched, while opposing any attempts at contesting or limiting it.

The idea that the spread of manufactures had an innate emancipatory tendency and would naturally bring the end of slavery, however, was not only contradicted by the reality of mid-nineteenth-century capitalism, but it was explicitly contradicted by the fact that some Southern economic thinkers took up Carey’s protectionist policy prescriptions without ever questioning the permanence of slavery. George Fitzhugh, for example, in his *Sociology for the South* (1854), elaborated

⁶³ Carey, *Two Letters to a Cotton Planter of Tennessee*, 14, 16, 27.

⁶⁴ Carey, “On the True Causes of Existing Difficulties,” 41.

⁶⁵ Carey, “Letter to a Distinguished Patriot of the South,” 96.

⁶⁶ Carey, “The Slave Question,” 411.

⁶⁷ Carey, 404.

a critique to British free trade very close to Carey's, but coupling it with a scathing attack against the system of wage labor and with the depiction of the North-South relation as a form of structurally unequal and quasi colonial form of dependency⁶⁸. Rejecting the traditional Southern agrarianism, Fitzhugh argued for the need to impose tariffs that could help to overcome the Southern productive specialization and foster «industrial pursuits» through an increase of «association» on a local scale that could allow a diversification⁶⁹. However, in Fitzhugh's vision, protection and manufacturing development did not even remotely entail a change of labor system, since slaves could easily be made to work in manufactures. On the contrary, the slave system would guarantee to capitalists a much more disciplined, docile, controlled and therefore productive industrial workforce than that existing in the North or in England. To Fitzhugh, then, slavery was not only compatible with manufactures, but it represented a superior system of labor «subordination» indispensable to manufacturing growth⁷⁰. Moreover, Fitzhugh even embraced the idea of «protection» as the very conceptual foundation of the slave system, since in his view it allowed to shield workers from market competition, thus avoiding the misery and social conflict existing in free societies. In this respect, he attacked the «whigs of America» like Carey for having rejected «international free trade» while accepting «social free trade», thus failing to be fully consistent with the logical consequences of the idea of protection⁷¹. Only the extension of slavery to all workers, both black and white, in Fitzhugh's perspective could bring economic diversification, capital accumulation and social harmony⁷². Far from being intrinsically anti-slavery and emancipationist, then, Carey's political economy could be easily turned on its head and used to outline the economic development of a slave society.

1.2. «Under the Control of the Master»: Emancipation, Wage Labor and Freedom

At the same time, since the 1830s Carey had argued that only the interests of slaveholders could dictate the timing and manner of gradual emancipation. Behind the appearance of an emancipation process detached from social relations and driven by capital accumulation, then, Carey had from the outset reflected on how to preserve the subordination of black labor within the process of

⁶⁸ The only historians who have identified the similarities between Carey and Fitzhugh are: Comer Vann Woodward, "George Fitzhugh, Sui Generis," in *Cannibals All! Or, Slaves Without Masters* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960), XVII–XVIII; Nicholas Greenwood Onuf and Peter S. Onuf, *Nations, Markets, and War. Modern History and the American Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 329–32. On Fitzhugh's "dependency theory", see: Joseph Persky, *The Burden of Dependency: Colonial Themes in Southern Economic Theory* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 71–78.

⁶⁹ George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South or The Failure of Free Society* (Richmond: Morris, 1854), 136. Also in: George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All! Or, Slaves Without Masters* [1857], ed. Comer Vann Woodward (Cambridge, Mass.-London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960), 59.

⁷⁰ Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, 33.

⁷¹ Fitzhugh, 169–70.

⁷² Fitzhugh, 12.

emancipation and despite it. In this respect, he had entrusted not to the state, which had to confine itself to a protectionist policy to emancipate the South from free trade, but to slaveowners themselves the sole authority to decide on the liberation of slaves and to realize it through a process mediated by the gradual establishment of wage labor. Gradual emancipation had thus to take place within the social relationship between slaves and masters and without questioning it, at the moment when the latter would find it economically profitable to start remunerating the former, buying the use of their labor-power from time to time instead of owning it once and for all, betting on the superior productivity of wage labor. Carey, in fact, as other Northern economists, following Adam Smith had indicated low productivity as slavery's fundamental economic shortcoming, due to the absence of a stimulus to work other than the master's whip. In his view, in fact, the desire for improvement, the fundamental human ambition, was also the main and most effective stimulus to work, without which slaves tended instead to work as little as possible. The problem with slavery, as the entrepreneur and economist George Opdyke wrote in 1851, was that it completely separated «Labor from Skill, and converts the former into Capital» inevitably reducing its productivity. Indeed, Opdyke argued, the slave, having no interest in the results of his labor, had no incentive to work diligently, except «a dread of the lash»⁷³. Similarly, according to William Elder, masters could only force slaves to use «bones and muscles» but not those «higher powers of the man» necessary for improvement and skilled work. In other words, to Elder «the lash can draw out the drudgery, but wages are the only stimulant of skilled industry»⁷⁴.

To Carey, this conclusion was decisive in conceiving the end of slavery, since, in his view, it was precisely the superior productivity of wage labor over slave labor that at some point could prompt slaveowners to grant emancipation. In his view, productive diversification and capital accumulation would lead to a general increase in the value and price of slaves, which on the one hand would prompt slaveowners to treat them better, as an investment of increasing value, and on the other hand would limit the possibility of buying more slaves. Consequently, to expand their production the masters' only option would be that of increasing the productivity of the slaves already in their possession. This, however, as political economy had amply demonstrated, through whip and chains was possible only to a limited extent. The masters' desire for accumulation would thus prompt them to offer their slaves «inducements to exertion» to stimulate them to work more productively, starting to pay them wages and thereby remunerating progressively increasing shares of their time⁷⁵. Such a process, which, according to Carey, was already taking place in many Southern towns with

⁷³ George Opdyke, *A Treatise on Political Economy* (New York: Putnam, 1851), 330.

⁷⁴ Elder, *Emancipation*, 10.

⁷⁵ Carey, *The Harmony of Nature*, 85-91.

slaves employed in domestic work, would gradually spread to slaves employed on plantations, to whom masters would grant a piece of land, to be cultivated, however, always and strictly «under the control of the master». While it is true that in Southern bigger cities slaves were usually hired for the day, in domestic labor and sometimes in artisanal workshops, this by no means threatened slavery as an institution, nor amounted to a generalized transition to wage labor as Carey described it⁷⁶. In any respect, he argued that emancipation could and should happen under the strict supervision of slaveowners and that only within such relation could black workers improve their condition.

«The man who really desires to benefit the race, must retain his control over them, seeking constantly the means of improving *their condition and his own*, by rendering them more valuable, and thus increasing his means of making their situation more comfortable – increasing their wages, and fitting them gradually for freedom. Thus the desire of obtaining wealth, and of employing that wealth in such manner as will afford to the proprietor the means of indulging his tastes, will lead to emancipation, gradual, sure, and safe»⁷⁷.

In this sense, as another student of Carey, the economist and politician Erasmus Peshine Smith, wrote in his 1853 *Manual of Political Economy*, the natural process of freeing slaves would begin only at the time when masters would realize that they could increase their profits by paying slaves for small task works and by allowing them to accumulate their savings. That is, when masters would realize that slave labor was unproductive because it lacked the «stimulus of hope» and that instead granting a «partial liberty» would lead the slave to work «harder for himself than when working for his master». Thus, according to E. P. Smith, masters had every interest in giving up ownership of the slave, as «more work can be got from him, and at a cheaper rate, by paying him fair wages, than in any other way»⁷⁸. Having understood this, he argued, many slaveholders in the South had begun «hiring their slaves to themselves», granting the option of selling their labor power in exchange for wages, despite it formally remained the property of the masters. Only such a process, driven by the interest and profits of slaveholders, could bring with it, according to Elder, «the redemption of the bondmen, slowly but surely»⁷⁹. Emancipation was thus presented by Carey and his students primarily as a strategy to accelerate the slaveholders' ability to accumulate and to increase their power to extract value from black labor.

⁷⁶ Seth Rockman, *Scraping by: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

⁷⁷ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy Vol.3*, 204.

⁷⁸ Erasmus Peshine Smith, *A Manual for Political Economy* (New York: Putnam, 1853), 115.

⁷⁹ Elder, *Emancipation*, 10.

More crucially, Carey developed a vision of emancipation not only gradual, but also passive and formal. First, it entailed a completely passive role of black workers within the process of their own liberation, which had to be driven by their masters' interests, had to happen within a coercive power relation and had to allow for the persistent subordination of black workers labor even after the end of slavery. Wage labor, then, had to be both the instrument to realize this gradual, passive and formal emancipation, and its only result: simultaneously the engine and the limit of emancipation. Through wage labor, in fact, the slaves would be gradually freed, prevented that such freedom be limited to wage labor itself. Through this representation, Carey performed a twofold ideological operation. On the one hand, against the abolitionist radical, expansive and active understanding of emancipation, it allowed him to reduce its scope by limiting it to the access to self-ownership and to the possibility of selling one's labor in the market. The freedom of emancipated slaves had, in other words, to be limited to the freedom to work in exchange for wages. On the other hand, this representation allowed Carey to legitimize, by contrasting it with slavery, wage labor as a form of free labor. By mid-century, U.S. political economy in fact had not only the problem of reacting to the abolitionist movement by defending Southern racial hierarchies, but also the problem of responding to the labor movement that had shaken Northeastern cities in the 1830s by legitimizing, against its republican critique of the wage, Northern class hierarchies as mobile, open and temporary. Against the former, and against his demand for a radical liberation of slaves that could grant them self-determination and independence, the freedom of labor had to be reduced to wage labor. Against the latter, and against its discourse on wage slavery that criticized the wage relation as a form of exploitation and dependency essentially similar to slavery, wage labor had to be identified with the very freedom of labor⁸⁰. Thus, if U.S. political economy presented wage labor as the means through which slavery could be overcome while continuing the subjugation of blacks to labor, at the same time slavery operated a decisive legitimizing function towards wage labor.

The confrontation with slavery had thus determined a shift in Carey's understanding of the freedom of labor, increasingly pushing it toward a fully capitalist definition of labor as a commodity to be exchanged on the market, as well as towards the identification of wage labor and "free" labor. The very description of the «freeman» offered by Carey since the 1850s differed crucially from that of the 1830s. In 1837, in the third volume of *Principles of Political Economy*, Carey had described «the

⁸⁰ On the U.S. labor movement in the 1830s and its critique of the wage as wage slavery, see, among others: Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic. New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); David R. Roediger and Philip Sheldon Foner, *Our Own Time: A History of American Labor and the Working Day* (London-New York: Verso, 1989); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London-New York: Verso, 1991). On the relationship between abolitionism and the labor movement: Eric Foner, "Abolitionism and the Labor Movement in Ante-Bellum America," in *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 57-76. See also chapter 1.

man who enjoys perfect freedom» as someone who held «entire control over his own actions», who was «master of his own time, and accountable to none for the use he may make of it», and who, above all had «entire control over the produce of his labor». Then, the difference between the «slave» and the «freeman» precisely consisted in the «different amount of control exercised by them over their own persons and their own property, the produce of their labor»⁸¹. Starting in 1851, however, the freeman became to Carey the individual who could easily sell his labor on the market, thanks to a high competition for its purchase, and who consequently «chooses his employer, sells his labor, and disposes of the proceeds at his pleasure»⁸². The slave, on the contrary, was not someone who was formally owned by a master, but any individual who could not find a buyer for his work⁸³. As he pointed out, «the freeman may go to many markets to sell his labor or its products, whereas the slave can go to only one, and in this consists the sole difference between the two»⁸⁴. Again, the question of «freedom or slavery for man», to Carey, was «embraced in that of competition»⁸⁵. Only to this limited extent, then, the wage laborer, both black and white, could be a freeman, that is «a being of power»⁸⁶. If in the 1830s Carey had responded to the critique of wage labor offered by the Northern labor movement with a theory of improvement and classlessness that described the possibility for each worker to ascend socially by becoming free as autonomous, in the 1850s the systematic comparison with slavery led Carey to equate the freedom of Northern labor with the possibility of selling one's labor-commodity on the market at a high price, that is, with the possibility of choosing one's employer. In this respect, Carey contributed to a shift, albeit still incomplete, in the semantics of American freedom, which no longer coincided with the independence made possible by access to property, but with the self-ownership that the individual enjoyed insofar as he was not subject to the constraints of subjugation.

It was only this limited, wage-mediated freedom granted through a master-led process of emancipation that to Carey could be granted to black workers to ensure their continued subjugation

⁸¹ Carey, *Principles of Political Economy Vol.3*, 95-96.

⁸² Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 213.

⁸³ «Wherever there exists competition for the purchase of labour, there the labourer has his choice among employers, and the latter are not only required to pay higher wages, but they are also required to treat their workmen and workwomen with the consideration that is due to fellow-beings equal in rights with themselves: but wherever there is not competition for the purchase of labour the labourer is a slave, compelled to work for any who are willing to employ him, and to receive at the hands of his employer low wages and the treatment of a slave, for slave he. [...] If he lives in a neighborhood in which there exists *competition for the purchase of labor*, he knows that he can act as becomes a freeman in determining for whom he will work, and the price he is willing to receive for his services; but if he lives in one in which there is competition *for the sale of labor*, he knows well that it does not rest with him to determine either where he will work or what shall be his wages». Henry Charles Carey, «How to Increase the Competition for the Purchase of Labour, and How to Raise the Wages of the Labourer,” *The Plough, the Loom, and the Anvil* V, no. 5 (November 1852): 259.

⁸⁴ Carey, *Two Letters to a Cotton Planter of Tennessee*, 26.

⁸⁵ Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. III*, 234.

⁸⁶ Henry Charles Carey, «What Constitute Real Freedom of Trade? Chapter III,” *American Whig Review* XII, no. 34 (October 1850): 353.

as a labor force indispensable to U.S. development. And it was along these same lines that Carey envisioned the future of blacks in the United States even after their ultimate liberation. In his perspective, in fact, the colonization of blacks in Africa or Central America, however «laudable» and useful as an experiment in «civilizing» the lands in which it was carried out, could not be the solution to the problem of emancipation. After the end of slavery, instead, freed blacks were to remain in the United States «differing in color but similar in rights», enjoying republican citizenship and the right to vote and even electing their own senators. And yet, Carey pointed out, this could only happen when «the whole race will be concentrated in the southern tier of States» inhabited exclusively by blacks, in which they were to live and work «as a separate and independent race of free men». It was in this form only that blacks could be «happier, better, and more useful» to the nation, since «the Almighty never intended them to mix with the white race, nor is it desirable that they should do so». Carey thus envisioned a post-slavery America grounded upon racial segregation, in which the emancipation of slaves and the granting of formal equality should not erase the racial hierarchies upon which U.S. capitalism had based its development⁸⁷.

1.3. The Specter of the West Indies

After having proposed protectionism and capital accumulation as solutions to the problem of slavery and the sectional conflict, in 1853 Carey published *The Slave Trade*, the volume that marked the culmination of his reflection on the subject. There, he once more looked at emancipation first and foremost from the point of view of the command over labor, a problem made all the more urgent by the changing political context. Indeed, the compromise reached between North and South in 1850 had not led to a truce in the sectional crisis. On the contrary, the Fugitive Slave Act approved that same year had provoked a strong reaction by abolitionists both in the United States and abroad. The transatlantic success of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, published in 1852, was part of this renewed abolitionist agitation⁸⁸. Precisely to counter the novel's depiction of slavery (based on extensive documentation of slave narratives), the following year Carey wrote *The Slave Trade*⁸⁹. There, on the one hand he elaborated a lengthy comparison between slavery in the United States and slavery in the British West Indies with the object of defending Southern slaveholders against the accusations waged by abolitionists. On the other hand, more explicitly than ever before Carey raised the issue of the economic and political conditions of emancipation in the United States moving from an analysis of the outcome of emancipation in the West Indies. Against

⁸⁷ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 362-66.

⁸⁸ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 441-42.

⁸⁹ William Elder, *A Memoir of Henry C. Carey. Read Before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, January 5, 1880*. (Philadelphia: American Iron and Steel Association, 1880), 27; George W. Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1951), 35.

those who argued that the United States should follow the British example, Carey endeavored to demonstrate that emancipation in the Caribbean had been a failure, having led to the destruction of the plantation economy. In doing so, he proved to be well aware of the economic and political stakes of emancipation.

As a matter of fact, since the 1830s U.S. economists had systematically started their reflections concerning the end of slavery from an assessment of emancipation in the British Caribbean colonies. If the Haitian Revolution had been the specter that haunted Atlantic slavery in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, «West India Emancipation» haunted U.S. political economy in the first half of the century. Indeed, the outcome of such process, an abolition of slavery that had taken place under the constant threat of revolt and emancipation from below⁹⁰, was a lesson that U.S. economists set out not to forget, taking it as a negative model in contrast to which American emancipation had to be thought of. Carey confirmed this tendency by devoting a large part of *The Slave Trade* to a comparison between British slavery in the Caribbeans and American slavery. In his perspective, in the United States, the high labor productivity of slaves had always guaranteed them a treatment far better than that received by slaves in the British colonies, but also better than that received by many formally free workers around the world. As early as the 1830s, establishing an arbitrary equation between labor productivity and the treatment of slaves, Carey had described blacks in the South as workers who were guaranteed a condition inferior to that of free workers in the North, but superior to that of slaves in Jamaica, peasants in India or Ireland, and even factory workers in England⁹¹. Unlike all these cases, in the U.S. South the master had an economic interest in granting «good care» to slaves because of their productivity and rising price, Carey claimed following an argument popular among Southern slaveholders⁹². This same thesis, in fact, was also echoed in the reports of several European travelers to the United States cited by Carey, beginning with Michel Chevalier, who in 1835 had described Southern slaves as «less overburdened with labor, better fed, and better provided for, than the greater part of the peasants of Europe»⁹³.

⁹⁰ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1944), 208.

⁹¹ Carey, *The Harmony of Nature*, 302-3; Carey, *Principles of Political Economy Vol.3*, 199-200.

⁹² On the contrary, the historiography on slavery showed how on Southern plantations, throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the rise in productivity and economic value of slaves was accompanied by a tightening of violence and discipline imposed (not always effectively) by masters and overseers. It also showed how the rising price of slaves, far from resulting in better treatment or leading toward emancipation as Carey argued, testified to the profitability, growth, and strengthening of slavery as an economic and political system.

⁹³ Michel Chevalier, *Society, Manners and Politics in the United States: Being A Series of Letters on North America* (Boston: Weeks, Jordan and Company, 1839), 454.

In particular, the main evidence of the superior treatment received by American slaves compared to Caribbeans consisted to Carey in their steady demographic increase, which occurred despite the abolition of the slave trade in 1808. In his view, this had not been the case in the West Indies, and particularly in Jamaica, where slavery had resulted in a «destruction of life» due to a «deficiency of food and clothing» and an «excess of work», up to the point that by the time of emancipation there were fewer slaves than those imported⁹⁴. In the United States, by contrast, the number of slaves had steadily and naturally increased to nearly four million at mid-century, since they had always been «well fed, clothed, lodged, and otherwise cared for»⁹⁵. Indeed, as he had written earlier, American slavery had guaranteed the material and intellectual improvement for blacks, enabling them to consume increasing shares of the product of their labor and educate themselves, protecting them from the horrors endured by European workers, and thus transforming «the few miserable barbarians» into «a numerous, happy and civilized people»⁹⁶. None of this of course corresponded to the harsh reality of a regime of violent labor exploitation and human bondage, but through such a mystifying portrayal Carey nevertheless concluded that slavery constituted the «most honorable» chapter in the history of the American Union. Accordingly, he celebrated Southern slaveholders for the «restraint and benevolence» with which they had used their power over slaves, while being unjustly stigmatized as «negro breeders» by U.S. abolitionists and the British government, the same that, besides being responsible for the introduction of slavery in America, had more than any other «misused its power over the negro race», as demonstrated by the West Indian case⁹⁷.

It was precisely the characteristics of slavery in the Caribbean, Carey continued, that had determined the outcome of the emancipation process. On the one hand, the small number of surviving slaves had made it possible for the British government, at the time of emancipation, to pay compensation to planters for the loss of their property: a possibility that was precluded in the United States, both because of the number of slaves and because of their superior economic value⁹⁸. On the other hand, the state of degradation and barbarism to which slaves had been reduced in the Caribbean, Carey argued, had made them particularly unfit to be free. At the time of emancipation, he explained, Caribbean slaves were in fact little more than «savages», naturally indolent, lazy, improvident, prone to gambling, alcohol and dissipation⁹⁹. Having always been «forced to work», their main desire was an «exemption from labor». Under these conditions, emancipation had translated into a refusal on the part of the former slaves to work more than what was strictly

⁹⁴ Carey, *The Slave Trade*, 10-12.

⁹⁵ Carey, 18-19.

⁹⁶ Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 225-27.

⁹⁷ Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 169.

⁹⁸ Carey, *The Slave Trade*, 19.

⁹⁹ Carey, 21-22.

necessary to ensure their survival: «suddenly emancipated from control», the slaves had thus indulged in «idleness». Emancipation, Carey denounced, had thus inverted the relationship between slaves and masters, allowing the former to dictate to the latter the conditions of their work and thus, in deference to their nature, to work as little as possible.

«Emancipation, under such circumstances, changed them at once from the condition of absolute slaves to absolute masters of the fortunes of those whom they had lately served. They could live on the produce of little labor, and the less they were disposed to work the greater must become the necessities of the planters, and the greater their own power to determine the conditions upon which they would work»¹⁰⁰.

In the British colonies, and particularly in Jamaica, emancipation had thus resulted in a chaotic and disorderly process that brought about the ruin of the plantations, from which the former slaves had massively fled to appropriate plots of land and engage in subsistence farming. The reason for this did not lie to Carey in the incompetence of planters, as argued by abolitionists and by John Bigelow's famous account of Jamaica¹⁰¹, but in the fact that liberation had allowed the slaves to demand wages that were too high, beginning to live «at the expense of the planter. After emancipation, Carey lamented, «the laborer gives very little labor for the money he receives», to the point that «as compared with the work done, wages are really far higher than in any part of the Union»¹⁰². As the *Times* of London had written in an 1852 article cited by Carey in support of his argument, the sudden removal of all forms of control over slaves, far from allowing them to acquire «habits of industry», had turned them into «vagrants and squatters»¹⁰³. Thus, to Carey the immediate emancipation in the West Indies had destroyed the plantation economy's productivity, producing «a disturbance of the order of things», that is in the harmony of market relations and in the interplay between labor supply and demand, drastically and suddenly reducing the number of available workers¹⁰⁴. In such an outcome, he wrote «there may be much philanthropy, but there is certainly much error». Thus, in order to overcome slavery without endangering the processes of accumulation, to Carey it could not be enough that slaves «simply loose their chains» from one moment to the next. On the contrary, «they need to be prepared for freedom»¹⁰⁵.

The idea of the slaves' fundamental unpreparedness and inadequacy for freedom had been recurrent in U.S. economists' approach to the problem of emancipation, often in relation to the

¹⁰⁰ Carey, 22-23.

¹⁰¹ John Bigelow, *Jamaica in 1850: Or, The Effects of Sixteen Years of Freedom on a Slave Colony* (New York-London: Putnam, 1851).

¹⁰² Carey, *The Slave Trade*, 25-26.

¹⁰³ «Times», August 4, 1852, quoted in Carey, 31-33.

¹⁰⁴ Carey, 23-24.

¹⁰⁵ Carey, 34.

case of the West Indies. As early as 1836, Carey himself had declared that «a sound political economy» could never approve of a «sudden change» as that effected by Britain, which had granted slaves a freedom they were «totally unfit to use with advantage» since they had not been «gradually prepared»¹⁰⁶. Moreover, he had added, for individuals born and raised in slavery, totally incapable of «self-restraint», «unused» to any «habit of thoughtfulness», the question of freedom was, according to Carey, «secondary to many others» since they considered it irrelevant «if accompanied by starvation»¹⁰⁷. In the same year, this same argument was echoed by the jurist and politician Theodore Sedgwick, who, in his *Private and Public Economy*, argued in favor of a period of preparation for freedom, during which the federal government would have had to «put down insurrection, and prove to the slave, that freedom cannot be had here through revolt, and remorseless murder»¹⁰⁸. Similarly, in 1845, in a dialogue with a Southern reverend about slavery as a «scriptural institution», the New-England economist Francis Wayland had argued that the unmediated grant of an «absolute liberty» risked representing «too violent a stimulant to be safely administered to a race who have long been bred in slavery». The case of the West Indies had demonstrated, in Wayland's perspective, to what extent emancipation could turn into a «calamity» when slavery was to be terminated «by violence, or without previous moral and social preparation» that taught the slave to «subject his passions and appetites to the laws of Christianity», in order to make his freedom beneficial to himself as well as to the State¹⁰⁹. A few years earlier, even Friedrich List had reached similar conclusions in a long note of his *Das nationale System der politischen Ökonomie*. Once more commenting on emancipation in the Caribbean, he had stated that only by introducing «a kind of sweetened slavery with the prospect of future emancipation» it could be possible to «prepare the Negroes for full freedom». To make a «barbarian» population pass from natural freedom to civil liberty was for List unthinkable «without first acquainting them with the discipline of strict obedience». A discipline through which all mankind had been «educated to labor and diligence», and which therefore had to be imposed even more strongly on slaves¹¹⁰.

Behind this recurring call for the preparation of slaves for freedom clearly laid the economists' fear that, in the United States as in Jamaica, in the absence of slavery it would become impossible to ensure the same degree of discipline and subjugation of black workers that had allowed the

¹⁰⁶ Carey, *The Harmony of Nature*, 88-91.

¹⁰⁷ Carey, 302-3.

¹⁰⁸ Theodore Sedgwick, *Public and Private Economy. Part First* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1836), 261-62.

¹⁰⁹ Francis Wayland and Richard Fuller, *Domestic Slavery Considered as a Scriptural Institution: In a Correspondence Between the Rev. Richard Fuller, of Beaufort, S.C., and the Rev. Francis Wayland, of Providence, R.I.* (New York: Lewis Colby, 1845), 100-101, 251-54.

¹¹⁰ Friedrich List, *The National System of Political Economy* (Philadelphia: Lippincott & Co., 1856), 66. On List, see: Keith Tribe, *Strategies of Economic Order. German Economic Discourse, 1750-1950* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 33-65; Harald Hagemann, Stephan Seiter, and Eugen Wendler, eds., *The Economic Thought of Friedrich List* (Abingdon-New York: Routledge, 2019).

flourishing of the plantation economy. The fear, in other words, that it would be impossible to impose on emancipated blacks the same «amounts of labor» that could be imposed on slaves, as Southern economist Thomas Roderick Dew had warned as early as 1832¹¹¹. This concern for the continuity of command over black labor turned out to be so central to the way Northern economists thought of emancipation in the mid-nineteenth century that it led their arguments about the West Indies to coincide with those of Southern pro-slavery economists. George Fitzhugh, in particular, in the same years and in the same terms as Carey had described the end of slavery in the Caribbean as «a failure in all respects», denouncing the destruction of plantations, the impotence of masters, and the rejection of labor by slaves¹¹². In the Caribbean colonies «all industry is paralyzed», Fitzhugh had lamented, attacking the «short-sighted philanthropy» that in the British colonies had emancipated slaves despite knowing how they were «not fitted for liberty»¹¹³. The outcome of emancipation in the West Indies thus forced U.S. economists, North and South, to come to terms with the specter of a slaves' collective uprising that threatened to jeopardize the survival of the plantation economy. If Fitzhugh refused to conceive any form of labor subjugation other than slavery, Carey and the Northern economists reflected instead, facing this very specter, on how to ensure such subjugation even within a different proprietary and institutional framework, seeking the path to an emancipation of black labor that would not undermine its exploitation and subordination. By looking at the recurring specter of the West Indies it is therefore possible to understand that, even in *The Slave Trade*, Carey did not limit himself to conceive a technological emancipation that would allow, in the long run, to dispense with slaves by replacing them with machines¹¹⁴, but that he faced the conundrum of emancipation moving from the problem of how to guarantee and perpetuate the command over black labor even after the end of slavery. Precisely the unsolvable nature of this problem, however, forced Carey and Northern economists to call for a postponement of emancipation itself.

1.4. Emancipation as a «Withheld Right»

The argument in favor of a suspension or postponement of emancipation explicitly emerged in two pamphlets published in 1856 by economists very close to Carey: his student William Elder and his friend Stephen Colwell, who argued for the need to maintain black workers subordinated to the master's patriarchal power because of the state of minority and incapacity to which centuries of

¹¹¹ Thomas Roderick Dew, *Review of the Debate in the Virginia Legislature of 1831 and 1832* (Richmond: White, 1832), 88.

¹¹² George Fitzhugh, *Slavery Justified; by a Southerner* (Fredericksburg: Recorder Printing Office, 1850), 14.

¹¹³ George Fitzhugh, *What Shall Be Done With the Free Negroes; Essays Written for the Fredericksburg Recorder* (Fredericksburg: Recorder Job Office, 1851), 1-2. Also in: George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, 259-60.

¹¹⁴ As has recently been argued by Ariel Ron in *Grassroots Leviathan: Northern Agricultural Reform in the Slaveholding Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020), 111-17.

slavery had supposedly reduced them. In doing so, they proved that, in the context of the mid-1850s, marked by the slaves' growing insubordination, by their increasingly frequent escapes and by a growth of abolitionism, the threat of a radical and revolutionary emancipation appeared to Northern economists as far more dangerous than the persistence of slavery. In such context, then, supporting a gradual emancipation, arguing for the need to "prepare" freedom and demanding respect for the masters' interests, as Carey as well had done, actually meant defending slavery in the present, with its racial hierarchies and power relations, while postponing emancipation to an undetermined future.

In a speech on emancipation and its political conditions delivered in Boston in early 1856, Elder condemned slavery as an illegitimate form of property. At the same time, he recognized that, since it had always existed throughout history, slavery necessarily had «some sort of congruity with the system of society». The reason for this congruity consisted in his view in the need to govern individuals who would otherwise be incapable of autonomously doing so. Under common law, in fact, he explained, the enjoyment of the right of «self-government» could be temporarily or permanently suspended because of a condition in the subject of that right that prevented its full exercise. Thus, just as the condition of infancy temporarily suspended the child's right to self-government, similarly the condition of moral and material inferiority of black slaves, due to centuries of «imbruting bondage», had necessarily to suspend their right to enjoy freedom¹¹⁵. A conclusion not far, once again, from that of George Fitzhugh, who two years earlier had similarly applauded the «wisdom of the common law, and indeed of all ancient codes», which established that «the humblest members of society», namely blacks, children and women, had a right to be protected through a «tutelary guardianship» (carried out by a master, parent or husband) that could make up for the «want of self-control» that made them unfit for «self-government»¹¹⁶. Unlike Fitzhugh, however, Elder believed that emancipation had to be regarded as «the right of the Southern slaves», but «as a suspended or as a withheld right», which could be granted only at the time when they could prove themselves capable and deserving of enjoying it¹¹⁷. Unsurprisingly, in a letter to Carey reporting the reactions to his speech in Boston, Elder noted that it had aroused the opposition of the «Garrisonians» present in the audience¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁵ Elder, *Emancipation*, 5–6.

¹¹⁶ Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, 265.

¹¹⁷ Elder, *Emancipation*, 5–6.

¹¹⁸ «The leading men agreed that it had the sense of the whole matter in it, and that the array of the true friend of emancipation against the sentimental agitation of the abstract rights of it, was irresistible. Moreover, the applause was recurrent and the satisfaction universal, except with the Garrisonians who were utterly crowded out of consideration in the agencies at work. When I told them that they were talking against and working with the South, they sat so hushed as if they would never recover their breath. Later the demonstration started the applause of the free people in the

In the same year, in a pamphlet entitled *The South: A Letter from a Friend in the North*, Colwell advanced a similar argument. In his view (like in Fitzhugh's) slavery represented a necessary violation to the principle of *laissez-faire* in the attempt to compensate black workers' incapacity of self-government. It constituted a «special intervention of society in reference to a particular class for their best interests»¹¹⁹ and more specifically «an efficient means of civilizing the African»¹²⁰. In this respect, to Colwell slavery was not only beneficial to the master, but was at the same time «for the good of the slave», with the former acting as a «patriarch of his people - they are his children; he is their guardian; they his wards»¹²¹. Thus, he maintained that the issue of emancipation would arise «sooner or later», but only when it could assure to both parties the same advantages that slavery could guarantee. Moreover, it could happen only upon the condition that the slave had earned the right to be freed by demonstrating his capacity to be autonomous. While the master had the «duty» to prepare the slaves for freedom by educating them to «industry» and «habits of labor», the slaves «must pay for this care and guardianship» and for «the advancement to civilization» guaranteed to them by slavery itself. In fact, Colwell argued echoing List's aforementioned words, educating savages in labor and civility would be impossible without «some degree of compulsion» and without «the power of discipline»¹²². A discipline that had to continue «until the African had undergone the physical, moral, and intellectual change which would fit him to take his place among civilized nations»¹²³.

By assimilating patriarchal power to the master's power, Elder and Colwell thus recovered the original, passive meaning, dating back to Roman law, of emancipation as the act through which the *pater familias* liberated the child who had become an adult¹²⁴, thus giving to the slave owner the unilateral power to free the slaves. If, in fact, in the case of children the conditions of emancipation would naturally accrue with the attainment of adulthood, in the case of slaves it was strictly up to the masters to determine the time and manner of their liberation. «Emancipation is a question

audience and then we had a time of it». *William Elder to Henry C. Carey*, February 17, 1856, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 13, folder 2), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

¹¹⁹ «There is in my view but one sound or endurable defence of Slavery —that it is for the good of the slave. On that ground only can Slavery be endured in any part of Christendom for the time to come. Slavery is a special intervention of society in reference to a particular class for their best interests. It takes the savage, it takes his labor, his personal liberty; it clothes him, feeds him, takes care of his health ; in fact it descends to the minutest particulars in the direction and management of the individual man. This is a -wholesale violation of the principle, *Laissez faire, laissez passer* which dictates in what concerns labor and trade and personal dealing men are the best judges of their own interests, and must be left to themselves». Colwell, *The South*, 14.

¹²⁰ Colwell, 33.

¹²¹ Colwell, 5.

¹²² Colwell, 5. The assonance between List and Colwell is probably more than coincidence. Indeed, in the same 1856, the first English translation of List's major work, for which Colwell himself had written the preface, was published in Philadelphia: List, *The National System of Political Economy*, 17–60.

¹²³ Colwell, *The South*, 40.

¹²⁴ Reinhardt Koselleck, «Emancipazione», in *Il vocabolario della modernità* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009), 73–95.

which belongs to the master», insisted Colwell, «he is made the judge, and on him rests the responsibility». It was the master that had to avoid both keeping slaves too long and freeing them too soon, just as a parent should not send his children «into the world» without adequate preparation to face it¹²⁵. To Colwell and Elder, then, as to Carey, slavery could thus be abolished only when and if slaves could emerge from the condition of minority imposed upon them by being born and raised as slaves. The subjugation brought by slavery thus became a justification for its very continuation.

Along these same lines, Elder harshly criticized the abolitionists and their immediatism for waving their moral principles while refusing to take into account the objective obstacles that stood in the way of black liberation. However, he added, «the abstract natural right of liberty» had never been enough ever been enough to emancipate «any race of men» by itself. On the contrary, «emancipation must be invited and prepared for by conditions of the subjects, otherwise it cannot take effect»¹²⁶. Moreover, Elder added following Carey's arguments, «the slavery of the South is not the worst that ever saw the sun» and it was definitely better than «slavery in the West Indies», which had produced a dramatic «waste of life», while in the United States «the slave population has grown»¹²⁷. Southern slavery was certainly «the shame of us all», but at the same time, it was «getting better every day», and it would «resolve itself all right, if we but treat it judiciously». To reach emancipation at some point it would be sufficient, Elder concluded, to «hold slavery within its present boundaries»¹²⁸. Colwell as well attacked the «fanatical abolitionists» for their tendency to fuel «disunion» and for their «moral treason» against the U.S. Constitution that, in his perspective, represented «the mightiest bulwark of slavery now existing in the world» and under which the entire North was «bound to accept slavery as it is, and to protect it»¹²⁹. With the words of the protectionist journalist Calvin Colton, abolition thus amounted to an «organized sedition» that threatened the very pillars of the U.S. «social compact», since slavery represented a «corporate part of the American political fabrics»¹³⁰. To Northern economists, then, slavery would be naturally overcome by the natural laws of human progress, but in the meantime it had to be politically and constitutionally defended against abolitionism, maintaining the masters' power over slaves and leaving the unquestionable judgment about emancipation to the masters' self-interest. Preparing freedom and suspending emancipation meant denying them in the present.

¹²⁵ Colwell, *The South*, 6.

¹²⁶ Elder, *Emancipation*, 7.

¹²⁷ Elder, 15.

¹²⁸ Elder, 16.

¹²⁹ Colwell, *The South*, 20–22.

¹³⁰ Calvin Colton, *Abolition a Seditious. By a Northern Man* (Philadelphia: George W. Donohue, 1839).

Such vision, however, did not go unchallenged. On August 1, 1857, in fact, in a speech pronounced on the twenty-third anniversary of the Slavery Abolition Act in the British colonies, Frederick Douglass proposed a different reading of emancipation in the West Indies, taking aim at gradualist at economic visions like Carey's. This way, he clarified the terms of the ongoing clash around the problem of emancipation within the North itself. As a matter of fact, to Douglass «West India emancipation» represented «the most interesting and sublime event of the nineteenth century» - an achievement infinitely more remarkable than all the advances in science and technology¹³¹ However, in the United States, he explained, such historical event had been immediately denounced as a «failure» both North and South on strictly economic grounds, by those who, using «a microscope to view the stars», had approached the liberation of millions of individuals «as though it were a railroad, a canal, a steamship». That is, by only asking «the great American question: *will it pay?* [...] Can money be made out of it? Will it make the rich richer, and the strong stronger? Will it affect property?»¹³². Posing such questions meant, according to Douglass, making money into «the measure of morality» and the economic performance of slavery into the only criterion by which to assess whether it should be maintained or abolished. Above all, to ask such questions, as Northern economists had done, meant looking at the problem of emancipation «from the slaveholders' side, and never from the side of the emancipated slaves»¹³³. Only from this political and class perspective it was possible to conclude that emancipation had changed nothing or that it had worsened the condition of black workers in the West Indies.

Precisely against the Northern economists' tendency to think of emancipation from the perspective of the masters, Douglass argued for the need for slaves to take the lead in their own liberation, as in the West Indies. Emancipation in the Caribbean, in fact, had not been solely an initiative of the British government, he explained, but the outcome of a prolonged struggle for freedom carried out by slaves themselves, who had rejected their chains by enacting a «general protest against oppression». While British abolitionists had worked to show that slavery was morally wrong, the slaves had demonstrated concretely, through «riots and violence» that it could also be dangerous, forcing the British government first to phase out slavery and then the colonial assemblies to divest themselves of the apprenticeship system beforehand¹³⁴. This general slave revolt, which had played a key role in ending slavery in the West Indies, according to Douglass had to serve as a model for American slaves. In the clash for emancipation ongoing in the United States, which pitted slaves

¹³¹ Frederick Douglass, «The Significance of Emancipation in the West Indies [1857]», in *The Portable Frederick Douglass*, eds. Henry Louis Jr. Gates and John Stauffer (New York-London: Penguin Books, 2016), 275–78.

¹³² Douglass, 281–82.

¹³³ Douglass, 282–83.

¹³⁴ Douglass, 290.

not only against their masters but also against those who tried to keep them subservient even after the end of slavery, to Douglass it was crucial that they keep fighting for their freedom themselves, as they had already been doing for decades, albeit often separated and individually, by boycotting work in the fields, by fleeing or by openly rebelling. In fact, in human history, Douglass famously warned, freedom had only been won through struggle, without which there could be no progress, since «power concedes nothing without insistent demand»¹³⁵. Thus, Douglass concluded, to enforce emancipation against those in the North as well as the South who attempted to prevent, depower, or postpone it, and to guarantee that emancipation would not merely bring oppression in new guises, slaves had to place themselves at the head of the movement to end slavery. If in the West Indies «abolition followed closely on the heels of insurrection», the same had to happen in the United States¹³⁶. Only this way, Douglass later reiterated, it would be possible to impose an emancipation that would not free the black worker from his condition as «slave of one master» only to transform him into a «slave of society», but that could also subvert the racial and class hierarchies upon which slavery had been founded until then¹³⁷.

It was precisely this threat of a slave insurrection that haunted the reflections of Northern political economists. In fact, in addition to inviting the North to defend slavery and the Constitution, in the final pages of his pamphlets, Colwell admonished the South not to push their demands up to the point of breaking up the Union. «If disunion were followed by civil war, as would be inevitable», Colwell wrote, this would risk producing a rebellion in the South. Slaves «would soon become excited, dangerous enemies to the households of their masters, and almost impossible to retain in service»¹³⁸. While at present the South could count on the North to arrest and return fugitive slaves, secession would make it impossible to hold them at their place. In such case, Colwell continued foreseeing the actual unfolding of the Civil War, slaves «would soon become agitated» by the movement of armies and by the «rumors» of a war of which they would soon learn to be «the cause». This way, slaves being «roused», to Colwell «murder and conflagration would rage far and wide»¹³⁹. In other words, he concluded, «the almost certain result of this contest would be the entire extinction of Slavery», with «millions of semi-civilized men» that «would be turned loose, to the utter ruin of the white population, though unfit themselves to form a civilized community»¹⁴⁰. The Southern increasing secessionist defiance itself was therefore threatening to fuel slave insurrection

¹³⁵ Douglass, 288.

¹³⁶ Douglass, 291.

¹³⁷ Frederick Douglass, «The Day of Jubilee Comes [1863],» in *The Portable Frederick Douglass*, eds. Henry Louis Jr. Gates and John Stauffer (New York-London: Penguin Books, 2016), 305.

¹³⁸ Colwell, *The South*, 24–29.

¹³⁹ Colwell, 30.

¹⁴⁰ Colwell, 33.

and economic destruction. It was against such danger that emancipation had to be postponed, both to appease the South and to prevent further disorder.

Thus, Carey and Northern economists, in facing the problem of emancipation, grasped its political stakes. They understood that emancipation represented an unpredictable, conflictual social process that once opened would be hard to be governed because of the slaves' insubordinate movements, as the Caribbean case had proven¹⁴¹. While considering slavery as an economic (because of its inefficiency) and political (because of its divisiveness) obstacle to U.S. development, when faced with the concrete threat of the slaves' liberation from all forms of coercion, Northern economists reacted by supporting the postponement of emancipation and by defending the persistence of the slave system. In this respect, up until the mid-1850s, Carey, together with Colwell and Elder, simply argued for the need to suspend emancipation, to limit its scope and to entrust it to the masters themselves. However backward, inefficient and unproductive, to Northern economists slavery remained necessary to govern a labor force deemed racially inferior, unfit for self-determination and, above all, increasingly restless. The gradualism with which Carey approached the problem of emancipation, then, took on a conservative meaning with respect to slavery and to the racial hierarchies menaced by abolitionism and slave revolts, in the attempt to guarantee the survival of the plantation economy, indispensable to U.S. capitalist development both North and South. In other words, gradual emancipation became the name that Carey and Northern economists gave to their attempt to preserve racial and class hierarchies in the midst of a conflict that was increasingly putting them at risk.

2. Protection and the Politics of Emancipation in the Sectional Conflict

2.1. «Towards Sectionalism»: the North, the South and the Republican Party

It was precisely the double threat of abolition on the one hand and of disunion on the other, with which political economy increasingly struggled to deal theoretically in the wake of an increasingly chaotic and conflictual scenario, that led Carey to abandon the scientific reflection on slavery and emancipation to directly engage in party politics and public debates. In the years following the publication of *The Slave Trade*, in fact, while the sectional clash over slavery reached its peak, the problem of emancipation disappeared from Carey's writings, with the word itself being rarely used and only in reference to the «emancipation from taxation». Simultaneously, Carey started intervening directly in public debates, particularly through his several articles and editorials for the *New York Tribune*, as well as for the protectionist newspaper *North American*. Through these articles

¹⁴¹ Eric Foner, *Nothing but Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 10.

and pamphlets, as well as through his correspondence, it is possible to reconstruct Carey's role within the sectional conflict and to show how, despite his oscillations, his political interventions in this phase were largely consistent with his theoretical reflection on emancipation. In fact, despite an increasing hostility towards the Southern pretenses to hegemonize the policy of the Union, Carey kept opposing abolitionism, kept looking for a compromise between Northern and Southern moderates and only accepted to support a limitation of slavery's expansion to the West, while never showing the slightest interest for the freedom of black workers. In particular, he identified the Republican Party as the political vehicle through which keeping both abolitionism and Southerners at bay as two faces of the same extremist tendency. However, this required engaging a battle within the Republican Party itself to affirm protectionism and economic policies as the party's central demand against more radical anti-slavery components. In other words, what this part of the chapter seeks to show is that Carey's attempt to make, against all the odds, the Republican Party first and foremost into a protectionist party did not simply represent the unrealistic obsession of a theoretician detached from reality, as historians as largely described it. On the contrary, it epitomized Carey's strategy to affirm his anti-abolitionist vision of emancipation within the Republican Party, in the attempt to find a common ground with Southern moderates that could avoid secession. However, such strategy had to reckon with the fact that abolitionism, slave revolts and Southern secessionism could hardly be kept at bay in the 1850s United States, leading Carey to change directions and even take contradictory positions in the attempt to adapt to a constantly changing political scenario.

In the spring of 1854, the approval of the Kansas-Nebraska Act marked a temporary but significant departure from the conservative and compromising attitude toward the South adopted by Carey in previous years. The bill, introduced in the Senate in January by Democrat Stephen A. Douglas, repudiated the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and stipulated that the legality of slavery in any territory could be decided by majority vote by the settlers who inhabited it. Replacing the geographical principle of the Mason-Dixon Line with the political principle of popular sovereignty, the Kansas-Nebraska Act not only allowed the expansion of slavery into the Southwestern territories acquired from Mexico but theoretically admitted the possibility of its introduction into the Northwestern territories as well. Since the months immediately following its approval, which represented for many in the North further evidence of the Slave Power's dominance over national politics, the Kansas-Nebraska Act contributed to a decisive shift in Northern public opinion towards an increasing hostility against the South, marking the dissolution of the Whig Party, laying

the ground for the birth of the Republican Party, and shifting to increasingly anti-slavery positions even those who, like Abraham Lincoln, had hitherto avoided taking a clear-cut side¹⁴².

If, to Lincoln, the Kansas-Nebraska Act represented an unacceptable injustice in that it made the federal government completely indifferent politically and morally with respect to slavery¹⁴³, to Carey it signaled the extent of the Southern hegemonic ambition. In the wake of this new awareness, between April and May 1854, during the very months when the Kansas-Nebraska Act was being debated in Congress, Carey published a series of editorials in the *New York Tribune* in which, aided by their anonymous nature, he attacked Southern expansionist ambitions with unusually polemical tones, presenting them as a drag on Northern economic perspectives¹⁴⁴. In doing so, he was among the first Northerners to overturn Southern threats of secession by describing the North as economically autonomous and potentially advantaged from a separation¹⁴⁵. Carey's editorials set out to challenge two Southern arguments in particular. On the one hand, the idea, that Southern States were economically and politically oppressed by Northern States and that therefore the Union was more beneficial to the latter than to the former. On the other hand, the directly consequential belief that a «dissolution of the Union» would prove fatal to the North, while being a blessing for the South, which would finally be able to dispose of its own economic resources independently¹⁴⁶. It was in fact because of such arguments, as well as of the constant threats of secession, that over the previous three decades the South had assumed increasing political influence, up to the point that, Carey denounced, «the South dictates the whole policy of the Union», as evidenced by the impending repudiation of the Missouri Compromise¹⁴⁷. However, the North's repeated surrenders had not been enough to appease the South and cement the Union. On the contrary, the South's claims had only increased and the political rift between the two sections had only deepened.

«We see thus that the North and the South are steadily moving in opposite directions; the one becoming more averse to slavery, and the other more enamored of it. Differences in the modes of thought increase

¹⁴² Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial. Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: Norton, 2010), 63–65; Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 95–96, 125–26.

¹⁴³ Abraham Lincoln, “Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act at Peoria, Illinois, October 16, 1854,” in *Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Library of America, 1992), 93–98. See also: Tiziano Bonazzi, *Abraham Lincoln. Un dramma americano* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2016), 144–53.

¹⁴⁴ [Henry Charles Carey], *The North and the South. Reprinted from the New York Tribune* (New York: Office of the Tribune, 1854). Although this series of editorials was published anonymously both in the newspaper and later as a pamphlet, it was attributed to Carey after his death by William Elder in 1880. See: William Elder, *A Memoir of Henry C. Carey. Read Before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, January 5, 1880.* (Philadelphia: American Iron and Steel Association, 1880). It is therefore difficult to doubt Carey's authorship, as well as it is clear that the anonymous nature of the editorials had contributed to their polemical tone.

¹⁴⁵ Brian Schoen, “The Political Economies of Secession,” *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 37, no. 2 (June 2015): 210.

¹⁴⁶ Carey, *The North and the South*, 3–5.

¹⁴⁷ Carey, 7.

from day to day. [...] Southern political conventions precede the dissolution of the ties which formerly connected Southern and Northern Whigs, and Southern and Northern Democrats. From year to year the tendency, in and out of Congress, is toward sectionalism»¹⁴⁸.

This growing divide had emerged particularly, according to Carey, in relation to the annexation of territories in the West. In fact, while «the policy of the North looks inward» and did not aspire to territorial expansion, but «to make productive what they have» by building roads, canals and railroads, in contrast «Southern policy looks outward», continually seeking territorial expansion to compensate for the depletion of soils produced by plantations and to gain power in Congress. This expansion, moreover, had to be accomplished through wars, conquests or acquisitions financed by the federal government, as according to Carey had happened in previous decades, when the South gained the annexation of Florida and Texas and the invasion of Mexico, while the North gained portions of territory in the West only through the exercise of «squatter sovereignty» by free settlers¹⁴⁹. Moreover, the South was currently planning the reopening of the transatlantic trade and the annexation of Cuba to project its power on a continental scale, but also to reinforce slavery «as an element of political control» in the United States. Through its domination of the Union, Carey denounced, the South would advance its own sectional interest, «by taxing the free people of the North for the steady extension of the area of slavery, while denying the constitutionality of any expenditures tending to the improvement of the land, or of the people, of the North and West»¹⁵⁰. It was thus the North that had suffered an economic and political oppression by the South, Carey declared, reversing the first of the two Southern arguments. It was the North that had borne enormous economic costs without reaping benefits because of its connection with the South in the Union. This was all the more paradoxical, according to Carey, if one looked at the actual political and economic balance between the two sections.

The North, in fact, in addition to having a larger population, had a productive power (and a trade capacity) «four times greater» than those of the South, partly due to the diversification of its economy, the presence of manufactures and machines. Above all, however, to Carey this superiority was due to the fact that while in the North everyone worked, in the South «labor is not held in honor among the white men, and slaves, as is well known, do but little work». Thus, in the North labor was «economized» while in the South it was «wasted» and consequently «capital accumulates at the North with vastly greater rapidity than at the South». Since the former turned out to be «very powerful» and the latter «comparatively very weak», it was the latter that was right

¹⁴⁸ Carey, 7.

¹⁴⁹ Carey, 16-17.

¹⁵⁰ Carey, 20.

«to dread the day of dissolution»¹⁵¹. Here then, the South's second argument was reversed: in the event of separation, it would be the North that would prosper, being freed from the economic burden of slavery and from the taxation imposed by Southern expansionism. The South, on the other hand, in the absence of the domestic demand for cotton guaranteed by Northern manufactures, would be completely at the mercy of prices set by foreign demand in the world market and entirely dependent on exports. A «Northern Union», Carey then declared, apparently wishing for it, would thus have the advantage of reduced administrative and military costs, a diversified economy defended by the protectionist tariff, a steady flow of immigrants from Europe, which would increase its population and productive capacity, and would also accomplish the peaceful annexation of Canada's provinces that the South had always obstructed¹⁵². In other words, the North would be «relieved by that secession which, according to the *Charleston Mercury*, would constitute 'the real triumph of the South'»¹⁵³. In contrast, a «Southern Union» would not only be weak economically, but would also risk being nipped in the bud by the fact that the States of the Upper South, such as Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina, would not necessarily follow the others in seceding, having economic interests ultimately closer to those of the North, Carey added anticipating a crucial dynamic of the Civil War. As States «whose chief manufacture is that of negroes for exportation», in fact, they would be harmed by the reopening of the trans-Atlantic slave trade invoked by the Lower South. Furthermore, in the event of secession, the North with which they bordered would stop enforcing the Fugitive Slave Law. Consequently, Carey concluded, despite decades of threats, «the South plainly cannot *afford* to dissolve the Union»¹⁵⁴.

A «contest for power», however, was underway in the United States to determine «whether free labor shall become slave labor, or slave labor shall become free labor», Carey announced, depicting an absolute contrast that would be widely echoed in the following years¹⁵⁵. A clash between two increasingly opposed and irreconcilable economic and political systems, whose goals diverged «as do the poles of the compass». On one side was the South, dominated by an «aristocracy», or «a

¹⁵¹ Carey, 9-12.

¹⁵² Carey, 34.

¹⁵³ Carey, 29.

¹⁵⁴ Carey, 39.

¹⁵⁵ Notably in 1858, by Abraham Lincoln: «A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved - I do not expect the house to fall -- but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other». Abraham Lincoln, «Speech at Springfield, Illinois, June 16, 1858», in *Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Library of America, 1992), 131–39. But also by William Seward: «Shall I tell you what this collision means? They who think that it is accidental, unnecessary, the work of interested or fanatical agitators, and therefor ephemeral, mistake the case altogether. It is an irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces, and it means that the United States must and will, sooner or later, become either entirely a slaveholding nation, or entirely a free-labor nation». William Henry Seward, «Irrepressible Conflict Speech», in *The Works of William H. Seward. Volume IV*, edited by George Baker (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1884), 56–57.

body of great land-owners surrounded by slaves who work for them», clinging to the «British free trade system» as the best way «for cheapening labor». On the other side was the North, the space of «democracy» as «divided among a body of small land-owners, unequalled in the world for number, all working for themselves», who wanted «protection against the cheap labor system of Europe»¹⁵⁶. A clash, then, not only between two «sections» but between two «inchoate countries» on the verge of separating. «How soon they will become really different countries», Carey noted, «enemies in war, and in peace friends - depends upon the South», since, after decades of compromise, the North's patience had now run out¹⁵⁷. The confrontation was thus on the verge of being resolved by force.

«The North has thus far carried the South on its shoulders, and so it is bound to do in all time to come. [...] During the whole of this period, it has borne unmeasured insolence, and has, for the sake of peace, permitted its whole policy to be governed by a body of slaveholders amounting to but little more than a quarter of a million in number. It has made one compromise after another, until at length the day of compromise has past, and has given place to the day on which the South and the North - the advocates of slave labor on the one side and of free labor on the other - are now to measure strength, and we trust it *will* be measured»¹⁵⁸.

Precisely because of the productive and demographic imbalance between the two sections, the same that distinguished a «pigmy» from a «giant», the North could no longer accept that the South directed the entire policy of the Union, but had to oppose its hegemonic pretense and the further expansion of slavery. In this context, «the real disunionists» were not those who opposed the South, but those who kept compromising. «To preserve the Union», Carey concluded, «it is required that the freemen of the North should insist on having the government administered in the interests of freedom». Defending the Union no longer meant compromising, but asserting Northern supremacy. From the pages of the *New York Tribune*, Carey thus outlined the conceptual coordinates of a radical opposition between the North and the South no longer as parts of the same nation but as distinct and irreconcilable entities on the brink of confrontation. A representation that on the one hand affirmed the superiority of the North by making it coincide with the American Union itself¹⁵⁹, and on the other hand erased class divisions within Northern society, which was presented as entirely “free”, in order to project those divisions onto the sectional

¹⁵⁶ Carey, *The North and the South*, 21.

¹⁵⁷ Carey, 35.

¹⁵⁸ Carey, 48.

¹⁵⁹ Nicholas Greenwood Onuf and Peter S. Onuf, *Nations, Markets, and War. Modern History and the American Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 295–307.

clash. This clash, in the following years, in the North as in the South, would be nurtured in public discourse up to the point of becoming an accomplished fact in 1861.

Thus, Carey's editorials from 1854 attested to the shift produced by the Kansas-Nebraska Act in Northern public opinion, bringing many anti-abolitionists like himself towards the positions of constitutional anti-slavery, based upon the principles of «nonextension» and «freedom national»¹⁶⁰. In doing so, the Kansas-Nebraska Act also paved the way for the final breakdown of the U.S. political system along sectional lines, with the split of both parties and the emergence of the Republican Party. Born out of a coalition between former Whigs and former Democrats already involved in the Free Soil Party, both radicals and conservatives, the Republican Party was widely divided on economic policy, on the problem of emancipation and on the question of racial equality, but united by the opposition to the extension of slavery, as well as by a celebration of Northern society and by a common reference to what has been called a “free-labor ideology”¹⁶¹. If the year 1854 marked a turning-point for the Northern public opinion, Carey's deviation from a conservative and compromising attitude towards the South did not last long. While in the aftermath of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, he felt the urge to castigate the Southern increasing defiance, he was soon worried by the markedly sectional and moderately anti-slavery character of the nascent Republican Party which, in his perspective risked fueling both disunion and abolition. While Elder and especially E. P. Smith, William Seward's right-hand man in New York, immediately enlisted wholeheartedly in Republican ranks, believing that opposition to the “Slave Power” had the priority over all other issues, Carey at first considered support for the American Party, the so-called Know Nothings, on whose program many ex-Whigs of the old guard were converging and which was growing particularly strong in Pennsylvania. Nonetheless, as the son of an Irish immigrant and as a firm believer in the economic necessity of immigration, he soon ended up rejecting the Know Nothings' nativist program and joining, albeit skeptically, the newly formed Republican Party, hoping that former-Whigs could exert a moderating influence upon it by prioritizing protectionism over anti-slavery¹⁶².

Thus, in the heat of the sectional conflict, Carey felt the need to directly engage into party politics. In June 1856, he participated as a Pennsylvania delegate (together with Elder) in the first Republican Party Convention in Philadelphia¹⁶³. There, agreeing with the rest of the Pennsylvania delegation,

¹⁶⁰ James Oakes, *Freedom National: The Destruction of Slavery in the United States, 1861-1865* (New York: Norton, 2013).

¹⁶¹ Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 12–39; William E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹⁶² Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, 43-44.

¹⁶³ *Proceedings of the National Convention Held at Philadelphia. On the 17th, 18th, and 19th of June, 1856* (Philadelphia, 1856), 37.

he supported the nomination of the moderate and protectionist Supreme Court Justice John McLean against John C. Frémont, a former army general during the war against Mexico who had stood for free soil and against the Fugitive Slave Law. However, the Convention immediately appeared to be dominated by the more radical and openly anti-slavery factions of the party, led by Salmon P. Chase, which managed to impose Frémont over McLean. Moreover, they succeeded in imposing an electoral platform demanding the federal government to abolish slavery in any territory under its direct jurisdiction and denying the authority of Congress to establish slavery in any territory¹⁶⁴. A platform that, moreover, in order not to displease the party's different sensibilities, gave no indication on trade policy and omitted the pro-tariff plank proposed by Pennsylvania delegates. Three of them, probably in protest to this decision, voted for Carey as the vice-presidential candidate¹⁶⁵. The convention, then, frustrated Carey's expectations to operate a moderation over the party by giving centrality to the tariff and to trade policy. Nonetheless, he personally engaged in support of Republicans in the following months, acting as treasurer of the Philadelphia Kansas Aid Committee, an organization set up to financially support free-soil settlers, and then as Frémont's campaign treasurer in Pennsylvania¹⁶⁶.

The terms of his own adhesion to the Republican Party were made explicit by Carey himself a few days before the 1856 presidential election in an article for the *New York Tribune* in which he listed twenty-five reasons for his support. To some extent, they can be seen as a depiction of what the party had to become in his perspective. First, he claimed to support it as the party of liberty: in favor of «free speech» against attempts to prevent debate in Congress, in favor of «free labor» against attempts to devalue it, in favor of «free soil» in Kansas and Nebraska, in favor of «free men» and «free government» against a system that granted «60,000 oligarchs» slaveholders «the sole direction of the policy of the country». The Republican Party had therefore to be supported because it opposed the «repeal» of the Missouri Compromise and, clinging to the principles of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, and the extension of slavery against those who deemed it as a «legitimate and expedient institution», both «for the black man or the white». Moreover, Carey added in an attempt to exorcise his own fears, the Republican Party was «purely National and Anti-Sectional», in that it simply argued that the North should have the same rights as the South, and indeed had aroused «the hatred of all sectionalists», in the North as well as in the South. The Republican Party, in his view, had to be seen as «emphatically the Party of the Union», being the only one that had never threatened «dissolution of the connection» in case of electoral defeat, as

¹⁶⁴ Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 129-30.

¹⁶⁵ *Proceedings of the National Convention Held at Philadelphia. On the 17th, 18th, and 19th of June, 1856*, 74.

¹⁶⁶ Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, 44-46.

both extremist Southerners and extremist New-England abolitionists in his view had done. Then, it should be supported «because it stands by the Constitution», as interpreted by the «Patriots of the Revolution». Because it was the party of «high wages», refusing to reduce the free worker to the condition of a slave just so it could compete with European poor labor. Because, Carey continued, it was «the Party of Freedom everywhere, anxious to relieve the millions of poor and down-trodden whites of the South from the degrading and debasing tyranny to which they are now subjected». Because it was the party of peace and morality, in that it opposed both slavery and polygamy in the Western territories. Because, finally, it argued «that Freedom is National, and Slavery only sectional»¹⁶⁷.

In this list Carey thus on the one hand confirmed his shift towards the positions of moderate, constitutional anti-slavery that had already emerged two years before in his editorials, and reiterated his opposition to the expansion of slavery, his support for the cause of free labor in Western territories, and his support for the principle of “freedom national”. On the other hand, he confirmed his strongly anti-abolitionist and even racist approach to the problem, ignoring the question of emancipation, avoiding any reference to the condition of slaves and even going as far as claiming that, in the South, it was only poor whites who needed to be relieved from a tyrannical oppression. Slavery, in this respect, was a problem solely and exclusively insofar as it had become a lever of political and institutional power through which the Southern oligarchy had gained the ability to dictate trade and expansionist policies to the Union. In other words, only insofar as it had allowed the South to restrict the rights of the “free men” of the North, hindering their development and preventing their settlement in Western territories. In this respect, the Republican Party had to be «the Party of Freedom», but explicitly and emphatically of the freedom of Northern and Southern whites against the tyrannical oppression imposed on both by slaveholders. Thus, Carey’s intensifying polemic against the South and his support for the Republican Party entailed no revision of his positions on slave emancipation and black freedom. Both of them, in his view, had nothing to do with the clash between the North and the South, let alone with the Republican Party, which he conceived as a political instrument to fight both abolitionism and Southern secessionism in the attempt to avoid disunion (and slave insurrection), but definitely not as an instrument to implement emancipation. It was in the attempt to make it so, and to reduce the influence of more radical currents, that in 1856 Carey decided to wield his battle from within the party.

The outcome of the 1856 presidential election was interpreted by Carey as a further confirmation of his hypothesis. In fact, he could argue that having centered the party’s agenda on anti-slavery

¹⁶⁷ Henry Charles Carey, “Reasons for Acting with the Republican Party,” *New York Tribune*, October 22, 1856.

and not on protection was not only politically dangerous, but also electorally weak. In particular, Frémont's defeat in Pennsylvania to James Buchanan, a moderately-protectionist Democrat, was immediately attributed by Carey to the absence of tariff support in the Republican platform¹⁶⁸. Only by uniting free labor and protection would it be possible, in his view, to attract moderate elements and expand the party's base in States, such as Pennsylvania, where being anti-slavery was actually a liability. Carey's interpretation of the defeat, however, got little attention among Republicans, who were convinced that it was precisely their ambiguity on economic policy that had allowed them to hold together a composite coalition in which free-trade sensibilities were strong among former Democrats¹⁶⁹. As Charles Dana wrote to Carey shortly after the election, «to put protection in the platform of any party to-day would be equivalent to political suicide». Only after defeating «the Southern domination» could one think of reintroducing the tariff¹⁷⁰. To Carey, on the contrary, putting protection in the party platform was precisely a way of marginalizing radical elements and avoiding a confrontation with the South on slavery.

In the following March, Republicans in Congress almost avoided to oppose the Tariff of 1857, which further reduced duties on imports as compared with the Walker Tariff of 1846¹⁷¹. It was on this occasion, due to a difference of opinion on the tariff, that, according to Elder, Carey broke with the *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley, leading to the end of his collaboration with the paper after nearly a decade in which he had been its «virtual editor»¹⁷². The Republicans' lack of attention to the tariff issue also depended on the fact that its passage occurred almost simultaneously with the Supreme Court's ruling on the Dredd Scott case. In a watershed decision, the Supreme Court denied that blacks could enjoy any right of citizenship in the United States, holding that they were not part of the American people, and affirming the right to slave ownership in any state of the Union, thus negating Congress the authority to prohibit slavery in the West. In the following months, the Dredd-Scott sentence, representing a direct attack on both the egalitarian claims of abolitionism and the non-expansionist policy of the Republican Party, helped to further radicalize public opinion in the North towards against the South and slavery¹⁷³. Probably frustrated by the Republican unwillingness to take up the cause of protection, but most crucially by the polarization of the sectional clash and by the inescapable centrality that slavery was assuming within

¹⁶⁸ Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, 46-48.

¹⁶⁹ On Carey's difficulties to affirm protectionism in the Republican Party in 1856, see also: Egnal, *Clash of Extremes*, 241-42.

¹⁷⁰ *Charles Dana to Henry C. Carey*, November 16, 1856, in «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 12, folder 5), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

¹⁷¹ Douglas A. Irwin, *Clashing over Commerce: A History of U.S. Trade Policy* (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 205. See also; Arthur M. Lee, «Henry Carey and the Republican Tariff», *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 81, no. 3 (July 1957): 283-87.

¹⁷² Elder, *A Memoir of Henry C. Carey*, 22-23.

¹⁷³ Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 91-94; Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 567-71.

it, Carey distanced himself from the party for a phase, and from politics more broadly, devoting himself to a six-month trip to Europe¹⁷⁴.

2.2. Protection and the Coming of Disunion

Upon his return, however, at the end of 1857, Carey caught the opportunity of a financial crisis to reintroduce the tariff issue into the U.S. economic and political debate. Between August and October 1857, in fact, a financial panic had resulted in the failure of hundreds of banks across the country, the suspension of specie payments, and a general restriction in access to credit. The collapse of the financial system had soon translated into an unprecedented economic crisis, particularly in the North, with the bankruptcy of railroads, manufactures and shipbuilding companies, leading to layoffs and mass unemployment in large urban centers. In contrast, the impact on the South had been significantly inferior, contributing to spread the idea that the slave economy was more economically sound than the “free” one in the North¹⁷⁵. Carey traced the catastrophic effects of the financial panic back to the persistent attachment of U.S. trade policy to British free trade, and in particular to the tariff reduction of a few months earlier. As he wrote in a series of public letters to President Buchanan, not only did free trade tend to drain precious metals from U.S. economy to British banks, but it resulted in a broader instability of the economic and monetary system. Thus, if economic specialization and excess imports had, in Carey’s view, clogged the financial markets, only the diversification guaranteed by the introduction of a protectionist tariff could first facilitate economic recovery and later protect the domestic market from further crises¹⁷⁶.

In the months following the panic and recession, Carey’s argument was successful in converting to protectionism many who had hitherto taken different positions, spurring him to intensify his commitment to the protectionist cause¹⁷⁷. This time, however, he acted outside of existing parties, deeming the Republican Party excessively dominated by sectional and anti-slavery tendencies, in the attempt to coalesce moderates from both sections around a protectionist platform that could defuse abolition and disunion. In the second half of the decade, then, after his first Republican interlude, Carey returned to an explicitly anti-sectional, moderate, and compromising position toward the South. The choice of Buchanan as a public interlocutor was therefore not accidental,

¹⁷⁴ Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, 51.

¹⁷⁵ James L. Huston, *The Panic of 1857 and the Coming of the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 14-33.

¹⁷⁶ Henry Charles Carey, *Letters to the President on the Foreign and Domestic Policy of the Union* (Philadelphia: Lippincott & Co., 1858).

¹⁷⁷ Lee, “Henry Carey and the Republican Tariff,” 288-89. The breadth of the appreciation of Carey’s *Letters to the President* clearly emerges by his correspondence of 1858, when he received dozens of congratulatory letters from prominent Republican politicians.

since for a brief period after his victory in the election of 1856 Carey even seemed to regard him as a possible federator of a moderate, protectionist party that would sideline pro-slavery and anti-slavery extremism¹⁷⁸.

With this view in mind, in early 1858 Carey founded the Home Protective Union of the State of Pennsylvania, with the aim of exerting non-partisan political pressure in favor of industrial interests, in the belief that their defense should not depend on the dominance of a specific party¹⁷⁹. The association's first initiative was to convene a major protectionist rally in June 1858, with the stated purpose of building «one great national party which shall have in view the good of the country [...] without selfish aims or sectional ambitions; and at the same time secure the revival of a genuine American policy»¹⁸⁰. Among the Southern politicians invited to the event, many showed interest in the initiative. However, journalist Duff Green, a South Carolina Democrat, answering to Carey's invitation, pointed out that any sectional cooperation on the tariff would require a set of guarantees on slavery as a pre-condition. In fact, Green declared to Carey a full willingness to work together «by organizing a party independent of and controlling both [the Republican and Democratic organizations]» in order to achieve «a proper modification of the tariff». However, he specified «to bring in our whole force from the South, we ought to have assurance on the surrender of fugitive slaves»¹⁸¹. In the end, the participation of many Southern politicians was hampered by the fear that Republicans present at the rally would attempt to make it into an occasion for criticizing the Buchanan administration, trying to give «a sectional tone to the question of protection to American labor», as J. W. Burns, the secretary of the Home Protective Union, wrote worriedly to Kentucky Senator John J. Crittenden¹⁸².

Thus, on June 15, 1858, only Northern politicians attended the event: Pennsylvania Senator Simon Cameron, the two senators from Vermont and one from Rhode Island, along with several Northern and Western representatives. In chairing the meeting, Carey denounced the state of economic depression in which the country found itself, declaring the goal «to restore to health the body politic, now so fearfully diseased that the societary circulation has almost ceased»¹⁸³. At the meeting, which according to the *North American* was convened by the «operatives» of the Philadelphia manufacturers to express «the voice of the workman», the tariff issue was presented as a means to

¹⁷⁸ Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, 52.

¹⁷⁹ *Home Protective Union of the State of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1858).

¹⁸⁰ "Philadelphia Citizens" to J. Crittenden, May 13, 1858, quoted in Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, 65.

¹⁸¹ *Duff Green to Henry C. Carey*, May 21, 1858, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 13, folder 5), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

¹⁸² *J. W. Burns to John Crittenden*, May 26, 1858, quoted in Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, 68.

¹⁸³ *Great Popular Rally. Protection to American Industry. Grand Demonstration at National Hall*, in «North American and United States Gazette», June 16, 1858.

protect American workers from the consequences of the financial crisis, unemployment and competition with European cheap labor. However, the names of the distinguished participants listed by the newspaper (whose editor, Morton McMichael was a close associate of Carey's and a future mayor of Philadelphia) were predominantly of manufacturers¹⁸⁴. The resolutions passed by the assembly declared a willingness to vote, in future elections, only for those candidates who would support «measures looking to securing to the American laborer a market for his labor», expressing the will to gain «the cooperation of our fellow citizens of the north, the south, the east, and the west [...] for the final establishment of that industrial independence»¹⁸⁵. The resolutions omitted any reference to slavery as well as any criticism of the South.

As Carey's aide James Harvey stated in a public letter to the *North American*, the meeting thus signaled that, thanks to the Home Protective Union, Pennsylvania could become «a breakwater between the extremes of north and south» by uniting men from both sections into a new «national organization»¹⁸⁶. More realistically, E. P. Smith warned Carey of the impossibility of circumventing the slavery issue, criticizing the entire framework of his political initiative. «The first thing is to destroy the Southern domination [...] through the anti-slavery feeling», he stated, declaring that he had «little faith, therefore, in direct popular agitation for Protection». All the less realistic was for Peshine Smith to think of reconciling the South on the tariff. On the contrary, only by electing an administration «in spite of the South» would it be possible to obtain «protection for the sake of protection». The tariff, he concluded, would come much more easily by electing a Republican free-trader like Salmon Chase than a Southern protectionist like John Crittenden¹⁸⁷. Thus, the distance between Carey's political strategy and Smith's, who was one of Seward's closest aides, could not have been greater. While the former saw protection as a way to tone down the sectional conflict and remove slavery from the center of the debate, the latter was arguing that only by scoring a victory against the Southern demands could the conflict be settled. Heedless of Smith's warnings, in October 1858, Carey, together with the Home Protective Union steering committee, of which Elder was also a member, promoted an appeal to the voters of Pennsylvania, arguing that, being positioned «between the North and the South», the Keystone state could «guide and direct the policy of the Union» by championing a protectionist coalition¹⁸⁸.

¹⁸⁴ Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, 41.

¹⁸⁵ *Great Popular Rally. Protection to American Industry. Grand Demonstration at National Hall*, in «North American and United States Gazette», June 16, 1858. For a detailed account of the meeting, see: Smith, 65-70.

¹⁸⁶ *From Washington*, «North American and United States Gazette», June 18, 1858.

¹⁸⁷ *Erasmus Peshine Smith to Henry C. Carey*, June 20, 1858, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 18, folder 2), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

¹⁸⁸ *To the People of Pennsylvania*, in «Miscellaneous Works of Henry C. Carey» (collection 330 C18a), vol. 15, Kislak Center, University of Pennsylvania.

If such hypothesis appeared to have no real prospects at the national level, the protectionist agitation nevertheless gained Carey growing support among Pennsylvania industrialists, who chose him as their spokesman. This was made evident by a series of celebrations in his honor in April 1859, before his departure for a new and longer trip to Europe. The invitation to the concluding dinner declared the will to celebrate not only Carey's scientific merits, but also and above all his «public services» on behalf of the «industrial interests of the country» and the prosperity of «merchants and manufacturers», but also his efforts to secure for the U.S. working classes «the fullest recompense for their labor, and the amplest opportunity for improving»¹⁸⁹. On the walls of the dinner room of the luxurious La Pierre House hotel in downtown Philadelphia two large signs were affixed: the first, at one end, reading «The Harmony of Interests», the second, at the other, «Protection to American Labor». Despite the repeated reference to the working classes and to American labor, the list of the promoters, in addition to his friends and associates such as William Elder and Stephen Colwell, counted only industrialists and politicians, including the mayor of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Senator Simon Cameron, and Tennessee Senator John Bell. Above all, the list of promoters included all the major representatives of Pennsylvania's industrial capital, particularly investors in steel, railroads, canals and manufacturing textiles. The event, they declared, served to show the world that «there are times and places in which prophets are not without honor in their own country»¹⁹⁰.

In his speech, Carey reiterated the need for industrial diversification, as well as the basic themes of his own critique to free trade, as a result of which «sectional jealousies have grown to such an extent as to make it doubtful if the Union can be maintained»¹⁹¹. The dinner was preceded by Carey's tour of Luzerne County, one of the areas of Pennsylvania with the highest density of coal and iron mines, at the invitation of local industrialists, particularly George W. Scranton, among the first U.S. rail manufacturers, founder of the eponymous town and recently elected to Congress¹⁹². In the course of the town-to-town visit, according to the *North American*, Carey was greeted with full honors by leading local notables, both Democrats and Republicans, as well as crowds of citizens and workers in the mines and industries¹⁹³. Episodes such as these, together with the chronicles of the Carey Vespers that occurred weekly at his Philadelphia residence, allow to reconstruct a network of relationships that followed and accompanied Carey's growing political engagement during the most heated years of the sectional conflict. But most crucially to grasp how, since the

¹⁸⁹ *Testimonials to Henry C. Carey, Esq., Dinner at the La Pierre House, Philadelphia, April 27, 1859* (Philadelphia: Collins, 1859), 3.

¹⁹⁰ *Testimonials to Henry C. Carey, Esq.*, 4.

¹⁹¹ *Testimonials to Henry C. Carey, Esq.*, 9.

¹⁹² *Testimonials to Henry C. Carey, Esq.*, 58.

¹⁹³ *Testimonials to Henry C. Carey, Esq.*, 57–79.

second half of the 1850s, Carey's protectionism coalesced the industrial interests of Pennsylvania, for which he lent himself as an intellectual and political spokesman, allowing his positions, in the following years, to gain increasing weight in national politics and in the Republican Party in particular.

Upon his return from Europe in late 1859, with the next year's presidential election in sight, Carey once again tried to explore the possibility of a moderate, protectionist coalition, moving from a new political, economic, and geographic analysis of the relationship between sections. This time, probably acknowledging the few chances enjoyed by his proposal, he went back to look at the Republican Party, in an attempt to caution it against choosing a radical candidate. First, in an article published in the *Boston Evening Transcript* in November 1859, Carey described the division of the United States into four zones, born out of the Westward migration along isothermal lines: a «Northern» zone, consisting of New England, New York, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa; a «Northern Central» zone, coinciding with Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois; a «Southern Central» zone consisting of North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and Virginia; and finally a «Southern» zone corresponding with the plantation States, namely South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. In the face of the nation's sectional crisis, Carey declared, the problem to be faced had to do not with the alternative between slavery and freedom, nor between free trade and protection, but with the relative «power» between the different zones of the Union. In the context of an increasingly clash between the Northern and Southern Zones, to Carey it was necessary to recognize that «the balance of power» resided in the central zones, and particularly in the «Northern center», because of its superior economic and demographic development. In his view, then, the party that wanted to win the presidency could do so only by choosing a candidate consistent with the wishes and interests of this zone, as the Democrats had done with their choice of Buchanan in 1856 and as the Republicans had failed to do.

Thus, the Northern Central Zone, and Pennsylvania specifically, represented according to Carey «the political battle-field» of the following presidential election, confirming the saying that «as Pennsylvania goes, so goes the Union»¹⁹⁴. It was in the wake of this reflection that in December 1859 Carey responded to the invitation of a group of conservative Philadelphia merchants who, in the weeks following John Brown's insurrectionary attempt in Virginia, had called a public meeting to express solidarity «toward our Southern Brethren, sustaining them in the enforcement of their

¹⁹⁴ Henry Charles Carey, "A Question of Power," «Boston Evening Transcript», November 28, 1859, in «Miscellaneous Works of Henry C. Carey», vol. 15, Kislak Center for Special Collections. See also: Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, 59-60.

laws against all who would endeavor to encroach upon the rights guaranteed to them by the Constitution»¹⁹⁵. Without concealing his fear with respect to the possibility that such an initiative could produce further tensions, Carey responded positively in the belief that it could help make Pennsylvania «a sort of neutral ground between the extremes of North and South»¹⁹⁶. Accordingly, in the January of 1860 he attended the event organized by this «National Union Movement», composed mostly of former Whig protectionists and conservatives such as Senator John Crittenden of Kentucky and Senator John Bell of Tennessee¹⁹⁷. Crittenden, in particular, in his speech railed against all «talk of dissolution» and against the «sectional parties», arguing for the need to put aside the slavery issue, calling for «protection to American industry and commerce», and calling on «conservative men» to champion «a party that has no jealousy either with the North or the South»¹⁹⁸. Positions very close to those that Carey had been forwarding in previous years.

In the following months, after publishing a series of articles in the *New York Tribune* against William Cullen Bryant to show how the financial crises were an outcome of free trade¹⁹⁹, Carey went back to explore his own “zone theory”. In a series of letters addressed to the *Memphis Daily Enquirer* in the spring of 1860, he appealed to the states of the Upper South by arguing for the need to unite in favor of protectionism the two central zones straddling the Mason-Dixon Line as a remedy for the «sectional discord that has now become so nearly universal, and that must result in dissolution of the Union». At the origin of this discord, he argued, laid precisely the free-trade orientation taken by the South in previous decades, which had caused the growing «financial revulsions» and impoverishment of American workers, leading to the abolitionist and anti-slavery radicalization of the North²⁰⁰. In the American Union existed to Carey not only different sections, but «several distinct and well-defined nationalities», which were defined here according to their economic specificities²⁰¹. Thus, in the North there was a «Trading Zone» in which the predominant activity was domestic and international trade, and in the South a «Planting Zone» characterized by intensive cotton farming, which although extremely different had a common interest in opposition to protectionism and support for free trade, with the former concerned with exporting the latter’s

¹⁹⁵ J. W. Bacon, J. S. Gibbons, S. Soarhawk, R. Guillon to Henry C. Carey, December 5, 1859.

¹⁹⁶ H. C. Carey to Bacon et al. to Henry C. Carey, December 6, 1859.

¹⁹⁷ Smith, Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict, 79-80.

¹⁹⁸ *Inception of the National Union Movement*, «New York Times», January 16, 1860.

¹⁹⁹ These were articles published in the *New York Tribune* between January and March 1860 and then reissued as a pamphlet in 1864: Henry Charles Carey, *Financial Crises: Their Causes and Effects* (Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, 1864).

²⁰⁰ *Letter from Henry C. Carey, Esq.*, «Memphis Daily Enquirer», March 31, 1860, in «Miscellaneous Works of Henry C. Carey», vol. 15, Kislak Center for Special Collections. In 2015, Stephen Meardon collected this series of articles and published it as an appendix to: Stephen Meardon, “Henry C. Carey’s ‘Zone Theory’ and American Sectional Conflict,” *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 37, no. 2 (June 2015): 305-20.

²⁰¹ *Second Letter from Henry C. Carey, Esq.*, «Memphis Daily Enquirer», April 7, 1860, in «Miscellaneous Works of Henry C. Carey», vol. 15, Kislak Center for Special Collections.

agricultural products. In the center, on the other hand, there existed a «Mineral Zone», which was itself divided internally between two different zones whose «material interests are yet the same»: a «Southern Center» and a «Northern Center», in which there existed «a nationality of the most conservative kind»²⁰².

It was precisely these two areas that, in Carey's vision, instead of allying themselves on the basis of their respective positions on slavery, should have defused the sectional divide by championing a protectionist policy capable not only of producing market diversification and manufacturing development, but also of marginalizing the extremist pro-slavery and anti-slavery tendencies of the South and the North²⁰³. The «Southern center», in particular, had to support the passage of the tariff, abandoning its alliance with the plantation South and its support for its free-trade policy, «to which the growth of Anti-slavery feeling and Abolitionism has almost alone been due»²⁰⁴. Once more, Carey fostered protection as a way of affirming his anti-abolitionist and anti-secessionist perspective on the sectional conflict, with the goal of marginalize the role of slavery within it, thus in the end defending its persistence, and find a common ground around economic policy. Carey's proposal was immediately criticized and rejected both by his interlocutors in the Upper South and by many of his closest allies in the North, by then closely linked to the Republican Party, especially Elder, McMichael and E. P. Smith. The latter in particular reiterated once more to Carey how any political formula that disregarded a clear pro or anti-slavery stance was at this point anachronistic. In Smith's perspective it was now impossible to bypass the political centrality of slavery as a rift, as Carey was trying to do. Only after electing a Republican president, and only after excluding slavery from the territories, would it be possible to return to talk «of our bread & butter», that is the tariff²⁰⁵.

Probably influenced by these reactions, Carey himself started to realize the impracticality of a protectionist third party in the present context. In fact, in 1860, he decided not to support the Constitutional Union Party that had been formed after the Philadelphia meeting in January 1860, precisely according the Unionist, conservative, protectionist political hypothesis rooted in the Upper South he had worked on the previous three years²⁰⁶. Instead, he went back to support the

²⁰² *Third Letter from Henry C. Carey, Esq.*, «Memphis Daily Enquirer», April 10, 1860, in «Miscellaneous Works of Henry C. Carey», vol. 15, Kislak Center for Special Collections.

²⁰³ *Fourth Letter from Henry C. Carey, Esq.*, «Memphis Daily Enquirer», April 13, 1860, in «Miscellaneous Works of Henry C. Carey», vol. 15, Kislak Center for Special Collections.

²⁰⁴ *Reply to Judge Scruggs. Fifth Letter from Henry C. Carey, Esq.*, «Memphis Daily Enquirer», April 20, 1860, in «Miscellaneous Works of Henry C. Carey», vol. 15, Kislak Center for Special Collections. On these articles, see also: Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, 60-64; Meardon, «Henry C. Carey's 'Zone Theory' and American Sectional Conflict», 313-17.

²⁰⁵ *Erasmus Peshine Smith to Henry C. Carey*, December 19, 1859 and January 15, 1860, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 18, folder 3), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²⁰⁶ Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, 79-80.

Republican Party, while trying to moderate it from within. His decision was probably made easier by the new Republican willingness to support protectionism in the election of 1860, despite persistent internal disagreements on the issue. And to do so particularly in those states, like Pennsylvania, where a purely anti-slavery stance risked not to pay off in the elections. In previous months, the Republican agenda had thus expanded to include a broad economic program for the North that included the tariff, to whose support former free-traders such as Salmon Chase and David Wilmot had also converted in the wake of the panic of 1857²⁰⁷. As one Iowa Republican later wrote to Carey, «many old Free Traders have like myself have become confirmed Careyites»²⁰⁸. Moreover, in May 1860, House Republicans pushed through a tariff bill introduced by Justin Morrill to restore tariffs to the 1846 level²⁰⁹. Carey's arguments repeatedly resonated during the debate, and he personally traveled to Washington to coordinate with his allies in the House, including John Sherman, by then chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means, James Campbell, George Scranton, and Morrill himself²¹⁰. Although the bill soon stalled in the Senate and was postponed until the next session, to Carey it represented sufficient reason to support the Republican Party in the following election, in the hope that its clear-cut affirmation would allow the passage of the tariff, as Morrill himself hoped²¹¹. This scenario thus opened up for Carey the possibility of achieving what had been his goal as early as 1856, that of transforming the Republican Party into a «protective party *en bloc*»²¹², to use E. P. Smith's words, in the hope that this could mean an increasingly central role of the former-Whig, conservative and moderate factions over anti-slavery.

Despite not participating as a delegate, Carey followed closely the proceedings of the Republican Convention held in Chicago in May 1860, endorsing Abraham Lincoln's nomination, a candidate almost unknown but, as a native of Kentucky and a resident of Illinois, coming precisely from those central zones of the Union that he had indicated as politically decisive and at least in principle sympathetic to the protectionist cause. However, against Carey's hope, Lincoln had repeatedly refused to give centrality to economic policy. Only one year earlier, while reiterating to be «an old Henry Clay tariff Whig» and that in his youth he had made more speeches on the tariff than on any

²⁰⁷ Egnal, *Clash of Extremes*, 246-47.

²⁰⁸ W. G. Hammond to Carey, December 28, 1860, quoted in Egnal, 249.

²⁰⁹ Frank W. Taussig, *Tariff History of the United States*, 8th ed. (New York-London: G. Putnam, 1931), 158; Irwin, *Clashing over Commerce*, 207. Impatient with the outcome of the House vote, Carey wrote to Morrill on April 18, 1860: «Nothing less than a dictator is required for making a really good tariff. Would to heaven you or I could fill the place for a week», quoted in Justin S. Morrill, «Notable Letters From My Political Friends - I», *The Forum* XXIV (September 1897): 147.

²¹⁰ Lee, «Henry Carey and the Republican Tariff», 297; Egnal, *Clash of Extremes*, 248.

²¹¹ Justin Morrill to Henry C. Carey, June 21, 1860, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 16, folder 4), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²¹² Erasmus Peshine Smith to Henry C. Carey, February 6, 1859, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 18, folder 2), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

other subject, Lincoln had warned against attempts by more conservative Republicans like Carey to agitate for the tariff in order to set aside slavery, which instead constituted the «living question of the day»²¹³. At the same time, even if Lincoln had changed his positions over the years, shifting towards an increasingly strong moral and political condemnation of slavery, he had always kept an extremely cautious approach on emancipation, supporting the limitation of slavery's extension but accepting its persistence in the South. Therefore, Carey probably judged him moderate enough on slavery to earn his support even if he remained not strongly committed to protection.

Even the tariff plank of the Republican platform, approved in Chicago thanks to Pennsylvania delegates' strong pressure, did not represent a protectionist triumph, but was the outcome of a delicate compromise between the need to secure the state's support in the elections and the need not to displease the free-trader wing of the party. The result was a plank that merely called for an «adjustment» of import duties such as to encourage «the development of the industrial interests of the whole country», to ensure «liberal wages» for workers, «remunerating prices» for farmers, «adequate reward» for manufacturers and «prosperity and independence» for the nation²¹⁴. A formulation that undoubtedly reflected the perspective of harmonious and balanced development advocated by Carey, but that nevertheless remained extremely ambiguous, failing to mention the word «protection» or even the need to increase tariffs. Nevertheless, the plank's announcement, even in this limited form, was greeted with great enthusiasm by the Pennsylvania delegation in Chicago, which voted almost entirely for Lincoln's nomination, as well as by Carey himself²¹⁵. «Happily the Republican Party, or *anti-slavery party*» he wrote shortly thereafter, «recently re-adopted Protection as one of the essential parts of its platform, and has nominated as its candidate for the presidency a man who has been all his life a protectionist», hoping that «he *will* be elected, & we shall then have a total change in the policy of the country»²¹⁶. Four years later, comparing it to the Emancipation Proclamation issued by Lincoln during the Civil War, Carey would describe the tariff plank as «the Chicago proclamation of *emancipation for the white slaves of the North* by means of protection»²¹⁷, once more proving that describing protection as the «true anti-slavery policy» amounted first and foremost to an anti-abolitionist stance aimed at circumventing the problem of black slaves' emancipation.

²¹³ Quoted in Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 135.

²¹⁴ Charles W. Johnson, ed., *Proceedings of the First Three Republican Conventions of 1856, 1860 and 1864* (Minneapolis: Harrison & Smith, 1893), 132.

²¹⁵ Reinhard H Luthin, «Abraham Lincoln and the Tariff», *The American Historical Review* 49, no. 4 (July 1944): 615-17; Lee, «Henry Carey and the Republican Tariff», 290-92; Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 174-76.

²¹⁶ *Henry C. Carey to C. N. David*, June 2, 1860.

²¹⁷ Henry Charles Carey, *The Way to Outdo England Without Fighting Her. Letters to the Hon. Schuyler Colfax on the Paper, the Iron, the Farmer's, the Railroad, and the Currency Question* (Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, 1865), 21.

In the fall of 1860, Carey was again directly and personally involved in the financing and organization of the Republican campaign in Pennsylvania, which was entirely centered on the claim of protection for Northern free labor and American industry, limiting any reference to slavery as much as possible, except in reference to the freedom of the Kansas territories²¹⁸. In Pennsylvania, the Republican Party was thus presented first and foremost as the party of protection. Not an easy task, since the State's Democratic Party also declared itself to be moderately protectionist and the Constitutional Union Party, which nominated John Bell of Tennessee for president, centered its entire program on the protectionist tariff, circulating pamphlets and texts by Carey himself²¹⁹. Lincoln's strong victory in Pennsylvania in the November election, however, vindicated the Republican strategy, as well as Carey's choice. At the national level, the outcome of the election confirmed the sectional split of the U.S. political system, with Lincoln's victory in all the Northern states, the split of the Democratic Party, and the failure of the Constitutional Union Party to gain ground, with the significant exceptions of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia, the very «Southern center» that Carey had identified as a crucial battleground for the future of the Union and that would soon become a decisive stake after secession. While the increasing centrality of slavery in the sectional conflict had made the hypothesis of a protectionist and unionist third party impracticable, Carey was still satisfied with the Republican cautious embrace of protection. Even if he had not succeeded in moderating the party's anti-slavery factions and in affirming his own gradualist vision, he could still hope to influence the clash that opened after Lincoln's election.

The different phases that marked Carey's political path in the years leading up to the Civil War, then, never affected the perspective with which since the 1830s he had approached the problem of slavery and the conundrum of emancipation. In the same years in which he was maturing his support for the Republican Party despite its anti-slavery character, in fact, in his private correspondence Carey reiterated to various interlocutors his hostility to abolitionism and his preference for a gradualist approach. In November 1858, in response to a public plea from Hinton Rowan Helper, a Southern (and white supremacist) critic of slavery, Carey denied its support by claiming that he had a different perspective on anti-slavery remedies, while agreeing that the institution had «injurious effects». While Helper in his pamphlet *The Impending Crisis of the South* (1857) had incited poor whites in the South to revolt against the system that oppressed them, to Carey this only risked making the problem even worse. «You are what is called an abolitionist - believing that the slaves should at once be freed», Carey explained, «I am not - holding as I do, that the enfranchisement of man must be a consequence of a slow & very gradual action, such as I have

²¹⁸ Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 176.

²¹⁹ Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, 86-87.

many times described»²²⁰. One year later, commenting Helper's book in a letter to Charles Dana, Carey added that in any case «the southern people [...] will not have abolition because it would put the negroes on a level with themselves»²²¹. In the same period, Carey also went back to directly attacking abolitionist agitation. In December 1859, he signed a public letter against the mayor of Philadelphia, criticizing him for having the police intervene in defense of abolitionist speaker George William Curtis, against whom a violent racist riot had broken out to prevent him from speaking²²². His public speech, Carey said in a letter to Curtis himself, was a provocation: «a sort of anti-slavery carnival». Indeed, if a year earlier «we had the Kansas murders on our side», now, Carey continued, «our opponents have the Harper's Ferry riots on theirs», adding that currently «Messrs. Beecher, Phillips & others are *in this quarter*, the most efficient allies of the pro-slavery power»²²³. Up to the eve of the Civil War, then, Carey continued to conceive emancipation as a process that could have been accomplished only in the long run and provided the subjugation of black labor was secured, endeavoring to affirm such vision, under the banner of protection, within the Republican Party.

2.3. Secession, the Morrill Tariff and the Civil War

Immediately after Lincoln's election, South Carolina's representatives resigned from Congress and called a state convention to decide whether to remain in the Union. In the following month, offers of compromise multiplied, particularly from Northern industrialists and merchants with economic ties to the South, but also from the Buchanan administration. In his annual message to Congress in early December, however, while blaming the crisis on Northern attempts to interfere with slavery, Buchanan refused to recognize any legitimacy to secession, sending federal troops to reinforce Fort Sumter²²⁴. On December 20, 1860, South Carolina declared its secession from the Union, closely followed by Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Kansas and Texas. In early February, the seven secessionist states formed the Confederate States of America.

During these months, Carey simultaneously moved in two directions, seeking the two goals that had guided his political action in the previous years, at this point increasingly incompatible: on the one hand, the search for a compromise with the South that would save the unity of the nation, and on the other, the assertion of protectionism as the Union's trade policy. It is clear from his letters

²²⁰ *Henry C. Carey to Hinton R. Helper*, November 6, 1858, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 14, folder 3), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²²¹ *Henry C. Carey to Charles Dana*, December 24, 1859, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 12, folder 5), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²²² Green, *Henry Charles Carey*, 40.

²²³ *Henry C. Carey to George W. Curtis*, January 10, 1860, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 12, folder 4), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²²⁴ Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 147.

and initiatives that, in the weeks following Lincoln's election, Carey oscillated between supporting a mediation with the South and accepting secession as an accomplished fact, as did many conservative members of the Republican Party²²⁵. Early in November he contacted his Southern interlocutors reiterating the need for sectional cooperation and worked to prevent a new public address by George William Curtis in Philadelphia²²⁶. In this vein, his name appeared among the vice-presidents of a large rally, held on December 13 in Philadelphia, sponsored by conservative merchants to demand concessions to the South and the search for a compromise to save the Union, although it is unclear whether he was actually present²²⁷. Upon receiving the news of South Carolina's secession, however, Carey went back to argue that the North would ultimately gain from separation, writing to George Scranton: «let them go, peacefully, as fast as they see fit to go», in the hope to rid the country of the «wildest men the world has yet seen», but fearing the coming of a «revolutionary crisis» more destructive than ever²²⁸. In the end, secession appeared to Carey as a plausible solution to the problem of slavery.

In the following weeks, Carey's signature appeared in the call for a meeting to discuss Philadelphia citizens' support to the federal government «in the enforcement of the laws, to remove all just ground of complaint against the Northern States, and to secure the perpetuity of the Union». The meeting, which convened on January 4, split immediately between those who supported the federal government in any effort to defend the Constitution, denying the existence of a right to a «peaceable secession», and those who argued for a compromise with the secessionist states or alternatively for the acceptance of their separation, in order to avoid conflict in any case. The next day, a new assembly, of which Carey was listed again among the vice-presidents, convened. This time, in the wake of news of the first tensions between Unionist and secessionist forces in the Charleston harbor, the assembly expressed strong support for Major Robert Anderson, commander of Federalist troops at Fort Sumter²²⁹. In those same days, Carey wrote to Ohio Senator-elect John Sherman reiterating that a peaceful secession would probably be the most desirable outcome of the crisis. «Keeping States in the Union by force» would achieve nothing more than a repetition «of the crises that have for the last fifteen years been gradually shattering

²²⁵ Schoen, «The Political Economies of Secession».

²²⁶ Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, 89.

²²⁷ *The Grand Union Demonstration*, «North American and United States Gazette», December 14, 1860.

²²⁸ *Henry C. Carey to George Scranton*, December 21, 1860, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 17, folder 5), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²²⁹ The account of the two meetings is contained in: J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Wescott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884. Volume I* (Philadelphia: L. H. Everts, 1884), 741-45.

our political machine». In addition, he noted, at this point any compromise with the South would imply «the abandonment of *protection* by the North»²³⁰.

Over the following two months, punctuated by the failure of John Crittenden's proposed compromise and of the Peace Convention promoted by the Border States, Carey then shifted his attention to the benefits the North could gain from separation. In his view, secession could offer the North a unique opportunity to get rid of the problem of slavery and of emancipation once and for all. The Union would of course lose a crucial source of raw materials, but, without Southern free-trade obstructionism in Congress, it could finally assert a protectionist policy that could ground its industrial takeoff. Moreover, secession would allow the North to detach itself from slavery without having to deal with the presence within its borders of four million increasingly insubordinate black workers that kept moving, escaping and rebelling. After having tried for years to fight disunion and abolitionism through protection, Carey now seemed to realize that only disunion could help implementing protectionism and defuse abolitionism, by literally separating the North from slavery. With this new awareness in mind, in February 1861 Carey addressed a public letter to Secretary of State William Seward through the *New York Tribune*, pointing out that the «dissolution» of the Union represented an opportunity that the North needed to take advantage of.

«The Cotton States have now seceded, and have left us free to pursue the policy by means of which alone we may repair the damage done. [...] Let us profit now by the Secession of the Cotton States, and we shall, one year hence, have reason to return our thanks to Heaven for it, as having been the means of saving the Union. Let us once again establish our independence, and the day will not then be far distant when the Union will again comprise the whole of the existing States»²³¹.

By accepting peaceful secession and imposing a protectionist policy, Carey argued, it was possible not only to ensure the development of the North but also to set the conditions for future reunification with Southern states. In the short term, Carey focused on getting Congress's approval for the Morrill Bill, still stalled in the Senate, but which now could be passed thanks to the «retirement of so many fireaters»²³². To this end, Carey began extensive lobbying of leading Republicans and, in January 1861, sent Lincoln the first of a series of private letters that would continue throughout the Civil War. «The success of your administration is wholly dependent upon

²³⁰ *Henry C. Carey to John Sherman*, January 1, 1861, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 20, folder 1), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²³¹ Henry C. Carey, «Protection Indispensable to Our Union. An Interesting Letter to Mr. Seward», «New York Tribune», February 14, 1861.

²³² *Henry C. Carey to Justin Morrill*, January 18, 1861, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 20, folder 1), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

the passage of the Morrill bill at the present session», Carey wrote. Its passage, in fact, would ensure «a rising wave of prosperity», an increase in Treasury revenues and a strengthening of the party²³³. Similar letters, stressing the economic and political importance of the tariff, were sent in the same weeks to several Republican politicians, in an effort that was crowned by the Morrill Tariff's approval in February and by its ratification by Buchanan on March 2, just two days before Lincoln's inauguration. While presented as a revenue measure aimed only at increasing government funding, the tariff significantly increased import duties, well above 1846 levels, transforming them into specific duties that would therefore be unaffected by any price manipulation²³⁴. Most importantly, in accordance with Carey's theories, the Morrill Tariff did not merely increase duties on manufactured goods, but extended protection to raw materials and to agricultural, mineral, and fishing products²³⁵. As much as the tariff left many on both sides unhappy, Carey welcomed it as a key step in the direction of a protectionist economic policy, calling it nothing less than «the most important measure ever adopted by Congress»²³⁶.

At the same time, in the early months of 1861, Carey was also committed to influencing, as far as he could, the composition of the Lincoln administration with regard to appointments related to trade policy, particularly the Secretary of the Treasury, who would have to administer and implement the new tariff. Lincoln himself apparently sought Carey's advice on that appointment, which was informally contested between Salmon Chase, a former Democrat and free-trader, recently converted to moderate protectionism, and Simon Cameron, a Pennsylvania senator among the tariff's strongest supporters. Lincoln's consultation of Carey was probably intended to explore reactions in Pennsylvania should Chase, for whom the president-elect leaned, be nominated. Despite a long political collaboration between the economist and Cameron, who had in previous years taken part in all of the initiatives organized by the former, and even in the dinner in his honor in 1859, Carey answered to Lincoln by strongly advising against his nomination. Indeed, he wrote, in Pennsylvania it was widely known that Cameron represented «the very embodiment of corruption», having amassed his fortune dishonestly, something that determined his «unfitness for the responsibilities of high public office»²³⁷. Over the next few days, Carey then approached Chase,

²³³ *Henry C. Carey to Abraham Lincoln*, January 2, 1861, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 20, folder 1), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²³⁴ According to Douglas Irwin, with the passage of the Morrill Tariff, the average tariff level on imports (average tariff of dutiable imports) increases from 19 percent to 27 percent. Irwin, *Clashing over Commerce*, 210.

²³⁵ Heather Cox Richardson, *The Greatest Nation of the Earth. Republican Economic Policies during the Civil War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 105.

²³⁶ *Henry C. Carey to Justin Morrill*, February 27, 1861, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 20, folder 1), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²³⁷ *Henry C. Carey to Abraham Lincoln*, January 7, 1861, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 20, folder 1), Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Carey added: «of political aspirations I have not even a shadow, nor would I ever mix in politics, did I not know, that to enable us to have proper measures, it is needed that we first have proper men». Also in *Henry C.*

hoping to gain reassurance from him about his support for the Republican tariff plank, but without obtaining response, which, as Chase wrote to Charles Dana, would have amounted to an admission of his willingness to obtain the nomination in question²³⁸. Nevertheless, in the following weeks Carey declared his support for Chase, who was eventually appointed by Lincoln and from that point on began frequent correspondence with Carey. Upon his advice, Chase appointed William Elder to the Treasury Department in a position crucial to the administration of trade policies²³⁹. During the course of the war, through his writings and reports, Elder would play a prominent role in the campaign to underwrite federal bonds in collaboration with Jay Cooke²⁴⁰.

Just over a month after Lincoln's inauguration, the outbreak of hostilities between Union and Confederate forces at Fort Sumter marked the beginning of the Civil War. Despite preaching the need for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in previous months, and despite writing in late March that he hoped for «a speedy settlement» that would end the «present disorders» and avoid a military escalation²⁴¹, Fort Sumter led Carey, as many others in the North, to take side with the Union without further ado. On April 15, 1861, his name thus appeared among the signers of an appeal to the citizens of Philadelphia «to sustain the government in its effort to maintain the honor, the integrity, and the existence of our National Union and the perpetuity of its popular government»²⁴². He later joined the Union League of Philadelphia, an association composed of the city's leading political and economic elites whose purpose was that of «controlling and directing the political opinion of the State»²⁴³, as Carey later stated, and in particular to raise financial resources for the conduct of the war, the circulation of Unionist propaganda and the support of wounded soldiers²⁴⁴. A similar turn was also made by E. P. Smith, who in November 1860 had declared himself to «believe in the right of secession»²⁴⁵, but in summer 1861 came out arguing in favor of the Southern

Carey to Abraham Lincoln, January 22, 1861, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 20, folder 1), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²³⁸ Lee, «Henry Carey and the Republican Tariff», 294-95.

²³⁹ Lee, 296-97; Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, 96. In a great deal of literature, Carey is referred to as Lincoln's «economic advisor.» However, apart from a series of letters Carey sent to the president, for which there is no record of a reply, there is no evidence to support this claim. Instead, it is true that during the Civil War years, Secretary of Treasury Chase consulted repeatedly with Carey, who did not fail to provide him with abundant opinions.

²⁴⁰ See: William Elder, *Debt and Resources of the United States And the Effect of Secession Upon the Trade and Industry of the Loyal States* (Philadelphia: Ringwalt & Brown, 1863); William Elder, *How Our National Debt Can Be Paid. The Wealth, Resources, and Power of the People of the United States. Issued by Jay Cooke* (Philadelphia: Sherman & Co., 1865); William Elder, *How the Western States Can Become the Imperial Power in the Union* (Philadelphia: Ringwalt & Brown, 1865).

²⁴¹ *Henry C. Carey to John Sherman*, March 25, 1861, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 20, folder 1), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²⁴² Quoted in Scharf and Wescott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884. Volume I*, 753-54.

²⁴³ Henry Charles Carey, *Reconstruction: Industrial, Financial, and Political. Letters to the Hon. Henry Wilson* (Philadelphia: Collins, 1867), 32.

²⁴⁴ Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, 99-100.

²⁴⁵ *Erasmus Peshine Smith to Henry C. Carey*, November 11, 1860, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 18, folder 3), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

states' «complete subjugation at any cost», since, he wrote to Carey, «we cannot afford to have a separation conquered from us»²⁴⁶.

The terms of Carey's support for the Union, as well as his broader interpretation of the conflict, were made explicit the following summer in an exchange of public letters with an anonymous British economist. To the interlocutor who criticized the federal government's choice of forcing the South to remain in the Union through war, accusing the United States of following the path of militarism and despotism typical of European states, Carey answered by admitting the difficulty of such a choice, but declaring that the North was forced «to insist upon maintaining the supremacy of the law»²⁴⁷. The current conflict, in fact, was not simply a clash between two sides divided by a geographical line, one clearly opposed to the expansion of slavery and the other in favor of its extension to the entire continent. In such case, the separation would have already taken place. Instead, the South was not to be regarded as a «homogeneous body», but as one divided internally between a minority of slavers and a majority of (supposedly white) «freedom-loving people» who had been silenced, censored, repressed and forced to accept secession, whom the North could not abandon²⁴⁸. The ongoing conflict was, in other words, not simply a war of secession, but, as the letter's title stated, an «American Civil War».

«Shall the friends of civilization, north and south, govern and direct the movements of the Union: or shall those of the north abandon those of the south, handing them over, bound hand and foot, to the control of men who see in the maintenance and extension of slavery the only firm and permanent basis of what they are pleased to call free government?»²⁴⁹

Faced with this confrontation, Carey lamented, European nations such as Great Britain, which had always denounced slavery and criticized Northerners as «aiders and abettors in the maintenance of the system», were now standing by, tempted to intervene on behalf of the South to break the naval blockade and secure «the supply of cotton». Certainly, the conflict would bring a reduction in the flow of cotton from the United States to Britain and cause a «suspension of employment» for many British industries. However, Carey warned, encouraging the South to resist, as Britain was in fact doing, risked further prolonging the war and exacerbating it by compacting the North in the anti-slavery cause, fostering «the appearance on the stage of men like John Brown» and producing «a state of general anarchy» in the South. Once more, even after the outbreak of the Civil War, Carey

²⁴⁶ *Erasmus Peshine Smith to Henry C. Carey*, August 17, 1861, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 18, folder 3), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²⁴⁷ Henry Charles Carey, *American Civil War. Correspondence with Mr. H. C. Carey of Philadelphia*, 1861, 5.

²⁴⁸ Living especially in the Allegheny mountains, which constituted «a great free soil wedge with its attendant free atmosphere, created by nature herself in the very heart of slavery». Carey, 6.

²⁴⁹ Carey, 7.

hoped that it could be conducted by marginalizing the anti-slavery struggle and by avoiding disorder in the South. The Civil War should not bring immediate emancipation. Those who wished for the prompt restoration of American cotton exports had therefore to wish for the speedy victory of the Union and to materially support «the suppression of disorder»²⁵⁰. Lord Palmerston, in particular, who had wished for the suppression of Italian brigands by the Savoy army, should also support the suppression of brigands in the U.S. South. It was thus a clash opposing on the one hand «Civilization», the respect for rights and property upheld by the «freemen» of North and South, and on the other hand the «Barbarism» of those who despised labor in any form and who had grown rich through slavery. «You cannot have both», Carey then concluded, as by now the «peaceful separation» that the interlocutor suggested and that he himself had previously advocated was no longer possible²⁵¹.

Above all, the war became an opportunity to consolidate the protectionist shift that the Morrill Tariff had initiated in the wake of secession and to obtain further duties increases. As Carey himself had stated in 1848, «war is an evil, and so are tariffs of protection: yet both *may* be necessary, and both *are* sometimes necessary»²⁵². The war, Peshine Smith assured Carey in August of that year would play a crucial role «in securing adequate protection for a long series of years»²⁵³. As a matter of fact, it was not the federal government's commitment to protection, but rather the increasing need to finance the war that led to the further increase of the tariff in July and December 1861. However, it soon became apparent that the revenue obtainable from import duties, which up to that point had been the main source of funding for the federal government, was nowhere near sufficient to cover the financial burden of the war²⁵⁴. In the spring of 1862, Republicans then passed an Internal Revenue Act that for the first time in U.S. history imposed a system of internal taxation on income, inheritance and consumption. A measure that was strongly opposed by Carey, who had always been averse to indirect taxation, but also by many Northern industrialists, since in their view the domestic taxation on consumption represented a form of discrimination against domestic production that risked offsetting and nullifying the effect of the protectionist tariff. In turn, then, the Internal Revenue Act required the passage of a second Morrill Tariff in the summer of 1862 to further raise import duties. Two years later, the explosion of war costs necessitated a further

²⁵⁰ Carey, 12-14.

²⁵¹ Carey, 15.

²⁵² Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 302.

²⁵³ *Erasmus Peshine Smith to Henry C. Carey*, August 17, 1861, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 18, folder 3), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²⁵⁴ Richardson, *The Greatest Nation of the Earth*, 109-13.

increase in domestic taxation, again followed closely by a further increase in duties²⁵⁵. In all cases, legislative adjustments to the tariff were proposed by Morrill in direct cooperation with Carey²⁵⁶.

The war thus imposed an escalating spiral of increased domestic taxation and increased duties that influenced each other, but which, even added together, covered only one-fifth of the expenses faced by the federal government between 1861 and 1865. The rest was entirely financed through the public debt, to repay which the federal government had to maintain the duties passed in these years up until 1883²⁵⁷. To Carey, then, the duty system established during the Civil War represented both a success and a disappointment. On the one hand, the economic policy measures decided by the Republican Party raised import duties to an unprecedented level with respect to the previous thirty years²⁵⁸. On the other, however, the wartime tariff appeared to Carey limited in that it was conceived solely as a tool to finance the federal government and not to encourage productive diversification: a measure decided not «for the sake of protection», but imposed by the war and its cost, and yet insufficient to finance it. During the conflict, Lincoln himself, despite numerous letters addressed to him by Carey urging him to explicitly affirm «the principle of protection as the true Union policy»²⁵⁹, always appeared to be interested in the tariff only as a means of taxation, arousing the economist's disappointment. In February 1865, by then frustrated by the president's attitude, ignoring the actual achievements of the protectionist cause and completely unconcerned with the larger context of the Civil War, he wrote to Supreme Court Justice Noah Swayne: «Protection made Mr. Lincoln president. Protection has given him all the success he has achieved, yet has he never, so far as I can recollect, bestowed upon her a single word of thanks»²⁶⁰. Despite Carey's disappointment and despite the contingent nature of the wartime tariff as an instrument of taxation, the Republican Party's measures during the Civil War nonetheless led to a sharp turn towards protectionism, which would remain a standard of U.S. trade policy, albeit constantly disputed, for more than half a century, playing a decisive role in accelerating U.S. industrial development in the second half of the nineteenth century.

2.4 «Preparing for Such a Reconstruction»: Infrastructures and Immigration

During the Civil War years, then, Carey did not stop his political activity in favor of the industrial interests of Pennsylvania and the North in general. While the gradual raising of tariffs on imports

²⁵⁵ Irwin, *Clashing over Commerce*, 210-13. See also: Richardson, *The Greatest Nation of the Earth*, 115-38.

²⁵⁶ Lee, «Henry Carey and the Republican Tariff», 299-300.

²⁵⁷ Irwin, *Clashing over Commerce*, 214.

²⁵⁸ According to Irwin, the average rate reached 48 percent in 1865. Irwin, 213.

²⁵⁹ *Henry C. Carey to Abraham Lincoln*, June 20, 1861, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 20, folder 1), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²⁶⁰ *Henry C. Carey to Noah Swayne*, February 1861, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 20, folder 1), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

remained his priority, Carey also supported other initiatives during the course of the conflict, which further illuminated certain aspects of his conception of the relationship between the state and capitalism, as well as his persistent attitude on the issue of emancipation. Already at this stage Carey began to think about postwar reconstruction and the conditions for an economic and political reunification of the nation. During the Civil War, he began to pose the problem of how to achieve, following the Union victory, that integration of the two forms of U.S. capitalist development that in the preceding decades the clash over slavery had made impossible. Protectionism clearly represented the first and fundamental step in this direction, since it would allow the industrial acceleration of the North and a diversification of Southern economy up to the point that the two economies would become more complementary and interdependent with each other, while at the same growing independent from the world market. From Carey's point of view, however, the federal government also had to facilitate such economic-political integration by strengthening the connection between the North and the South from an infrastructural point of view, by fostering the colonization of the South by free workers from the North, and finally, and most importantly, by ensuring an influx of labor from Europe such as to offset the diminished labor supply brought by the war. The initiatives in which Carey engaged during the Civil War thus went precisely in the direction of affirming this role of the state in building infrastructures and governing labor mobility to prepare for the postwar reconstruction of U.S. capitalism.

The first of these consisted of Carey's support for the construction of a railroad along the North-South axis connecting Ohio with Kentucky and Tennessee. As early as December 1861, Lincoln had recommended the construction of such an infrastructure to Congress, but without success. By the summer of 1863, however, the Army had begun construction of part of the project for military needs, employing slaves in the construction of the railroad. Work had soon stopped, but the Tennessee élites had kept pressing Lincoln for its continuation²⁶¹. Carey had always opposed the indiscriminate construction of railroads along the East-West axis because in his view they contributed to the dispersion of workers to the frontier thus slowing down accumulation in the more densely populated areas. A railroad connecting the North to the Upper South, instead, in his view could have the opposite effect, by intensify trade and interactions among the resource-rich areas and integrating them into a diversified national market. With this view in mind, in the fall of 1863 he wrote a short pamphlet entitled *How to Perpetuate the Union*, which he circulated and sent to Lincoln himself²⁶². The occupation of East Tennessee that had taken place in the preceding weeks, Carey wrote, finally gave the Union army a chance to «cut the rebellion in twain» and «prepare the

²⁶¹ Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, 106-7.

²⁶² *Henry C. Carey to Lincoln*, November 6, 1863, «Lincoln Papers».

way for large, direct and rapid intercourse between the loyal men of the northern and southern sections of the Union». Indeed, it was through «the hill country of the south, one of the richest in the world, and largely loyal» that it was necessary to build «those iron roads which are destined to become the great *cross-ties* by means of which the north and the south are to be held together». A project that, being «national, and not sectional» in its purpose, only the federal government could and should carry out in order to make effective «the idea of a ‘perpetual Union’», Carey specified, emphasizing the economic role now assumed by the state in the Civil War.

The construction of the railroad, however, did not have a merely infrastructural relevance, but also a political one. In fact, it would open the Upper South to «northern settlement» so that «thousands would gladly volunteer who would otherwise remain at home»²⁶³. This way, the federal government would foster a displacement of free workers from the North to the South, indispensable to the development of manufacturing in the South and such as to shift its political balance, harmonizing it with that of the North. Indeed, as he had already written in 1861, the North was to set itself the goal of filling the «great free soil wedge» present in the South, namely the Appalachian mountainous area, «with free white northern men»²⁶⁴. To Carey this was a region «which must necessarily be occupied by men who with their own hands till their own land» and in which «a slight increase» in the free population would suffice to come to control the «southern policy»²⁶⁵. By building the railroad between Ohio and Tennessee, the federal government could thus easily accelerate this operation of demographic and political engineering. Moreover, the railroad would show Southerners who remained loyal to the Union «that we are preparing to give value to their land, and that our success would add largely to their wealth» and that therefore the federal government was «preparing for such a reconstruction, on the basis of freedom for all, as must be permanent»²⁶⁶. To Carey, in fact, the North had not only an interest, but a duty, to loyalist Southerners.

«We are now destroying the value of the chief item of southern property, the millions of slaves by whom the land has been thus far tilled. Should we not, on the other hand, endeavor to give value to southern land, and most especially to that portion of it which belongs to such men as the patriots of eastern Tennessee? [...] We owe it to them, and it is due to ourselves, to adopt such a course as shall in some measure compensate them for the sufferings they have endured»²⁶⁷.

²⁶³ Henry Charles Carey, *How to Perpetuate the Union* (Philadelphia, 1863).

²⁶⁴ Henry Charles Carey, *The French and American Tariffs Compared; In a Series of Letters Addressed to Bishop Michel Chevalier* (Philadelphia: Collins, 1861), 19-20.

²⁶⁵ Carey, *American Civil War. Correspondence with Mr. H. C. Carey of Philadelphia*, 6-7.

²⁶⁶ Carey, *How to Perpetuate the Union*, 1.

²⁶⁷ Carey, 2.

Even following the Emancipation Proclamation, which just a few months earlier had freed slaves in the secessionist states while leaving slavery intact in loyal border states, Carey thus continued to look at the emancipation issue from the perspective of slaveholders and their property rights, reiterating the need to guarantee them some form of compensation, even indirectly, through infrastructure building. In the following year, the railroad project between Louisville and Cincinnati, despite a favorable vote in the House, stalled in the Senate. After the end of the war, Carey would return to advocate the need for a North-South railroad as a means of integrating the nation and to argue that it should take priority over the transcontinental railroad project to Oregon, which risked instead being «sectional in its tendencies»²⁶⁸, thus perpetuating British free-trade dominance.

Carey's second initiative was his participation in the attempt, promoted by Northern industrialists, to create a centralized system of skilled worker recruitment in Europe, run directly by private companies but funded by the federal government and its agencies. A hybrid public-private scheme of immigration governance in which Carey played a central role in publicly advocating its relevance, in promoting joint action by industrialists on the issue, and in lobbying the Republican Party leadership and the Lincoln administration²⁶⁹. To Carey, it was necessary to anticipate a post-war scenario in which the growing demand for labor brought about by the wartime economy and by the restart of industrial production would have to contend with a labor supply decimated by the war in the North and wholly unpredictable in the South because of the sudden emancipation of four million slaves. After the war, then, in addition to fostering the colonization of the South by white workers from the North, at the same time it would be essential to ensure a continuous flow of immigration from Europe. Indeed, since the outbreak of military hostilities, the conscription of young men into the army, the increased production for wartime purposes and a decline in immigration had produced a labor shortage of which Northern industrialists had begun to complain²⁷⁰. Carey was aware of the problem as early as the summer of 1862, when he warned Chase that «we need more men for the army & more for the workshops» and that they could be brought «from abroad by hundreds of thousands» if the advantages they would enjoy in the United States were made known to them. «Every man imported», Carey explained to Chase, «is a machine that represents a capital of at least \$1000»²⁷¹. Of all «foreign products», as he wrote elsewhere,

²⁶⁸ Carey, *Reconstruction*, 5.

²⁶⁹ Charlotte Erickson, *American Industry and the European Immigrant 1860-1885* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), 7; David Montgomery, *Beyond Equality. Labor and Radical Republicans 1862-1872*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1967), 21. See: *Henry C. Carey to Erasmus Peshine Smith*, September 2, 1862, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 20, folder 2), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²⁷⁰ Erickson, *American Industry and the European Immigrant*, 6.

²⁷¹ *Henry C. Carey to Salmon P. Chase*, July 9, 1862.

immigrants were «the most expensive and most valuable»²⁷². Importing half a million of them would thus, according to Carey, recover more value than that spent in a year of war.

In the same weeks, Secretary of State William Seward sent a series of circulars to U.S. diplomats urging them to propagate the «large rewards» obtained by workers in the United States and to reduce travel fares, in the belief that «the cure for all the social evils in both hemispheres is migration of surplus population to regions where population is deficient»²⁷³. In the following months, many Northern industrialists began to organize on their own, setting up private companies, such as the Boston Foreign Emigrant Aid Society, and sending agents to Europe in order to recruit workers. Carey himself, in November 1862 brought together «a few of our principal iron men» who complained that labor shortages were resulting in higher wages, thus threatening to nullify the benefits guaranteed to them by the wartime tariff²⁷⁴. A complaint that further proved that the tariff's function was to protect industrial profits and not the wages of American labor. Over the next year, the industrialists' agitation in favor of government support for immigration continued to grow. In his December 1863 message to Congress, even Lincoln recognized the need to «establish a system for the encouragement of immigration», pointing out that there was «a great deficiency of laborers in every field of industry, especially in agriculture and in our mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals»²⁷⁵.

Thus, in early 1864, the association between iron dealers in Philadelphia close to Carey and a group of Connecticut bankers and land speculators gave birth to the American Emigrant Company, «chartered for the purpose of procuring and assisting emigrants from foreign countries to settle in the United States»²⁷⁶. Endowed with an initial capital of \$1 million, the American Emigrant Company was founded with the purpose of tying immigration from Europe to the colonization of the West²⁷⁷. From the outset, John Williams, the company's general agent and publisher of the *Hardware Reporter*, the iron industry's flagship newspaper, set out to seek support and funding from

²⁷² Carey, *The Way To Outdo England Without Fighting Her. Letters to the Hon. Schuyler Colfax*, 26.

²⁷³ William H. Seward to Mr. Harvey, July 9, 1862.

²⁷⁴ Henry C. Carey to Salmon P. Chase, November 14, 1862.

²⁷⁵ Abraham Lincoln, «Annual Message to Congress, December 8, 1863», in *Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Library of America, 1992), 406–10.

²⁷⁶ John Williams, *American Emigrant Company, Chartered for the Purpose of Procuring and Assisting Emigrants from Foreign Countries to Settle in the United States* (New York: Office of the Iron Age, 1865).

²⁷⁷ «The American Emigrant Company, with a capital of a million of dollars, whose shareholders reside chiefly in the Eastern States, with its headquarters in this City, is promoting immigration to the Western States. It has obtained large tracts of land for this purpose. It has sent agents to different countries in Europe to organize colonies, and parties of the best class of emigrants to come together, and undertakes to afford them ample facilities for transportation to the chosen locations, and to aid them in making a beginning on the virgin soil». *American Emigrant Company*, «New York Times», September 6, 1863.

the federal government²⁷⁸. In the spring of 1864, the American Emigrant Company then promoted a long series of petitions from industrialists to Congress, which helped lobbying in favor of an Act to Encourage Immigration, signed by Lincoln on July 4 of that same year. Immediately after the passage of the bill, Salmon Chase, who by then had become Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, wrote that it represented the culmination of a project he had been working on for a long time and on which he had had «several conversations with my enlightened friend Mr. Henry C. Carey, of Philadelphia, agreeing with him that Congress ought to give substantial aid to the work»²⁷⁹.

First, the law established the office of a Commissioner of Immigration within the State Department. A position to which for a few months in 1866 Erasmus Peshine Smith himself was appointed²⁸⁰. A central element of the law was the recognition of the validity of contracts signed in Europe between migrants and U.S. officials under which the former would forfeit their wages for a period of up to twelve months in exchange for payment by the latter of travel expenses. Once registered with the Commissioner of Immigration, enforcement of such contracts would be ensured by U.S. courts and, in the event of non-compliance with their terms, the contract would be a lien on any land acquired by the workers. Such contracts, however, were not to contravene the U.S. Constitution or «creating in any way the relation of slavery or servitude». The law also stipulated that workers recruited in this way would be exempt from compulsory enlistment in the military unless they decided to become U.S. citizens. Finally, a Superintendent of Immigration was created to direct an Emigrant Office based in the port of New York, which, under the direction of the Commissioner, was to be responsible for arranging the transportation of migrants to their final destinations²⁸¹. While the law did not meet the demands of industrialists, especially in financial terms, it nonetheless established a regulatory framework through which the federal government vouched for private recruitment initiatives in Europe, protected their legal validity and attempted to coordinate their actions by centralizing them. Above all, it established a legal scheme that reintroduced a form of *de facto* indentured labor just as the federal government was preparing to abolish slavery. It was thus an attempt, unprecedented in U.S. history, to shape a political government of labor mobility and to make the state into an agent in the organization of production, with the task of directing the labor force where it was most needed by industrial capital. A task

²⁷⁸ Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*, 105; Erickson, *American Industry and the European Immigrant*, 10-11. See also, *John Williams to Henry C. Carey*, November 26, 1864, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 19, folder 3), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²⁷⁹ *From Hon. Chief Justice Chase*, July 9, 1864, in Williams, *American Emigrant Company, Chartered for the Purpose of Procuring and Assisting Emigrants from Foreign Countries to Settle in the United States*, 37.

²⁸⁰ *John Williams to Henry C. Carey*, March 10, 1866, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 19, folder 3), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²⁸¹ *An Act to Encourage Immigration*, July 4, 1864.

that, at least in Carey's view, was complementary to that of protection. «The real importance of the emigration question is at length beginning to be appreciated», Carey wrote in 1865²⁸².

The scarce resources allocated by the federal government (twenty-five thousand dollars) and the conflicts of jurisdiction with the agencies of the individual states on the subject, however, immediately limited the possibilities of action of the federal offices created, which ended up operating mainly through existing private channels, such as the American Emigrant Company (with which, moreover, the Superintendent of Immigration shared offices in New York)²⁸³. The American Emigrant Company itself, on the other hand, was immediately confronted with the financial and organizational difficulties of implementing its project. Indeed, the absence of appropriated funds from the government forced the company's agents to seek funding from Northern industrialists, who, however, showed little interest in investing in such a costly and risky operation, in which they would have to commit capital with the risk that workers, once they arrived in the United States, would default on their contracts. «You *know* how hard it is to get the *iron men* to pay *anything*», Williams wrote to Carey, who for his part continued to stress the importance of importing labor in a series of articles in *The Iron Age*²⁸⁴.

Simultaneously, direct attempts to recruit skilled workers in Europe encountered several obstacles. While between 1864 and 1865 the American Emigrant Company's envoy to England recorded widespread interest in the prospect of emigration on the part of textile manufacturing workers, particularly in those Lancashire areas hardest hit by the cotton famine caused by the North's naval blockade of Southern exports, such interest rarely led to contracting. For a brief phase, company agents even ended up using English trade unions as brokers to make contact with workers interested in emigration²⁸⁵. In other European countries, the failure was even more pronounced, particularly in France, Germany, Sweden and Norway, where labor recruitment activities were actively opposed by local authorities. Overall, between 1864 and 1866, only a few hundred workers were imported through agencies such as the American Emigrant Company, and just 311 contracts were registered by the Commissioner of Immigration²⁸⁶. The activities of the company and federal offices then shifted towards sorting the migrants who arrived in the United States: a distribution that was used not only to allocate workers where they had been most needed but also and especially to counter the growing insubordination of the U.S. working class. Indeed, between 1864 and 1867,

²⁸² From Henry C. Carey, Esq., August 27, 1865, in Williams, *American Emigrant Company, Chartered for the Purpose of Procuring and Assisting Emigrants from Foreign Countries to Settle in the United States*, 34.

²⁸³ Erickson, *American Industry and the European Immigrant*, 12.

²⁸⁴ John Williams to Henry C. Carey, November 26, 1864, March 2, 1865, May 25, 1866, December 31, 1867, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 19, folder 3), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²⁸⁵ Erickson, *American Industry and the European Immigrant*, 17-18.

²⁸⁶ Erickson, 19-20.

European contract workers were systematically used to break strikes in St. Louis, Chicago, and Pittsburgh²⁸⁷. E. P. Smith himself, in a letter to Carey in May 1866, argued for the need to use his role as Commissioner of Immigration with this goal, declaring himself concerned by the «continued success of strikes by workmen of almost all kinds»²⁸⁸. It was therefore no coincidence that the actions of the American Emigrant Company immediately raised the strong hostility of U.S. workers and unions, whose delegates to the 1867 National Labor Congress denounced its strikebreaking activities²⁸⁹.

Beyond the financial and organizational difficulties of the project, decisive in its failure was the European workers' fundamental distrust of recruitment agencies and their unwillingness to commit to contracts that would uphold their future wages. Thus, from 1865 onward, when European immigration to the United States began to increase again, in most cases it was through independent channels. Moreover, European workers could easily compare the information provided by agencies about U.S. wages, often blatantly false, with the working conditions described in the letters of friends, relatives or acquaintances who had already emigrated²⁹⁰. Conditions that, for skilled workers in particular, were often not better enough to justify departure. The labor importation scheme promoted by U.S. industrial capital in collaboration with the federal government had thus run up against the refusal of European workers to outsource control of their mobility and submit to contracts that reintroduced forms of coercion similar to those of indentured servitude.

Nevertheless, the American Emigrant Company attributed all difficulties to the absence in the 1864 Act of greater protection for employers in the event of noncompliance with contracts. «The main obstruction to the effective working of the law is the difficulty of enforcing the fulfillment of their contracts by the emigrants», Williams wrote to Congress in March 1866, pointing out in particular «the special temptation to escape the repayment of the money advanced to them»²⁹¹. The company then asked Congress to amend the 1864 law by introducing the right for the employer to follow the worker and seize his wages even in his new employment. «The employer is an importer of *labor*», which was purchased «at a peculiar risk», Williams in fact explained to justify the appropriateness of the remedy, «the workman who alone has the commodity in charge runs away with it. Is it not just that the commodity should be seized wherever found?». The workers then «ought to work out» the amount advanced for the trip, «even under a disagreeable master», he

²⁸⁷ Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*, 23-24.

²⁸⁸ *Erasmus Peshine Smith to Henry C. Carey*, May 4, 1866, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 18, folder 3), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²⁸⁹ «Workingman's Advocate», August 31, 1867.

²⁹⁰ Erickson, *American Industry and the European Immigrant*, 22-23.

²⁹¹ John Williams, *Considerations in favor of the accompanying Proposed Amendments to the Act entitles an Act to Encourage Immigration, approved July 4, 1864. Offered by the American Emigrant Company*, 1866, 1.

concluded, confirming the persistent difficulty of American capital in forgoing a certain degree of coercion and in accepting that the labor force could move freely²⁹². E. P. Smith also recommended to Congress the adoption of such measures on wage seizure, already approved by the Connecticut House of Representatives, declaring them indispensable «in securing the *specific performance of contracts for labor*»²⁹³. Congress did not consider these amendments and indeed, acknowledging the failure of the scheme but also the spontaneous increase in immigration following the end of the Civil War, in 1868 revoked the Act to Encourage Immigration²⁹⁴.

Such initiatives supported by Carey during the Civil War thus show how he was already looking at the economic and political conditions of post-war reconstruction, in an attempt to anticipate the needs of U.S. capital not only in terms of commercial protection, but also in terms of the availability of infrastructures and skilled labor, which were both essential to put economic development on a broader and more solid foundation. These initiatives also testified to the role Carey attributed to the state in preparing and ensuring the conditions for such development, entirely consistent with the transformation that the federal state was undergoing during the Civil War. The explosion of the national debt, the establishment of a system of internal taxation, the introduction of protectionist barriers to imports, but also and above all the abolition of the ownership of four million slaves had in fact placed the federal state in a new position in relation to the U.S. economy and society. A transformation that Carey had only partly helped to produce but that he had theorized in his theoretical writings. No longer a state that exercised a merely infrastructural power, but a state that had assumed a developmental function: a power to regulate the market and a capacity to redistribute wealth aimed at accelerating the accumulation of capital²⁹⁵. And, at the same time, a state that was at the center of the clash over the command of black labor.

3. Insurrection and the Coming of Emancipation

During the Civil War, slavery and emancipation, while ignored by Carey's writings and political interventions, irresistibly came to the fore as the fundamental reason and stake of the military confrontation. On the one hand, the Confederation was explicitly fighting to defend slavery and prevent any form of emancipation. On the other hand, since the first months of the war it became clear to many that only by abolishing slavery could the North prevail over the South. Already in

²⁹² Williams, 2.

²⁹³ *Erasmus Peshine Smith to E. Washburne*, March 27, 1866, quoted in Erickson, *American Industry and the European Immigrant*, 29.

²⁹⁴ Erickson, 29.

²⁹⁵ Nicolas Barreyre, «Les avatars politiques de la dette américaine: la crise de la sécession et les transformations de l'État fédéral (1861-1913),» in *Les crises de la dette publique: XVIIIe-XXIe siècle*, ed. Gérard Béaur and Laure Quennouëlle-Corre (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 2019), 475-93.

August 1861, E. P. Smith had written to Carey that the war could accomplish «purposes for which it was not begun» and among them «the practical destruction of the slave system», since it would have been absurd from a military point of view «to continue to let slaves be employed against us, without employing them for us and striking the enemy in his weakest spot». Moreover, he continued, the slaves themselves would readily understand this and in the South «insurrection will be chronic». Therefore, to Smith it was vital to start recruiting freed slaves in the U.S. army in order to use them as a military tool while at the same time controlling them and limiting their insubordination: «I don't know any better preparation for freedom that negroes can have, than the slavery, tempered by law, of military discipline». The army, with its power hierarchies, thus seemed to finally reveal to economists a possible way towards an ordered and controlled emancipation. In any respect, Smith concluded, the start of the war had marked «the beginning of the end of slavery»²⁹⁶.

However, until late 1862, despite secession and despite military defeats, Lincoln refused to take this road, maintaining a cautious approach, always declaring himself in favor of gradual and compensated emancipation and insisting on the need to protect the slaveholders' property rights. Meanwhile, he repeatedly cracked down on generals who began to free and enlist slaves for military purposes. In August 1862, then, Lincoln infamously declared to a delegation of free blacks that they could never aim to a position of equality with the white race, that it was their presence in the United States that had caused the war and that their removal towards Central America represented the only possible solution²⁹⁷. A few days later, he published a letter to Horace Greeley arguing that his priority was saving the Union's integrity, not abolishing slavery, and that anything he would do concerning the latter was driven by the former²⁹⁸.

Thus, it was largely because of the slaves' own actions in the course of the conflict, that in September 1862 Lincoln was forced to announce, and in January 1863 to emanate, the Emancipation Proclamation declaring the immediate, unconditional abolition of slavery in all the Confederate territory. In fact, following Frederick Douglass' hope and materializing Stephen Colwell's prediction, during the Civil War the myriad of individual and collective acts through which slaves had been resisting their condition for decades deflagrated into a generalized uprising against slavery. By rejecting the conditions of their own labor, massively fleeing the slave

²⁹⁶ *Erasmus Pesbire Smith to Henry C. Carey*, August 17, 1861, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 18, folder 3), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²⁹⁷ Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 224–25.

²⁹⁸ Lincoln wrote to Greeley: «My paramount object in this struggle *is* to save the Union, and *is not* either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing *any* slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing *all* the slaves I would do that. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because it helps to save the Union». «New York Daily Tribune», August 20, 1862.

plantations, appropriating lands or enlisting in the Unionist army, in what W.E.B. Du Bois called a «general strike» against slavery, American slaves broke any command over their labor and started to emancipate themselves²⁹⁹. Through strike, flight, and revolt, slaves thus made any form of government of the emancipation process impossible, forcing, despite Lincoln's own intentions, the transition from the «constitutional phase» to the «revolutionary phase» of the Civil War, as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels noted in 1862³⁰⁰. The slaves would thus win their freedom by themselves without waiting for it to be granted by the state or by their masters, in a self-emancipation with respect to which the Emancipation Proclamation issued by Lincoln simply represented the legal sanction of an accomplished fact³⁰¹. Even in the United States, then, realizing the worst nightmares of Northern U.S. economists, emancipation came «on the heels of insurrection»³⁰² as in the West Indies, and not as the culmination of an “anti-slavery project” carried out by the Republican Party, Northern industrial capital and its theorists, who instead, as this chapter has shown, continued to defend its permanence³⁰³.

In February 1864, the *New York Times* precisely recorded the defeat of all gradualist approaches to the end of slavery, noting «how completely the idea of gradual emancipation has been dissipated from the public mind everywhere, by the progress of events». Before the war, the editorial continued, only «the very extreme of Anti-Slavery fanaticism» believed that immediate emancipation could happen «without social ruin», while «the wisest Anti-Slavery men of the day» assumed «as an axiom» that slavery could not end without some form of transition to «deadend the shock». To the latter, emancipation had to «be gradual in order to be safe». Now, however, such

²⁹⁹ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 55–83; Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, 245; David R. Roediger, *Seizing Freedom: Slave Emancipation and Liberty for All* (London–New York: Verso, 2014); David Williams, *I Freed Myself: African American Self-Emancipation in the Civil War Era* (Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 583–85. On the Civil War as a slave revolt, see also: Ira Berlin, “Who Freed the Slaves? Emancipation and Its Meaning,” in *Union and Emancipation: Essays on Politics and Race in the Civil War Era*, ed. David W. Blight and Brooks D. Simpson (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1997), 105–21; Steven Hahn, *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom*, Nathan I. Huggins Lectures (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 55–114; Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010), 259.

³⁰⁰ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “A Criticism of American Affairs, ‘Die Presse’, August 9, 1862,” in *The Civil War in the United States*, ed. Andrew Zimmerman (New York: International Publishers, 2016), 121–23. On Marx's writings on the American Civil War, see: August H. Nimtz, “Marx and Engels on the US Civil War: The ‘Materialist Conception of History’ in Action,” *Historical Materialism* 19, no. 4 (2011): 169–92; Matteo Battistini, “Karl Marx and the Global History of the Civil War: The Slave Movement, Working-Class Struggle, and the American State within the World Market,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 100 (2021): 158–85.

³⁰¹ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 84.

³⁰² Douglass, “The Significance of Emancipation in the West Indies [1857]”, 291.

³⁰³ As argued for example by James Oakes. See: Oakes, *Freedom National*; James Oakes, *The Crooked Path to Abolition: Abraham Lincoln and the Antislavery Constitution*, First edition (New York: Norton, 2021). This position, in addition to denying the distinction between gradualist and immediatist approaches to emancipation, tends to downplay the importance of Lincoln's racism and his support for colonization. It has been criticized by Eric Foner and Manisha Sinha, among others. See: Eric Foner, “Review of ‘The Radical and the Republican’ By James Oakes,” *The Nation*, February 5, 2007; Manisha Sinha, “The Complicated Histories of Emancipation: State of the Field at 150,” *Reviews in American History* 41, no. 4 (2013): 665–71.

idea seemed completely «obsolete». In all Southern states in which the Union army was advancing, immediate emancipation was the order of the day, being considered the only practicable way in a context in which relations between masters and slaves had been turned upside down. «The rupture is instantaneous, and complete, and permanent», the editorial declared, while «to undertake to renew the relation between master and slave for the sake of destroying it more scientifically would be only to prolong social confusion, and work unmixed evil to both races». In other words, it concluded, «there is nothing really left to graduate. Slavery now exists only in name»³⁰⁴. Thus, the *New York Times* caught to what extent the slaves' general insurrection against slavery had transformed the sectional conflict into an abolition war³⁰⁵, breaking, at least temporarily, that command over black labor that Northern economists had sought to preserve.

Carey, then, had probably been right in seeing the end of slavery as a direct threat to the class and racial hierarchies that structured the plantation economy, in dreading abolitionism as a menace to national unity and in fearing that emancipation could turn itself into an ungovernable process because of black labor's insubordination. However, his attempts to postpone emancipation, as well as to fight abolitionism and anti-slavery through protection within the Republican Party, failed precisely because slaves kept moving in an unpredictable manner, escaping and rebelling in the South while organizing with abolitionists in the North, thus forcing even moderate Republicans like Lincoln toward increasingly strong anti-slavery positions and radicalizing Southern slaveholders in the attempt to defend the slave system. This way, the slaves themselves contributed to polarizing the clash between the North and the South in the 1850s and then transformed the very meaning of Civil War, in a way that could not be controlled and governed. After the war, the reconstruction of racial hierarchies and labor command in the South would become the stake of a new class conflict around the meaning of emancipation that would soon extend to the North and in which Carey would continue to intervene in the attempt to reshape and strengthen the economic and political foundations of U.S. capitalism.

³⁰⁴ *No Gradual Emancipation*, «New York Times», February 25, 1864.

³⁰⁵ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 584.

Chapter 4

The Machine of Society: Social Science, Order and the State (1858-1860)

In the second half of the 1850s, while deeply engaged in the politics of the sectional conflict, Carey operated a broad revision of his theoretical reflection of the previous years, culminated in the three-volume *Principles of Social Science*, published between 1858 and 1860. On the eve of the Civil War, he repropounded and systematized many of his previous theories, while placing them in a new methodological framework, grounding them upon new epistemological premises and expressing new political implications. In the midst of the country's most severe political and constitutional crisis, in fact, Carey faced the problem of finding a stronger scientific foundation for a social order that seemed increasingly jeopardized by slave revolts, the advance of abolitionism and threats of secession. In order to do so, following the encounter with Auguste Comte's sociology, Carey pushed political economy beyond its own limits, turning it into a social science that could assimilate the laws regulating individuals in their social interactions with those regulating the functioning of matter, in particular by identifying a gravitational law of association that governed the movements of society. Against the disorder of history, then, in which capital and labor, both black and white, kept moving in an unforeseeable and chaotic manner, Carey attempted to naturalize and legitimize the U.S. social order through science, outlining a system of social relations endowed with the same cogency and predictability of the mechanical world depicted by Newtonian physics.

This chapter thus focuses on the *Principles of Social Science* as a crucial culminating point of Carey's mature reflection, treating it as his highest attempt to scientifically ground a legitimation of the U.S. social order through a new understanding of society, of the state and of individual freedom. First, the chapter argues that Carey moved from political economy to social science in the attempt to find a stronger epistemological and methodological foundation for his theory. Second, it shows that Carey elaborated a new vision of society as a dynamic and constantly accelerating order, regulated by a law of social gravitation that governed the movements and interactions of individuals just like gravity governed the movement of bodies in space. Third, it maintains that Carey strengthened his vision of the state, presenting it as the «political head of society» vested with the task of coordinating and governing its movements, thus imagining a social order that could not function without a political direction. Finally, the chapter shows how Carey's social science involved a reinterpretation of the role of the individual as a «societary man» and as a «molecule of

society», as well as a restriction and disciplining of the meaning of its freedom as a market freedom which could only be achieved by submitting to the order of society.

Overall, then, the chapter aims to show how Carey's vision of a classless society and of a democracy of capital, in which all white and male individuals could improve through labor while profiting to some extent from accumulation, under the pressure of the 1850s political and social conflict gave way to the depiction of a «societary machine». That is of an ordered system in which all individual movements were regulated by a physical law, coordinated by the state and constrained in specific, subordinate positions, and in which only upon the condition of such subordination and only by contributing to the accelerated movement of society, could individuals emerge from being the «slaves of nature» to being its «masters». This vision of society, the state and individuals, deeply rooted in the social and economic context of the antebellum United States, was soon shattered by the Civil War, after which Carey would find his theory increasingly at odds with the new scale of U.S. capitalism. In doing so, the chapter also aims to recover a relevant, albeit forgotten, root of U.S. social sciences.

Introduction: At the Origins of U.S. Social Science

Attempts at outlining a scientific study of society dated back to the second half of the seventeenth century, when European economic and political thinkers started to conceive the realm of “civil society” as separate and independent from government and the state, capable of producing its own immanent order and regulated by laws that science had the task of identifying¹. However, it was only in the early nineteenth-century that a science of society started to emerge as a discipline separate from political economy and political philosophy, and that the terms «social science» and «sociology» as such gained a broader usage both in English and in French². In this respect, Auguste Comte's *Cours de Philosophie Positive* had marked a turning-point in the attempt to extend the method of science to the study of society with the goal of reconstructing it on a more rational basis³. Against the revolutionary outbreaks that were shaking France between the 1820s and the 1840s, Comte had argued for the need to foster the evolution of society towards a “positive” stage in which spiritual power had to be entrusted to social scientists and temporal power to industrialists in order to govern and order the increasingly complex, differentiated and conflictual modern social relations.

¹ Maurizio Ricciardi, *La società come ordine. Storia e teoria politica dei concetti sociali* (Macerata: EUM, 2010), 15–25.

² Peter R. Senn, “The Earliest Use of the Term ‘Social Science,’” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19, no. 4 (October 1958): 568; Fred R. Shapiro, “A Note on the Origin of the Term ‘Social Science,’” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 20, no. 1 (January 1984): 20–22.

³ Giovanni Minozzi, “Dallo sviluppo alla rottura. Epistemologia e politica della scienza sociale in Auguste Comte,” *Politica & Società*, no. 3 (Settembre-Dicembre 2022): 363–86; Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought. Volume 1* (New York-London: Penguin Books, 1968), 63–110.

The science of society was therefore necessary to shape a highly integrated, hierarchical and even authoritarian social order⁴. In the first half of the nineteenth century, it was precisely the influence of Comte's idea that gave rise to the first U.S. experiments in outlining a science of society. While historians have shown that the actual birth of sociology or social science as an established, academic discipline in the United States had to wait the last third of the century, when it grew out of the reception of Herbert Spencer and the spread of social Darwinism since the 1860s⁵, already in the antebellum era there were attempts at formulating a specifically American social science.

Some historians have highlighted the pioneering role of U.S. Fourierism and "Associationism" in outlining a first theory of social organization, particularly in the 1830s and 1840s, when utopian communities modeled upon Charles Fourier's vision of the "phalanx" dotted the Northern countryside⁶. Fourier's followers, however, most famously Albert Brisbane, while building a first attempt at rationally understanding society's functioning, always prioritized social reform and the building of utopian experiment to scientific elaboration. Thus, it was the reception and reinterpretation of Comte that grounded the first systematic attempts at building a scientific discourse on society in the United States. Comte's positivism had begun to circulate already in the 1830s (even before the publication of the last volume of his *Course de Philosophie Positive* in 1842), being read by religious and Transcendentalist reformers such as William Henry Channing and Orestes Brownson, who appeared largely unappreciative of the atheistic and skeptical tones of his scientific system⁷. Then, John Stuart Mill's interpretation of positivism in his *System of Logic* in 1843 represented the first channel for Comte's influence in the United States, even if it failed to find immediate recognition⁸. It was only in 1853 that the spread and popularization of Comte's ideas

⁴ Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 12; Jeffrey Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy. Market Society and Selfhood in American Thought, 1820-1920* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2002), 74–75.

⁵ Thomas L. Haskell, *The Emergence of Professional Social Science: The American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth-Century Crisis of Authority* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977); Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* [1944] (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992); Lawrence Goldman, "Exceptionalism and Internationalism: The Origins of American Social Science Reconsidered," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 11, no. 1 (December 16, 2002): 1–36; Stephen P. Turner, *American Sociology: From Pre-Disciplinary to Post-Normal* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Alan Sica, "The History of Sociology in the United States," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociology*, ed. Kathleen Odell Korgen, (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁶ Luther L. Bernard and Jessie Bernard, *Origins of American Sociology. The Social Science Movement in the United States* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1943), 59–112; Carl J. Guarneri, *The Utopian Alternative: Fourierism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991); Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic. New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 337–39; Martin J. Burke, *The Conundrum of Class: Public Discourse on the Social Order in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 103–5.

⁷ Richmond L. Hawkins, *Auguste Comte and the United States (1816-1853)* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1936), 14–16; Bernard e Bernard, *Origins of American Sociology*, 131–33.

⁸ Bernard e Bernard, *Origins of American Sociology*, 119–20.

made a leap forward both in the United States and in Great Britain, thanks to the publication of Harriet Martineau's abridged translation of his main work⁹.

In the 1850s United States it was probably inevitable that Comte's reception came to intersect the deepening sectional conflict around slavery that was politically and ideologically pitting the North and the South against each other, while at the same time both were crisscrossed by social and class conflicts. In fact, in both sections Comte's sociology was immediately taken up as a methodological horizon and scientific perspective through which it was possible to justify one's own social order against the other. In particular, two Southern thinkers used the system of positive science in support of their defense of a highly hierarchical society in which slavery represented a the fundamental and most natural form of labor subordination¹⁰. The first one to do so, in 1854, was George Fitzhugh, who published his *Sociology for the South, or the Failure of Free Society*, arguing for the need to use «the new-born science» in order to understand and cure the «disease» afflicting contemporary society», as well as to prove the superiority of Southern social relations¹¹. The second was Henry Hughes, a lawyer and journalist from Mississippi who had met Comte himself in the 1840s in Paris¹², who in the same year published his *Treatise on Sociology, Theoretical and Practical*, the first systematic sociological treatise in U.S. history, which outlined a «science of societary organization» that depicted «order» as constituting the «substance» of society and the existence of superior and inferior social positions as the condition of possibility for the maintenance of such order¹³.

In elaborating their vision of society as a hierarchical order, both Fitzhugh and Hughes subscribed to a strongly anti-contractualist vision of the social compact's foundations¹⁴. In their perspective, social relations could not be considered the result of a free agreement among individuals, but were intrinsically despotic since only this way order could be maintained. «Society does not owe its sovereign power to the separate consent, volition, or agreement of its members»¹⁵, Fitzhugh wrote, echoed by Hughes, who explained that «every individual is under an obligation to associate»¹⁶. The individual man, both argued, had no choice but to be born in a society whose rules he had not chosen and to which he had to submit, since outside of society he could not survive. For this

⁹ Harriet Martineau, *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, 2 voll. (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1853). Bernard and Bernard, *Origins of American Sociology*, 133–37.

¹⁰ Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy*, 75.

¹¹ George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South or The Failure of Free Society* (Richmond: Morris, 1854), V–VI.

¹² Luther L. Bernard, «Henry Hughes. First American Sociologist,» *Social Forces* 15, no. 2 (December 1936): 154–74.

¹³ Henry Hughes, *Treatise on Sociology* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co, 1854), 47, 175.

¹⁴ Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy*, 96–97.

¹⁵ Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, 25–26.

¹⁶ Hughes, *Treatise on Sociology*, 176.

reason, Fitzhugh concluded, every individual had «no rights whatever, as opposed to the interests of society», since society was «the being» and the individual only «one of the members of that being». In this respect, every person «was born its slave, and had no rights to cede»¹⁷. Slavery, then, was not a condition that concerned a specific race, but the general condition of individuals within society, whether actually slaves or formally free. Therefore, in Fitzhugh and Hughes' vision, society amounted to system of hierarchical and despotic relations, not only among master and slave, but also between husband and wife, between the father and its children, between capitalists and laborer. Thus, despite avoiding to directly engage with Comte and taking his positive philosophy only as a loose framework, Fitzhugh and Hughes showed to what extent could sociology be turned into a reactionary ideological instrument and to what extent the elaboration of a social science answered to the need to find a stronger foundation and legitimation for a social order that, in the 1850s South, shaken by slave revolts and by the abolitionist movements' demands for immediate emancipation, appeared on the brink of collapsing. Thus, between 1858 and 1860, Carey's *Principles of Social Science* represented the first reinterpretation of Comtean thought in the North, as well as the first Northern, free-labor attempt to formalize a social science. However, as the chapter shows, their conclusions in terms of the relationship between the individual and the organization of society resembled in many ways those of the first Southern sociologists.

1. E. P. Smith: Science, Social Organization and the State

Carey's turn towards social science in the 1850s, however, was anticipated and influenced by Erasmus Peshine Smith, who synthesized his economic theory, while pushing it in new epistemological and theoretical directions. He did so, in particular, by redefining political economy as a social science, by specifying the role of the state implicit in Carey's protectionism and by arguing for the necessary limitation of individual freedom within social organizations. A New-York lawyer and close ally of then Governor, and later U.S. Senator William Seward, Smith had started to study political economy since the late-1840s, when he had read Carey's *The Past, the Present and the Future* and noticed it on the *American Whig Review* as the long-awaited formalization of an «American System of Political Economy» opposed to the English one¹⁸. Since then, he had started a decade-long personal and intellectual correspondence with Carey, devoting another series of

¹⁷ Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, 25–26.

¹⁸ Erasmus Peshine Smith, «Political Economists. Henry C. Carey,» *American Whig Review* XII, no. 31 (July 1850): 376–87. On E. P. Smith, see: Bernard and Bernard, *Origins of American Sociology*, 42–433; Michael Hudson, «E. Peshine Smith: A Study in Protectionist Growth Theory and American Sectionalism» (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1968); Michael Hudson, *America's Protectionist Takeoff, 1815-1914: The Neglected American School of Political Economy*, (Dresden: ISLET-Verlag, 2010), 155–75.

articles to his protectionist «law of progress» in the *Hunts' Merchant Magazine*¹⁹. In 1853, he published his main work, *A Manual of Political Economy*, in which, right from the preface, he declared his debt to Carey's scientific merits, claiming to follow in his footsteps²⁰. In Smith's perspective, in fact, Carey had «led the way» in constructing a science based on the empirical observation of phenomena, and not on the deduction of aprioristic principles. This way, he had started to outline «a skeleton of Political Economy upon the basis of purely physical laws, and thus to obtain for its conclusions that absolute certainty which belongs to the positive sciences». Carey had allowed, in other words, to separate political economy from the «metaphysical bias» derived by its traditional association to «moral philosophy», thus turning it into an actual science²¹.

Indeed, it was the observation of regularities in physical phenomena that had enabled Carey, according to E. P. Smith, to reject Ricardo's aprioristic theory of rent, and to identify a «law of progress» depicting increasing returns due to technical innovation, intensifying cooperation and passage to more fertile soils. In doing so, however, Carey had shown that economic and physical progress, that is the accumulation of wealth, was linked to a «social progress», both because it tended to produce a «higher social organization» and because it was made possible by an ever closer «union in societies». In this sense, he argued, the «law of progress» with which Carey had overturned the Ricardian principle of diminishing returns and the «law of proportion» with which he had described the harmony of interests between capital and labor, had not simply to do with the science of economics, but were already «a contribution to social science»²². This acknowledgment led Smith to rethink the very definition of political economy as a science that could not be aimed solely at studying the laws regulating the production and distribution of wealth, as British economists had done, but had to gain a «wider range». Only by interpreting the term «wealth» broadly, in fact, as the «*weal*, well-being» of society, could political economy be said to involve the study of wealth²³. Political economy, in fact, had to investigate «the laws which explain man's attainment, through association, of enlarged power over matter in all its forms, and the development of his intellectual and moral faculties, in virtue of that power»²⁴. The economic and political centrality attributed by Carey to the concept of «association» thus pushed Smith to redefine political economy as the science whose object was no longer individual conducts, but «the conduct of men associated in communities», that is individuals in their social interactions. In other words, in order to understand

¹⁹ E. P. Smith's letters to Carey make up a large part of Carey's incoming correspondence in the «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 18, folders 1-4), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²⁰ Erasmus Peshine Smith, *A Manual for Political Economy* (New York: Putnam, 1853), IV.

²¹ Peshine Smith, III.

²² Peshine Smith, 83.

²³ Peshine Smith, 20.

²⁴ Peshine Smith, 11–12.

«association» and its impact upon progress, the science of political economy had to turn itself into a science of society.

This was possible because human social conducts had general and regular laws, which science had the task to identify. Indeed, as much as phenomena like death, marriage or suicide could appear individually unique and due to unpredictable causes, in aggregate they showed a series of regularities observable empirically through statistics, E. P. Smith explained anticipating one of the founding problems of modern sociology (particularly in Émile Durkheim's reflection²⁵). «It has been found by experience», he wrote, «that irregularities, taken in sufficient masses, tend to become regular, and susceptible of strict ascertainment and calculation»²⁶. The goal of a science of association was precisely to understand how irregularities tended to become regular despite the apparent contradiction between individual «will» and the idea of «law». More precisely, to Smith science had to explain the laws that, in the course of progress, tended to subordinate «passion to reason», thus making «the private will and the social will correspond» and reconciling «the highest degree of individual freedom with the highest degree of mutual aid and mutual dependence»²⁷. Social science, then, had to investigate the natural functioning of society in order to improve it to human advantage. According to Comte's formula, in fact, whom Smith quoted at the beginning of the volume's introduction, «science» allowed «foresight» and foresight allowed rational «action»²⁸. The scientific study of society had therefore an immediately political relevance, being aimed at better organizing it.

To do so, Smith endeavored to reformulate Carey's entire economic theory moving from the principles of physics, in order to show the similarity between the functioning of matter and that of human aggregates. His first step was the identification of a «law of the endless circulation of matter and forces», according to which «the phenomena of the visible universe are resolvable into Matter and Motion». Together, matter and motion produced «Force», whose perpetual «flux and circulation» throughout matter guaranteed the existing «equilibrium». Man could «neither create nor destroy» matter, nor affect the quantity of force existing in the physical world, Smith explained, but he had the power to alter «the mode of its manifestation, its direction and distribution»²⁹. Man could liberate and stimulate forces already «latent in matter» but until then unused, thus destroying the previous equilibrium, while producing a new and higher one through a «development of

²⁵ See: Émile Durkheim, *Le suicide: étude de sociologie* [1897] (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1976).

²⁶ Peshine Smith, *A Manual for Political Economy*, 17–18.

²⁷ Peshine Smith, 19.

²⁸ Peshine Smith, 11.

²⁹ Peshine Smith, 24.

force»³⁰. Thus, even without creating or destroying matter, man could gain increasing «power» over it and satisfy its «illimitable» desires, constantly propagating «in widening circles, of larger extent», contrary to animals who were satisfied in a «stationary condition»³¹. It was precisely this law that, in E. P. Smith's perspective, regulated the production and consumption of food, allowing to disprove the main theories of British economists. First, it countered Ricardo's principle of increasing returns, showing how man could constantly stimulate the matter to produce more³². Second, it denied Malthus's principle of population, since it proved that the production of food could keep pace with human reproduction. Finally, it allowed to reject the theory of the international division of labor, since it showed that to increase the productivity of land it was necessary to it the waste of human consumption on a local level³³. Such attempt to reinterpret economic laws as depending upon natural and physical laws would prove relevant to Carey's following reflection.

Since the volume's introduction, however, it clearly emerged how, to Smith, the social progress described by Carey did not constitute a spontaneous process solely based on the natural interaction between individuals, but how it rested upon the state's intervention, as well as upon a specific organization of society. Indeed, he stated, «physical, intellectual, and moral progress, inseparably interdependent, is the historical fact characteristic of our species, and union in societies, its observed condition»³⁴. The social and political union of individuals was thus an inescapable condition of progress, as Smith made clear in the concluding chapter of the *Manual*, devoted precisely to the problem of the «economical functions» of government and to the problem of the nexus between the state, society and the individual. On the one hand, the state itself was presented as a form of association: «the widest form of association known among men, is the political»³⁵. On the other, and at the same time, association among individuals appeared as the specific purpose of the state (which Smith started to call with its own name) and of the government through which it acted. Criticizing Herbert Spencer's and Frédéric Bastiat's vision of a minimal state, Smith depicted it as «an agency to promote and facilitate the association of the individuals by whom it is instituted». In order to do so, the state had to perform both military functions, like «defence against foreign aggression» and the «repression of force» among its citizens, but also infrastructural functions, like the uniformization of weights and measure, the building of roads and canals, the definition of rights

³⁰ Peshine Smith, 24.

³¹ Peshine Smith, 23.

³² Peshine Smith, 44–62.

³³ Peshine Smith, 35–36.

³⁴ Peshine Smith, 12.

³⁵ Peshine Smith, 251.

of properties and the issuance of money. All of these purposes, according to Smith were only «subsidiary to the general purpose of promoting association»³⁶.

To E. P. Smith, in the United States it was the Constitution itself that had vested the federal government not only with the power «to promote that intimate union between the members of each individual State» but with that of facilitating «the association of the members of the different States»³⁷. All of the powers and functions of the state could thus be traced, according to Smith, to the general purpose of producing a social and political cohesion among individuals. In doing so, in promoting «association», the state emerged as the guarantor and the engine of social progress, as well as of the increase of wealth. In performing such role, however, to Smith as to Carey, the American State possessed its own specificity, its representative character, which distinguished it from European states. While in Europe the state was «something distinct from the people» and commanded through force, in the United States «the *whole* people appoint the administrators of government, portioning out to them such powers as they deem expedient; restricting their exercise, or resuming them at will»³⁸. The American people could collectively determine the breadth and limits of state power, conferring legitimacy to its action. In this sense, precisely because the American state was not something different and separate from society, but coincided with it and constituted its governing agency, Smith explained, in the United States it was much easier to overcome the objections of European economists against a political intervention in the economy³⁹.

In fact, it was upon the ground of the American state's representative character that according to Smith it was possible to justify, in particular, the imposition of protectionist tariffs. Indeed, higher duties were presented as a form of indirect taxation that was acceptable only insofar as it was aimed at supporting the government's general purpose of promoting association, and which could therefore impose temporary sacrifices to achieve what Smith called «the education of the laborers»

³⁶ «What is it that we call the State? [...] Perhaps the most general expression of the purpose of government is, that it is an agency to promote and facilitate the association of the individuals by whom it is instituted. Defence against foreign aggression; the repression of force and fraud in the intercourse of its constituents; the establishment of uniform systems of weights and measures; the construction of roads, bridges, and canals; the defining of the rights of property, and the remedies for an injury to them; the coinage of money; the postage of letters - all these, and the other offices, in which most governments agree, are plainly subsidiary to the general purpose of promoting association». Peshine Smith, 254.

³⁷ Peshine Smith, 255.

³⁸ Peshine Smith, 251–52.

³⁹ «The hostility which prevails so much among European Economists, not simply against particular governmental regulations relating to trade, but to regulation in the abstract, arises from their inability to make the answer to the foregoing questions which the American makes. It is the consciousness that the powers of the State are wielded, not by the many but by the few, that is at the root of the aversion. We have no occasion for such a feeling. We may regard a regulation as unwise and injurious, but it is the agreement of the people who are to suffer by it if it is so, who have, therefore, every motive for enlightening themselves in respect to its operations, and who have the power to repeal it when they choose». Peshine Smith, 257–58.

in industrial production⁴⁰. Since «government is an association for all purposes that its constituents may from time to time agree upon and specify», he continued, protectionism was nothing more than the instrument by which the political community decided «to give a preference to the domestic over the foreign manufacture, notwithstanding the difference of price» in order to increase its overall production in the long run⁴¹. Protectionism thus constituted a fundamental leverage through which the state could perform its own task of fostering economic development, promoting association and enhancing social progress. The state, Smith explained, should not be concerned about the guarantee of an abstract and merely individual freedom of trade, which could infringe upon the overall increase of production: «the thing to be sought» by the state was «the greatest *aggregate* of freedom», which may well «be consistent with some degree of restraint upon individuals»⁴². The state promotion of association thus required at least some degree of limitation to individual freedom, Smith derived echoing Friedrich List's and Daniel Raymond's critique to *laissez-faire* from the 1820s. «Every organization implies», he continued, «the subordination of the separate powers of its members to a common purpose, for the sake of attaining greater power»⁴³. In other words, the state promotion of economic and social progress necessarily involved the individuals' subordination to the organization of society.

Establishing a direct connection between social progress and the growth of organization, Smith noted that while «the savage» righted his wrongs «by the strong hand», the «civilized man» renounced «his freedom to do this» in exchange for the possibility to obtain justice more effectively «through the combined action of his tribe or nation». Thus, civilization corresponded to a process that guaranteed an increasing «aggregate of free action» obtained through «general regulations», but at the cost of an increasing «subordination» of individual wills. Just as in every commercial partnership the individual had to submit his intensions to those of the majority of his associates⁴⁴, the same happened in the state. After all, E. P. Smith asked, «what is a state but a greater partnership for such purposes, subordinate to the general purpose of promoting association among themselves,

⁴⁰ In this notion, E. P. Smith was likely influenced by Friedrich List's notion of «industrial education». See: Friedrich List, *The National System of Political Economy* [1841] (Philadelphia: Lippincott & Co., 1856).

⁴¹ Peshine Smith, 226.

⁴² Peshine Smith, 256.

⁴³ «It is because freedom is a necessary condition of the greatest efficiency in industry, that Economists are solicitous that it should be everywhere established and maintained. It is obvious, however, that the thing to be sought is the greatest *aggregate* of freedom. This may well be consistent with some degree of restraint upon individuals. Every organization implies this. Every combination involves the subordination of the separate powers of its members to a common purpose, for the sake of attaining greater power»⁴³.

Peshine Smith, 256–57.

⁴⁴ «Every man who enters into a commercial partnership subordinates his individual will, in regard to the mode of conducting its business, to that of the majority of his associates. The rule sometimes restricts one, sometimes another; but it manifestly secures a greater aggregate of free action to the partners, than if the majority were liable at any time to be thwarted by the arbitrary volition of a single one». Peshine Smith, 257.

as its people choose to define)? The specificity of the American state, however, in his view consisted in the fact that any restriction of individual liberty aimed at the growth of overall freedom was «self-imposed», in that it was collectively decided thanks to the representative character of republican institutions⁴⁵. Precisely for this reason, Smith concluded, the American state had to strive as much as possible to give its «government» the form of a «self-government» collectively performed by the American people themselves. Self-government, however, did not mean the absence of the state, but rather a specific form of its action rooted in society and in its social relations, which simultaneously strengthened its power and its legitimacy. It was in this specific sense that in the United States government was «successful» in the degree to which it became increasingly «unnecessary»⁴⁶.

Thus, E. P. Smith's *Manual of Political Economy* took up and systematized Carey's political economy of the late 1840s and early 1850s, showing its broader scientific, social and political implications, particularly concerning the role of «association», the role of the state and the position of the individual within his vision of progress. At the same time, it contributed to push Carey himself, with whom the correspondence grew increasingly dense in the following years, to revise his economic theory, turning it into a social science that could better ground his legitimation of the U.S. social order.

2. «The Unity of Science»: From Political Economy to Social Science

To explain his methodological and epistemological leap, in the preface to the *Principles of Social Science's* first volume Carey explained that in the course of the investigations that had led him first to discover the «law of distribution» in the 1830s and then the law of increasing returns in the 1840s, he had repeatedly found himself «impelled to the use of physical facts, in illustration of social phenomena». While Carey claimed to have highlighted already in *The Past, the Present, and the Future* «the close affinity of physical and social laws», he nevertheless credited E. P. Smith with fully developing «the law of the perpetuity of matter»⁴⁷. Thanks to his *Manual of Political Economy* and to Comte's sociology, Carey thus declared to have understood «the universality of the laws governing matter, whatever form that matter may take, whether that of clay, coal, iron, wheat, or man - whether aggregated in the form of systems of mountains, or in that of vast communities of men»⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ Peshine Smith, 257.

⁴⁶ «In this, as in all the other forms of its actions, government is successful in the degree to which it becomes unnecessary - in which men acquire the knowledge and the power which render them a law unto themselves, substituting self-government, the cheerful conformity to the higher law, for subjection to earthly control and direction». Peshine Smith, 269.

⁴⁷ Henry Charles Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Volume I* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1858), VI.

⁴⁸ «It is scarcely possible to study these facts without arriving at the belief in the universality of the laws governing matter, whatever form that matter may take, whether that of clay, coal, iron, wheat, or man - whether aggregated in

In turn, the discovery of this homogeneity of natural matter brought Carey to identify «a single system of laws»⁴⁹, a monistic principle governing matter in all of its forms⁵⁰. From the existence of a fundamental unity of matter and of a universality of the natural laws that governed it Carey derived the unity of all the sciences that endeavored to study them. In this respect, he noted that Comte had the merit to unveil «the direct connection of chemical and social science»⁵¹, as well as the possibility of universally applying the method of positive science. Chemistry, physics, organology, psychology and social science thus constituted, in Carey's perspective, branches of the same tree of knowledge necessary to study matter in all its forms: from inorganic to organic, from vegetable life to men, who constituted the most sophisticated form of matter⁵².

To Carey, however, the limit of Comte's work had consisted in his refusal to fully apply the inductive and empirical method to social science. As a matter of fact, while stressing the analogies between the functioning of natural and social phenomena, Comte had always denied that the study of society could be conducted exclusively through an analytical and inductive method, rejecting the idea of an absolute and perfect identity between the natural laws of physics and chemistry laws and those of society and refusing any reduction of the functioning of the universe to a single law⁵³. To Carey, what prevented Comte from universalizing the positivist method was, in particular, an erroneous conception of mathematics and logic as stand-alone sciences and not as heuristic methods common to all sciences. Instead, to Carey mathematics and logic had to be considered «*instruments* for facilitating the acquisition of knowledge [...] They are the key to science, but are not to be confounded with science itself»⁵⁴. In his view, the logical and mathematical method of analysis and induction was «always applicable, whatever may be the subject of investigation», since the unity of science inevitably required a unity of method⁵⁵. To Comte, instead, society could not be studied by breaking it down into its individual units, but only in a synthetic and general way, as an organic totality⁵⁶.

the form of systems of mountains, or in that of vast communities of men. We can conceive of no body without weight, nor would it be possible to imagine anyone not subjected to the law of the composition of forces». Carey, 20.

⁴⁹ Carey, VI.

⁵⁰ Bernard e Bernard, *Origins of American Sociology*, 414.

⁵¹ Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. I*, 19.

⁵² See Carey's representation of the «tree of knowledge»: Carey, 21.

⁵³ Bernard e Bernard, *Origins of American Sociology*, 412.

⁵⁴ Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. I*, 10.

⁵⁵ «Mathematics must be used in social science, as it is now in every other branch of inquiry, and the more the former is used, the more the latter takes the form of real science, and the more intimate are shown to be its relations with other departments of knowledge. The Malthusian law was the first instance of its application, and had it proved a true one, it would have given a precision to political economy, of which before it had been utterly incapable. [...] So, too, with Mr. Ricardo's celebrated theory of rent. [...] The *method* of both these great laws was right, and the fact of their having adopted that method has properly placed their authors in the front rank of economists». Carey, 33.

⁵⁶ Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought. Volume 1*, 63–73.

The refusal to extend the logical and mathematical method universally, however, according to Carey risked reintroducing into the study of society that «metaphysical stage of science» that Comte's own positivism had allowed to overcome in other fields⁵⁷. Moreover, while Comte had described the stages of humanity's development, using «the societies of past ages - as a means of understanding the movements of the men by whom we are surrounded», a rigorously mathematically and empirically grounded social science could only study man in the present, and only moving from this it could understand the past and above all predict the future. Carey's social science thus aimed at filling these shortcomings of Comte's sociology, universalizing its positivistic and tightening its inductive method in order to study man and his social interactions with the very same scientific rigor with which a chemist studied inorganic particles and their bonds.

«We should do with society as the chemist does with the piece of granite, resolve it into its several parts and study each part separately, ascertaining how it would act were it left to itself, and comparing what *would be* its independent action with that we see *to be* its action in society; and then by help of the same law of which the mathematician, the physicist, the chemist, and the physiologist, avail themselves - that of the composition of forces - we may arrive at the law of the effect»⁵⁸

In recognizing the necessary unity and universality of science, Carey thus noted the insufficiency of political economy in the study of individual and associated human behavior. In this respect, the methodological problem of Ricardo's and Malthus's economic science lied in the attempt to study man by abstracting from all the characteristics that went beyond the mere pursuit of wealth and the sexual drive. This had led, in Carey's opinion, to the paradoxical representation of a «politico-economic man, on one hand influenced solely by the thirst for wealth, and on the other so entirely under the control of the sexual passion as to be at all times ready to indulge it, however greatly such indulgence may tend to prevent the growth of wealth»⁵⁹. This way, English economists had presented man as a «brute animal», being therefore unable to grasp the specific characteristics that distinguished him from other animals, in particular his «capacity for progress», which had to be the real object of a scientific study of society. «Social science», he wrote «treats of man in his efforts for the maintenance and improvement of his condition»⁶⁰. In other words, Carey came to acknowledge that to build a science of improvement, as he had tried to do since the 1830s, political economy had to be rejected as insufficient. Instead, it was necessary to build a social science that studied man within the dynamics of «association» within which only could his improvement be

⁵⁷ Carey, *Principles of Social Science*. Vol. I, 26.

⁵⁸ Carey, 27.

⁵⁹ Carey, 29.

⁶⁰ Carey, 63.

realized. In this respect, he came to conclude that «social science and the political economy of the [British] school are thus the precise antipodes of each other»⁶¹.

Only through a new social science, Carey argued, it would have been possible to find a purely «mathematical answer» to the problem of identifying the law regulating «the relations of man and the outside material world». A mathematical answer that would have to be similar to the proportional law of the harmony of interests discovered by Carey in the 1830s, which was scientific precisely because it was capable of describing variations in the relationship between capital and labor in the terms of a «mathematical relation»⁶². However, to construct such a social science, which at present «can scarcely be said to have an existence», it was necessary, Carey reiterated, to first explain the workings of matter, and of the earth in particular, as a source of human subsistence. In other words, the study of nature had to be prioritized over the study of man, but only insofar as it was aimed at better understanding the latter. Since «the laws of physical science are equally those of social science», only by obtaining «the physical, chemical, and physiological knowledge» was it possible to understand how man could move «from being the slave, to becoming the master of nature»⁶³. Social science, in studying man's improvement, thus also constituted the highest branch of inquiry around the functioning of nature.

«Science, as we are told, is the interpreter of nature. It reverently inquires, what there is, and why it is that such things are. It listens that it may know. It seeks for light. [...] That department which is denominated Social Science, treats of the laws which govern man in the effort for developing his own powers, and thereby obtaining entire control over the great forces of nature. [...] The object of its teachers is that of indicating what have been the obstacles which, thus far, have prevented progress, and the means by which they may be diminished, if not removed»⁶⁴.

In this description, more than being influenced by Comte's positivism, Carey's method appeared firmly anchored to a political and scientific Newtonianism, according to which the task of science was not to formulate hypotheses, but to observe reality empirically and grasp in it, through induction, the general and universally applicable laws governing it⁶⁵. The aim of science was thus to identify the universal laws of nature, which constituted «universal truths», and to offer the

⁶¹ Henry Charles Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Volume II* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1860), 291–92.

⁶² Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. I*, 33–34. Ibid: «Mathematics must be used in social science, as it is now in every other branch of inquiry, and the more the former is used, the more the latter takes the form of real science, and the more intimate are shown to be its relations with other departments of knowledge».

⁶³ Carey, 35.

⁶⁴ Henry Charles Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Volume III* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1860), 469.

⁶⁵ I am indebted for this intuition to: Maurizio Ricciardi, «La libertà al tempo della crisi globale: libertà del mercato, libertà dal mercato», paper presented at the 2014 Summer School of the Interuniversity Center for the Study of Euro-American History and Politics (CISPEA).

knowledge necessary to remove any artificial obstacle to their unfolding, causing «harmony and order to take the place of chaos»⁶⁶. In extending the scientific method of inquiry to society, Carey tried not only to show the existence of an inner order and organization of social relations, but also to legitimize existing social relations. In fact, the very depiction of a unity of matter and of a unity of scientific laws was instrumental to the affirmation of a homology between the order of nature and the order of society that allowed to reveal the non-arbitrary character of the latter⁶⁷. The role of science was, in Carey's vision, precisely that of proving such homology with the goal of naturalizing the organization of society. It was therefore the political problem of identifying a scientific legitimation of society and its relations as the foundations of capital accumulation, at a time when these relations appeared increasingly threatened by black and white labor insubordination, as well as by the sectional crisis over slavery, that made Carey's shift from political economy to social science all the more compelling. And it was moving from this problem that he set out to describe the forms of the natural functioning of society: to trace «the Physiology of society»⁶⁸.

3. The «Motion of Society»: Association and Gravitation

To do so, Carey started by taking into account the specific characteristics of «man» as the «molecule of society» and thus as the true «subject of social science». Similarly with animals, man performed the functions essential to life and subsistence, but unlike them he possessed four characteristics. First, man had an inherent tendency to «association» with his fellows. Second, within this process of association, he had a natural inclination to develop an «individuality» that distinguished him from every other individual of his species. Third, man tended to grow a moral «responsibility» for his actions⁶⁹. Fourth, contrary to animals, man could not be satisfied with subsistence but developed an increasing «capacity for progress»⁷⁰. It was, however, to the first two characteristics that Carey gave the most prominence, identifying in the interplay between association and individuality the coordinates that defined man's singular and collective life. Indeed, «association» was presented not only as an instinctive drive instrumental to exchange or productive cooperation, but as a necessity indispensable to the very existence of individual human beings. To Carey, association was man's «greatest need», not only at the moment of birth, when he was «the weakest and most dependent

⁶⁶ Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. I*, 35. See also: Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. III*, 265–66: «Physical science, in all of those departments of knowledge in which it has been enabled to furnish demonstration of the truth of its discoveries, testifies that order, harmony, and reciprocal adjustment, reign throughout the elements, and in all the movements it has as yet explored».

⁶⁷ Ricciardi, *La società come ordine*, 26.

⁶⁸ Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. I*, 231.

⁶⁹ Carey, 57–60.

⁷⁰ Carey, 60–61.

of animals», being completely unable to survive in the world without sufficient «care in infancy», but also later, when if left alone he remained «the most helpless of beings». Moreover, association was indispensable to the development of language in the individual, without which he couldn't develop rational thinking and memory and would remain «below the level of the brute creation». Overall, then, it was only in association with other individuals «that man can be man» and the «the idea of man» itself could be conceivable. «Isolate him», Carey wrote, and he would lose «the power of speech» and «the power to reason», that is «the distinctive quality of man»⁷¹. Language and human thought could not be conceived outside of society.

The isolated individual that in his previous writings Carey had taken as the starting point of his allegoric depiction of progress, now appeared not simply more backward, poor and barbaric, but largely inconceivable. Quoting the Bible, he remembered how God himself had affirmed that «“it is not good [...] that man should live alone”», nor do we ever find him doing so»⁷². This also meant that to Carey it was not possible to imagine individuals in a state of nature that preexisted the social compact. Instead, human beings had no choice but to be born into a society already formed, as intrinsically «societary» beings. As shown above, the same anti-contractualist conclusion had been reached a few years earlier by the first Southern social scientists, describing the intrinsically social nature of man with words very similar to those later used by Carey. In particular, contesting Locke's theory of the social contract, George Fitzhugh had written that men were «gregarious and associative animals» just as bees and that accordingly «an isolated man is almost as helpless and ridiculous as a bee setting up for himself», concluding that therefore men could not claim any natural right, since they had not formed society, but were born into it as «its slaves»⁷³. Similarly, Henry Hughes, explaining that society was not formed «from contract or agreement», had maintained that «every individual is under an obligation to associate, for the existence and progress of himself and others», since the substance of society was «perfunctory», that is mechanical. Therefore, he concluded, «dissociation is immoral and unnatural» while «isolation is injury»⁷⁴. Thus, in the same years in which Henry David Thoreau published his *Walden*, reporting his experiment

⁷¹ «His greatest need is that of ASSOCIATION with his fellow-men. Born the weakest and most dependent of animals, he requires the greatest care in infancy, and must be clothed by others. [...] Dependent upon the experience of himself and others for all his knowledge, he requires language to enable him either to record the results of his own observation, or to profit from those of others. [...] Without language, therefore, he must remain [...] below the level of the brute creation. To have language there must be association and combination of men with their fellow men, and it is on this condition only that man can be man; on this alone that we can conceive of the being to which we attach the idea of man. “It is not good”, said God, “that man should live alone”. [...] Isolate him, and with the loss of the power of speech, he loses the power to reason, and with it the distinctive quality of man. Restore him to society, and with the return of the power of speech he becomes again the reasoning man». Carey, 41–42.

⁷² Carey, 42.

⁷³ Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South*, 25.

⁷⁴ Hughes, *Treatise on Sociology*, 176.

in self-reliance and life outside of society, the first U.S. social scientists instead presented man as an intrinsically social animal, that is inextricably tied to social relations and power hierarchies⁷⁵. The shift towards a scientific study of society as a system of relations was thus pushing thinkers on both sides of the sectional conflict, and most crucially on both sides of the divide between slavery and “free” labor, to rethink the relationship between the individual and society, by denying the latter’s consensual foundation, while affirming its necessary and inescapable superiority to the needs of the former.

At the same time, to Carey the second fundamental distinguishing quality of man consisted in his «individuality», in the fact that, in his view, unlike animal species, each individual man developed his own set of peculiarities and differences that distinguished him from every other member of the human species. Such individuality, however, existed in an inseparable and reciprocal relationship with association. Indeed, on the one hand, the definition of this individuality could determine itself only within the process of association and the ensuing differentiation between individuals: «that these differences may be developed, it is indispensable that he be brought into association with his fellow man»⁷⁶. On the other hand, «individuality» was itself indispensable to «association», Carey asserted, proposing a vision of society as an organism that became more perfect as the specificity of the parts increased, thus anticipating Herbert Spencer’s theory of social differentiation⁷⁷. «The more dissimilar become the parts», he wrote, «the more perfect becomes the whole», up to the point that «difference is essential to association»⁷⁸. If only in the midst of others could each man be individual, unique and peculiar, simultaneously only from unique and peculiar individuals could the interactions that formed society be established. Thus, society did not consist in the mere and simultaneous existence of a plurality of individuals, Carey continued, but precisely in the compound of relationships established among individuals because of their difference, which necessitated relationships of exchange and cooperation. Going back to the case of Robinson Crusoe, he explained that only when the two met and established a productive relation, society could be said to have started. For society to exist, in particular, it was necessary that both men possessed a peculiar individuality and that they turned out to be non-self-sufficient. In fact, it was only by exchanging and cooperating that individuals could produce society.

⁷⁵ Henry David Thoreau, “Walden, or Life in the Woods [1854],” in *Walden and Civil Disobedience*, ed. Kristen Case (New York: Penguin Books, 2017).

⁷⁶ Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. I*, 52.

⁷⁷ Arnold W. Green, *Henry Charles Carey. Nineteenth-Century Sociologist* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951), 64.

⁷⁸ Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. I*, 53.

«Crusoe was obliged to work alone. In time, however, being joined by Friday, society commenced; but in what did this society consist? In the existence of another person on his island? Certainly not. [...] [Friday] in a thousand ways combined his efforts with those of his fellow-prisoner on the island-and thus produced society, or, in other words, association; which is but the act of exchanging ideas and services, and is properly expressed by the single word commerce. Every act of association being an act of commerce, the terms society and commerce are but different modes of expressing the same idea. [...] Society consists in combinations resulting from the existence of differences»⁷⁹.

While the terms «society» and «commerce» overlapped, to Carey it was necessary to distinguish between «commerce» and «trade». In fact, while the former indicated an exchange on a local scale between a producer and a consumer who were geographically close to each other, the latter indicated an exchange over long distances between individuals who did not meet, mediated by merchants who demanded a tax on transportation, thus hindering «commerce» itself⁸⁰. To create society, exchange had therefore to produce social relations: it could not be mediated solely by the market, but had to take place between individuals among whom a bond of «association» could be established. The society-commerce conceived by Carey thus coincided with the market, but with a market in which individuals did not appear as connected to one another solely by monetary, punctual relationships devoid of constraints beyond exchange itself, but in which they acted as inextricably embedded in a structural associative bond from which they could not escape, except at the risk of losing their character as individuals. Thus, the individuality conceived by Carey was the very opposite of the loneliness of the formal subject of the market and could therefore exist exclusively within a network of social relations to whom it had to conform⁸¹. At the same time, since in the reality of nineteenth-century U.S. capitalism productive and exchange relations of «association» inevitably contained unequal relations of power and exploitation, Carey ended up showing that the sphere of the market did not represent a network of exchanges among equals, but had necessarily to be grounded upon social relations of subordination (like that between Robinson Crusoe and Friday).

Moreover, in Carey's perspective the tendency to association did not create a static system of social relations, but rather a dynamic one powered by a mechanical movement. The «societary machine» was therefore represented by Carey as a system of individuals constantly moving and interacting

⁷⁹ Carey, 198. See also: Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. III*, 38: «Society, or commerce, consists in an exchange of services».

⁸⁰ Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. I*, 210–12. Carey had already introduced the same distinction a few years earlier, see: Henry Charles Carey, “What Constitute Real Freedom of Trade? Chapter II,” *American Whig Review* XII, no. 33 (September 1850): 240.

⁸¹ Maurizio Ricciardi, “La libertà al tempo della crisi globale: libertà del mercato, libertà dal mercato”, paper presented at the 2014 Summer School of the Interuniversity Center for the Study of Euro-American History and Politics (CISPEA).

among each other according to a law of mutual attraction and repulsion identical to that regulating the movements of bodies in space. «Man tends of necessity to gravitate towards his fellow-man», he wrote, arguing that, just like across the «material world», within society «gravitation» represented a force directly proportional to mass and inversely proportional to distance⁸². To Carey, then, the law of association was nothing but «the law of molecular gravitation» applied to human society⁸³. Faithful to his own methodological approach, then, to Carey the same law that regulated the movements of molecules in inanimate matter also governed the movements of man as the «molecule of society»: a law attracting individuals to each other, but at the same time, thanks to the dynamics of attraction and repulsion between bodies, arranging them in a harmonious and orderly manner in the social space. In this respect, Carey's social science aimed to depict a physics of individuals moving and interacting within society.

«Gravitation, is here, as everywhere else in the material world, in the direct ratio of their mass, and in the inverse one of the distance. Such being the case, why is it that all the members of the human family do not tend to come together on a single spot of earth? Because of the existence of the same simple and universal law by means of which is maintained the beautiful order of the system of which our planets forms a part»⁸⁴.

Thus, Carey's system of society appeared to function just like Newton's universe. Just as planets gravitated around each other in the solar system, Carey explained, so humans gravitated around each other in society, naturally tending to form local aggregates (communities or cities) of a size that balanced the force of mutual attraction and thus remained in a virtuous equilibrium that prevented the formation of excessively large centers. The emergence of metropolitan centers such as London, which by their size unbalanced the gravitational equilibrium and tended to attract most individuals and resources to themselves, resulted from a distortion of the natural form of society, which on the contrary consisted in the spread of «local centers of attraction» capable of neutralizing the centralizing tendency of larger cities. Through the law of social gravitation, Carey thus reinterpreted the principles of «centralization» and «concentration» no longer as two different forms of economic development, but as two different forms of social organization. Indeed, the natural unfolding of the principle of social gravitation involved «the establishment of decentralization», with the emergence of numerous local centers, «each managing its own affairs», in which individuals «are brought into connection with each other», whose presence strengthened

⁸² Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. I*, 42–43.

⁸³ Pitirim Sorokin, *Contemporary Sociological Theories* (New York - Evanston: Harper & Row, 1928), 13.

⁸⁴ Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. I*, 42–43.

«association» and intensified social ties. Carey's vision of a localized, small-scale accumulation was here turned into a model of society.

In the United States, such a decentralized social form had established itself with particular cogency, allowing for more peaceful coexistence than elsewhere, with the «equal action of opposing forces» producing «wonderful harmony. Precisely for this reason, in the history of the United States there had been «no case of civil war»⁸⁵, Carey declared in the attempt to exorcise a specter that was becoming increasingly threatening in the second half of the 1850s. It was therefore no coincidence that, more than in his earlier writings and probably influenced by the political conflicts in which he was simultaneously engaged, Carey presented a sharp contrast between the condition of Northern states, in which, despite the attractive force of New York, the «local attraction» of small towns fostered «association»⁸⁶, and that of Southern states, in which «centralization» predominated to such an extent as to hinder any form of association⁸⁷. In his view, in fact, «the organization of society» took its natural form the more the mutual force of attraction and repulsion between individuals tended to follow that of planets in the solar system, according to the law of universal gravitation. «The more perfectly the local attraction tends to counterbalance that of the center», Carey wrote, «the more society tends to conform itself to the laws we see to govern our system of worlds»⁸⁸.

In depicting his vision of society's movement, Carey also reposed the main arguments of his monetary thinking, already exposed in the 1855 articles. Here, the depiction of money as a «machinery of association» assumed a more precise meaning and a much clearer relevance in Carey's vision of society. In fact, in allowing to realize the process of «division, subdivision, composition, and recomposition» indispensable to connect within the market the myriad of individuals acts of production to the myriad of individuals wills of consumption, to Carey money held society together, making association possible. In this respect, he wrote, «the precious metals are to the social body what atmospheric air is to the physical one»⁸⁹. Or, according to a different analogy, money was «to society what fuel is to the locomotive and food to the man»⁹⁰. By facilitating combination, exchange, production and consumption, money made possible that «societary circulation» which to Carey coincided with the circulation of wealth and with the very movement of society. If association to Carey represented a law of gravitational motion⁹¹, money represented

⁸⁵ Carey, 46.

⁸⁶ «Each State constituting a body perfect in itself, with local attraction tending to maintain its form, despite the gravitating tendency toward the center, around which it, and its sister States, are required to revolve». Carey, 51.

⁸⁷ Carey, 52.

⁸⁸ Carey, 57.

⁸⁹ Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. II*, 297–300.

⁹⁰ Carey, 343.

⁹¹ «Every act of association being an act of motion». Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. I*, 200.

«the cause of motion»⁹², that is the social infrastructure that made such motion possible. In this respect, it represented «the *indispensable* machinery of progress»⁹³. For this reason, Carey wrote reiterating the arguments from 1855, the supply of money always needed to match the increasing volume of exchange and accumulation that accompanied economic development. Therefore, increases in the quantity of circulating money could only stimulate production, investment and overall accumulation, without necessarily producing inflation. At the same time, Carey here added that what really mattered to prosperity was not simply the quantity of money «held by a country» but in particular «the rapidity with which it circulates», since «hoarded» money rendered «no service to society»⁹⁴. In this respect, it was crucial, in his vision, to develop credit instruments like banknotes, checks and even fiat money that allowed not only to fight monetary scarcity, but that allowed money to circulate as fast as possible reaching the places when it was needed right at the time when it was needed⁹⁵. Thus, in stressing the centrality of money to his vision of societary movement, at the end of the 1850s, Carey anticipated the monetary questions that the United States would soon have to face during the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Thus, as a law of gravitation the principle of association did not regulate static social relations but governed their dynamics. However, unlike Newton's universe, Carey's system of society did not always move according to a regular pace but was constantly accelerating. In such acceleration, in his view, consisted the human «capacity for progress». This way, Carey could not only show that society was an intrinsically ordered system, but that it could also produce growing wealth and expanding opportunities of accumulation. In fact, in his view the relations of exchange and cooperation determined a generalized «motion of society», which tended to become faster as man's power over nature increased. «All force results from motion», he wrote, «and it is where there is the greatest movement in society, that man is seen exerting the greatest power for the subjugation of the various natural forces»⁹⁶. It was this movement of society that enabled «the never-ending round of production and consumption»⁹⁷, in that it put into action the human capacity to direct and transform the forces of nature to one's own ends and, ultimately, to accumulate wealth⁹⁸. «Societary movement» thus turned out to be a process co-extensive with capital accumulation, which, in Carey's view, took the form of a progressive substitution of variable capital for fixed capital: «the more continuous and rapid becomes the motion of society, and the greater the power

⁹² Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. II*, 344.

⁹³ Carey, 323.

⁹⁴ Carey, 341.

⁹⁵ Carey, 343.

⁹⁶ Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. I*, 200.

⁹⁷ Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. III*, 59.

⁹⁸ «Man needs power, and to have power there must be motion». Carey, 18.

of accumulation»⁹⁹. The gravitational movement of society and the accumulative movement of capital were indistinguishable, revealing how to Carey it was the latter that ultimately constituted the organizing principle of the former. It was capital, with its drive for accumulation, that built the systemic structure and the increasingly rapid, but also stable, predictable and orderly movement of society. In such structure, however, the movements of individuals were limited just like those of the bodies governed by the force of gravitation.

In fact, as much as Carey described accumulation essentially as a process of man's emancipation, increasing his power over nature and increasing equality between individuals and classes¹⁰⁰, the accelerated «societary motion» could happen only upon the condition of a strengthening and tightening of social relations. In order that society could accelerate its movement, in other words, individuals had to be anchored more and more firmly to their social position. White workers had to submit to wage labor in Northeastern manufactures, slaves had to keep working in Southern plantations, while patiently waiting for the gradual unfolding of emancipation, while women had to accept their separate and subordinate role in the home. In order to guarantee accumulation, to make it ever more rapid, extensive but also secure, progress had therefore to coincide with an increasing ordering of society which allowed «steadiness» and continuity in its movement, in turn increasing the cogency of the force of social gravitation, «by imitating as far as possible the mechanism he sees to govern the movements of the heavenly bodies»¹⁰¹. Progress, of which the security of people and property was an inescapable condition, thus coincided with an intensification and strengthening of social ties of exchange and cooperation, which allowed gravitational motion to assert itself at all levels, from family to the State, in an increasing approximation to the movement of planets.

«In time, however, wealth and population grow, and with that growth there is an increase of motion in the community. [...] Motion now becomes more continuous, and with this increase of movement there is a steady increase in the power of man over nature, attended by diminution of her resistance to these further efforts. Everywhere around, are seen other families, each revolving on its own axis, while the community of which they form a part, is steadily revolving around a common center; and thus, by degrees, we see established a system corresponding with that which maintains in order the wonderful system of the universe»¹⁰².

⁹⁹ Carey, 59.

¹⁰⁰ Carey, 53.

¹⁰¹ Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. I*, 201.

¹⁰² Carey, 203–4.

In describing this natural law of social gravitation, however, Carey did not merely propose an analogy between the mechanics of society and that of the solar system but went as far as asserting a full homology between the functioning of the former and that of the latter¹⁰³. Indeed, since the seventeenth century, the success of Newtonian science and its principle of universal gravitation had made it inevitable for any form of political or economic thought with scientific ambitions to resort to analogies between the functioning of nature on the one hand and the functioning of society, economics and politics on the other¹⁰⁴. In the United States in particular a deeply-rooted tradition had tended to view the institutional organization of society through the lens of political Newtonianism¹⁰⁵. Constructing analogies of this kind, however, usually meant asserting a functional, albeit generic similarity between political, economic and social laws and the principles of Newtonian science, in the attempt to construct a science of society that had the same method, epistemological foundation and thus the same legitimacy as physics¹⁰⁶. Carey's social science, instead, aspired to describe a true homology between nature and society, identifying a law of social gravitation that, in his view, was not only similar but formally and substantially identical to that which governed the motion of bodies in space. Such a homology was almost unique in the history of economic thought (matched only by Léon Walras's theory of prices in 1860) and partly based on an erroneous interpretation of Newton's formula¹⁰⁷, but nonetheless testified to the urgency with which Carey tried to face the problem of finding a scientific foundation for the social order's functioning.

Just as Newton had provided a general and coherent explanation of the workings of a *systema mundi*, in which each particle of matter resulted connected to all the others by a physical law of attraction, so Carey attempted to elaborate the description of a mechanical *systema societatis* in which each molecule-individual resulted structurally and necessarily connected to all the others and governed

¹⁰³ There are countless analogies between society and the solar system throughout the three volumes of *Principles of Social Science*. For some examples, see: Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. I*, 190, 203–4, 290; Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. II*, 177–78, 269; Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. III*, 74, 329–30, 464.

¹⁰⁴ On the often uncritical and illegitimate application of Newtonian principles by political and economic thought, but also by other scientific disciplines, see: Alexandre Koyré, *Newtonian Studies* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1965), 20–24.

¹⁰⁵ On Newtonianism in American political thought, see: Michael Foley, *Laws, Men and Machines: Modern American Government and the Appeal of Newtonian Mechanics*. (New York-London: Routledge, 1990); Richard Striner, "Political Newtonianism: The Cosmic Model of Politics in Europe and America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (October 1995): 583-608; Eran Shalev, "Our Federal Sun: Planetary Politics before the Civil War," *American Political Thought* 7, no. 2 (March 2018): 189–215.

¹⁰⁶ I. Bernard Cohen, "An Analysis of Interactions between the Natural Sciences and the Social Sciences," in *The Natural Sciences and the Social Sciences. Some Critical and Historical Perspectives*, Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science (Berlin: Springer Science+Business Media, 1994), 17–19.

¹⁰⁷ Cohen, 17–18. Bernard Cohen has criticized the inaccuracy of Carey's formula («Gravitation is here, as everywhere else in the material world, in the direct ratio of the mass, and in the inverse one of the distance», *Principles of Social Science. Vol. I*, pp. 42-43), pointing out that in Newton's law the force of gravity was inversely proportional not to distance, but to the square of distance. On Carey's Newtonian homology see also: Terenzio Maccabelli, "Economia scienza newtoniana? Note sui rapporti tra la metodologia della fisica di Newton e l'economia politica" (Discussion Papers n. 4: Dipartimento di Studi Sociali, Università di Brescia, 1996), 5.

by the gravitational principle of association¹⁰⁸. Through this representation, social science could thus describe the apparently disconnected and unpredictable movements of individuals within society as constitutive elements of its own order¹⁰⁹. In particular, this was possible insofar as the system of society was not simply a way of ordering individuals, but also of guaranteeing them increasing opportunities of accumulation, consumption and improvement, provided that they maintained their place within the system. In other words, through social science Carey tried to depict society as a dynamic order that through its own gravitational and accelerating movement could solve the social diseases that several subjects were contesting in the 1850s. However, while presented as the result of a mechanic movement regulated by a natural and necessary law, Carey's system of society nonetheless seemed to require a political power to govern its interactions and make its functioning possible, just like the order of Newtonian mechanics required a God to impress movement upon it. In the crisis of the 1850s, it was clearly not enough to leave the implementation of social order to spontaneous mechanisms, but the state had to be called into question.

4. «The Power of Co-ordination»: the State as the «Political Head» of Society

While in his previous writings, even in those devoted to protectionism, he had never gone as far as explicitly rejecting *laissez-faire*, in the third volume of the *Principles of Social Science* Carey outlined a vision of the state not only as an engine of economic development, but as the power tasked with coordinating the movements and the organization of society. In the third volume's last chapters, in fact, dealing with the question of government and its relation to society, Carey tended to abandon the purely mechanistic analogy between the order of society and the order of the solar system, to resort to a more organicist analogy between society and the human body. Clearly, the two metaphors cannot be considered radically alternative, as the history of philosophical and political thought abounds with mechanical conceptions of the body¹¹⁰. Carey himself repeatedly juxtaposed mechanistic and organicist metaphors, comparing the «machine of society» to the «human frame» as being both composed of «portions acting independently, yet all in perfect harmony, each with every other»¹¹¹. However, in dealing with the state's role, Carey tended to go beyond the purely

¹⁰⁸ It could be said of Carey's social science, what Koyré wrote of the «*monstra* conceived by the illicit extension-or extrapolation» of the Newtonian method: «an atomistic sociology for which society was reduced to an aggregate of human atoms, each accomplished and enclosed within itself, attracting and repelling each other». Koyré, *Newtonian Studies*, 23.

¹⁰⁹ Ricciardi, *La società come ordine*, 9–10.

¹¹⁰ Georges Canguilhem, *Knowledge of Life* [1952] (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 75–97.

¹¹¹ «The machine of society, like that of the human frame, is composed of portions acting independently, yet all in perfect harmony, each with every other. The stomach acts while the eyes are closed in sleep; and the ear is open, though the nerves are unexcited. Each of these changes in its constituent parts from day to day – the machine remaining still the same; and the more rapid the assimilation of the food required for the accomplishment of those changes, the more healthful is the action of the whole; and the greater is the tendency to stability and durability of the machine itself. So

mechanistic vision of society as an automatically moving body-machine, increasingly embracing a more strongly organicist vision, probably derived from Comte as well as from contemporary biological sciences¹¹². Carey started from the problem of the political unity of society, explaining how, despite its composite character, it could gain a kind of «oneness» as a «societary body». In fact, as the United States of America had proven, through the principle of «*e pluribus unum*» it was possible to create an «artificial man» who acted as the institutional representative of a multitude of individuals¹¹³. As a matter of fact, Carey explained, just as the human body needed a brain to perform its functions, and particularly those that went beyond mere subsistence, the collective body of society beyond a certain level of development needed a «head», that is a political government, in order to properly function.

«The political head does exactly what [...] has provided to be done by the physical one - co-ordinating the movements of the various members of the society in such manner as to remove the obstacles which stand in the way of association, and prevent the diversification of the employments of society which is required for adding value to land and labor, and giving freedom to man. The more perfect that co-ordination, whether in the physical or social body, the more complete must be the development of all the parts, and the more harmonious the action of the whole»¹¹⁴.

The gravitational movements of society that had been described by Carey as necessary, automatic and inevitable thus appeared to require an artificial intelligence in order to function. Only through the state-brain's action, then, could societary movements be coordinated into a unitary and harmonious dynamic, overcoming the obstacles posed to the accumulation of capital on the one hand by labor insubordination and on the other by the world market's power structure. Only the state-brain could thus re-establish the mechanical movement of society whenever a cog emerged in its functioning, with an external intervention that allowed the machine to go back to its normal operation. Thus, the emergence of the organicist metaphor testified to the insufficiency of Carey's mechanistic vision of society, just as his protectionism had proven the insufficiency of his vision of a natural and necessary economic development. Thus, the movement of society, just as the accumulation of capital, to Carey ended up requiring a political coordination by the state in order

is it, too, with society — its tendency towards steadiness and durability being in the direct ratio of the rapidity of motion among its various parts, and the activity of commerce. The more natural the form, the greater, as we everywhere see, is the tendency to continuity of existence». Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. I*, 223.

¹¹² Arnold Green highlighted how Carey juxtaposed the two metaphors without ever reconciling them, describing it as an attempt to combine Newtonian physics with the rising organicist explanations of human behavior: Green, *Henry Charles Carey*, 63. On the contrary, Pitrim Sorokin ignored the organicist metaphors within Carey's social science, defining him as an integrally mechanistic and Newtonian social thinker: Sorokin, *Contemporary Sociological Theories*, 3–19. It is true that both metaphors can be found in the *Principles of Social Science*, but what is relevant is where and to what purposes they are used by Carey.

¹¹³ Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. III*, 401.

¹¹⁴ Carey, 414.

to function, and the stronger that coordination, the more perfect its functioning. Most crucially, Carey depicted the state as indispensable to produce an order that could not emerge spontaneously out of individual interactions. In other words, the acephalous society imagined by Adam Smith in Carey's perspective could not function properly, nor progress, without a political brain capable of coordinating its movements. Thus, to fulfill the purpose of association among individuals, namely productive development and wealth accumulation, it was necessary that «some certain persons must act as umpires, empowered so as to co-ordinate and determine the movement of the societary body - as to call into activity all the powers of its members»¹¹⁵. Society needed a political head that could guarantee its order.

«The government - representing, as it does, the intelligent of the body, physical and social - has a duty and a use, and therefore, a right to a place in the natural order. While ministering to the well-being of the body, it may not, and, as we see, it does not, intervene in that sphere of life which is nearest its central movements. *Laisser faire* is *there* the law - ruling all that has already been appropriated»¹¹⁶

As the brain and the arbiter of the social body, government had thus to ensure its welfare, leaving individuals «liberty to the internal life» while ensuring «protection to the social life». A «protection» that had to include «assistance and defense» and must take the form of both a «regulative help», in order to guarantee «the sustenance of the body within its reach» and of a «guardianship in warding off all disturbing and injurious influences from without»¹¹⁷. Protection, in other words, took on a broader political significance, now fully referring to the protection covenant, the exchange between protection and submission that founded the pact between the State and its citizens, and thus the foundational element of the internal and external legitimacy of the State itself, which enshrined both an obligation for the State to defend itself against external threats but also specific obligations to its citizens¹¹⁸. Having a duty to provide «protection», the government also had to regulate social life to ensure its existence. In any case, Carey specified, just as the brain did not directly control all the organs of the human body, so the government did not control all the organs of the social body, leaving many of them to function on their own. And yet, since in every organism «the necessity for a coordinating power appears, therefore, to exist in the direct ratio of development»¹¹⁹, the coordinating power of the state would also increase as the social body became more developed. In this respect, Carey's «power of co-ordination» did not coincide with Raymond's and List's

¹¹⁵ Carey, 409.

¹¹⁶ Carey, 405.

¹¹⁷ Carey, 405.

¹¹⁸ Nicholas Greenwood Onuf and Peter S. Onuf, *Nations, Markets, and War. Modern History and the American Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 282.

¹¹⁹ Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. III*, 406.

«interfering social power», in that it was required to govern the movements of society but allowing their free and natural course as much as possible.

Thus, duties and tariffs constituted to Carey only one, albeit the most important, of the many possible forms in which such «protection» could be implemented. In this respect, he enumerated a series of concrete cases in which the state had to act as the arbiter of society in order to guarantee the conditions of production and accumulation. It had to do so, for example, by intervening where transportation infrastructure was lacking, by organizing the construction of roads, railways and canals, but also by intervening where there was a lack of general units of measurement or essential services such as postal services, education, electricity and gas, or where there was a lack of resources needed to finance scientific discoveries or to meet the costs of building a naval fleet¹²⁰. In all these cases, however, Carey specified, the «coordinating head» should not take charge of the implementation of such public works on itself, but rather it had to dictate their terms («fixing the terms») and to finance them, in particular by entrusting their implementation to privately managed «corporations», that is, by «creating an artificial man, and authorizing the head of the body thus created to guide and direct the operations»¹²¹.

In listing the obstacles to «combination» that the state had a duty to remove, Carey thus depicted the way in which the American state had both to place itself at the very center of economic development and social relations while at the same time concealing its own role as much as possible, a tendency that some historians have highlighted as actually predominant in the nineteenth-century history of the American state¹²². The «corporation» emerged once more in Carey's perspective as the fundamental institutional form of association: the «social body» through which the state had to indirectly achieve its purposes by immersing itself within society. Moreover, the government could not fail to intervene through the imposition of trade tariffs when the subordinate position of national economy in the world market constituted an obstacle to its further development. Indeed, Carey explained, just as a ship deprived of the bolts that held it together would fall apart, the same would happen to any country «in which industrial development has yet to be accomplished, and yet adopts the doctrine of *laissez faire* - manufactures being to the societal machine exactly what the bolts are to the ship»¹²³. Accordingly, the government had to ensure the economic development of society by governing its movements: as to List, to Carey the issue of government economic

¹²⁰ Carey, 411–13.

¹²¹ Carey, 410.

¹²² William J. Novak, «The Myth of the 'Weak' American State," *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 3 (June 2008): 752–72; Brian Balogh, *A Government Out of Sight. The Mystery of National Authority in Nineteenth-Century America* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹²³ Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. III*, 445.

intervention was a matter of duty rather than of right. In his view, however, this «power of coordination» of the government did not determine a risk of «centralization», since the removal of obstacles to development constituted both the main task and the only limitation of State action, going beyond which it would end up making «mischief instead of good»¹²⁴.

In fact, if government constituted the political brain of society, the state in whose name it acted had to replicate in itself the decentralized model of society, based on the principles of «concentration» and «local attraction», which had been realized in the United States. «The theory of political government of these United States», Carey explained, «is in an obvious general harmony with the vital economy», in that it provided for a federal construction of the State that translated the delocalized organization of society onto the constitutional level. Indeed, the American state allowed the individual to enjoy the vital impetus that government gave to the societary movement, but without feeling «the rein of a nerve of the ruling functionaries», and allowed each family, each «school district», each «township», each «county», and each «state» to govern itself within the limits of the «supremacy of the Union», which remained «supreme only in what is essential to the harmony and well-being of the whole of the great confederacy»¹²⁵. It was thus a form of state once again interpenetrated in society and capable of coordinating its movement precisely because it was rooted within it: a form of political power, with respect to which society and the individuals were both the object of governing action and the very source of power. To Carey, the American state had to derive its strength from its ability to distribute and at the same time coordinate power through the proliferation of institutions, such as the «corporation», that were both public and private, at once part of the state and part of society. «American civil polity», he wrote, «is distinguished by the prevalence and diversity of civil corporations - political power being, by this means, distributed, decentralized, and co-ordinated»¹²⁶. It was this model of state that made it possible, according to Carey, to affirm «subordination, without sacrifice - authority, without usurpation - intervention, without interference»¹²⁷.

Through this triad, Carey in some ways revealed the arcane of the American state-form: a decentralized, federal and self-governed form that precisely served to carry out the functions of the state without incurring the risks inherent in the European state-form. This model of state that was not separate from society but governed it from within, Carey seemed to suggest, could allow to achieve a subordination of citizens that was not perceived as sacrifice, an authority that was not

¹²⁴ Carey, 415.

¹²⁵ Carey, 408.

¹²⁶ Carey, 420.

¹²⁷ Carey, 408.

perceived as usurpation, and an interventionism that was not perceived as interference with the free unfolding of society's movements. This state, precisely because of such an ideological and political success, to Carey ended up being both stronger and more legitimate precisely because it was less visible and, so to speak, hidden within society itself. Paraphrasing the function attributed by Tocqueville to democracy, one might say that the purpose of the «self-government» described by Carey was precisely to legitimize, by concealing it, the necessary political power of the State, not to erase it. In this respect, he could paradoxically claim that precisely where «the power of coordination is in constant exercise, [...] there it is, government is most unfehl»¹²⁸. As much as society could not function without its political brain, nonetheless, within the American state-form, the stronger the state, the more society could appear to function on its own.

«Look where we may, we shall find evidence, that the necessity for the application of intelligence to the coordination of the movements of the various members of the societary body, grows with the growth of wealth and numbers, and that the more wisely it is exercised, the greater is the growth of production-the more rapid is the progress of accumulation-the more equitable is the distribution-the longer is the duration of life-the more perfect is the development of local centers of action-and the greater is the tendency toward [...] the development of the real man, master of nature and of himself».¹²⁹

Thus, by presenting the state as the political brain of society vested with the task of coordinating and accelerating its movements, Carey showed the political foundation of his mechanical vision of society. In doing so, he went far beyond the vision implicit in his protectionist writings, since the state here did not appear solely as an engine of accumulation and as a power at the service of capital, but as a power tasked with the broader role of allowing the functioning of society and of guaranteeing its very order, a problem that to Carey, in the midst of the 1850s sectional conflict, appeared all the more compelling. In order to do so, the state had to root itself no longer simply within capital but within society, so as to govern and coordinate its overall movement. Thus, Carey's organicist vision of the state-brain in some ways aimed to compensate the shortcomings of society's mechanics. Just as Newton's universe needed a God to regulate its functioning like that of a clock, then, Carey's society-machine required a state that, as a *deus ex machina*, had to constantly re-establish, through its political command, the fundamental conditions of its ordered and predictable movement, especially in the moment of crisis.

¹²⁸ Carey, 436.

¹²⁹ Carey, 444.

5. «The Societary Man»: Freedom and Subordination

Although Carey continued to portray development as a process of emancipation that increased human power over matter, his conceptualization of a gravitational order of society and of the state's coordinating power resulted in a redefinition of individual freedom that radically narrowed its scope. To Carey, as noted above, man lived split in a «two-fold physiological division» between his existence «as an individual» and his existence «as a member of society»¹³⁰. The latter, however, determined his real status as an individual, in particular by making impossible any form of true independence on his part. Only in the absence of relationships, Carey explained, could the individual really be independent, but in isolation he could not survive, being «helpless» and losing his own human characteristics. Within society, on the contrary, individual independence «cannot be entire, either in extent, or in degree», precisely because of the individual's increasing embeddedness in a network of relationships that intensified and became more cogent as development proceeded. «The societal man», Carey explained, «has his independency rooted in his original relations with his fellow-men» and therefore developed «a general dependency upon every neighbor»¹³¹. As E. P. Smith had already noted, within the order of society the individual was placed in a network of interdependencies with other individuals that made him *de facto* dependent vis-à-vis the whole of society and its political government.

Thus, if in the 1830s, independency, especially economic through ownership, had been depicted by Carey as the culmination of the path of individual improvement, here, in describing society as a mechanical system, he abandoned every residual republican ideal to legitimize individual dependency from social relations not only as compatible with, but as the very foundation of individual freedom. In doing so, Carey resorted to a semantics of subordination quite unique in nineteenth-century U.S. political discourse in the North and much closer to Fitzhugh's and Hughes's discourse on the relationship between the individual and society. Carey, in fact, moved from a vision of the social system in which the «subordination of specialities to a general intention» represented the very «mark and test of organization». In this respect, just as the development of all organisms existing in nature depended both on the simultaneity between the differentiation of their component parts and the subordination of such parts to the overall functioning of the organism, so the development of «societary organizations», Carey explained, was directly proportional to the degree of individual subordination and obedience, as well as to the coordinating capacity of government.

¹³⁰ Carey, 404.

¹³¹ Carey, 406.

«Absolute subordination in the parts of a machine to the moving force, is the constant characteristic of inanimate organizations. In a watch, steam-engine, mill, or ship, all the parts are in prompt and complete obedience - their perfection being measured by the exactness of their subordination. In societary organizations, we have the same law modified, but not repealed, by the liberty which accompanies human life - bringing with it responsibility to both God and man. The crew of a ship - the hands employed in a factory - the thousands of whom an army is composed - are organized and subordinated, that they may accomplish the work for whose performance they have been brought together. So, too, is it in civil government - subordination of the subjects being essential to the well-being and the progress of the community, and to those very individual liberties which it limits, as well as to the national order for whose security it has been designed. [...] The more perfect the organization, and the more absolute the subordination, the more harmonious and beautiful is the interdependence of the parts»¹³².

The examples chosen by Carey are extremely significant, and give a measure of the degree not only of subordination, but of actual discipline, that he deemed necessary to impose on individuals in order to ensure the functioning of society. Only to the extent that individuals acquired the same degree of subordination to society as the members of a crew, the soldiers of an army, the workers of a factory, or more generally the cogs of a machine, could the societal organization make progresses, guaranteeing their «individuality», their «improvement», and their increasing power over nature. Thus, not only did the subordination of individuals represent to Carey a necessary condition for the functioning of society as a whole, but also a condition of their own progress, improvement and freedom: «organization and subordination, association and individuality, responsibility and freedom, travel thus together, throughout the social world»¹³³. Carey thus redefined the freedom of the individual by literally subordinating it to the demands of the organization of the societal system as a whole. Only if subjected to the society-machine and its ordered movement, and thus to the demands of capital accumulation, could Carey's individual be free in the sense that it could participate to society's accelerating movement, while profiting, at least to some extent, from the increasing accumulation of wealth it produced¹³⁴. At the same time, the very description of society as subject to a gravitational force, and as such necessary and inescapable, entailed a specific delimitation of the degree of individual freedom within it.

«Man, thus, is ever in subjection to the same great forces which maintain the order of the solar system - his progress toward civilization, being always in the ratio of the intensity of the attractive and counter-attractive forces to which he is thus subjected. The greater that intensity, the more rapid is the societary circulation -

¹³² Carey, 456.

¹³³ Carey, 457.

¹³⁴ «All the facts of history may now be cited in evidence of the proposition, that the societary organization becomes more complete - subordination more perfect - and man more free - in the direct ratio of the approach of the consumer to the producer». Carey, 463.

the greater the competition for the purchase of labor and labor's products - and the greater the tendency toward development of the human faculties, and toward the production of the real MAN»¹³⁵

As a molecule of society, the individual subjected to the gravitational force of society thus enjoyed a degree of freedom equal to that of the planets attracted and repelled by gravity in the solar system. The only difference being that while planets always moved at the same pace and could not in any way affect it, humans had the ability to contribute, through labor, to accelerating the speed of «societary motion». Man was thus freer than inorganic matter and animals insofar as he could accelerate his own movement, that is, insofar as he could work more and more productively for the accumulation of capital. Precisely in this laid the «capacity for progress» and the «mastery of nature» that distinguished man as a specie. Only upon the condition of this obedience could man become part of that process of accumulation and to that democracy of capital that Carey had celebrated in his previous writings and of which he finally made clear the social and political conditions. The individual's freedom and his capacity of improvement thus became functions of his obedience: the societary freedom and improvement of a societary individual.

At most, in the system of society, to Carey individual freedom could represent a contingent variable resulting from the interplay of market forces, and specifically between labor supply and demand. Indeed, in the chapter devoted to «competition», Carey explained that since human «labor-power» was the «most perishable» commodity, in that «the laborer *must* sell his potential energies, be they what they may, or perish for want of food», it followed that individual freedom depended precisely on the ease with which he could sell his labor in the marketplace. In this respect, human freedom was a matter of competition. «In regard to no commodity», Carey explained, «is the effect resulting from the presence or absence of competition so great, as in relation to human force», arguing that «two men competing for its purchase, its owner becomes a freeman. The two, competing for its sale, become enslaved». In this respect, he concluded, «the whole question of freedom or slavery for man is, therefore, embraced in that of competition»¹³⁶. Thus, it was ultimately supply and demand that determined the free or slave character of labor, not the social relations in which individuals happened to be coerced. Such conclusion allowed Carey on the one hand to legitimize wage labor as a form of free labor in which the worker could choose his own employer, something that was hardly true, even in early-nineteenth-century U.S. capitalism¹³⁷. On the other hand, this allowed Carey to operate a crucial ideological operation with respect to American slavery, by

¹³⁵ Carey, 329–30.

¹³⁶ Carey, 234. See also: Carey, 25.

¹³⁷ Seth Rockman, «The Unfree Origins of American Capitalism,» in *The Economy of Early America: Historical Perspectives & New Directions*, ed. Cathy D. Matson (University Park, Pa: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 335–61.

denying its specificity as a violent and institutionalized system of labor coercion and depicting it as the outcome of impersonal market dynamics that therefore could be overcome through capital accumulation itself. Moreover, by reducing freedom to a function of the market and by indicating subordination to society's gravitational order as its fundamental condition, Carey also laid the ground for a crucial conceptual limitation of the emancipation that in the late-1850s slaves increasingly demanded and threatened to obtain. In other words, in a phase of increasing slave insubordination and rebellion, restricting the meaning of freedom represented to Carey an indispensable precondition of emancipation. It was only this limited, ordered and subordinated freedom that black and white workers could aspire to in U.S. society.

«The more thorough the development of differences among men, and the more perfect the power of self-direction, the more complete becomes their interdependence; the greater is the tendency toward harmony in the relations of society, and mutual respect on the part of both laborer and capitalist; the larger is the production; the more rapid is the circulation; the more equitable the distribution; the more absolute the subordination; and the greater the tendency toward freedom for all mankind»¹³⁸.

In any respect, even this limited freedom appeared accessible only by male and white individuals, since Carey's social science, while describing capital as the «great equalizer», could not avoid to ground its functioning upon racial and sexual hierarchies. On the one hand, while describing social progress as endowing increase relevance and value to women and their labor, it still conceived their social position as both separated and subordinated. While in the backwards and «barbarous» stages of society the woman was nothing but «the slave of man, where man himself is nature's slave», Carey wrote in a chapter devoted to the «relation among sexes», with «every stage of progress», she tended to acquire «increased importance». However, she did so only as a «wife» and only «as being the mistress of the house, the companion of his joys and his sorrows, and the mother of his children»¹³⁹. In fact, with the diversification of employments, which gave «brain» increasingly more importance over «mere force», the woman could see her value growing and find «herself becoming more and more the equal of the man», but only insofar as demand grew «for her peculiar powers», that is for her reproductive and domestic labor¹⁴⁰. Moreover, the same progress also strengthened the sacrality of marriage¹⁴¹. Thus, in Carey's perspective, women's supposed improvement and increasing equality had to happen within the separate sphere of the home, within the realm of the

¹³⁸ Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Vol. III*, 463.

¹³⁹ Carey, 368.

¹⁴⁰ Carey, 369.

¹⁴¹ Carey, 384.

domesticity and within the patriarchal relation with the husband, thus in the end reproducing their subordination based on sex.

On the other hand, in revisiting his critique to Malthus' theory of population moving from purely physical facts, Carey embraced the principles of scientific racism propagated in the previous decades by Samuel George Morton, who in his *Crania Americana*, published in Philadelphia in 1839, had used craniometric evidence to argue in favor of the existence of racial hierarchies¹⁴². In his view, in fact, the dimension of skulls corresponded to the development of intellectual abilities and therefore had to be matched by a higher or lower position within society. Carey used Morton's phrenology to counter Malthus with a new argument. It was wrong, he wrote, to assume, as Malthus had done, that the rate of human reproduction would always increase with increased economic means, since this would condemn humanity to misery and subsistence, while also describing God as inconsistent with his own recommendation to men about the need to «be fruitful and multiply». On the contrary, in Carey's view, a physical law existed connecting, in the course of social and economic progress, the increasing development of human faculties to a decreasing capacity of reproduction, so as to naturally and spontaneously avoid the problem of overpopulation. To Carey this meant that the larger the size of the human brain, the lower would be human fertility, since, «intense mental application, involving great waste of the nervous tissue, and corresponding consumption of the nervous element for its repair» would be accompanied «by a proportionately diminished production of sperm-cells»¹⁴³. It was for this reason, he explained quoting Morton's *Catalogue of Skulls* (1849)¹⁴⁴, that black slaves in the South reproduced themselves at higher rates, because of their «absence of mental activity»¹⁴⁵. In the course of progress, Carey seemed to suggest, even blacks or «barbarous American Indians» could develop their intellectual faculties, but in the present their lower intelligence, and higher fertility, could scientifically explain, and justify, their inferior social and economic condition. Thus, the acceleration of societary motion did not involve the erasure of hierarchies based on sex or race.

In the conclusion of the *Principles of Social Science's* third volume, Carey reiterated the main findings of his social science and the lessons that the different social subjects should learn from it. In doing so, Carey listed the several threats that in his view were shaking the United States in the late 1850s, praising subservience to the accumulation of capital as the sole condition for obtaining increased freedom and wealth. Thus, he admonished «workingmen» about the need to respect «the rights of

¹⁴² Samuel George Morton, *Crania Americana; or, a Comparative View of the Skulls of Various Aboriginal Nations of North and South America* (Philadelphia: Dobson, 1839).

¹⁴³ Carey, *Principles of Social Science*. Vol. III, 303.

¹⁴⁴ Samuel George Morton, *Catalogue of skulls of man and the inferior animals* (Philadelphia: Dobson, 1849).

¹⁴⁵ Carey, *Principles of Social Science*. Vol. III, 299.

property» as the only way to increase their wages and «freemen» about the need to embrace «subordination» as the «road to harmony, peace and freedom». Moreover, he warned «advocates of women's rights» and «anti-slavery advocates» about the fact that the road towards «freedom» for slaves and «elevation of sex» laid in the direction of a diversification of industry. In general, he advised «reformers» about the need to pursue their goals «slowly and gently»¹⁴⁶. On the eve of the Civil War, then, Carey ended his treatise with a conservative call for subordination to the order of society and its hierarchical relations, increasingly threatened by slave insubordination, abolitionist militancy, women's demands for equality, workers' pretenses for higher wages, as well as Southern temptations of secession. It was against such scenario, in which both capital and labor largely refused to contribute to the ordered vision of progress outlined in his previous writings, that Carey had felt the need to rethink science, society, the state and individual freedom. It was in the attempt to scientifically ground and strengthen the U.S. social order, that Carey had depicted society as a gravitational and constantly accelerating system, tightly coordinated by the state and capable of organizing human interactions at the local level while keeping individuals subordinated and at work. However, Carey's social science, elaborated against the most profound crisis of U.S. history, could not arrest the epochal, chaotic transformation that, in the following years, the Civil War and the abolition of slavery would bring in the U.S. social, economic, political and constitutional history.

Despite its pioneering role in attempting a scientific study of society as a whole and in bringing Comte to the United States, the publication of Carey's persistently Newtonian *Principles of Social Science* between 1858 and 1860 proved untimely. In fact, already since the early 1860s, U.S. social thought was invested by the coming of Herbert Spencer's philosophy to the United States, who provided an entirely new and more powerful approach to the study of nature, of society and of its organic development¹⁴⁷. It was therefore Spencer's social Darwinism, not Carey's Newtonianism, that constituted the founding root of U.S. social sciences¹⁴⁸. Describing society as an organism that changed slowly and gradually through an evolutionary process of improvement in which only the fittest could survive, social Darwinism proved more effective in representing competition as the fundamental law of nature and in justifying the struggle for survival imposed by the booming, late-nineteenth-century U.S. capitalism¹⁴⁹. Carey's attempt at building a small-scale, localized capitalism capable of both disciplining and including individuals in the process of accumulation so as to avoid social conflict, clearly proved out of touch.

¹⁴⁶ Carey, 469–70.

¹⁴⁷ Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* [1944] (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 3–5.

¹⁴⁸ Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science*, 53–98.

¹⁴⁹ Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, 13–30.

It is therefore not surprising that Darwinism became the target of Carey's attacks in his last scientific effort. Published in 1872, in *The Unity of Law*, Carey basically summarized his *Principles of Social Science*, while reassessing his vision of the «societary movement» in terms of the recently discovered laws of thermodynamics and resorting to an even more radically materialist vision of the relationship between man and nature that almost canceled any room for free will¹⁵⁰. There, Darwinism was presented as the latest manifestation and as the highest expression of the philosophy of conflict, scarcity and competition that had already been fostered by British political economists like Ricardo and Malthus. The world, Carey explained, was currently dominated by war, poverty and backwardness precisely because it had been following «a school from which we learn, that “survival of the fittest”, and crushing out of those less “fitted”, constitute the bases of all natural arrangements for promoting advance in civilization»¹⁵¹. In his vision, the «Darwinian theory» furnished a distorted representation of human society as «a perpetual strife for life» just as British economists had represented interests as competing and conflictual. The «survival of the fittest» was, in other words, the logic corollary of «politico-economical laissez faire». To Carey, instead, social science had the goal of describing a social order in which subordination and discipline were rewarded with an overall progress: in which, with the accumulation of capital, «the strife for life declines, and the weak are daily more and more brought to a level with the rich and strong»¹⁵². It was the societary movement itself that, in Carey's vision, could and should guarantee a generalized improvement and an increasing equality¹⁵³. This scientific perspective, however, was not only increasingly ideological, but, in the context of the 1870s, increasingly at odds with the new scale and pace of U.S. capitalism.

¹⁵⁰ «There is [...] no difference between man and the trees which adorn our parks; the cotton-plant which furnishes the material of our clothing; or the shrub from which we derive our fruits». Henry Charles Carey, *The Unity of Law; As Exhibited in the Relations of Physical, Social, Moral and Mental Science* (Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, 1872), XIV–XV. In their private correspondence, Erasmus Peshine Smith criticized Carey for this stronger vision of man as a part of matter. See his letters to Carey on January 16, 1867 (box 18, folder 3) and October 7, 1871 (box 18, folder 4), «Henry C. Carey Papers», Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

¹⁵¹ Carey, *The Unity of Law*, XIX.

¹⁵² Carey, 156–57.

¹⁵³ See also: «Mr. Malthus exhibits the strife for life as growing with increase of numbers and consequent increase of power to co-operate together for compelling the physical forces to labor in man's service. Following in his footsteps, Mr. Darwin gives us a “survival of the fittest,” and a trampling out of the weak, as necessary consequences of inability of the earth to meet the large demands upon her of an increasing population. In the natural course of things, directly the reverse of this *should* be the case, the strife for life being greatest when a thousand acres scarcely furnish the supplies required by a single individual; and least, when a single well cultivated acre can be made to furnish more than all the food he needs; greatest, when men are least able to combine together for obtaining power over the natural forces, and least when combination has enabled them to control the wonderful powers of steam, and to exchange ideas on the instant with other men from whom they are separated by broad oceans and almost pathless continents. That so it is, is proved by the fact, that man is daily rising in the scale of being in those countries whose population grows most rapidly, to wit: Russia, Germany, and these United States; as steadily declining in all those countries of the East in which population decreases with correspondent decline of the associative power». Carey, 295.

Chapter 5

Industrial Reconstruction: Money, the State and Capital after the Civil War (1861-1879)

«The act of secession by the South was an act of emancipation for the North»¹. With these words, in a public letter in February 1865, Henry Carey identified what he believed to be the most relevant outcome of the Civil War, which in those very months was drawing to a close, with General Sherman's army preparing to occupy South Carolina. Not the abolition of slavery and the immediate and unconditional emancipation of four million black workers, which only a few days earlier had been constitutionally sanctioned by Congress with the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, but the emancipation of Northern capital from British free-trade and from the colonial condition it had hitherto imposed on U.S. economy. Thanks to the Lincoln administration's wartime economic policies, made possible precisely by the secession of the South, a conflict that had threatened to bring «universal ruin» had thus been transformed, according to the Philadelphia economist, into an economic and political success, resulting in a massive growth in the North's productive capacity and finally setting the United States on the road to «real independence»².

Such reading of the Civil War, which downplayed its abolitionist outcome and revolutionary significance for the social relations of the South, was in full continuity with Carey's repeated attempts in the previous decade to deny the centrality of slavery in the sectional conflict. At the same time, this reading opened up Carey's reflection on Reconstruction once more focusing on the needs of American capital and its accumulation. After the Civil War, to Carey it was necessary on the one hand to defend the economic achievements of the North, particularly in terms of trade and monetary policies, and on the other to trigger a similar industrial development of the South, a necessary and sufficient condition for both the reintegration of the secessionist states into the Union and for the improvement of the freedmen's condition. The «industrial reconstruction» of the South, as Carey named it, had thus to follow the «emancipation» of the North that had taken place during the Civil War, in order to build, with the state's support, an integrated and diversified national economy capable of grounding the international rise of the United States and of bringing it to compete for global economic and political supremacy.

¹ Henry Charles Carey, *The Way to Outdo England Without Fighting Her. Letters to the Hon. Schuyler Colfax on the Paper, the Iron, the Farmer's, the Railroad, and the Currency Question* (Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, 1865), 151.

² Carey, 51, 110.

The goal of this chapter is to trace Carey's thinking in the years from the end of the Civil War in 1865 to his death in 1879. This period coincided with what historians defined Reconstruction, that is the turbulent phase in which the movements of emancipated blacks in the South and of workers and farmers in the North opened a political and class conflict around the redefinition of the post-slavery relations between capital and labor, ending in 1877 with the emergence of a new political alignment. Despite his advancing age, Carey witnessed the events of this phase and kept intervening through pamphlets and articles, identifying currency and protectionism as the conditions for accelerating Northern growth, for starting the productive diversification of the South, and at the same time for ensuring, against class struggle, a cooperation between capital and labor.

The chapter follows Carey's interventions both thematically and chronologically, showing the different implications of his vision of an «industrial reconstruction». After an introduction framing the social, economic and political context of Reconstruction, the first part of the chapter takes into account Carey's post-bellum writings in defence of the Civil War's economic policy, showing how he identified protectionism on the one hand and the greenbacks on the other, and therefore a specific, developmental role of the American state, as the conditions for continuing and accelerating the industrial growth that the North had started experiencing during the Civil War. This first part also reconstructs how Carey's polemic against Hugh McCulloch's contractionist policy signaled the emergence of a broader conflict within Northern capital and within the Republican Party between opposing visions of money, the State and the post-bellum shape of capitalist development. The second part is devoted to Carey's writings on Reconstruction in the South, and specifically on the problems posed by the readmission of Southern states to the Union and the role of black labor after the abolition of slavery. This second part argues that Carey's vision of «industrial reconstruction», identifying the spread of manufactures in the South as the only possible Reconstruction policy, constituted an attack against Radical Reconstruction and its achievements in terms of civil and political rights for blacks, involving a critique of emancipation and a retrospective defense of slavery. A third part focuses on Carey's speeches and interventions during the 1873 Constitutional Convention of Pennsylvania, during which he specified his understanding of the State's role within capitalism as a regulator of financial capital but not of industrial capital, whose development it simply had to support through the guarantee of a universal right to form limited-liability corporations. This part also shows how Carey went back to attack the resurfacing U.S. labor movement and how he tried to depict the corporation as a tool for fostering cooperation between capital and labor. The fourth part follows Carey's very last writings, in the attempt to show how his vision of money and capitalist development was first and foremost aimed at building American independence within the world market and at laying the grounds for the

global projection of U.S. economic and political power. Overall, the chapter argues that Carey's vision of «industrial reconstruction» attempted to rethink the post-slavery conditions of capitalist accumulation in the United States by reproposing a vision of a locally-oriented development that, through protectionism, monetary abundance and democratic forms of corporations, aimed at neutralizing social conflict by widening the opportunities for investment while reproducing the fundamental class, racial and sexual hierarchies of U.S. society. This vision, the chapter argues, in the context of an economic scenario radically transformed by the war, proved increasingly anachronistic and increasingly at odds with the exigencies of the firmly established industrial and financial capital of the North, as well as with its increasing hegemony over the Republican Party.

Introduction: Reconstruction and Class Conflict

Historians have shown how the historical events of Reconstruction happened within a field of tensions produced by the movements of white and black labor, by the reaction of Southern landowners to the end of slavery, by the interests of Northern industrial capital, as well as by the clashes between agrarian, industrial and financial interests in the North. In fact, far from bringing any national pacification, the end of the Civil War marked the beginning of a new phase of political, economic and social confrontation around the problems left open by the conflict. In particular, a clash immediately opened up, in the South but also in the North, around the redefinition of the relationship between capital and labor following the abolition of slavery. For black workers in the South, this meant, first and foremost, imposing their own definition of their newly obtained freedom, which were to consist primarily of control over the conditions of their labor, economic autonomy, and the absence of subordination to white authority. A radical interpretation of freedom that involved a refusal to continue working on plantations and producing cotton, preferring subsistence farming, and above all a demand for access to land ownership.

Having rebelled *en masse* during the Civil War, therefore, freedmen immediately began mobilizing to demand land from the federal government as a necessary complement to emancipation. A demand that in many cases took the form of spontaneous occupation of the plantations on which they had worked until then, further reinforced by Field Order No. 15 issued by General Sherman in 1865, through which more than 400,000 acres of land seized from Confederates between South Carolina, Florida and Georgia were distributed to freedmen, guaranteeing each family «forty acres and a mule»³. Soon, however, the former-slaves' quest for land put them at odds not only with the former-slaveholders but also with many Northern industrialists, who feared a decline in cotton

³ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction. America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863 - 1877*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2014), 70-71.

production, and with the federal government, which as early as the fall of 1865, following Andrew Johnson's presidential pardons, began returning land to the Confederates and expelling the blacks who had settled upon them⁴. The Freedmen's Bureau itself, between 1865 and 1866 played a contradictory role in the transition of the Southern economy from slavery to wage labor, being charged on the one hand with providing education, health care, and legal protection to former slaves, including the establishment of courts to settle disputes with former-slaveholders, while on the other hand being charged with the task of bringing blacks back to work in the fields, with the support of the army, and of promoting the signing of annual contracts, thus contributing to some kind of stabilization of the workforce and the resumption of cotton production⁵.

In the United States, then, as in all post-slavery societies, emancipation brought about a class clash over the control of land, which was at the same time a clash for the control over labor⁶. The freedmen's claims came violently into conflict with the attempts of former masters, still owners of the land, to recreate the discipline of slave plantations and to impose an interpretation of freedom as limited to the opportunity to work. Between 1865 and 1867, however, maintaining such discipline proved particularly difficult, as the unwillingness of black workers to be employed under previous conditions resulted in a labor shortage that for a phase granted the freedmen an unprecedented bargaining power, forcing the former slaveholders to raise wages and avoid enforcement of contracts. This labor shortage was due on the one hand to the reconstitution of the black family, that allowed most women and children to escape the labor market, and on the other hand to the refusal of men to work the same number of hours as when they were slaves⁷. Planters reacted to this refusal by seeking support from the states, which between 1865 and 1866 implemented a series of Black Codes that, while codifying the freedmen's new formal rights, aimed at forcing them to work on plantations by restricting any economic alternatives through vagrancy laws and apprenticeship laws, obligations to reside and have a labor contract, prohibitions to access other forms of subsistence, and regressive taxation. While enjoying the protection of the Southern courts of justice, however, these codes soon proved ineffective in reconstructing the discipline of slavery⁸.

Thus began a process of constant and uncertain negotiation of working conditions on the plantations that would last throughout the following years, settling in the 1870s in the compromise

⁴ Foner, 77-78, 102-10.

⁵ Foner, 153-70.

⁶ Eric Foner, *Nothing but Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 10.

⁷ According to Eric Foner, after the Civil War, the labor supply, in terms of hours worked, of blacks in the South was reduced by about one-third. Foner, *Reconstruction*, 138-40.

⁸ Foner, 198-210.

of sharecropping, which would nonetheless remain a matter of contention for a long time, between the willingness of blacks to work in the absence of white supervision and the willingness of the former masters to impose wage labor. This solution made the black family into the fundamental unit of the organization of production, forcing in many cases the return of women and children to work to cope with periods of crisis and growing indebtedness⁹. While even sharecropping would soon show its oppressive nature, and while racial and class hierarchies in the South would soon be reestablished and strengthened, emancipation had nonetheless irrevocably transformed the conditions of black employment in the South, making a return to pre-Civil War levels of production impossible for a long time. U.S. economists, North and South, had thus been right in the 1850s to fear that an immediate and unconditional emancipation (such as that imposed by slaves themselves through the general strike during the Civil War) would make it impossible to guarantee the same levels of exploitation and discipline guaranteed by slavery.

The clash to redefine the relations between capital and labor after the abolition of slavery, however, did not remain confined to the South, but immediately invested the North as well, where the white working class started organizing on a national level for the first time, seizing the opportunities opened up by the contribution made by Northern workers to the Unionist cause, but also by the fall of racially-based legal divisions of the national workforce with the end of slavery. Already during the war, the working class in the North had returned to demand a reduction of the workday, this time to eight hours. By 1865, hundreds of eight-hour leagues were spreading throughout the North, merging into Grand Eight-Hour Leagues at the state level. Labor leaders such as Ira Steward and historic abolitionist leaders such as Wendell Phillips presented the struggle for the postwar workday as a necessary continuation of the struggle against slavery and as part of the same struggle against class oppression, stressing the need for a union between white and black workers¹⁰. The eight-hour claim was also a decisive stimulus to the formation of a nationwide trade union organization. Thus, in 1866 the National Labor Union was created in Baltimore, which over the following three years, under William Sylvis' leadership, grew to include a hundred local and national trade unions, opening to women's membership in 1868, advocating equal rights and the principle of "equal wages for equal work" (but splitting on the issue of women's suffrage), as well as to blacks in 1869¹¹.

⁹ Foner, 170-75, 403-11.

¹⁰ Philip Sheldon Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States. Volume 1. From Colonial Times to the Founding of the American Federation of Labor* (New York: International Publishers, 1947), 366-67; David R. Roediger and Philip Sheldon Foner, *Our Own Time: A History of American Labor and the Working Day* (London-New York: Verso, 1989), 84-85.

¹¹ Foner, *History of the Labor Movement Vol. 1*, 385-88, 399-401.

However, such an expansion was opposed by many member unions, which refused access to women and especially to blacks. The persistent racism of a large section of the white working class also added to a fundamental indifference of the Northern labor movement to the transformations brought about by Reconstruction, as well as to the broad support for President Johnson among white workers and farmers¹². Sylvis himself, during an organizing tour of the South in 1869, attacked the Radical-Reconstruction governments as emanations of the Republican Party, without grasping the relevance of their program of public support in favor of black workers. On the other hand, however, black workers did not wait to be admitted into white unions but started to organize by themselves, particularly in 1867, when a wave of strikes swept through the South. In July 1869, the National Colored Labor Union was formed to coordinate the many black unions that had sprung up in the South in the previous years¹³. The alliance between the NLU and NCLU was short-lived, however, precisely because of differences in political strategy and especially because of the white labor movement's incapacity to understand the Reconstruction of the South as part of its own struggle. In fact, while the NLU decided early on to support the creation of an independent labor party in opposition to Republicans, the NCLU, in which Frederick Douglass assumed a growing, moderating role in the late 1860s, always argued for the need to strengthen the Republican Party, which, with all its limitations, was supporting Radical Reconstruction governments, the Freedmen's Bureau, legal equality and black voting rights¹⁴.

Despite this rupture, however, the experience of the immediate postwar period showed how emancipation and the abolition of slavery had given new strength to the labor movement precisely because it had unexpectedly opened class struggle to the contribution of new subjects. As Karl Marx wrote in the same years in the first book of *Capital*, while up until the Civil War any autonomous labor movement had been paralyzed, since «labor in a white skin cannot emancipate itself where it is branded in a black skin», after the death of slavery «a new life» had arisen, opening up the possibility of a new class unity and allowing the eight-hour claim to travel «from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from New England to California, with the seven-league boots of the locomotive»¹⁵. Nonetheless, white labor and black labor would soon return to take opposite directions because of the former's refusal to see the latter as an essential part of the U.S. labor movement¹⁶.

¹² Foner, 393.

¹³ Foner, 397-405.

¹⁴ Foner, 402-7.

¹⁵ Karl Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One.*, ed. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1976), 414.

¹⁶ William E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*, ed. David L. Lewis (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 353.

It was precisely in the context of this renewed agitation of white labor in the North and black labor in the South, and in the wake of the threat of their welding together into a national and interracial labor movement, that Carey reflected on the post-slavery rebuilding of American capitalism and on its conditions of accumulation in a new economic and political arrangement. And it was also in an attempt to contain the scope of this mobilization that he deemed it necessary on the one hand to ensure, through protectionism and an abundance of currency, the continuation of the development experienced by the North during the conflict, so that high wages could prevent the sharpening of class conflict, and on the other hand to export this model to the South in order to diversify its economy and allow the employment of freedmen in manufacturing. While to achieve the latter goal it was necessary to prioritize a purely «industrial» reconstruction of the South over any form of political reconstruction, which would have risked further stimulating the claims of black labor, to achieve the former it was necessary, in Carey's view, to defend the economic legacy of the Civil War. It was therefore to this problem that he devoted his attention in the years immediately following the end of the conflict, when a clash over commercial, fiscal and monetary policy emerged in the North.

1. Protection, the Greenback and the Economic Consequences of the Civil War (1865-1866)

The four years of war had left behind an unprecedented public debt, two different currencies not convertible into each other, a new system of domestic taxation, an extraordinary increase in import duties, a national banking system, and a new economic role for the state that arose precisely from the need to finance the war mobilization. Already a few months after the outbreak of hostilities between the North and the South it had become clear that it would be impossible to finance the war through the fiscal instruments that the federal government had employed up to that point. Even the protectionist duties established by the Morrill Tariff in March 1861, while presented as a revenue measure, had soon proven inadequate to meet the rising costs imposed by the conflict. Consequently, between 1862 and 1863, the Republican Party in Congress and the Lincoln administration, particularly through Treasury Secretary Salmon Chase, had deployed a series of measures to obtain the cash needed to finance the wartime mobilization. First, to compensate for the shortage of currency, in February 1862 the Legal Tender Act authorized the first of three issues by the Treasury of a paper currency not convertible into gold but endowed with legal tender with which to support all government expenditures. Greenbacks (named after their color), which by the end of the conflict totaled \$430 million, thus became the first national fiduciary currency, whose value was not intrinsically tied to precious metals but politically guaranteed by the authority of the federal government. Immediately, however, they began to undergo a process of devaluation against gold that led to increasing inflation. Precisely for this reason, in order to guarantee a flow of gold

into state coffers, Congress mandated that duties on imports be paid in metallic currency¹⁷. At the same time, beginning with the Revenue Act of July 1862, the Treasury created a new national system of internal taxation, which until then had been primarily the responsibility of states. In addition to raising the average tariff on imports to 48 percent, therefore, during the conflict the federal government imposed a long list of taxes, mostly indirect, on land, real estate, industry, occupational licenses, and even high incomes, which a Bureau of Internal Revenue was created to manage. While internal taxation made it possible to cover barely 20 percent of expenditures, it was nevertheless essential to reassure the government's creditors of its ability to pay interests¹⁸ and had a crucial role in limiting the greenbacks' devaluation¹⁹.

The remainder of the federal government's expenditures during the war had been financed through a public indebtedment unprecedented in size (\$2.3 billion by the end of the conflict) and character, since the Treasury could not rely on loans from European nations, reluctant to take sides in the conflict because of their dependence on Southern cotton²⁰. Thus, thanks to the public subscription program devised and implemented by banker Jay Cooke, the federal government became mainly indebted to its own citizens, through a long series of financial instruments, most of them small in denomination, but in particular through the so-called «five-twenties», bonds on the debt that the federal government had to redeem within twenty years but could be redeemed as early as five, having the advantage of being purchasable in greenbacks, whose interest was paid in gold²¹. Moreover, to consolidate the debt bond market, a national banking system had been created in February 1863, after being missing since the 1830s. To be chartered by the federal government, banks were required to invest one-third of their capital (which had to amount to at least \$30,000) in Treasury bonds, receiving in return bills with a face value of 90 percent of the bonds deposited. Through this system, which led banks to have an interest in the financial health of the state, an additional currency was thus created, in addition to gold and greenbacks, that was not legal tender but was also guaranteed by the federal government²². The combination of these economic policies, in addition to enabling the financing of the Civil War, permanently transformed the conditions of capital accumulation in the United States, bringing about an expansion of the power and capabilities

¹⁷ Nicolas Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom. The Political Economy of Reconstruction* (Charlottesville-London: University of Virginia Press, 2015), 45-46; Irwin Unger, *The Greenback Era. A Social and Political History of American Finance, 1865-1879* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 13-15.

¹⁸ Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 81-82.

¹⁹ Ariel Ron and Sofia Valeonti, "The Money War: Democracy, Taxes and Inflation in the U.S. Civil War," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 47, no. 2 (April 28, 2023): 263-88.

²⁰ Nicolas Barreyre, "Les avatars politiques de la dette américaine: la crise de la sécession et les transformations de l'État fédéral (1861-1913)," in *Les Crises de La Dette Publique: XVIIIe-XXIe Siècle*, ed. Gérard Béaur and Laure Quennouëlle-Corre (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 2019), 5-7.

²¹ Unger, *The Greenback Era*, 16.

²² Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 46-48.

of the federal government, and, together with the demand for arms and ammunition for the army, contributing to a decisive acceleration of industrial development²³.

While such measures had enjoyed broad support within the Republican Party during the war, with its conclusion different visions emerged of how to handle the economic and financial legacy of the conflict, how to reform domestic taxation, how much to reduce duties on imports, how and when to repay the national debt, and, most importantly, what to do with the greenbacks, whether to withdraw them to fight inflation and restore convertibility with gold or whether to leave them in circulation and continue printing them to ensure an abundant supply of currency. More generally, it was a question of whether the new economic role of the state that had emerged in previous years should represent an exception imposed by military contingency, therefore to be dismantled as soon as possible, or a now structural feature of a new economic arrangement.

Carey was a prominent voice in this debate since early 1865, when he published a series of public letters addressed to House Speaker Schuyler Colfax defending the political-economic legacy of the Civil War and the new function of the state as guarantor and engine of development. In the previous four years, to Carey, there had been a profound transformation of the Northern economy, with a diversification of production, industrial growth, increased demand for labor and domestic trade, extension of railroads, development of iron mines, and lower interest rates. If, in his opinion, at the time of Lincoln's inauguration the Northern states were chronically suffering from unemployment, lack of demand, stagnant production and difficulty in accessing credit due to a persistent dependence on British trade policy that had crippled «societary circulation», by 1865 the situation appeared radically reversed²⁴. According to Carey, these «wonderful results of a state of civil war» had been made possible by «two great measures»²⁵. On the one hand, the increase in import duties, imposed since the Morrill Tariff of 1861, which had provided American producers with a growing shield from international competition. On the other hand, the Treasury's issuance of a paper currency that had allowed an increase of the monetary supply in circulation. In two words, it was «Protection and the Greenback»²⁶ that had brought about such a transformation.

Actually, the productive capacity of Northern manufactures had leapt up qualitatively and quantitatively over the course of the war because of the explosion in demand for arms, clothing and food for the army, rather than protectionism and currency²⁷. And the very measures celebrated

²³ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 23.

²⁴ Carey, *The Way To Outdo England Without Fighting Her. Letters to the Hon. Schuyler Colfax*, 126-28.

²⁵ Carey, 152-53.

²⁶ Carey, 158.

²⁷ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 20-22.

by Carey had been dictated primarily by the need to finance the war and not by an attempt to stimulate production²⁸. Nevertheless, Carey grasped the magnitude of the change produced by the Civil War. The issuance of greenbacks, in particular, according to Carey had solved a recurring problem of monetary scarcity due, in his view, to the free-trade policy that, by leaving the domestic market open to imports of English manufactured goods, resulted in a systematic outflow of precious metals, California gold in particular. Before 1862, currency, in its various forms of gold, silver, bank notes and circular notes, «was scarcely anywhere to be found», particularly in the South and West, due to a system that resulted in its unequal distribution²⁹. As a result, the issuance of a form of paper currency such as greenbacks had injected back into the economic system what Carey considered its «lifeblood». In other words, the abundance of money had put «societary circulation» back into motion, facilitating consumption and investment, the payment of wages and debts, and access to credit through lower interest rates. Above all, as Carey had already argued in his monetary writings of the 1850s, an increase in the money supply such as that occurred during the Civil War had the capacity to stimulate production by incentivizing investments and by allowing an increase in the overall demand for goods³⁰. In short, he declared, «the “greenback” has fallen on the country as the dew falls, bringing with it good to all and doing injury to none»³¹.

Beyond their economic importance, however, greenbacks had, in his view, also a further decisive political relevance, as a currency whose value was based not on convertibility to gold but on confidence in the federal government³². This meant that the use, acceptance and spread of greenbacks as a means of payment throughout the country signaled, according to Carey, not only the adherence of the people to the Union cause, but also a renewed political credit by capital toward the state. Unlike other fiduciary currencies printed by governments in situations of crisis, he argued, the greenbacks could rely on the confidence placed by investors in the federal government. While the Continental money issued by the former colonies during the Revolutionary War, the French *assignats* issued during the Revolution, or the Confederate notes issued by the South had all failed due to a lack of means, power or credibility of the governments towards investors, in the case of greenbacks «the authority by which they have been issued is one quite as capable of binding posterity»³³. To Carey, they were in fact employed by a people whose numbers and productive

²⁸ Douglas A. Irwin, *Clashing over Commerce: A History of US Trade Policy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 211–13.

²⁹ Carey, *The Way To Outdo England Without Fighting Her. Letters to the Hon. Schuyler Colfax*, 127.

³⁰ Henry Charles Carey, *Money. A Lecture Delivered Before the New York Geographical and Statistical Society, Thursday, February 1857* (Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, 1860). See: Sofia Valeonti, “Henry C. Carey’s Monetary Thought and American Industrialization in the Greenback Debate,” *History of Political Economy* 54, no. 2 (April 1, 2022).

³¹ Carey, *The Way To Outdo England Without Fighting Her. Letters to the Hon. Schuyler Colfax*, 150.

³² Nicolas Barreyre, “Les échelles de la monnaie. Souveraineté monétaire et spatialisation de la politique américaine après la guerre de Sécession,” *Annales. Histoire Sciences Sociales*, 439-468, LXIX, no. 2 (2014).

³³ Carey, 135-36.

powers were growing, and who could count on the support of a government which «co-operates by authorizing him to deposit with its officers», providing circular notes or public debt bonds in return. The political and economic credibility of the federal government had thus provided the greenbacks with a «security against depreciation the like of which the world had never seen before», or, in other words, «a safety valve» that other governments had not been able to provide³⁴. This also meant that, in Carey's perspective, the economic relevance of money did not lie in its intrinsic value, guaranteed by the convertibility in gold or silver, but rather in its function, that of a «machinery of association» that made possible exchanges and payments within the market³⁵. Through his defence of the greenbacks, Carey thus fostered a vision of money as a fundamental institution for the functioning of the capitalist economy, but at the same time as a socially constructed and politically guaranteed institution, that had to be subject to the control of the state and that became increasingly abstract and intangible in the course of development³⁶. Precisely because of their connection with the political power of the federal state, then, according to Carey the greenbacks, together with protectionism, had made the financing of the war, the Union victory, and the manufacturing development of the North possible.

«These are wonderful results, and for them we have been largely, yet not wholly, indebted to the re-adoption of the protective system. That alone was capable of doing much, but we should have failed in the prosecution of the war had not the Treasury, by the establishment of a general medium of circulation, given us what has proved to be a great *clearing house*, to which were brought labor and all of labor's products to be exchanged. Increased rapidity of circulation was a necessary consequence of this, and to that increase the greatly improved health of the societary body has been wholly due. Such having been the results of the two great measures by which the first period of Mr. Lincoln's administration had been distinguished»³⁷.

Thus, while through the issuance of greenbacks the federal government had made itself «responsible for the financial movement of the country»³⁸, the economic policies of the Lincoln administration had more broadly signaled a new willingness and ability of the American state to act directly and actively in support of economic development. In Carey's view, it was precisely this novelty, this state moment of the American Civil War³⁹, that had decisively contributed to the North's economic transformation over the previous four years. Through the tariff and the

³⁴ Carey, 136. For a recent historical account of the different outcomes of paper money in the North and in the South during the Civil War, see: Ron e Valeonti, «The Money War».

³⁵ Henry Charles Carey, «Money», *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine* XXXII, no. 1 (January 1855): 19–37.

³⁶ Bruce G. Carruthers and Sarah Babb, «The Color of Money and the Nature of Value: Greenbacks and Gold in Postbellum America», *American Journal of Sociology* 101, no. 6 (May 1996): 1556–91.

³⁷ Carey, *The Way To Outdo England Without Fighting Her. Letters to the Hon. Schuyler Colfax*, 153.

³⁸ Carey, 155.

³⁹ Matteo Battistini, «Karl Marx and the Global History of the Civil War: The Slave Movement, Working-Class Struggle, and the American State within the World Market», *International Labor and Working-Class History* 100 (2021): 158-85.

greenbacks, the federal government had in fact «enabled each and every man in the country to arrange his business in the manner that to himself has seemed most advantageous», while also increasing the individuals' ability to contribute to state expenditures. This way, but also thanks to the growing public demand for goods, labor and services, «domestic commerce has been stimulated into life» and at the same time the federal government had expanded its ability to levy taxes, thanks to a new revenue system and a growth in overall wealth that had ensured an unprecedented «financial success». According to Carey, the American state had finally begun to perform its own specific task, which he had been advocating since the late 1840s: that of facilitating the exchange between producer and consumer by making itself an actor within the economic process, directly removing the obstacles to «association» and thus stimulating production⁴⁰. The Civil War had thus reminded the United States that, far from adhering to the principle of *laissez-faire*, «first among the duties of the government» was the exercise of what in his *Principles of Social Science* Carey had called a «power of co-ordination»⁴¹

«The National Treasury has now become a partner in, and entitled to the lion's share of, the profits of every mine, every furnace, every mill, every work shop, and every farm in the land, and that every increase in the prosperity of such works must be to it a source of double profit: first, that arising out of the direct contributions of the work itself; and second, that resulting from the increased consumption of sugar, tea, coffee, and other commodities consumed by those who mine the coal, roll the iron, and make the engines and the cloth»⁴²

To Carey, this new economic role of the state had both an internal political relevance in building an integrated market and recomposing national unity above all class and economic fractures, and an external political relevance in finally laying the foundation for challenging Great Britain's hegemony over the world market. On the one hand, the conflict had seen the affirmation, at least in the North, of the «principle of association», which was now to be strengthened by the construction of a «great national league» that had to include farmers and industrialists, workers and capitalists, taxpayers and politicians. On the other hand, during the Civil War the United States had «for the first time acquired something approaching a *national independence*», both productively and financially. In fact, while the price of currency had previously been «wholly dependent on the price in England» thanks to the greenbacks the United States had at least partially sheltered itself from international monetary fluctuations. Thus, the country had laid the groundwork for placing itself «in a position successfully to contend for the control of the commerce of the world, and thus to

⁴⁰ Carey, *The Way To Outdo England Without Fighting Her. Letters to the Hon. Schuyler Colfax*, 129-30.

⁴¹ Henry Charles Carey, *Principles of Social Science. Volume III* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1860).

⁴² Carey, *The Way To Outdo England Without Fighting Her. Letters to the Hon. Schuyler Colfax*, 164.

outdo England without fighting her»⁴³. The maintenance of the political-economic system created during the war over the following two decades would thus suffice, in his perspective, first to place the United States on a par with England and then to ensure that it would «attain that position among the nations of the world to which our vast natural resources and the extraordinary development of mind among our people so well entitle us»⁴⁴. In other words, the state moment in the national market opened, according to Carey, to an imperial moment in the world market. Indeed, as he made explicit in a lecture delivered at the end of 1865 in New York and Boston, «commercial power has always gone hand in hand with that diversification of pursuits which has everywhere resulted from measures tending to the promotion of internal commerce». Consequently, only by continuing along the path taken during the Civil War would the United States be «enabled to control and direct the commerce of the world»⁴⁵.

However, as early as 1865 Carey denounced the attempts by the federal government to evade its new political-economic role, particularly on the issue of currency. «Since 1861, our course has been onward», he wrote in concluding his letters to Schuyler Colfax, «now [...] we are steadily retracing our steps»⁴⁶. Beginning in late 1864, in fact, the U.S. Treasury, in an effort to fight inflation, had decided to halt new issuances of greenbacks, preferring to emanate interest-bearing bonds that would serve as forms of investment rather than circulating currency. To Carey, inflation was not caused by greenbacks, since in previous years fluctuations in prices, and in the price of gold in particular, had occurred independently of the amount of money printed by the government⁴⁷. The significant increases in the prices of consumer goods had occurred, in his view, because of several contingent circumstances, such as the poor wheat harvest in 1864, a reduction in livestock both in the United States due to the war and in Europe due to an epidemic, to increased transportation costs, increased taxes, and especially to the increased demand produced by the army. Moreover, these price increases had continued even after the monetary expansion had stopped and thus could not be traced back to it⁴⁸. Already in his writings on the issue in the 1850s, in opposing the quantitative theories of money, Carey had argued that an increase in the amount of money in circulation would not necessarily produce a simultaneous and immediate increase in all prices, but rather, by stimulating production and demand, would lead to a price reduction in the medium to

⁴³ Carey, 165.

⁴⁴ Carey, 34.

⁴⁵ Henry Charles Carey, *The Resources of the Union. A Lecture Read December, 1865, before the American Geographical and Statistical Society, New York; and before the American Association for the Advancement of Social Science, Boston* (Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, 1866), 26.

⁴⁶ Carey, *The Way To Outdo England Without Fighting Her. Letters to the Hon. Schuyler Colfax*, 153.

⁴⁷ Carey, 136–38; Valeonti, “Henry C. Carey’s Monetary Thought”, 200–201.

⁴⁸ See also: Henry Charles Carey, *Contraction or Expansion? Repudiation or Resumption? Letters to the Hon. Hugh McCulloch* (Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, 1866), 14–19.

long run⁴⁹. The increasing inflation during the Civil War was thus to be blamed not on greenbacks but rather on the ratio of loans to deposits by banks, that is to the tendency of banks to lend more money than they had on hand, thus creating speculative a «ballooning system» and a «process of *duplication*» of money. A tendency against which «the circulation had nothing whatsoever to do, nor could it have»⁵⁰.

Consequently, according to Carey, the Treasury's intention to curb inflation by suspending the issuance of greenbacks or even by taking them out of circulation would miss its target and would also reduce the chances of a further economic expansion. «The circulation now furnished», he then stated, «bears a smaller proportion to the needs of the people, and to the extent of the country requiring to be supplied»⁵¹. Carey's diagnosis was thus from the outset opposite to that of the U.S. Treasury, in that he identified the greatest dangers not in the excess but in the scarcity of money, particularly in the West. While he argued that any form of regulation of the amount of money in circulation was unnecessary, since «the people regulate it for themselves»⁵² by putting money into the system through purchases and investments or by taking it out through hoarding, to Carey the problem was rather one of ensuring that this amount was sufficient to carry out the level of trade and investment proper to a booming economy. It was, in short, impossible, in his view, that the post-Civil War United States could experience something like an overabundance of money. In this respect, any intervention that reduced the amount of money in circulation would simply damage the development prospects. It was in an attempt to avert this danger, which he felt would jeopardize the chances of a Reconstruction that could ensure national reunification, economic development, and the hegemonic rise of the United States, that Carey contributed to open a clash within the Republican Party on the issue of currency, inaugurating a long controversy against contractionist attempts by the federal government that became manifest with the appointment of Hugh McCulloch as Secretary of the Treasury in March 1865.

McCulloch had immediately made his positions on currency and the public debt explicit. On the one hand, he had declared his intention to withdraw as many greenbacks as possible from circulation to accelerate the resumption of specie payments, thus solving the problem of the existence of two inconvertible currencies. On the other hand, he had proposed to reduce the immense public debt left by the war through increases in taxation. In his view, the drastic reduction in government spending due to the end of the conflict required the federal government to restore

⁴⁹ Henry Charles Carey, "Money. Chapter II," *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine* XXXII, no. 2 (February 1855): 166–85.

⁵⁰ Carey, *The Way To Outdo England Without Fighting Her. Letters to the Hon. Schuyler Colfax*, 143-44.

⁵¹ Carey, 155.

⁵² Carey, 133.

the public accounts after the extraordinary measures made necessary by the war, which, however, should not have led to a permanent change in the financial structure of the American state. From the earliest months of his term, McCulloch had thus initiated a deflationary policy, withdrawing greenbacks from circulation to increase their value and bring them back to parity with gold, while in 1865 it took \$145 in greenbacks to get \$100 in gold⁵³. In December of that year, however, believing that his own powers were unduly limited, McCulloch asked Congress for formal recognition of the Treasury's authority to withdraw greenbacks as a first step toward resumption. «The plethora of paper money», he wrote in his annual report, «is not only undermining the morals of the people by encouraging waste and extravagance, but is striking at the root of our material prosperity by diminishing labor».

The only possible remedy to this situation laid, for McCulloch, in establishing a «policy of contraction» that would give the Treasury the power to withdraw an unspecified amount of greenbacks, issuing bonds with 6 percent interest in return. Although this process was to be gradual, it was in fact impossible to establish *a priori* the amount of money that needed to be withdrawn from circulation, which could range from one hundred to two hundred million dollars⁵⁴. At the same time, McCulloch called on Congress to pass fiscal measures that would guarantee the payment of interest on the public debt and reduce its overall amount. The goal was to raise «in a manner the least odious and oppressive to taxpayers, the revenues necessary to pay the interest on the debt, and a certain definite amount annually for the reduction of the principal». If during the Civil War the United States had been able to incur debt with unprecedented ease and magnitude, according to the Secretary it was now a matter of proving that a «republican government» would be able to ground «this debt on a satisfactory basis, and meet every engagement with fidelity», so as to preserve the «public faith». In McCulloch's perspective, taxation was thus the necessary tool for this purpose: «nothing but revenue will sustain the national credit, and nothing less than a fixed policy for the reduction of the public debt will be likely to prevent its increase»⁵⁵.

McCulloch's stance in favor of monetary contraction, tax increase and public debt reduction soon made him the main target of Carey's attacks, who, between January and February 1866, wrote two texts in response to the Secretary's program, outlining an opposed view of the postwar restructuring of U.S. finances. The first was a letter on the public debt to David Ames Wells, an economist who, during the war, had argued in favor of the United States' capacity to sustain the expanding public

⁵³ Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 48.

⁵⁴ *Report of the Secretary of Treasury on the State of the Finances for the Year 1865* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1865), 9-14.

⁵⁵ *Report of the Secretary of Treasury for the Year 1865*, 14-16.

debt⁵⁶ and who, because of this, had been appointed by Lincoln as chairman of the National Revenue Commission. In that same commission, whose purpose was to monitor the country's fiscal situation and propose reform of the domestic taxation system, Wells had Stephen Colwell appointed, following Carey's recommendation⁵⁷. To Carey, the Civil War had been «emphatically a people's war, waged for no purpose of conquest or of plunder, but purely and simply for that of perpetuating the Union». In his perspective, it was precisely this popular character of the conflict between North and South that had allowed the collection of large sums of money for its financing, either through taxes or through loans. However, he continued, the internal revenue system created during the war and further increased since then was becoming an obstacle to the productive capacity of the U.S. economy. In particular, domestic taxation was in danger of nullifying the benefits guaranteed to domestic producers by the protectionist tariff.

In many cases, Carey denounced, the only form of protection left for U.S. producers was that resulting from the price difference between the greenbacks and gold. In fact, while taxes could be paid through the former, import duties necessarily had to be paid with the latter⁵⁸. To him, then, the further tax increase proposed by McCulloch, together with his restrictive monetary policy, risked making the approval of the tariff completely futile. Thus, to Carey the priority was not to reduce the national debt, but rather to reduce taxes. «We need to abolish all those taxes which now so seriously impede the societal circulation», Carey wrote, and particularly those on incomes and manufactures, «which now so greatly tend toward production of the state of paralysis»⁵⁹. Once the groundwork had been laid for periodic interest payments on the debt, which could have been financed by duties on imports and taxes on luxury goods and alcohol, to Carey the reduction of the public debt would have been a spontaneous outcome of the development process and of the growing wealth resulting from it. In other words, only by strengthening the productive capacity of the overall U.S. economy could the state's tax-raising capacity have been strengthened and the national debt repaid. Indeed, Carey wrote, «a merely arithmetical increase in the rapidity of the societal circulation is followed by an almost geometrical one in the power to contribute to the support of government». Only by approving measures capable of stimulating production and accumulation, not by hindering them through additional taxes, could the United States accelerate the repayment of its public debt, both to domestic and, more importantly, foreign creditors⁶⁰. Thus,

⁵⁶ David Ames Wells, *Our Burden and Our Strength. A Comprehensive and Popular Examination of the Debt and Resources of Our Country, Present and Prospective* (New York: Loyal Publication Society, 1864).

⁵⁷ *David A. Wells to Henry C. Carey*, April 8, 16, 19, May 9, 1865, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 19, folder 3), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁵⁸ Henry Charles Carey, *The Public Debt, Local and National: How to Provide for Its Discharge while Lessening the Burden of Taxation. Letter to David E. Wells, Esq.* (Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, 1866), 9.

⁵⁹ Carey, 10-11.

⁶⁰ Carey, 15-16.

without saying it explicitly, Carey seemed to grasp how the sheer volume of public debt accumulated during the Civil War had transformed its meaning, making it a permanent feature of the U.S. economic system, with respect to which it was far more relevant to guarantee interest payments to fuel the investors' confidence than to repay or even reduce it, as had been the case in U.S. history up to that moment⁶¹.

In any case, the problems posed by taxation and the public debt turned out to be closely linked to those posed by the currency, to which Carey devoted a series of public letters addressed to McCulloch in the same months, constituting a harsh attack on his contractionist policy. In fact, while the increase in taxes to repay the debt risked undoing the effects of the protectionist tariff, at the same time the monetary contraction risked further hampering production by restricting access to credit and investment opportunities, as well as taking away instruments for paying those same taxes. First, to Carey it was false that a «plethora of money» existed in the United States, as claimed by McCulloch. On the contrary, despite the issuance of greenbacks, the amount of circulating money in the United States remained proportionately inferior than in countries such as France and Britain, especially in relation to the size of population and land. «Of all the commercial nations of the world», he then declared, «our own is the one that is worst supplied with the machinery of circulation»⁶². Greenbacks had thus made a decisive but nonetheless insufficient contribution to solving the structural money shortage that had characterized the financial history of the American Union, particularly in the West⁶³. To Carey there was in fact a direct and reciprocal correlation between the degree of development, population density, demand for money and the form of money demanded. In fact, as he had already argued in the late 1830s, not only did a condition of poverty and backwardness, in which the population was «scattered» over a vast territory, corresponded to, and was exacerbated by, a scarce quantity of money, but in such a situation the currency demanded tended to be metallic, since «a material representative of value» would be needed because of the inadequacy of the credit system. Conversely, with the progress of development, accumulation and the densification of population, forms of paper money would be gradually introduced, being guaranteed by banks or the government and allowing the presence of a growing quantity of money, which in turn would further stimulate production and accumulation.

⁶¹ On public debt at the origins of the United States: Max M. Edling, *A Revolution in Favor of Government. The Origins of the United States Constitution and the Making of the American State* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Matteo Battistini, «A National Blessing: debito e credito pubblico nella fondazione atlantica degli Stati Uniti d'America», *Scienza & Politica. Per una storia delle dottrine* XXV, no. 48 (2013): 13–31; Max M. Edling, *A Hercules in the Cradle. War, Money and the American State, 1783-1867* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014). On public debt after the Civil War, see: Nicolas Barreyre, «Les avatars politiques de la dette américaine: la crise de la sécession et les transformations de l'État fédéral (1861-1913)», in *Les Crises de La Dette Publique: XVIIIe-XXIe Siècle*, ed. Gérard Béaur and Laure Quennouëlle-Corre (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 2019), 475-93.

⁶² Carey, *Contraction or Expansion?*, 32.

⁶³ Carey, 3-7.

In this respect, Carey could affirm on the one hand that the replacement of paper money with metallic money constituted «an important step in the progress of civilization» and on the other hand that in the course of development money became less and less visible and tangible, but also increasingly fundamental to production: «as it is with electricity in the physical world so is it with money in the social one, the vigor and importance of its operations being in the inverse ratio of the manifestations of its existence»⁶⁴.

This correlation between development and the quantity and form of money explained, according to Carey, the economic and sectional interests that coalesced, overlapped and clashed around monetary issues, as well as the unequal distribution of circulating money in the United States: abundant in the industrial Northeast and scarce in the predominantly agricultural West and South. In addition to highlighting the socially and politically constructed character of money, then, Carey also endeavored to unveil the distributive consequences of monetary systems, thus radically deconstructing classical understandings of money⁶⁵. In his view, benefiting from the greenbacks were those who, while not immediately disposing of money, needed or intended to employ it productively, thus workers, farmers and artisans, as well as industrialists seeking capital. In addition to this class dimension, however, to Carey the greenbacks also had a spatial and sectional dimension, in that they had especially benefited those regions, such as the West, which were predominantly agricultural and suffered structurally from a scarcity of money⁶⁶. The «western farmer» thus came to symbolize the intersection of the two fault lines opened by the clash over currency. Carey thus identified an interclass social coalition of «employers of money» who constituted the most dynamic and productive part of U.S. economy and who therefore demanded the maintenance of expansive monetary policies, pitted against a coalition of «lenders of money», that is merchants, bankers and financiers, particularly from the Northeast, between New York and New England, who owned money without producing and who would benefit from the monetary contraction proposed by McCulloch, thanks to the rise in interest rates.

The greenbacks had thus represented, in his view, an attempt to support the «improvement» of the most disadvantaged classes and backward regions. In this respect, they were a form of currency inherently «democratic in its tendencies», guaranteed by the federal state itself («a corporation of whose solvency none could doubt, offering, as it did, a mortgage on the whole property of the

⁶⁴ Carey, 20-21. For an early formulation of this theory see: Henry Charles Carey, *Answers to the Questions: What Constitutes Currency? What Are the Causes of Unsteadiness of the Currency? And What Is the Remedy?* (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1840).

⁶⁵ Carruthers e Babb, «The Color of Money», 1559–60.

⁶⁶ On the relevance of spatial, and especially sectional, categories in the study of U.S. political history of Reconstruction see: Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 1-10, 235-43; Valeonti, «Henry C. Carey's Monetary Thought», 192-194.

Union as security for the performance of its engagements») for the purpose of favoring the classes who needed to improve their condition. Consequently, he concluded that «a war upon what is called ‘paper money’ is therefore a war upon the poor in favor of the rich»⁶⁷. Against those who argued that greenbacks favored speculators, therefore, Carey countered that they would simply favor individuals «*speculating for a rise*, as is every employer of capital, every really useful man amongst us». It was with this «class of speculators» Carey continued, made up of «farmers, laborers, mechanics, manufacturers, road makers», that the Republican Party had allied itself during the Civil War, only to choose now to ally itself with the «*speculators for a fall*» who desired money scarcity and high interest rates to consolidate their economic position⁶⁸.

Carey’s portrayal of the social and sectional clash that emerged around money, between «producers» in favor of a democratic abundance of money on the one hand and bankers, financiers, and large merchants in favor of restricting access to money on the other, was undoubtedly rooted in the coalition of interests that had actually formed in support of a soft-money policy, including industrialists from the West and from Pennsylvania (though until the 1870s favoring free banking far more than the greenbacks), but also farmers and workers⁶⁹. Indeed, in the second half of the 1860s, currency reform had become a central claim of part of the Northern labor movement, with the National Labor Union giving less and less prominence to union strategy and to the issue of working hours and focusing instead on political action, support for cooperative experiments, and currency reform⁷⁰. Influenced by economic thinkers such as Edward Kellogg, who in the 1840s had developed a critique of the U.S. banking system, and Alexander Campbell, who during the Civil War had proposed the issuance of public debt securities convertible into greenbacks as a means of spontaneously controlling the level of interest rates, labor leaders such as William Sylvis, Andrew Cameron, and Richard Trelvelick identified the struggle over currency, in defense of greenbacks and for lower interest rates, as a crucial battleground for U.S. labor⁷¹. However, while for the labor movement the battle over currency remained part of a broader class clash, to Carey the opposition between «employers of money» and «lenders of money», between producers and finance, was functional, from an ideological point of view, to re-propose the idea of a fundamental harmony between capital and labor. In fact, the denunciation of the parasitic action of banks and finance against producers, whether urban workers, peasants or industrialists, allowed Carey to

⁶⁷ Carey, *Contraction or Expansion?*, 19-22.

⁶⁸ Carey, 27-28. «Throughout the war, as has been shown, the National Treasury had for its allies the men who worked - those *who sought to rise* - those to whom it was desirable that money should be cheap; and to that alliance have we been indebted for all our past success. Now, the alliance is with those who do not work - those who, *having risen*, have money to lend - those who desire that food and labor may be cheap, and money dear».

⁶⁹ Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 67-72.

⁷⁰ Foner, *History of the Labor Movement Vol. 1*, 417-20.

⁷¹ Unger, *The Greenback Era*, 94-110.

conceal the existence of exploitative relations among producers and thus to dislocate class conflict outside of the relation between capital and labor and especially outside of the wage relation. This way, by pointing to the existence of a conflict of interests between producers and money finance, Carey could reaffirm the identity of interests between employers and employees. Agitating the issue of greenbacks thus meant for him pointing to a possible terrain of ideological recomposition between capital (or at least a part of it) and labor.

Here also laid the fundamental distance between Carey and labor greenbackism. While it is unquestionable that they converged in the claim of greenbacks as a democratic currency, it is equally undeniable that such claim was situated in two very different political discourses and class perspectives. Carey, in fact, thought of monetary abundance as a condition of possibility for the acceleration and consolidation of capital accumulation through state action, as well as for a democratization of the access to credit that was conceived as a way of guaranteeing harmonic social relations. For labor leaders, instead, greenbacks represented the possibility of an access to money not mediated by banks and finance, that would allow, through the establishment of cooperatives, a progressive emancipation from the wage relationship. Thus, while to Carey the critique to finance was functional to describe the harmony between capital and labor and thus in the end to legitimize the wage relationship, to the labor movement the attack against the banking system was always accompanied by the denunciation of wage exploitation and was never used to conceal the conflictual character of class relations⁷². Sylvis, in particular, repeatedly railed against economists belonging to the «higher orders» who claimed to teach workers «that there is an identity of interests between labor and capital, that labor and capital are co-partners, [...] and that the price of labor are regulated by the laws of supply and demand»⁷³. In addition, the Northern labor movement repeatedly attacked protectionist tariffs as a form of public support for industry whose burden was being shifted onto the workers because of the price increases they entailed⁷⁴. If anything, then, the convergence of discourse between Carey and the labor movement on currency testified more to the latter's moderation than to any radicalization of the former, as argued by some historians⁷⁵. In fact, the centrality attached by labor leaders to currency reform from the late 1860s onward was accompanied by a reformist turn that led them to focus increasingly on electoral strategy, with the

⁷² In this sense, some of the historiography has exaggerated in describing Carey's closeness to the labor movement on the issue of greenbacks, for example: Robert P. Sharkey, *Money, Class, and Party. An Economic Study of Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959), 206-10. In contrast, Irwin Unger showed the distance between labor greenbackism and the «entrepreneurial version of soft money» represented by Carey: Unger, *The Greenback Era*, 113-14.

⁷³ William H. Sylvis, «Address Delivered at Buffalo, New York, January, 1864», in *The Life, Speeches, Labors and Essays of William H. Sylvis*, ed. James C. Sylvis (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1872), 97.

⁷⁴ Unger, *The Greenback Era*, 113.

⁷⁵ Particularly: Sharkey, *Money, Class, and Party*, 206-210.

creation of a National Labor Party and local experiments such as the Massachusetts Labor Reform Party, rather than on strikes and working hours⁷⁶. In Carey's vision, thus, the greenbacks appeared functional to a vision of a democracy of capital grounded on a small-scale, localized society that could neutralize class conflict precisely because it generalized opportunities for investment and accumulation.

Such vision, however, that had ideologically grounded and united the Republican Party's coalition before the Civil War, in the postbellum economic context appeared increasingly anachronistic and at odds with the new scale of industrial development, with the new financial foundations of American capitalism and with the new economic interests that the Republican Party itself had to answer to. Perceiving this shift, but without being able to adapt his economic vision to it, Carey thus concluded his series of letters to McCulloch, by harshly attacking the emerging alliance between the Republican Party and financial interests, to which in his view was to be attributed the return to a situation in which «money abounds and is very cheap on Wall Street», but at the same time «it is very dear to all who seek to use it in any manner likely to increase production», particularly for the farmers of the West, who in the absence of liquidity had to depend more and more on exports to foreign markets. Above all, to such an alliance was owed an economic paralysis that threatened to result in a «paralysis of the party that has so successfully made the war» and in a new political crisis, this time threatening to engulf the Republican Party itself⁷⁷.

Carey was thus aware of the economic shift in the party's social composition and of the sectional rift that such change threatened to introduce within a political force whose success had hitherto been based on the alliance between the Northeast and the Northwest in the name of opposition to the slaveholding South and of support for a policy of economic development. Having defeated the Confederacy, economic policy thus remained the only glue of the Republican coalition but was in danger of being challenged by the clash over money, upon which the Northeast and Northwest were on opposing sides⁷⁸. To Carey, then, beyond its detrimental effects on the economy and development prospects, monetary contraction risked alienating farmers in the West and splitting the party in two. Thus, he wrote, while «cheap money - low interest - enabled our working men to prosper, built up that party, carried us through the war, and gave us our present position before the world», in contrast, «dear money - high rates of interest - will swamp both the party and the

⁷⁶ This turn of the labor movement would soon prove to be politically unsuccessful, coinciding with the decline of the National Labor Union, from which most of the trade unions detached themselves. Foner, *Reconstruction*, 420-32; Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 112, 317. See also: Timothy Messer-Kruse, *The Yankee International: Marxism and the American Reform Tradition, 1848-1876* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

⁷⁷ Carey, *Contraction or Expansion?*, 24-25.

⁷⁸ Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 13-42.

country»⁷⁹. Only by re-establishing an abundant money supply, guaranteed by the federal government, could development be stimulated, the Republican Party reunited on its “producerist” base, and confidence in the state discredited by contractionist policies restored, as well as its independence in the world market. For this to be possible, however, the Treasury would have had to return to making itself «general debtor to such an extent as may enable all to deal for cash», returning to control «banks and brokers» instead of having its actions dictated by them⁸⁰.

«Let them be done, and we shall at once re-enter upon competition with Britain for control of the commerce of the world. Let them be done, and we shall not only cease, by the export of bonds, to increase our dependence on Europe, but shall gradually buy back those now held abroad, and thus increase our independence. Let them be done, and the great republican party shall continue to control the movements of the great Ship of State. Let them be done, and the East and the West, the North and the South, will become from day to day more thoroughly knit together»⁸¹.

In early 1866, Carey’s attack on McCulloch’s program did not prevent the federal government from going down the path of monetary contraction, but it contributed to a polarization of the debate and to the opening of a clash over currency within the Republican Party that limited the Treasury Secretary’s strategy. Indeed, in February 1866, the proposal to formalize the Treasury’s unlimited authority to withdraw greenbacks raised doubts among Republicans about the risk of a slowdown in growth and about the power such a law would have granted McCulloch, with the risk of currency manipulation. The Contraction Act passed the following April, therefore, granted limited authorization for the withdrawal of 10 million greenbacks in the first six months and 4 million in each of the following months⁸². Carey’s controversy thus marked the end of the wartime consensus on monetary and fiscal issues and the emergence of a clash that soon came to split the Republican Party along sectional lines, this time with the opposition between a Northeast predominantly protectionist on trade policy, because of its industrial interests, and hard-money on financial policy, because of the concentration within it of the country’s major banks, and a Midwest in favor of greenbacks, as a solution to a recurring problem of currency scarcity that systematically forced many farmers into debt, and free trade, to encourage exports of their agricultural products⁸³.

Carey crisscrossed this conflict, being in favor of the tariff as the Northeast and greenbacks as the Midwest, but without succeeding in turning that combination into a compromise capable of

⁷⁹ Carey, *Contraction or Expansion?*, 25.

⁸⁰ Carey, 37-38.

⁸¹ Carey, 39.

⁸² Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 48-50.

⁸³ Barreyre, 72-77, 96-104.

bringing the party's different souls together. Thus, in the same 1866, Justin Morrill's proposal to further increase import duties was defeated because of opposition from Midwestern Republicans who had voted for the tariff during the war⁸⁴. Specularly, calls for McCulloch to slow down the monetary contraction were opposed by Northeastern Republicans. Carey's fierce polemic against McCulloch traced in this first part thus signaled the emergence of a conflict within the North, not only between different sectional interests and understandings of money, but more broadly between different visions of the economic role of the State and of the postbellum shape of capitalist development. Or, more precisely, it showed that Carey's vision of a small-scale development that could guarantee economic opportunities at least to white males was by then not only ideological, but also incompatible with the new scale and the new grounds upon which the Civil War had placed the relations of production and the accumulation of capital in the United States.

2. Industrial Reconstruction and the Limits of Emancipation (1867-1869)

In the following years, the social and sectional conflicts over economic policy and money in the North began to have an increasing impact on the politics of Reconstruction in the South, which constituted the only point of convergence for the Republican coalition⁸⁵. In 1867, Carey as well, after having systematically ignored the consequences of emancipation for almost four years, turned his attention to the challenges posed by Reconstruction in the South. Meanwhile, since the summer of 1865, blacks in the South, in addition to refusing to work as they had done before emancipation, had begun to organize and mobilize in assemblies, petitions and state conventions that enshrined the political alliance between urban freeborn and rural freedmen, now equals in the face of new, post-slavery forms of racism. They demanded the recognition of legal equality, full citizenship, the right to vote and land as necessary consequences and guarantees of emancipation⁸⁶. However, this mobilization immediately clashed with the plans of President Johnson, who from May 1865 took the lead in outlining a Reconstruction policy based on amnesty for those who swore allegiance to the Union (except for holders of property in excess of \$20,000, who had to ask for it individually) and conventions to amend state constitutions in compliance with the Thirteenth Amendment. To Johnson, it was the white yeomanry, of which he had always been a spokesman, that had to rebuild the South, at the expense of both the aristocracy of planters and former-slaves, who should not be granted the right to vote since, in his view, their degraded conditions would lead them to systematically vote along with the former-slaveholder⁸⁷. Their role, according to Johnson's vision, was thus to be limited to that of wage laborers on cotton plantations. The policies of Presidential

⁸⁴ Barreyre, 85-89.

⁸⁵ Barreyre, 113-50.

⁸⁶ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 410-19.

⁸⁷ Foner, 180-84.

Reconstruction, therefore, in addition to soon proving incapable of creating new leadership and new development possibilities for the South, left the field open to the passage of Black Codes, a wave of Southern revanchism, and the escalation of violence against freedmen. It was precisely the South's opposition to any kind of reform, which revealed a fundamental inability to accept the outcome of the Civil War, that produced a decisive shift in public opinion in the North. In fact, if initially Johnson's Reconstruction policy had enjoyed broad support in the North, not only in the Democratic Party but also in the more conservative currents of the Republican Party, as well as among industrialists and cotton merchants, united by a desire for a quick return to normalcy and opposition to black suffrage, during 1866 even the more moderate Republicans began to demand tougher measures against the former slaveowners⁸⁸.

Moreover, Johnson's veto of the two proposals that summarized the existing consensus among Republicans on Reconstruction, on the one hand the financing of the Freedmen's Bureau and on the other the Civil Rights Bill that recognized the formal equality of all citizens before the law, contributed to a further shift within the party toward the positions of Radical Republicans⁸⁹. The only ones to oppose Johnson's policies from the outset, the Radicals, led by Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens, viewed not only the guarantee of civil rights, but also that of political rights, as a necessary corollary to emancipation, although they remained divided on the issue of land⁹⁰. Thus, in response to Johnson's vetoes, the Fourteenth Amendment was passed in June 1866, defining national citizenship, constitutionalizing equality before the law, affirming the ineligibility of ex-Confederates, and establishing a reduction in representation in Congress in proportion to the number of male citizens denied suffrage by each state⁹¹. Following the overwhelming Republican victory in the 1866 elections, it was then the Radicals who took the political initiative in Congress, proposing a Reconstruction Act, passed in March 1867, which on the one hand mandated military government of the South, with the army being used in defense of people and property, and on the other hand convened new constitutional conventions with universal male, black and white suffrage, that had to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment as a condition for the states' readmission into the Union.

The opposition of Johnson and of the Southern leadership to any possibility of reform in the South had thus determined the shift of the more moderate wing of the Republican Party to increasingly radical positions, culminating in support for black voting as the only means of defense against the

⁸⁸ Foner, 216-27.

⁸⁹ Foner, 239-51.

⁹⁰ Foner, 228-39.

⁹¹ The latter norm, which implicitly sanctioned sex as a legitimate form of disenfranchisement, determined the first rift between the abolitionist movement and the women's movement. Foner, 251-61.

Southern elites' return to power⁹². Suffrage for blacks was therefore granted in the South while, paradoxically, being still denied in the North⁹³. At the same time, it soon emerged how for many moderate Republicans the Reconstruction Act constituted an extreme limit beyond which they were unwilling to proceed. In this sense, Sumner and Stevens' attempts to move toward confiscating the planters' lands and redistributing them to former slaves were also opposed by many Radical Republicans. If Reconstruction could lead to civil and political equality for blacks as a means of breaking the hegemony of the former-slaveholders, it was in no way to bring economic equality. In other words, Reconstruction should not, in any way, turn into a labor question⁹⁴. Nevertheless, after the passage of the Reconstruction Act there was a renewed political mobilization of blacks in the South, both within the Republican Party and through mass membership in the Union Leagues, which became instruments of political education and organization for freedmen. In the fall of that year, Southern Constitutional Conventions were thus elected in which, for the first time in U.S. history, not only blacks voted, but black and white legislators sat side by side⁹⁵.

It was in this context that, in mid-1867, Carey finally turned his attention to the problems posed by the reintegration of Southern states into the Union and by the role of blacks in the post-slavery South, which he had hitherto largely ignored in favor of monetary issues. His dispute against the Johnson administration's ongoing attempts at financial restructuring became now coupled with a dispute against the Radical Reconstruction program put forth by Republicans in Congress, in which he reiterated many of the theses on slavery espoused in the 1850s. Not coincidentally, Carey's chosen interlocutor for a new series of public letters, entitled *Reconstruction: Industrial, Financial and Political* (1867), was Henry Wilson, a senator from Massachusetts who, along with Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens, was one of the leading Radical Republicans. Unlike Stevens, however, a protectionist Pennsylvania senator who favored an expansionist monetary policy, Sumner and Wilson combined radicalism on Reconstruction with free-trade positions on trade policy and hard-money positions on financial issues. In addressing Wilson, then, Carey could further clarify the conflict over development already implicit in his writings against McCulloch, uniting the polemic against monetary contractionist policies and attempts to lower the protectionist tariff with the polemic against radical Reconstruction in a more generalized attack to the role that New England was assuming in the Union. Namely, the role of literally a "new" England that, with its industrial superiority strengthened by the Civil War, was producing a centralization of capital, currency and

⁹² Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 330.

⁹³ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 271-80.

⁹⁴ Foner, 307-9.

⁹⁵ Foner, 281-83, 316.

power on the national level while forcing the rest of the country into specialization in agricultural production, thus into subordination and dependence, just as the “old” England had been doing on a global level in the past decades.

So, while the war had «removed the obstacle that had prevented combined action», to Carey the postbellum years had seen the creation of «trading, manufacturing, and moneyed monopolies of fearful power», which had reopened a sectional clash, this time between the «Producing States» of the Center, West, and South on the one hand, whose interests had realigned thanks to the abolition of slavery, and the «Trading States» of the Northeast on the other⁹⁶. Two opposing blocs that embodied different visions of development and that were moving «in opposite directions», Carey wrote, echoing language he had used in the mid-1850s to describe the North-South relations. In particular, with the national banking system created by the National Banking Act of 1863 came, for Carey, a «monopoly of money power» in the Northeastern banks that had been at least partly counterbalanced during the war by the ample money supply provided by greenbacks in the West, but which, as a result of McCulloch’s monetary contractionist policies, had now fully unfolded, becoming a true «financial despotism»⁹⁷. By restricting the money supply in the very areas of the country where it was most scarce and concentrating it further in the large cities of the Northeast, the Secretary of the Treasury had thus created «a monster, a sort of monetary Frankenstein» that ended up controlling its own creator⁹⁸. Or, according to a different metaphor, he had created a completely deranged circulation system that produced an «accumulation of blood in and about the societary heart, to the utter destruction of circulation throughout the body and the limbs»⁹⁹. In the years following the end of the Civil War, therefore, «power has gone from the extreme South to the extreme North, and the sectionalism of today is likely [...] to prove quite as injurious as has already proved that of the past»¹⁰⁰.

It was from this interpretation of the reconfiguration of sectional relations that Carey jointly, albeit incorrectly, read McCulloch’s monetary policy, the Radical Reconstruction advocated by Wilson, Sumner, and the Radicals, and the free-trade positions they shared, as three pillars of the same New England hegemonic strategy over the Union that «producers» across the country, and particularly industrialists in the Center, South, and West seeking growing market shares, had an interest in opposing. First, restrictive monetary policy and banking regulation would allow New England (but

⁹⁶ Henry Charles Carey, *Reconstruction: Industrial, Financial, and Political. Letters to the Hon. Henry Wilson* (Philadelphia: Collins, 1867), 65.

⁹⁷ Henry Charles Carey, *The Finance Minister, the Currency, and the Public Debt* (Philadelphia: Collins, 1868), 14, 40.

⁹⁸ Carey, 17.

⁹⁹ Carey, 8.

¹⁰⁰ Carey, *Reconstruction*, 3–4.

more generally the Northeast) to maintain the centralization of money in its banks and thus reinforce the industrial supremacy of its manufactures by discouraging industrial development in the rest of the country through a restricted access to credit and higher interest rates. Second, the policy of Radical Reconstruction would allow New England to militarily subordinate the South to the federal government while maintaining its agricultural and specialized economy to ensure the influx of cotton to Northeastern manufactures. Finally, the free-trade policy of reduced tariffs on imports, which New England's now-developed industries no longer needed, made it possible to prevent the emergence of domestic competition in states such as Pennsylvania and Ohio, as well as in the Midwest and the South. It was in opposition to these three axes of supposedly New-England sectional policies that between 1867 and 1869 Carey outlined his own vision of a national «industrial reconstruction» that, in his perspective, would lay the groundwork for the full reintegration of Southern states, for true freedom for the former-slaves, and for a financial restoration of the state coffers, thus paving the way for a true political pacification of the nation and finally for the global projection of its economic and political power. However, as this part of the chapter tries to show, Carey's industrial reconstruction had at its very root a rejection of Radical Reconstruction that ended up contesting emancipation itself.

In fact, the main error of radical Republicans was, according to Carey, to have regarded slavery as the chief evil afflicting the nation, without grasping how it was actually «the mere symptom» of a larger problem that had caused its strengthening and expansion in the South. This problem consisted, in his perspective, in the subordinate placement of the United States within the world market, imposed by British free-trade, whose agents had always been «in such close alliance with the slave-holding aristocracy of the South»¹⁰¹. According to Carey, it was fifteen years of open markets, following the Walker tariff of 1846, that had produced growing polarization between sections and an increasingly heated clash over the lands of the West, into which both Northeastern laborers who needed to secure a livelihood and slaveholders who needed to extend plantations to increase exports were forced to move. In this way, secession had become «not only possible but inevitable», but, Carey pointed out, «slavery did not make the rebellion. British free trade gave us sectionalism, and promoted the growth of slavery, and thus led to rebellion»¹⁰². Fueling such sectionalism, however, for Carey had also been those New England politicians who on the one hand had supported «the extremest anti-slavery doctrines» and on the other had voted with the slaveholders in favor of free trade. Charles Sumner, in particular, Carey wrote unashamedly, «while he had spoken much of freedom, his senatorial votes on industrial questions had thus far always

¹⁰¹ Carey, 8.

¹⁰² Carey, 10-16.

been given on the pro-slavery side»¹⁰³. Adding free-trade to a radical anti-slavery that Carey had been fighting since the 1850s, New England politicians had failed to grasp the real causes of slavery before the Civil War and consequently had been unable to lay the foundations of true freedom during Reconstruction. To prevent the return of slavery, the legislative and constitutional measures passed by Radical Republicans in the previous years were therefore not enough. Instead, they should have prevented the return of free trade in the first place, instead of fostering it, like McCulloch's economic policy was doing, on the one hand with monetary restriction and on the other with attempts to reduce duties on imports. «So long as our legislation on all economic subjects shall continue to be sectional in its tendencies it is wholly vain to hope for permanent reconstruction», Carey quipped, since «British free trade, industrial monopoly, and human slavery, travel together»¹⁰⁴. In the middle of the most transformative period for Southern social, economic and political relations, then, Carey repropounded his longtime strategy of dislocating the causes of slavery outside of the nation and of blaming its most fervent enemies for its persistence. An attitude that also characterized his assessment of Reconstruction measures.

To Carey the legal and political freedom conferred on Southern blacks, in fact, had no real meaning in the absence of measures that could lay the foundation for the economic freedom of individuals, something that could not be decided by legislation but could only be produced in the market through industrial development. To grant civil and political rights without producing economic development, as in Carey's view the Radical Republicans had done, was to act only on the form and not on the substance of freedom. Indeed, through suffrage freedom could only be defended and only to some extent, but it could not be created: «competition for the purchase of labor *makes* men and women free. The ballot-box is useful as a means of *perpetuating* freedom»¹⁰⁵. Thus, if Reconstruction was to lay the foundations of freedom in the post-slavery United States, North and South, it first had to coincide with an economic policy of industrial development so as to diversify the entire U.S. economy, not just New England's, allowing the creation of competition for the purchase of labor and thus the creation of true economic freedom in the marketplace. Only such policy would lead, in time, to the political freedom that Republicans were trying to impose by decree in the South, but also to the financial consolidation that the Johnson administration was trying to achieve through monetary contraction. In other words, to Carey what Wilson, Sumner and McCulloch had not understood was that «the work of reconstruction could not be regarded as having been achieved so long as the whole nation should be required to aid in the construction of

¹⁰³ Carey, 21.

¹⁰⁴ Carey, 8-11.

¹⁰⁵ Carey, 18-19.

an inverted pyramid, the little apex of which was to find its place among the mills of Lowell and of Manchester». What was needed instead was the construction of a productive «pyramid [...] with a base so broad as to enable it to cover every part of that great farming and mining region»¹⁰⁶. To Carey, an «industrial reconstruction» of American capital and its capacity for accumulation on a growing scale, made possible by the state and its intervention to support development, had to be the inescapable premise and precondition of any financial and political Reconstruction.

«Seeking to obtain financial reconstruction we must begin by an industrial one, it being totally impossible that we should ever again avail ourselves of the services of the precious metals so long as our commercial policy shall continue to impose upon us a necessity for not only exporting the whole produce of California, but of sending with it gold-bearing bonds to the annual extent of almost hundreds of millions of dollars. In like manner must both industrial and financial reconstruction precede the political one that is to have any, even the slightest, chance of permanence. The former are the bases on which the latter must rest»¹⁰⁷.

Only in this way, Carey concluded, it was possible to affirm «that diversity in the demand for human service by means of which, alone, can the freedman be enabled to profit by the act of emancipation», and thus to establish the freedmen's new status as wage laborers able to sell their labor dearly in the marketplace, thus saving Southern blacks from the threat of a «money tyranny more injurious in its effects than the slavery from which they have but now been rescued». Only thus, above all, could a new political divide between sections have been averted, ensuring «that the Union, when reconstructed, shall be permanent»¹⁰⁸. Only industrial reconstruction, to Carey, would have guaranteed national reunification in the name of development and imperial ambitions. Against the policies of monetary contraction, against Radical Reconstruction, and against the return of free-trade tendencies, then, Carey demarcated the boundaries of what he believed to be the only Reconstruction possible: an industrial development spread throughout the country and supported by the state by guaranteeing closure to imports through the tariff and an abundance of currency through greenbacks, to ultimately build American independence and imperial power in the world market.

This redefinition of the political-economic conditions of capital accumulation in the post-slavery United States was, in Carey's view, what Reconstruction had to aspire to but also limit itself to, putting on the back burner all other issues, particularly those concerning the status of blacks as freedmen, the solution to which would be offered over time by industrial development itself. Just

¹⁰⁶ Carey, 30.

¹⁰⁷ Carey, 52-53.

¹⁰⁸ Carey, 64, 68-69.

as in the 1850s emancipation had to be postponed up to the time when it could come spontaneously throughout market dynamics, now the grant of civil, political and social rights to blacks had to be postponed until development could naturally bring it. Meanwhile, then as now, blacks had to presumably continue laboring as a racially subordinated workforce.

The political events of the following months, and in particular the outcome of the 1867 election, went precisely in the direction Carey hoped, with a victory for the soft-money camp and a setback for Radical Republicans. On the one hand, George Pendleton's proposal to repay the «fifties» in greenbacks and not in gold, known as the «Ohio Idea» gained so much support for the Democratic Party in the West that Congress, in the following February, was prompted to pass a Suspension Act requiring the Secretary of the Treasury to stop retiring greenbacks. On the other hand, while in the South, in the election of the Constitutional Conventions, the Republican Party won the black vote *en bloc*, in the North it suffered a general setback precisely because of its support for black suffrage, an outcome that helped weaken the Radicals' position in the party and played a role in bringing about the defeat of Johnson's impeachment in early 1868¹⁰⁹. The political novelty of this phase was precisely the increasingly close connection between the currency debate and the politics of Reconstruction.

Indeed, decisive in the differing outcomes of the Suspension Act vote and the impeachment vote were some moderate Republicans who, while recognizing the need to momentarily halt the monetary contraction to save party unity, simultaneously considered it essential to keep McCulloch in the Treasury and to prevent the ascension to the presidency of Benjamin Wade, who was radical, pro-labor and an ardent greenbacker, even at the cost of leaving Johnson in the White House. Thus, for the more moderate factions of the Republican Party, the defense of a hard-money financial policy began to take priority over the implementation of Southern Reconstruction¹¹⁰. It was precisely their growing influence, along with that of Northern business interests, that led to the nomination of Ulysses Grant as the Republican presidential candidate the following year, in the hope that his election would ensure a definitive return to fiscal moderation, a stabilization of the South that would open it up to investments, and a return to normalcy, according to the slogan «Let Us Have Peace»¹¹¹. The Democrats' choice to nominate a hard-money candidate such as Horatio Seymour led them to neutralize the currency issue in the campaign, which was all about

¹⁰⁹ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 311-15, 333-35.

¹¹⁰ Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 130-36.

¹¹¹ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 336-38.

Reconstruction, favoring Grant's win, albeit by a narrow margin, in the context of a wave of terrorist and racist violence in the South by the Ku Klux Klan¹¹².

Following Grant's election, in a series of public letters addressed to the newly elected president, Carey went back to the problem of how to achieve «political peace» through «industrial reconstruction». Here, in the very months when the Southern Constitutional Conventions were showing the new political prominence of blacks, his critique of the Radical Republicans' program turned into a full-fledged attack on the immediate emancipation brought about by the Civil War and ultimately into a retrospective defense of slavery and of its racial hierarchy, with tones and arguments similar to those he had already used in the 1850s to argue against abolitionism, but also very similar to those of Northern Democrats. Right from the title, *Shall We Have Peace?* (1869), playing with the former Unionist general's presidential campaign slogan, Carey questioned the conditions for achieving national reconciliation: «not a temporary one to be maintained by aid of military force, but such a peace as shall tend [...] to bind together and consolidate the different portions of the Union as to render absolutely impossible a recurrence of scenes of war»¹¹³. In order to achieve such reconciliation, in his view, it was necessary to start with an account of the outcomes of black emancipation in the South, which, according to Carey, had resulted in a failure.

In fact, he argued, while «as a slave the black man had a large money value, and it was greatly to the interest of planters to provide carefully for the women and the children», something that in his perspective had ensured the numerical increase of slaves, «now, having lost all such value», currently Southern blacks were «shot down by hundreds, while women and children perish for want of medical assistance». To Carey, then, the end of slavery had destroyed the institution that supposedly safeguarded and protected black labor precisely insofar as it had transformed it into a form of capital to be valued. After emancipation, he added, however «nominally free, the condition of the blacks, in such a state of affairs, must be far worse than it had ever been before»¹¹⁴. As proof of this, Carey highlighted the violence enacted in the preceding months by the Ku Klux Klan, as if racial and terrorist violence could be considered as reasons for not having emancipated slaves¹¹⁵. Of the systematic violence upon which slavery itself had been founded Carey made no mention, while also concealing the fact that the mass mobilization and political organizing of blacks in the previous three years had provided a measure of the anything but ephemeral value they placed upon their formal liberation. Despite its ambiguity, then, it should be clear that Carey's discourse, while

¹¹² Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 136-41; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 342-43.

¹¹³ Henry Charles Carey, *Shall We Have Peace? Peace Financial, and Peace Political? Letters to the President Elect of the United States* (Philadelphia: Collins, 1869), 1.

¹¹⁴ Carey, 9.

¹¹⁵ Carey, 9.

having the appearance of a critique of the merely formal character of the freedom gained by blacks, actually consisted of a delegitimization of emancipation that not only disqualified the black struggles' political achievements but ended up once more defending American slavery as a form of protection and valuation of black labor.

Indeed, while Carey raised the problem of the persistent dominance of the landed aristocracy in the South even after the end of slavery, lamenting that «we have proclaimed emancipation while leaving all the land in the possession of its opponents», at the same time he used this consideration to deny that emancipation had brought any improvement in the condition of blacks. On the contrary, Carey insisted, while the American slave was treated well by his master to the point of ensuring his subsistence (or more precisely «as he would for his horses or his cattle»), after emancipation freedmen had been reduced to the same level of many European peasants, Irish in particular, who were «really enslaved» even though they were not formally so. «Our measures of emancipation have resulted in giving to the Negro slave just the same amount of freedom that has so long been enjoyed by the Irish slave», that is, Carey explained, the ability to marry, to raise their children and not to be «exchanged by his master against any given quantity of money»¹¹⁶. Emancipation had thus left black workers «wholly dependent for employment upon the men who own the land»¹¹⁷. While it is undoubtedly true that the end of slavery had not solved the problem of black workers' dependence on planters who continued to hold a monopoly of land, it is equally true that emancipation had drastically changed the power relations between capital and labor on plantations, triggering a long confrontation that would ultimately lead to the emergence of the sharecropping system through which freedmen, while continuing to work the land of former masters, were able to avoid direct, day-to-day control over their own labor¹¹⁸. Moreover, what Carey dismissed as merely formal changes (self-ownership and the possibility of having a family) had in fact marked a fundamental achievement in the blacks' struggle against slavery and a far from negligible shift in their condition.

Moreover, if Carey emphasized the persistent dependence of black labor, it was not to argue for the need to deepen and substantialize the emancipation process, for example through the redistribution of land to former slaves (which he never supported), but rather to disqualify its achievements in order to assert different political priorities in the Reconstruction debate. In this respect, Carey wrote with the same arguments used by Johnson in the previous years, the persistent dependence of the former-slaves made it useless to grant them the right to vote: «to four millions

¹¹⁶ Carey, 12.

¹¹⁷ Carey, 12.

¹¹⁸ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 392–411.

of people similarly situated we have given the right to vote in accordance with the orders of their masters, at the same time giving those masters the right of representation in Congress»¹¹⁹. Thus, to the extent that there was in Carey a perception of the danger of a «new, but peaceful, rebellion» by the economic and political elites of the South in the absence of federal government interference, this danger never amounted to a sufficient reason for expediting the granting of political rights to freedmen, as it did for many moderate Republicans during Reconstruction.

The root of what Carey essentially described as the failure of emancipation was in fact to be found, in his view, in the way slavery had been abolished during the Civil War, namely in the immediate and unconditional nature of emancipation made inevitable by slave revolts and by the exigencies of war. In his perspective, if emancipation had been prepared gradually and orderly by industrial development, as he himself had advocated in the 1850s, it would have enabled American slaves to advance «with profit to themselves and their owners toward a freedom far more perfect than that which, at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives, and thousands of millions of property, they have as yet obtained»¹²⁰. If emancipation had come as a result of development and according to the laws of the market, then, the slave would have accessed freedom perhaps more slowly but more fully. The true freedom of the worker, in fact, Carey reiterated, consisted in the existence of a market competition among employers for the purchase of his labor, that is, in the existence of a demand for labor that only the diversification of production brought by industry could guarantee.

In this respect, to Carey it had been a mistake to grant blacks emancipation, civil rights and the right to vote without having first industrially built their freedom. It had been a mistake to free slaves in an undeveloped South lacking the demand for labor necessary to make possible the full and autonomous exercise of that freedom. «Our legislators have wholly failed to see that throughout the world freedom had come, *not as the result of mere proclamations*», Carey wrote implicitly attacking Lincoln, «but as a consequence of that diversification in the demand for human service which enables each and every individual to find the employment for which he had been intended, and for which he was most completely fitted»¹²¹. Carey appeared, in short, to be aware of the rupture produced by the immediate emancipation sanctioned by Lincoln but concretely realized by

¹¹⁹ Carey, *Shall We Have Peace?*, 13.

¹²⁰ Carey, *Reconstruction*, 35.

¹²¹ Carey, *Shall We Have Peace?*, 13. See also: Henry Charles Carey, *The Unity of Law; As Exhibited in the Relations of Physical, Social, Moral and Mental Science* (Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, 1872), 73–74, in which he wrote: «Is it with the poor white of our Southern States, who has been now so severely punished for allowing himself to be controlled and directed by those whose every effort had been given toward preventing that diversification of employment by means of which societary positives and negatives would long since have been brought in contact with each other, thus generating a social force which would peaceably have brought freedom to the negro, and prosperity to the white, whether laborer or planter?».

the slaves, in Frederick Douglass' words, «on the wheels of insurrection»¹²². A rupture in the command over black labor and in the dynamics of capital accumulation in the South which an industrial reconstruction had now the task of healing by putting blacks to work in the manufactures and by redefining their freedom within the marketplace, through wages and according to the terms set by capital.

Again, Carey concluded, «the road toward perfect peace, perfect union, perfect freedom of trade, and perfect political independence, lies through the establishment of perfect industrial independence»¹²³, that is in a diversification of the economy such as to create competition between industrialists and landowners «for purchase of negro labor», giving former slaves the opportunity not to work exclusively in the fields and thus «that freedom which results from power to choose between employers in the field, in the mines, and in the workshop»¹²⁴. True emancipation of slaves could therefore only take place in and through industry. Moreover, the development and diversification of the Southern economy would also resolve the land question, leading over time to its division, from which blacks too could benefit if they had accumulated enough, through rising wages, to buy a piece. The answer to what had been from the outset the former-slaves' main claim as the only possible foundation of their freedom («forty acres and a mule»), and which the Republican Party had always refused to support (with the exception of its most radical exponents such as Sumner, Stevens and Wade), would thus be guaranteed according to Carey in the marketplace through the growing wealth brought by industrial development. Thus, even former-slaves at some point «might be enabled to enter upon and improve the little tracts secured to them by the Homestead Laws», Carey asserted, glossing over the fact that the Homestead Act concerned lands in the West and not those in the South, and more importantly were aimed at white workers and not black. Such a division of land, in any case, through which «the now down-trodden negro race» would become «from hour to hour more free and independent» to Carey should have occurred as an ultimate consequence of development, leaving blacks with the opportunity to become owners through the dynamics of the market, and certainly not through a political intervention to expropriate and redistribute the lands of former-slaveholder.

Finally, in order to accelerate the diversification of Southern economy it would have been necessary, in Carey's view, to build railroads along the North-South axis, as he had already advocated in 1863, so as to encourage the immigration to the South of masses of Northern laborers,

¹²² Frederick Douglass, «The Significance of Emancipation in the West Indies [1857],» in *The Portable Frederick Douglass*, ed. Henry Louis Jr. Gates and John Stauffer (New York-London: Penguin Books, 2016), 269–91.

¹²³ Carey, *Shall We Have Peace?*, 5.

¹²⁴ Carey, 13.

to stimulate trade, and to facilitate the introduction of machinery and technological innovations in the South. If suppressing the first Southern rebellion had required «a million of men in arms», preventing another and accomplishing «the great work of emancipation» now required «great armies of men and women carrying with them spades and ploughs, spindles and looms, sewing-machines and steam-engines, geographies and testaments, and all others of the machinery by aid of which the people of the North have been becoming more prosperous and more free»¹²⁵. To Carey, it was therefore the immigration of white workers from the North, with their superior skills, technology and civilization that could provide the decisive impetus for the industrial Reconstruction of the South, thus for black freedom and the political pacification of the Union. «Let this not be done, and the Negro will be re-enslaved; the Union will be split up into fragments», Carey concluded¹²⁶. The problem of black-white relations in the post-slavery South thus appeared to Carey only secondary to that of industrial development, if not completely irrelevant.

In this respect, already in an article written the previous year, commenting approvingly on the report of the first Mechanics and Agricultural Fair in Louisiana held in 1866, during which it had been stated that the immigration of whites from the North would be beneficial not only to industrial development but also for ensuring «the domination of the white race in the social and political systems» Carey had dismissed the problem of race relations in the post-slavery South to a secondary issue compared to that of development. Of such a «lust-named motive» he in fact declared his unwillingness to say anything, «for we care nothing about a side issue of this sort. Only let them do the right things, and then the things will take care of themselves, and of their political and social issues»¹²⁷. Against the mass political mobilization of blacks, who had clearly shown that they knew how to use their vote independently, against their claims to equality and against Radical Reconstruction, and ignoring the new Southern governments' attempts at actually developing the South, between 1867 and 1868 Carey thus reaffirmed the need to limit Reconstruction policy to the support for industrial development, leaving it to the market the arranging of social positions. Such conclusion, however, in the context of an undergoing confrontation between former-slaves and former-masters for redefining the post-slavery conditions of black labor concretely meant opposing further federal interventions in support of freedmen and supporting the maintenance and reproduction, through the market, of Southern racial and class hierarchies despite the end of slavery.

¹²⁵ Carey, 14.

¹²⁶ Carey, 15.

¹²⁷ Henry Charles Carey, *Industrial Reconstruction of the South*, «National American», undated, in Carey, *Reconstruction*, 78.

Only an industrial reconstruction, then, capable of integrating North, South and West into a single national economic system, grounded upon a persistent racial exploitation of black labor and made possible by the state through protectionism and an abundance of currency could on the one hand solve the problems posed by the reintegration of the Southern states, as well as the question of race relations within them, and on the other hand lead, in the long run, to that financial restructuring called for by the advocates of monetary contraction. Only a comprehensive industrial development, in fact, could have laid the groundwork for the repayment of the national debt, thanks to a growth in tax-raising capacity, and the «resumption» of greenbacks in gold, thanks to a gradual reduction in prices due to increased production. To set in motion the development that would make such financial restructuring possible in the short run, however, it was nevertheless paradoxically necessary to reduce taxes and ensure an abundant money supply through greenbacks¹²⁸. It was indeed absurd, for Carey, to have imposed in the South «a system under which money wages were to be paid» and at the same time to have denied the money supply necessary to guarantee such a system, with the gradual withdrawal of greenbacks¹²⁹. The road to industrial reconstruction, Carey acknowledged, was thus «somewhat long»¹³⁰, but the only one that could ensure both «financial peace» and «political peace», simultaneously resolving the elements of political and economic confrontation that had emerged bequeathed by the Civil War and finally leading to a national reunification such as to finally make the imperial projection of the United States into the world market possible, securing «a permanent place as the great power of the earth»¹³¹. It was with this hope that Carey concluded his series of letters to President-elect Grant in January 1869, contrasting economic reconstruction with political reconstruction, and industrial reconstruction with radical reconstruction.

«With little exception the things thus proposed to be done are precisely the reverse of those which have been done since the peace. [...] Let them be done, and it will soon be found that the needs, public or private, for gold will gradually decline until at length the greenback and the gold piece will stand on a level with each other. [...] The course thus proposed would speedily extinguish the debt, doing this by means of a saving of interest consequent upon giving security of the highest order, as is always done by the great European States. Giving us peace it would inspire a confidence that would so stimulate production that taxation might soon cease to exist except in cases where its burthens are scarcely felt. By reducing the general rate of interest it would place our people more nearly on a level, in this respect, with those of Europe, and thus would largely

¹²⁸ Carey, *Contraction or Expansion?*, 18–19; Carey, *The Finance Minister, the Currency, and the Public Debt*, 14–17; Henry Charles Carey, *Resumption! How It May Be Profitably Brought About* (Philadelphia: Collins, 1869).

¹²⁹ Carey, *Shall We Have Peace?*, 58.

¹³⁰ Carey, *The Finance Minister, the Currency, and the Public Debt*, 21.

¹³¹ Henry Charles Carey, *Our Future. Letter to the Hon. A. E. Borie. May 22nd, 1869.* (Philadelphia, 1869), 5.

contribute toward giving us that industrial independence without which there can be no political independence»¹³².

Carey's expectations towards the Grant administration on monetary policy, however, were soon frustrated. If in February 1869 a baseless rumor circulated in Republican circles that Carey himself might be chosen as Treasury Secretary to please Pennsylvania's protectionist interests¹³³, Grant soon showed his anchorage to a deflationary policy. Indeed, as the first act of his administration he approved the Public Credit Act, which committed the federal government to the payment of the debt in gold but promised not to redeem the «five-twenties» until the convertibility of greenbacks was restored. A compromise far from definitive, but capable of temporarily securing the unity of the Republican Party. At the same time, Grant had pushed for the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, which enshrined the constitutional prohibition of denying the vote on the basis of race (but left the door open to other forms of non-racial discrimination) and thus opened the way for black suffrage in the North as well. Overall, then, Grant's election expressed both the achievements and the limitations of Reconstruction: the willingness of the majority of the Republican Party to consider the achievement of civil and political rights for blacks definitive but also sufficient, in order to return to prioritizing the economic issues that threatened to divide the North. In other words, it was a matter of ending the Civil War politically and economically, on the one hand by guaranteeing black rights and order in the South and on the other by repaying the debt in gold and restoring the convertibility of greenbacks¹³⁴.

This goal, however, was undermined both by the financial panic of September 1869, which reopened the debate on economic policy and blew up the fragile compromise of the previous spring, and by the intensifying wave of counterrevolutionary terror enacted by the Ku Klux Klan, which soon rendered Grant's hopes of closing the books on Reconstruction vain. While the Republican Party refused to further expand the role of the state to extend the achievements of Reconstruction, it nevertheless found it necessary to intervene to defend the fundamental ones. This was the goal of the Enforcement Acts passed by Congress between 1870 and 1871, which codified discrimination against blacks in elections as a crime and authorized federal military interventions. Through the Ku Klux Klan Act, in particular, the federal government took charge of suppressing racist violence with its own apparatus, punishing it as a federal crime in federal courts run by Attorney General Akerman. These measures were effective in reducing terrorist

¹³² Carey, *Shall We Have Peace?*, 66.

¹³³ *Van Buren Denslow to Henry C. Carey*, February 2, 1869 (box 12, folder 6); *Erasmus Peshine Smith to Henry C. Carey*, February 24, 1869, (box 18, folder 4); *C. A. Eggert to Henry C. Carey*, March 12, 1869 (box 13, folder 1), «Henry C. Carey Papers», Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

¹³⁴ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 444-51; Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 147-50.

violence in the early 1870s, but at the same time they showed the inherent weakness of Reconstruction governments in the South, which, in order not to succumb to racist reaction, had to structurally depend on the protection of the federal government, which at the same time appeared increasingly reluctant to guarantee it because of internal tensions in the North¹³⁵.

These tensions deflagrated in the election of 1872, when a group of moderate Republicans led by Carl Schurz, soon to be renamed Liberal-Republicans, ideologically free-traders, hard-money and hostile to continued federal intervention in the South, broke away from the party and nominated Horace Greeley for the presidential nomination, soon supported by the Democratic Party. Greeley's protectionist past again imposed a campaign focused on Reconstruction and allowed a new Grant victory, this time with an overwhelming majority. However, the rise of Liberal-Republicans altered the political landscape, forcing Republicans to go after them on both economic issues and Reconstruction. In the months before the election, Congress thus decided on a 10% reduction in tariffs on all imported goods, passed an Amnesty Act that restored the political rights of Southerners who had been deprived of them under the Fourteenth Amendment, abolished the Freedmen's Bureau, and did not extend the authorization for the president to intervene militarily in the South, leaving the field open for the return of racist violence with the support of the Democratic Party¹³⁶.

So, while the 1872 elections showed the growing unwillingness of the Republican Party to take charge of the implementation of Reconstruction in the South, they also brought a significant departure of the party from Carey's positions and from the economic policy of the Civil War. In particular, they showed how the only possible compromise within the Republican Party consisted of a combination of free-trade measures, to satisfy the Midwest, and hard-money measures to satisfy the Northeast, the very opposite of what Carey believed was necessary to ground U.S. development on a solid foundation. At the same time, however, the Republican Party moved closer to Carey's positions on Reconstruction, who, like the Liberals, advocated the need for a disengagement of the federal government from the South and a policy that prioritized economic development over political reform and civil and political rights to blacks. It was in this perspective that he agitated the need for industrial reconstruction in explicit opposition to Radical Reconstruction. To Carey, in fact, economic Reconstruction had not only to precede but to supersede political Reconstruction, which could only take place gradually and according to the timetable set by the market. A position that involved a delegitimization of the black vote and of

¹³⁵ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 451-59.

¹³⁶ Foner, 504-5; Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 192-93.

emancipation itself, and the more or less explicit support for the persistence of racial hierarchies as an inescapable foundation of U.S. capitalism. From this point of view, historiography has largely exaggerated Carey's closeness to the Radical Republicans, failing to grasp how his agreement with William Kelley or Thaddeus Stevens on economic policy, protectionism and currency, was accompanied by a profound divergence regarding the politics of Reconstruction¹³⁷.

3. Capital and Labor at the Constitutional Convention of Pennsylvania (1872-1873)

In the early 1870s, therefore, partly as a result of this shift in the Republican Party, Carey thinned out his public interventions aimed at influencing national economic policy. On the one hand, he returned to theoretical reflection, with the publication in 1872 of *The Unity of Law*, a shortened restatement of his social science, which nevertheless attempted to take into account the latest scientific discoveries in the field of electromagnetism and which briefly criticized Darwin's theory of evolution¹³⁸. On the other hand, Carey participated firsthand in Pennsylvania's constitutional revision process between 1872 and 1873, as a delegate from Philadelphia and as chairman of the Committee on Industrial Interests and Labor. This experience provided him with an opportunity to speak on the most heated topics of postbellum development in the North, from the growth of corporations and railroads to the resurfacing of the labor movement. Reconstructing Carey's interventions on that occasion thus allows to deepen and specify his understanding of state's role in supporting capitalist development, in regulating financial capital and in liberalizing the possibilities of investment through the guarantee of a universal right to form limited-liability corporations as a way of neutralizing class conflict, but also to show how his social and economic theory increasingly struggled to cope with a transformed scenario.

The convening of a Constitutional Convention in Pennsylvania was rooted in the need to adapt the state Constitution to a new context, marked by the new constitutional framework introduced at the federal level by the Reconstruction Amendments but also by the acceleration of economic development in the previous ten years. This latter transformation brought the need of a stronger legislative effectiveness and of a growing capacity for political regulation of economic actors, in particular corporations, also to respond to the class conflicts that this development was bringing to the fore. In favor of such change were in particular Pennsylvania's Republican Party leaders, with the support of major industrialists, who, while taking advantage of the ongoing economic growth, were aware of the need to govern it politically¹³⁹. The main arguments in favor of

¹³⁷ In particular: Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*, 86–87.

¹³⁸ See end of chapter 4.

¹³⁹ Mahlon H. Hellerich, "The Origin of the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention of 1873," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 34, no. 2 (April 1967): 158-59.

constitutional revision revolved around the need to curb corruption in the Harrisburg State Assembly. Contributing to make abuses of the legislative process rampant was the prevalence in Pennsylvania of special legislation (unlike in other states where it had been prohibited since the 1850s¹⁴⁰), whereby the Legislative Assembly granted privileges and charters on a case-by-case basis to create corporations for economic investment purposes, which exposed it to the corruptive influence of local interest groups and limited any form of regulation of corporations.

In particular, this trend had emerged in the expansion of railroads, which were experiencing an unprecedented boom. Between 1865 and 1873, in fact, 35,000 miles of new lines had been built in the North, a number greater than the entire network that existed in 1860, resulting in a dramatic increase in iron and coal production and in the opening of new trade routes that enabled the expansion of market relations, particularly to the West¹⁴¹. This boom had also been accompanied by a growth and concentration of railroad companies into a handful of firms owned by Eastern industrialists, which in capitalization, employees and expenditures far exceeded the major manufactures, soon developing new techniques of bureaucracy management and labor control. Pennsylvania was at the very center of this development, both because of the breadth of its railroad network (over 6000 miles, second in the world only to France and Great Britain) and because it was home to the Pennsylvania Railroad, the largest corporation in the country and among the largest in the world, which would soon build a continent-spanning economic empire encompassing railroads, coal mines and steam-powered liners.

The expansion of railroads, however, directly called into question the relationship between capital and politics, since it was public authorities, both the federal and the state governments, that had to grant land use to railroad companies. As a matter of fact, between 1862 and 1872, the federal government had granted more than 100 million acres for railroad construction, while at the same time refusing to answer to the land claims of freedmen in the South. At the level of individual states this had opened the door to a systematic corrupt exchange between capitalists and legislators for special privileges and monopolies even where general incorporation laws existed¹⁴². In this landscape, in which corruption was a structural element in the functioning of the political system, in the North as well as in the South, Pennsylvania's General Assembly was universally recognized

¹⁴⁰ Naomi R. Lamoreaux and John Joseph Wallis, "Economic Crisis, General Laws, and the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Transformation of American Political Economy," *Journal of the Early Republic* 41, no. 3 (Fall 2021): 408-11.

¹⁴¹ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 461.

¹⁴² Foner, 462-67.

as the most corrupt legislative body in the country, in which, by the admission of its own members, lobbyists served as the «third chamber»¹⁴³.

It was therefore primarily to curb this situation, to limit the abuse of special legislation and the legislative chaos that ensued, that in Pennsylvania, as early as 1870, reformers began to argue for the need to review the Constitution approved in 1838 and subsequently amended in the 1850s. Railroads, according to Republican lawyer Wayne MacVeagh, had now become «an imperial power», since «the people are entirely dependent upon them for the transportation of their persons and their property». It was therefore a matter of deciding «whether they must be subordinate to the government, or the government will be subordinate to them»¹⁴⁴. According to Francis Jordan, Pennsylvania's Secretary of Commonwealth, the new Constitution was to require the legislature to enact general and uniform rules, prohibiting «local and special legislation in all cases where the same ends can be attained by general laws»¹⁴⁵. Thus, in the summer of 1870, a state meeting of the Republican Party came out in favor of calling a convention to reform the Constitution, in order to make it capable of keeping pace «with the progress of a free people» and of protecting their rights¹⁴⁶. A few months later, the proposal was taken up and supported by the Union League of Philadelphia, an influential organization formed during the Civil War to raise money for the Union army and of which Carey had been a member from the beginning. According to the resolutions of the Union League meeting, for too long Pennsylvania's legislative history had been marked «by the corruptive power of corporations, seeking special favors by the temptations of bribery», up to the point that «the franchises of the state are bartered for money, and our legislative halls have often been converted into market-places»¹⁴⁷. Therefore, a Constitutional Convention was called in October 1871 following a popular referendum that approved it by a large majority¹⁴⁸.

This awareness on the part of Pennsylvania's ruling classes of the urgency of curbing the corporations' growing legislative influence stemmed not only from the conviction that it was the

¹⁴³ William A. Jr. Russ, «The Origin of the Ban on Special Legislation in the Constitution of 1873,” *Pennsylvania History* 11, no. 4 (October 1944): 260-75.

¹⁴⁴ Wayne MacVeagh, *Letter From Hon. Wayne MacVeagh, To Certain Citizens of Chester County, Expressing His Views Upon the Subject of the New Constitution*. Reprinted from the *American Republican* of December 2, 1873, 7.

¹⁴⁵ Francis Jordan, *Constitutional Reform. An Argument by Hon. Francis Jordan, Before the Social Science Association of Philadelphia, February 15th, 1872*. (Philadelphia, 1872), 5. For similar arguments see also: Benjamin H. Brewster, *Argument of the Hon. Benjamin Harris Brewster on the Subject of the Ordinance of the Constitutional Convention* (Philadelphia: Samuel P. Town, 1872); A. Sidney Biddle, *The Work of a Constitutional Convention. Read February 20, 1873*. (Philadelphia: Social Science Association, 1873).

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Hellerich, «The Origin of the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention of 1873,” 161.

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in George Parsons Lathrop, *History of the Union League of Philadelphia, From Its Origin and Foundation to the Year 1882* (Philadelphia: Lippincott & Co., 1884), 158-59.

¹⁴⁸ Hellerich, «The Origin of the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention of 1873,” 175; A. D. Harlan, *Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention 1872 and 1873: Its Members and Officers and the Result of Their Labors* (Philadelphia: Inquirer Book and Job Print, 1873), 7-10.

state that should define the conditions and regulatory framework for development, but also from the need to answer to the protests that were emerging with increasing strength against the consequences of that same development. Since the late 1860s, in fact, widespread discontent against railroad expansion on the part of farmers in the Western states had begun to take the form of an organized movement, with the birth of the National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry. Farmers employed in commercial agriculture were challenging not only the allocation of monopolies to railroad companies, but also their discriminatory practices in favor of larger traders and the imposition of exorbitant rates for transportation. The extension of railroads into the West, bringing with it the capitalist relations now fully established in the East, thus posed a growing threat to the economic autonomy of independent producers. For this reason, the Grangers movement had begun to demand the states' intervention to harness railroad companies by regulating rates and prices, obtaining in the early 1870s the passage of regulatory laws in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa, the constitutionality of which would later be established by the Supreme Court in 1877 in the *Munn v. Illinois* decision, which sanctioned the right of states to regulate economic enterprises of a semi-public character. In 1871, Illinois, following a lengthy revision process, had also passed a new Constitution explicitly imposing limits and rules on railroad companies, prohibiting special legislation, and specifying the status of corporations, serving as the most immediate model and closest source of inspiration for Pennsylvania's Constitutional Convention two years later, being later imitated by several other states in the following years¹⁴⁹.

Simultaneously with the emergence of anti-monopoly contestations, the Northern labor movement had strongly resurfaced in the same years. The mobilization immediately following the Civil War had achieved mixed results, but had led Congress in June 1868 to pass a law to limit to eight hours the working day for laborers employed by the federal government, to which, however, many sectors of the administration had reacted with proportional reductions in wages, up to the point that President Grant had to issue an executive order in May 1869 to prohibit such reductions, which was also largely unimplemented¹⁵⁰. After the decline of the National Labor Union, linked in large part to the reformist strategy centered on independent political action and the centrality of currency reform, between 1872 and 1873 the Eight Hour Leagues, animated by immigrant trade unionists, Marxists of the International and followers of Ira Steward, once again became the driving force behind the workers' initiative and mobilization to obtain a reduction in the workday, which swept through several northern states. In the spring of 1872, eight-hour strikes were successful in

¹⁴⁹ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 474-75; Mark T. Kanazawa and Roger G. Noll, "The Origins of State Railroad Regulation: The Illinois Constitution of 1870," in *The Regulated Economy: A Historical Approach to Political Economy*, ed. Claudia Goldin and Gary D. Libecap (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 13-54.

¹⁵⁰ Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 101-9.

Philadelphia, Jersey City, Buffalo, Chicago, and Albany. In New York, the strike involved around 100,000 workers¹⁵¹. Then, in the summer of that same year, in the sawmills of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania, where eleven or twelve-hour working days were still the norm, the class clash took a particularly violent form, the first episode of the so-called Sawdust Wars that later affected the sawmills of Saginaw Valley in Michigan and Jacksonville in Florida¹⁵². Demanding a ten-hour workday, black and white workers in Lycoming County had gone on strike for three weeks with widespread support from the public. When the owners had attempted to bring in strikebreakers from outside on July 20, 1872, riots had broken out, forcing the closure of the sawmills, but also triggering the reaction of Pennsylvania Governor John Geary, who had sent 300 soldiers to suppress the strike and arrest nearly sixty workers, who in the following months were released but forced to leave the county¹⁵³.

The Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention convened for the first time in November 1872, having to face both the problem of development, its form and regulation, and the demands of the labor movement, which ran through the assembly's proceedings from the very outset. As early as November 26, a proposal was submitted to the attention of the Committee on Industrial Interests and Labor, chaired by Carey himself, demanding inclusion in the Constitution of a clause stating «that eight hours shall constitute a legal day's work, and that the Legislature shall prohibit, by penalty, any individual, firm or corporation from discharging an employee for refusing to work longer hours», but also «that all laborers and mechanics employed by the State, or by any county, city, township or borough, on contracts or otherwise, shall conform to these hours, and shall receive the same compensation therefor as for ten hours' labor»¹⁵⁴. Then, the following January, two speeches by members of the Philadelphia branch of the International Workingmen's Association before the Constitutional Convention made explicit what, for a part of the U.S. labor movement, constituted the stakes of the constitutional revision process in the context of a class conflict that included new subjects¹⁵⁵.

The first speech was delivered in support of women's suffrage on January 16 by Carrie Burnham, a teacher and member of the first International who would go on to become the first woman to become a lawyer in Pennsylvania. Burnham, who had a lawsuit pending before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court for attempting to vote in an election two years earlier (and who in the 1880s would

¹⁵¹ Foner, *History of the Labor Movement Vol. 1*, 381.

¹⁵² Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 116-17.

¹⁵³ Roediger and Foner, 117-19.

¹⁵⁴ *Journal of the Convention to Amend the Constitution of Pennsylvania: Convened at Harrisburg, November 12, 1872; Adjourned November 27, to Meet at Philadelphia, January 7, 1873. Part I.* (Harrisburg: Benjamin Singerly, 1873), 103.

¹⁵⁵ The IWA in 1873 had about 30 sections in North America. See: Messer-Kruse, *The Yankee International*; Foner, *History of the Labor Movement Vol. 1*, 413-14.

become the first woman admitted to the Pennsylvania bar as a lawyer), argued that the Convention had the duty, despite being composed only of men, to recognize the women's right to vote in order to remain true to the principles of equality imposed by the republican form of government. Indeed, not only women were entitled to the enjoyment of a natural right to «self-government», but the Fourteenth Amendment in her view enshrined women's citizenship, of which the right to vote was an indispensable element. According to Burnham, therefore, a state that, like Pennsylvania, legally accepted the distinction between a «privileged governing class, and a consequent governed class, by denying to any intelligent adult citizen the ballot as a means of self-government» was not only «unrepublican» but became «an oligarchy, aristocracy, or monarchy»¹⁵⁶. Not only then was «woman in Pennsylvania legally in a condition of servitude», but her subordination endangered the rights of all: «that defect in our organic law, by which one citizen can be deprived of this most sacred right, will disfranchise everyone of you whenever it is thought convenient»¹⁵⁷. It was therefore up to the new Pennsylvania Constitution to correct this drift, applying the criteria for access to the vote to both sexes, rejecting the prevarication of one class of citizens over another, and recognizing the rights of women.

The second speech, entitled *Legislative Wrongs to Labor and How to Right Them*, was delivered two weeks later, on January 31, by Damon Kilgore, a lawyer, Garrisonian abolitionist in the 1850s, women's rights advocate and also a member of the International¹⁵⁸. Kilgore first invoked the need for political regulation of corporations, whose growing power was distorting republican institutions. «The divine right of kings to oppress the people», he wrote, «has given place to the legal right of rich corporations to do the same thing»¹⁵⁹. In Pennsylvania, in particular, a railroad company had been allowed to grow to the point where it could control the decisions of the people's representatives, raise fares at its own discretion, and destroy all competition. By continuing to allow the «kingly power» of corporations to operate undisturbed, Kilgore warned, Pennsylvania was in danger of becoming «a slave state, her freemen transformed into servants, wearing the livery and

¹⁵⁶ Carrie S. Burnham, *Suffrage. The Citizen's Birthright. An Address Delivered Before the Constitutional Convention of Pennsylvania, January 16th, 1873, by Carrie S. Burnham, Chairman of Committee on Suffrage in Section 26, of the International Workingmen's Association, of the North American Confederation* (Philadelphia: Co-operative Printing Co., 1873), 4.

¹⁵⁷ Burnham, 9-11. By Burnham, see also: Carrie S. Burnham, *Woman suffrage. The argument of Carrie S. Burnham before Chief Justice Reed, and Associate Justices Agnew, Sharswood and Mercur, of the Supreme court of Pennsylvania, in bane, on the third and fourth of April, 1873.* (Philadelphia: Citizen's Suffrage Association, 1873); Carrie S. Burnham, *The address of Carrie Burnham Kilgore before the Legislature of Pennsylvania: Delivered in the Hall of the House of Representatives at Harrisburg, March 23d, 1881* (Philadelphia: Allen, Lane and Scott's Printing House, 1881).

¹⁵⁸ Kilgore and Burnham married in 1876. I consulted their papers at the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College: «Damon Young Kilgore and Carrie Sylvester Burnham Kilgore», series 4, «George A. Hoadley Family Papers» (collection: SFHL-RG5-327).

¹⁵⁹ Damon Y. Kilgore, *Legislative Wrongs to Labor and How to Right Them. Address Delivered Before the Committees of the Constitutional Convention of Pennsylvania, In Constitutional Hall, January 31, 1873, by Damon Y. Kilgore, Chairman of Committee on Legislation, In Section 26, of the International Workingmen's Association, of the North American Confederation* (Philadelphia: Co-operative Printing Co., 1873), 4.

doing the bidding of corporation masters». To avoid this, the new Constitution would have had not only to prohibit special legislation, but to limit the affairs of corporations to one area, to prevent the «consolidation of rival corporations», to prohibit tariff discrimination, to require accountability of its expenditures, and to force every corporation to be re-chartered every twenty-five years¹⁶⁰.

At the same time, the state was supposed to support workers' attempts to create «co-operative associations», reducing the amount of capital required to receive a charter and facilitating workers' access to credit. In addition, to Kilgore it was necessary to introduce a number of democratic correctives to legislative procedures, notably the inclusion in the Constitution of the principle of referendum, through which the people could retain a veto right over laws, but also the extension of suffrage to women¹⁶¹. The denial of the right to vote to half the population on the basis of sex, in fact, jeopardized the freedom and equality of all citizens, setting the stage for further restrictions: «deny suffrage to women citizens and you may deny it to any other citizens, white or black, Protestant or Catholic, poor or rich»¹⁶². According to Kilgore, then, as to Burnham, women's suffrage constituted a fundamental step not only toward the achievement of formal equality, but toward «the abolition of all class distinctions» and toward the unhinging of class as a criterion through which to organize political government¹⁶³. Finally, the Constitutional Convention had to reform the system of taxation, by ceasing to impose most of the tax burden on workers and beginning to tax the property and profits of capital, «increasing the rate in geometrical ratio in proportion to its accumulation»¹⁶⁴.

Focusing on criticism of the «moneyed aristocracy», institutional reforms, suffrage and support for the cooperative movement (and not mentioning the eight-hour claim) Kilgore, despite his membership in the Marxist International, proved to be predominantly influenced by the Lassallian currents of the U.S. labor movement¹⁶⁵. Nevertheless, his speech brought before the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention the views of a large section of the U.S. labor movement on the institutional and constitutional reforms needed to counter the growing power of capital and finance over the U.S. political system. Thus, if, as has been argued, the initiative in favor of a convention

¹⁶⁰ Kilgore, 7.

¹⁶¹ Kilgore, 8-10.

¹⁶² Kilgore, 10.

¹⁶³ Kilgore, 11-13.

¹⁶⁴ Kilgore, 14.

¹⁶⁵ By Kilgore, see also: Damon Y. Kilgore, *The Dangers which Threaten the Republic: Oration, Delivered before the Pennsylvania State Society of Spiritualists, Sunday Evening, July 4, 1869, in Concert Hall, Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Blood Brothers, 1869); Damon Y. Kilgore, *The Questions of Today, Caste, Suffrage, Labor, Temperance, Religion. An Oration Delivered before the Wesleyan Academy Alumni Association at Wilbraham, Mass., June 29, 1870* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1870); Damon Y. Kilgore, *How shall the unemployed get bread? Speech before the Philadelphia Liberal League, September 3, 1876* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Liberal League, 1876).

had started from the top and had not enjoyed popular support, the new labor offensive and the growing contestation of railroad monopolies in the countryside also played a significant role in pushing Pennsylvania's ruling classes toward the introduction of correctives to the most obvious distortions brought about by development, particularly with regard to the railroads. The challenge of the Pennsylvania Convention was thus to define, through the Constitution, a regulatory and institutional framework capable both of fostering capital accumulation and of governing it politically.

After an initial phase of work in the Committees, beginning in the spring of 1873 the amendment proposals were discussed by the entire assembly. It was in this context that Carey, as a delegate from Philadelphia, as the senior member of the Constitutional Convention, and especially as Chairman of the Committee on Industrial Interests and Labor¹⁶⁶, repeatedly intervened on the most relevant economic issues, on the regulation of interest rates, corporations, railroads and the relationship between capital and labor. The first discussion in which Carey took center stage happened in May 1873, concerning the proposal of the Committee on Agriculture, Mining, Manufactures and Commerce to include in the Constitution a provision to establish a maximum legal interest rate at 7 percent and at the same time to legalize «special contracts for higher or lower rates»¹⁶⁷. Legalizing the ability of banks and creditors to agree from time to time with debtors on interest rates different from and potentially higher than the legal rate was intended as a means of attracting capital into the state and ensuring greater freedom of investment. However, as admitted by the rule's proponents themselves, this left the possibility of circumventing, if not actually nullifying, the effect of the interest rate cap and in fact entailed an abolition of the «usury laws» hitherto in force, however rarely respected, in Pennsylvania. These were precisely the two points of attack by Carey, who in a lengthy speech, later published as a pamphlet under the title *Of the Rate of Interest* (1873), argued against the inclusion of such a provision in the Constitution.

The abolition of the usury laws was read by Carey as part of a broader attempt to consolidate the «money monopoly» that, in his view, had been established following the Civil War, when the federal government, by building a national banking system and initiating a policy of contraction, had begun to favor «money lenders» at the expense of «money borrowers». While the greenbacks had allowed an ample supply of money, an «elevation of the laborer» and a reduction in interest rates well below 7 percent, the abolition of usury laws served, according to Carey, to consolidate a system of access to credit and money concentrated in New England banks. The system through which U.S.

¹⁶⁶ Harlan, *Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention 1872 and 1873: Its Members and Officers and the Result of Their Labors*, 42-43.

¹⁶⁷ *Debates of the Convention to Amend the Constitution of Pennsylvania. Vol. I* (Harrisburg: Benjamin Singerly, 1873), 489.

manufacturers were blackmailed by «Shylocks who would gladly take ‘the pound of flesh nearest the heart’»¹⁶⁸. To Carey, then, the holders of «money power» were attempting to obtain a «legal recognition of the right of capital to perfect freedom» in order to secure «unlimited power» and «more perfect control over labor»¹⁶⁹. Thus, in order to limit the rise in interest rates, there was no need to insert a specific ceiling in the «organic law», but instead it was necessary to maintain the usury laws and return to ensuring a broad money supply as during the Civil War, which, in addition to reducing the price of money, would allow the monopoly of «money power» to be broken up. If, in response to peasant protests, the Convention was proposing to regulate railroads and forms of «combinations» for raising prices and manipulating competition, according to Carey it could not simultaneously grant unlimited power to banks by liberalizing interest rates.

«Money and the road are both alike mere machinery of exchange, the one aiding in the transfer of property from hand to hand as the other aids in changing it in place. The charge for the use of one is called interest. That for the other is denominated tolls. The farmer, anxious to be enabled cheaply to go to market, demands that there be established a limit to the power of railroad managers, and to some extent that has everywhere been done. That such regulations have to a great extent been set at naught we know, but have we thus been led to the belief that their managers should at once be set free from all restriction? Has it not, on the contrary, produced throughout the community a feeling that there exists an absolute necessity for providing more effectually against abuses of the power that had been granted; and has not the Committee just now adopted rules to that effect far more stringent than had before existed?»¹⁷⁰

Only through a political intervention to limit the power of the banks it would therefore possible, according to Carey, to ensure in Pennsylvania an «equality in the distribution of power over that machinery for whose use men pay interest, and which is known as money»¹⁷¹. Such intervention, in any case, in his view did not need to be constitutionally regulated, as it required a flexibility that only ordinary legislation could allow¹⁷². In the following discussion, Carey was countered by supporters of the proposed rule with liberal arguments in favor of removing all forms of obstacles to the unfolding of market dynamics. Legalization of «special contracts» served, according to John Broomall, to create the greatest possible freedom in the trade of currency, the only way to ensure that its price, the rate of interest, would be minimized: «there are higher laws than the laws of the State or of the United States, that fix prices, the laws arising out of supply and demand»¹⁷³. To

¹⁶⁸ Henry Charles Carey, *Of the Rate of Interest, and of Its Influence on the Relations between Capital and Labor. Speech of H. C. Carey at the Constitutional Convention of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Collins, 1873), 3.

¹⁶⁹ Carey, 11.

¹⁷⁰ Carey, 15.

¹⁷¹ Carey, 19-20.

¹⁷² «This is clearly a question for legislation; it is not a question for the Constitution». *Debates of the Convention to Amend the Constitution of Pennsylvania. Vol. IV* (Harrisburg: Benjamin Singerly, 1873), 531.

¹⁷³ *Debates, Vol. IV*, 528.

James Heverin, usury laws now represented «an overgrown and antiquated product of an unenlightened past» and needed to be removed to ensure «a free exercise of lawful inclinations among business men». Indeed, he continued, «I never could understand why there should be any actual prejudice against an unlimited rate of interest»¹⁷⁴.

To both, Carey answered by trying to show the market's inadequacy in guaranteeing fair competition and a fair price for money in an environment marked by a monopoly such as the one established in the preceding years, and thus the need to maintain a political curb on the power of finance: «we are told that supply and demand must regulate the matter; now, I say that our supply is insufficient»¹⁷⁵. The abolition of usury laws «would simply hand over the working people to the mercies of money lenders». That of interest rates, Carey thus concluded, was «a question of labor and capital, and I stand as I have always stood, by the workingmen, and there will I stan so long as I shall live»¹⁷⁶. This opposition on the question of currency, however, as noted above, actually concealed the opposition between capital and labor, describing an opposition between all the productive components of society, workers and farmers but also small industrialists and «the middle class of business men» on the one hand, and the unproductive ones, namely bankers and big merchants, what he called «the aristocracy of trade»¹⁷⁷ on the other. Carey's argument was echoed in the remainder of the debate by Alexander Simpson, who reiterated that the abolition of usury laws would open the door to unbridled competition for the possession of money, thus harming «laboring men». Money, in fact, was nothing but «the representative of labor» and consequently «so many dollars represent just so many days' labor, and the dearer you make money, the harder you make it for the laboring man»¹⁷⁸. It was this radical difference of opinion that convinced the assembly to avoid including such a controversial provision in the Constitution¹⁷⁹.

The antithesis between regulation and freedom also returned, but in an opposite sense, in Carey's second speech in the Constitutional Convention, which gave him an opportunity to clarify his own view of the role of the state and to return to the question of the relationship between capital and labor. Indeed, in June 1873 he presented to the assembly the report of the Committee on Industrial Interests and Labor of which he was Chairman¹⁸⁰. While the presence of such a committee in a constituent assembly was undoubtedly a novelty and signaled attention to the problems posed by class struggle, it should be noted, however, that only the interests of industry and finance were

¹⁷⁴ *Debates, Vol. IV*, 537.

¹⁷⁵ *Debates, Vol. IV*, 531.

¹⁷⁶ *Debates, Vol. IV*, 533.

¹⁷⁷ *Debates, Vol. IV*, 570.

¹⁷⁸ *Debates, Vol. IV*, 538.

¹⁷⁹ *Debates, Vol. IV*, 550.

¹⁸⁰ *Debates of the Convention to Amend the Constitution of Pennsylvania. Vol. V* (Harrisburg: Benjamin Singerly, 1873), 470-81.

represented in it, but certainly not those of labor, since its eight members included two merchants, three industrialists, a banker and two lawyers¹⁸¹. Carey's report, which was later republished under the title *Capital and Labor* (1873), started by acknowledging two proposals that had been presented to the committee, regarding «the constitutional determination of the number of hours that shall constitute a legal day's work».

The first proposal called for the workday to be constitutionally set at eight hours, with penalties for those who fired workers refusing to work longer, and for the public employees' workday to be reduced to eight hours for equal pay. The second, conversely, called for the inclusion in the Constitution of a provision preventing legislation from interfering with the «employer's» right to regulate labor hours and prices. The Committee, Carey argued, had thus to judge on the legality, and constitutionality, of an «interference by statute with contracts of employer and laborer»¹⁸². While declaring from the outset that he considered the matter to be one for ordinary rather than constitutional legislation, Carey argued that the state had an only limited right and duty to interfere to ensure compliance with certain fundamental health and safety rules in the workplace, particularly for the protection of weaker individuals, exercising a power similar to paternal and parental power over them.

«Statute law may, and should, protect children from being worked in factories to the loss of health and life; it may and should require employers to provide ventilation and all practicable securities of life for miners; doing these things for the same reason that it establishes steamboat inspection, abates public nuisances, feeds its paupers, and educates its children. The State stands *in loco parentis* to the helpless and the incapable of its people, and exercise of its parental sovereignty within such limits contravenes none of the principles of societary order»¹⁸³.

In this respect, to Carey it was inappropriate to prohibit all forms of political interference with the market, as suggested by the second proposal, but the state had no right to intervene directly in the relationship between employers and laborers, as demanded by proponents of limiting the workday to eight hours. This, in fact, would have entailed an immediate restriction on the freedom of contract and consequently would go «so far beyond the bounds of principle and policy». To regulate wages and working hours by law would thus be a form of interference not only wrong in theory, and dangerous to industry, but also unworkable in practice. «Something else», Carey maintained, «something very different from statute law, must determine the market price of labor», that is, the

¹⁸¹ Harlan, *Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention 1872 and 1873: Its Members and Officers and the Result of Their Labors*, 114.

¹⁸² Henry Charles Carey, *Capital and Labor. Constitutional Convention of Pennsylvania. Report of the Committee on Industrial Interests and Labor* (Philadelphia: Collins, 1873), 3.

¹⁸³ Carey, 4.

interplay between supply and demand¹⁸⁴. Thus, the labor movement's claim of a statutorily established eight-hour workday also had to be rejected. However, the case of the law passed by Congress in 1868, which had been followed by two Grant decrees in 1869 and 1872, which mandated the eight-hour workday for workers employed by the federal government, was different in his view, since in that case «the government is one of the parties and the employés are the other, and as such they are free to fix the terms of the contract».

In all cases in which it was not directly involved as a party, therefore, the state had to limit itself, according to Carey, to guaranteeing minimum safety conditions in the workplace and the protection of minors and the incapacitated, while letting employers and laborers confront each other to determine the price and hours of work. «It is but right», he wrote, «to allow the antagonistic parties to stand on even ground, profiting, so far as they may, of the respective merits and forces which, in the progress of events, they can bring to bear upon this great question»¹⁸⁵. Glossing over the fact that the ground between capital and labour could hardly be considered «even», nearly forty years after his articles against the first trades' unions strikes in Philadelphia, and despite his statements about supporting labor against finance, Carey thus went back to oppose the main claims of the U.S. labor movement. He returned to do so, however, in a transformed economic and political context that required him to be more cautious in observing the causes of class conflict, in responding to some of the demands of the labor movement, and in demanding from the state not only support for development but also its, at least partial, regulation, as well as the introduction of correctives capable of preventing the further escalation of such conflict.

While both proposals had to be rejected, to Carey the very fact that they were put forward was indicative «of an erroneous movement of the times of great importance». Those proposals, in other words, revealed the existence of a clash that had now taken on the form and name of a «war between capital and labor» due to the existence of a «system of industrial disorder» in which the price of labor was every day «knocked down to the lowest bidder», in which individuals had no control over the economic dynamics by which they were governed, and in which, above all, «the laborer's lowest reward is the employer's highest profit». It was against this «unequal distribution of the world's goods» that workers began to seek the means to impose a more just distribution, on the one hand demanding «upon the State to interpose» and on the other hand entering «into association with his fellow toilers» through unions oppressive of both the freedom of workers and that of their employers¹⁸⁶. To Carey, however, the state and labor unions both turned out to be

¹⁸⁴ Carey, 5.

¹⁸⁵ Carey, 5-6.

¹⁸⁶ Carey, 6.

useless instruments in solving the problem of inequality. In his view, in fact, they could only act on its effects and never on its causes and they also assumed the existence of a natural hostility between capital and labor without understanding how they were in fact «joined in indissoluble partnership, with interests essentially identical and, with the progress of the industrial arts, ever becoming more closely interdependent»¹⁸⁷.

What U.S. workers did not understand, according to Carey, was that their condition could not be improved by imposing some form of «legal compulsion» of labor prices and hours, but only by restoring the natural functioning of society that was currently and artificially distorted. Indeed, while «in the nature of things» labor could not fail to receive just remuneration through the market, «in the present order of things, however, markets *are* glutted; hands compete with hands for work; wages are inadequate»¹⁸⁸. It was thus, for Carey, a matter of recognizing that «society is diseased» due to the exogenous influence, once again, of the British colonial system and that therefore the state should not be invoked as a regulatory tool to solve the problem, so to speak, downstream, by adjusting wages and working hours, but rather as a developmental tool to solve it upstream, by bringing about an acceleration of production and growth to the point where structural competition for labor purchases and thus ever-increasing wages could be guaranteed.

«We need to remove all restrictions upon the exercise of that power of association to which man is now, and ever has been, alone indebted for power to control and direct the great forces of nature to his use and service. The more perfect the removal, and the more absolute the recognition of a right to associate for all lawful purposes, the more rapid must be the societary circulation and the greater the societary health and force»¹⁸⁹.

In order to cure the disease of the social body, to Carey the state thus had two tasks. On the one hand, it had to remove all obstacles to the development and growth of production, particularly those from outside, through protectionism and defense of the domestic market from international competition, to correct the distortions brought about by the hierarchical structure of a world market dominated by Britain. On the other hand, and inwardly, it had to stimulate enterprise, production and investment first and foremost by guaranteeing a universal right to association for economic purposes. It was this second task that, in Carey's view, the Convention had to take upon itself by including in the new Constitution a provision that would place at the highest level of the legal system a true general incorporation law that Pennsylvania continued to lack but whose

¹⁸⁷ Carey, 7.

¹⁸⁸ Carey, 8-9.

¹⁸⁹ Carey, 17.

approval had made possible, in his view, the development of England and Massachusetts. Even when general incorporation laws had been in place in Pennsylvania to promote the creation of manufacturing enterprises, they had remained limited to a few industries only and, more importantly, had continued to overstretch individual «liabilities» for investors.

In Pennsylvania, Carey thus lamented, «the right of association, for any purposes of trade or profit, has never been admitted». Precisely because of this, capitalists who had wanted to secure favorable investment conditions had hitherto to resort to «special legislation», which, however, the Convention was preparing to abolish¹⁹⁰. To ensure that companies could obtain corporation status and the privileges attached to it in the absence of the special legislation, Carey deemed indispensable a «constitutional provision recognizing the right of all men to associate together, for every lawful purpose»¹⁹¹ that guaranteed the principle of «limited liability» and minimized the restrictions imposed on the ability to join together for investment purposes. The introduction in the Constitution of a right to freely form corporations had therefore to serve as a counterbalance to the abolition of special legislation and regulations that the assembly was introducing¹⁹². This was thus the only proposal that Carey, on behalf of the Committee on Industrial Interests and Labor advanced before the Constitutional Convention, effectively encroaching on the field of the Committee on Corporations, which, however, had not included such a provision.

«Believing that the time has come for this, your Committee recommend the adoption of the following, as the closing section of the chapter on Corporations: The right of the people of the State to associate together for all lawful purposes, and for trading on principles of limited or unlimited liability, shall not be questioned; but it shall be the duty of the legislature to provide by law for the organization of associations, and for securing a publicity so complete as to enable all who trade with those which adopt the limited form to become familiar with the fact that no liability exists beyond that of the joint capital which may have been subscribed»¹⁹³.

To cure the disease of the social body and solve the problem of the conflicting relations between capital and labor, the state therefore had to limit itself to guaranteeing the former's freedom of enterprise and investment, without interfering in the freedom of contract. Thus, if in the debate on interest rates Carey had come out clearly in favor of political regulation of finance, here he returned to criticize any form of interference that went beyond the guarantee of minimum security

¹⁹⁰ Carey, 20-23.

¹⁹¹ Carey, 24.

¹⁹² Naomi Lamoreaux, «Revisiting American Exceptionalism: Democracy and the Regulation of Corporate Governance in Nineteenth-Century Pennsylvania,” in *Enterprising America: Businesses, Banks, and Credit Markets in Historical Perspective*, William J. Collins and Robert A. Margo eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 25–71.

¹⁹³ Carey, *Capital and Labor*, 25-26.

conditions. Even in an earlier debate on corporations, he had strongly criticized the introduction of restrictions on the operations of corporations and the imposition of individual liability on investors for any debts. In his view, such restrictions constituted a «relic of barbarism» that hampered freedom of association by violating the principle of «limited liability» which was the only «road toward civilization»¹⁹⁴. Thus, if freedom of contract could and should be interfered with in the money market, this for Carey was not necessary, except to a limited extent, in the case of the labor market.

Finance capital needed to be regulated but not industrial capital, since in the former Carey identified the presence of a competition-distorting monopoly power that he concealed in the latter. More precisely, the denunciation of finance and the parasitic action of banks against producing «money borrowers» allowed Carey, once again, to hide the hierarchical and exploitative character of the wage relationship and to preach harmony between employers and employees. Carey's apparent contradiction about the need for state interference in the market thus derived from a precise ideological representation of class relations functional to dislocate the conflict outside of the relationship between capital and labor, and thus to describe its necessary association. Still, this apparent contradiction and Carey's different attitude concerning industrial and financial capital signaled the emergence of a new composition and a new scale of American capitalism that his theory, grounded in antebellum economic relations, struggled to deal with.

The limited-liability corporation, institutionally and legally supported by the state, thus appeared as a crucial factor in Carey's understanding of economic development. The liberalization of the right to create corporations, however, was not presented by Carey solely as a means of guaranteeing the freedom of capital to secure profits and investment, but at the same time as a means through which effecting a democratization and broadening of investment opportunities, in keeping with a vision of the role of joint-stock companies that he had affirmed since the 1830s. By guaranteeing such a right, in fact, thousands of «intelligent working men, miners, mechanics, inventors, and others, would be allowed to obtain the aid required for enabling them to pass from working in the pay of others to working on their own account», since limited liability would persuade large and small capitalists to invest in their enterprises. The capitalist would thus find himself «enabled to cooperate with his employés in ways that would be profitable to them and him, but which are now by law forbidden». Above all, Carey concluded, freedom of association would allow American workers «to participate in the great co-operative movement which was inaugurated some thirty

¹⁹⁴ *Debates, Vol. IV*, 589-90.

years since in England»¹⁹⁵. In support of this claim, the report concluded with a lengthy quotation from an article on English cooperatives. Cooperation, which, along with monetary reform, had in previous years been a central element in the strategy of the more moderate wings of the U.S. labor movement, was thus reduced by Carey to the possibility of combining capital for the purpose of investment in joint-stock companies, which could have provided opportunities for accumulation even for those with limited sums of money.

In the context of the increasingly violent class clashes of the 1870s, by overlapping corporations and cooperation, Carey thus attempted to identify a form of enterprise capable of producing a convergence of interests between capital and labor through the involvement of workers in percentage shares of the profit. A form of enterprise that grounded his vision of a democracy of capital capable of preventing and limiting class conflict. This position was made explicit in particular during a debate by George Woodward, chairman of the Committee on Private Corporations. Precisely supporting the proposed article put forward by Carey, Woodward noted how in New England, where the corporation form was most widespread, capital and labor had the most harmonious relations, in that through such a form of association, «the laborer participates in the profits with the capitalist». Thus, the worker had a stake in the expansion and enrichment of the enterprise, ensuring greater productivity and, most importantly, avoiding strikes. To Woodward, as to Carey, the liberalization of the ability to associate in corporations could therefore not only provide an irreplaceable tool of accumulation, but also a barrier against class struggle.

«As the business increases and becomes more and more profitable, he can invest more and more of his earnings in the concern and thus deepen and increase his own interest, and secure a better production, and thus avoid the “strikes” which are so common here in Pennsylvania. Take the case of coal mining in Pennsylvania, which is an enormous interest, and see the effect of a strike which depends now upon the passions of the laborer. It deranges the business of a whole community, producing distress in all directions. Is it not desirable to avoid such occurrences as these? Give the laborers an interest in the profits which the capital is earning, and you avoid these strikes. You secure better and more loyal labor. You reconcile, in a word, that difference which has existed and which will probably always exist between capital and labor»¹⁹⁶.

Far from constituting an instrument of advancement or accumulation for workers, in the second half of the nineteenth century the corporation was definitively establishing itself as the most relevant form of economic enterprise in the United States, accelerating the processes of large-scale consolidation of American industries and railroads. The worker cooperatives that had come into

¹⁹⁵ Carey, *Capital and Labor*, 25.

¹⁹⁶ *Debates*, Vol. IV, 636.

being since the late 1860s would soon learn that only by transforming themselves into profit-driven capitalist enterprises could they remain in the marketplace¹⁹⁷. Carey's vision of a harmonious association between capital and labor within an economic system capable of democratizing opportunities for accumulation, by then fully anachronistic in the context of an economy in which the class divide was proving ever deeper, could only function as an ideological tool to delegitimize, once again, class organization and conflict. At the same time, Carey's reference to cooperation could serve as an appeal to a section of the labor movement. By opposing the legal reduction of the workday and at the same time supporting cooperation and greenbacks, Carey recognized and made his own the more moderate workers' demands that were compatible with the form of industrial development he envisioned.

In the following weeks, at Woodward's insistence, a subparagraph similar to the one Carey proposed in his report was introduced into the article on corporations that the Constitutional Convention was debating. To Carey, such constitutionalization of the «right of two, three, five, ten or twenty people to come together and do business on such terms as they may agree with their neighbors» represented the most important decision the assembly could make to ensure the development of Pennsylvania¹⁹⁸. A few months later, however, in October 1873, during the last reading and discussion of the new Constitution's articles, it was proposed to eliminate the section sponsored by Carey and Woodward. Speaking in support of the elimination, Samuel Dodd, a Democratic delegate, argued that corporations «have more rights in this country than individuals have. It is useless to say that all men are free and equal while we are creating artificial bodies that have rights which individuals have not». Liberalizing the possibility to form corporations with limited liability would also take away from individuals any form of «moral responsibility in their business»¹⁹⁹. Others objected against the section, considering it too broad and likely to open the way for a power that would be difficult to control: «this creature would be superior to the creator», argued William Bigler²⁰⁰. Arguments brought forward by Democratic delegates, signaling the danger of large-scale consolidation of corporate power and arguing for the need to tighten regulations rather than liberalizing the ability to create economic enterprises, persuaded the majority of the convention to eliminate the section of the article proposed by Carey²⁰¹.

By the fall of 1873, the delegates' desire to increase regulations had also strengthened in the wake of a controversy against banks, corporations, and monopolies fueled by the outbreak of a new

¹⁹⁷ Foner, *History of the Labor Movement Vol. 1*, 417-20.

¹⁹⁸ *Debates of the Convention to Amend the Constitution of Pennsylvania. Vol. VI* (Harrisburg: Benjamin Singerly, 1873), 19.

¹⁹⁹ *Debates of the Convention to Amend the Constitution of Pennsylvania. Vol. VII* (Harrisburg: Benjamin Singerly, 1873), 765.

²⁰⁰ *Debates, Vol. VII*, 773.

²⁰¹ *Debates, Vol. VII*, 779; Lamoreaux, "Revisiting American Exceptionalism," 24-27.

financial panic in the month of September. In fact, the bankruptcy of Jay Cooke & Co., based in Pennsylvania, due to speculation on railroad bonds, triggered a crisis that in the following months resulted in chain bankruptcies, collapsing demand, falling farm prices, falling wages and rising unemployment, beginning one of the longest periods of economic contraction in U.S. history²⁰². After the previous years' boom, railroads were hit hard by the crisis, to the point that in the following three years half of the railroad companies declared bankruptcy²⁰³. Against this backdrop, Carey's last speeches in the Constitutional Convention concerned, again in October 1873, railroads themselves. Once more, Carey attacked proposals to regulate railroad companies, and particularly the ban on tariff discrimination, describing them as potential obstacles to development. In doing so, he also took the opportunity of attacking the anti-railroad farmers' movement in the West, which had begun to take on a mass dimension during the previous summer and which would finally explode in the wake of the financial crisis.

Carey recounted spending the summer break in the «northwestern States, the seat of the «great railroad war» and hearing «from men of influence doctrine so revolutionary as to utterly astonish me». Observation of this conflict had even convinced him that «no sane man would invest a single dollar in western railroad bonds or stocks» and that consequently «the crash was inevitable», although it had come sooner than he had expected²⁰⁴. Despite his repeated polemics against banks and finance, in the face of the panic of 1873, Carey thus attributed its cause to the protests of the National Granges movement, which he felt had taken on an overly radical tone and discourse. «What have these men accomplished?» he then asked, «they have carried on this war against railroads for the last two or three years», but their «war against monopolies» had only strengthened them. Indeed, if before the protests in St. Paul, Minnesota, as many as three railroads capable of competing with the Northern Pacific were being built, they had now failed. For Carey, this confirmed how «every unsuccessful attempt at revolution strengthens the government»²⁰⁵. To introduce the proposed regulations into the Constitution meant for Carey to go in the direction indicated by the protests, which had led to the crisis. Therefore, the section prohibiting fare discrimination had to be eliminated, because, in his view, railroad companies had to be allowed to charge proportionately less for those who used them for longer stretches. Similarly, a ban on special tariffs should be avoided in the Constitution, because such limitations, by making it too expensive

²⁰² Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 201-2; Unger, *The Greenback Era*, 213-14; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 512-13.

²⁰³ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 512.

²⁰⁴ *Debates*, Vol. VII, 787.

²⁰⁵ *Debates*, Vol. VII, 787.

for companies to pay the full cost of transportation, risked cutting Pennsylvania off from long-distance interstate commerce and leaving it «in a state of isolation»²⁰⁶.

Ignoring the fact that discriminatory practices and special tariffs had been routinely used by railroad companies to harm competition and manipulate the market, Carey then insisted that Pennsylvania's development in earlier years had been ensured precisely by the role of the «railroad system», along with a «financial policy looking to development of the internal commerce». Nevertheless, he lamented, «we have complaints of railroad management»²⁰⁷. To Carey, therefore, the remedy against «railroad evils» was thus not regulation but support for development through protectionism²⁰⁸. «Instead of passing laws to compel people to go out of the State», he argued during the debate, «it would be far better that we should pass laws to endeavor to induce them to come through the State»²⁰⁹. Carey thus opposed, once again, the imposition of a political and constitutional regulation of corporations and railroad companies on the basis of a view of the role of the state, which emerged clearly from the Constitutional Convention debates, not as a regulatory power of capital, with the exception of financial capital, but as a power at the service of capital and its development.

All the sections criticized by Carey were actually retained²¹⁰ and, after little more than a year of work, the Convention promulgated a Constitution, approved by a large majority of the electorate in December 1873, whose major innovations laid precisely in the articles institutionalizing the state's regulatory intervention in the economy and sanctioning an extension of the constitutional text to areas of intervention that until then the U.S. tradition had preferred to leave to ordinary legislation. With regard to the legislative process, the Constitution, in addition to introducing a more stringent set of rules on deliberation mechanisms in the General Assembly, explicitly prohibited «local or special legislation» in a long list of areas and introduced harsher penalties for corrupt public officials²¹¹. The governor's pardoning powers were limited, he could no longer serve successive terms and became liable to impeachment²¹², and a limitation was introduced on the ability of the state and municipalities to borrow money²¹³. The new Constitution then extended the right to vote to every male citizen of age, removing the term «white» as a qualification²¹⁴ and

²⁰⁶ *Debates, Vol. VII*, 788-91.

²⁰⁷ *Debates, Vol. VII*, 791.

²⁰⁸ *Debates, Vol. VII*, 793.

²⁰⁹ *Debates of the Convention to Amend the Constitution of Pennsylvania. Vol. VIII* (Harrisburg: Benjamin Singerly, 1873), 193.

²¹⁰ *Debates, Vol. VII*, 804.

²¹¹ See Article II, Section 11 and III, Section 7, in *Official Text of the New Constitution of Pennsylvania. Ratified Tuesday, December 16th, 1873* (Philadelphia: Ringwalt & Brown, 1873), 4-8.

²¹² Article IV, in. *Official Text of the New Constitution of Pennsylvania. Ratified Tuesday, December 16th, 1873*, 11-20.

²¹³ Article IX, in. *Official Text of the New Constitution of Pennsylvania. Ratified Tuesday, December 16th, 1873*, 24-26.

²¹⁴ Article VIII, in. *Official Text of the New Constitution of Pennsylvania. Ratified Tuesday, December 16th, 1873*, 21-24.

established for the first time the creation of a system of public schools accessible to all²¹⁵. The most significant innovations on the political-economic level and on the level of constitutional competence, however, were contained in the two concluding articles, devoted to the two crucial areas of contemporary economic development: «private corporations» and «railroad and canals».

The former imposed a number of restrictions on corporations, including the obligation to limit their affairs to the areas explicitly authorized by their charters and established the right of the General Assembly to revoke them if they were deemed «injurious to the citizens of this Commonwealth». In addition, the state's right to exercise «eminent domain» and «police power» whenever necessary to prevent the corporations' actions from interfering with «the equal rights of individuals or the general well-being of the State» was reaffirmed²¹⁶. Significantly, it was made explicit that «corporations» meant «all joint stock companies or associations having any of the powers or privileges of corporations not possessed by individuals or partnerships». Such definition registered the transition to a meaning of «corporation» untethered from any pretense of carrying out «public purposes», sanctioning the rise of corporations as the main form of organization of private economic enterprise in U.S. capitalism²¹⁷. The final article, devoted to canals and railroads, in the hope of correcting existing abuses, first established the existence for all individuals, associations and corporations of an «equal right» to be transported or to have goods transported on the railroads, which constituted «public highways». To ensure compliance, it introduced a long series of rules and restrictions for railroad companies, including a prohibition against discrimination for or against specific individuals or companies with regard to the fares charged or means of transportation provided, a prohibition against offering «free passes», a prohibition against merging with rival companies to limit competition, and a prohibition against investing in activities other than the transportation of goods and people. This also included the prohibition for a corporation against being involved in mining or manufacturing, to prevent favoring the transportation of its own products over those of other companies²¹⁸.

The Constitution thus simultaneously attempted to recognize, by institutionalizing it, the centrality of corporations and railroads in U.S. capitalist development, while subjecting it to regulation dictated by the public interest. As MacVeagh wrote in commenting the final text, the Constitution «refuses to impair the usefulness or infringe the rights of Railway Companies», but at the same time

²¹⁵ Article X, in. *Official Text of the New Constitution of Pennsylvania. Ratified Tuesday, December 16th, 1873*, 26-27.

²¹⁶ Article XVI, in. *Official Text of the New Constitution of Pennsylvania. Ratified Tuesday, December 16th, 1873*, 29-30.

²¹⁷ Richard E. Wright, «Capitalism and the Rise of the Corporation Nation», in *Capitalism Takes Command: The Social Transformation of Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Michael Zakim and Gary J. Kornblith (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 146-68; Jonathan Levy, *Ages of American Capitalism: A History of the United States* (New York: Random House, 2021), 123-25.

²¹⁸ Article XVII, in. *Official Text of the New Constitution of Pennsylvania. Ratified Tuesday, December 16th, 1873*, 31-32.

«it reforms their abuses with an unsparing hand, limits them to the objects of their creation, and clothes the right of the people to use them without unjust discrimination, with the inviolable sanctions of the fundamental law»²¹⁹. In other words, Pennsylvania decided to constitutionalize corporations and railroads as central institutions of U.S. development and at the same time to constitutionalize the role of the state in regulating capitalism and its processes of accumulation.

This constitutionalization of a regulatory state in Pennsylvania occurred, moreover, at a time when railroads were becoming a fundamental terrain of class confrontation, being hit by a wave of strikes in the aftermath of the financial crisis. Between November 1873 and July 1874, workers on numerous railroads in Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, Georgia, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Illinois repeatedly struck against layoffs and wage reductions²²⁰. In late December, in particular, engineers and stokers on the Pennsylvania Central Railroad organized a strike that paralyzed the railroad's western network for days²²¹. Although sparsely attended and often defeated by the owners' reaction, these strikes appeared threatening because of their ubiquity, frequency, and spontaneity, being often organized by non-unionized workers, but also because of the great support they gained from the public and the ability to produce economic harm through the blockades. Above all, they appeared threatening in that they brought class confrontation within a central sector of U.S. capitalist development, setting the stage for the general strike of 1877²²². If the crisis exacerbated class conflict in the mid-1870s, with strikes also spreading to the mines, particularly in Pennsylvania with the "long strike" of 1875, and to factories across the North, at the same time it opened the possibility for a counterattack by employers who took advantage of the depression to cut wages and re-lengthen the workday where it had been limited. At this stage, the labor movement abandoned the demands of the previous decade, particularly the eight hours, cooperation and greenbacks, to focus on the demand for public relief against the crisis²²³.

4. Monetary Independence, Empire and the End of Reconstruction (1874-1876)

In the very last years of his life and intellectual trajectory, Carey went back to the question of money, both intervening in political debates over currency with a rather hopeless defense of greenbacks up to the moment of their resumption and reiterating the relevance of «monetary independence» for the building of American independence and imperial power within the world

²¹⁹ MacVeagh, *Letter From Hon. Wayne MacVeagh, To Certain Citizens of Chester County, Expressing His Views Upon the Subject of the New Constitution*. Reprinted from the *American Republican* of December 2, 1873, 7.

²²⁰ Herbert G. Gutman, "Trouble on the Railroads in 1873-1874: Prelude to the 1877 Crisis?," *Labor History* 2, no. 2 (March 1961): 215.

²²¹ Gutman, 231.

²²² Gutman, 234-35.

²²³ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 513-15.

market. As a matter of fact, the financial panic had also reopened the political battle over money, along social and sectional lines similar to those of previous years, with the hard-money camp blaming an excess of liquidity and the soft-money camp pointing to money scarcity and the unbalanced structure of the banking system as causes of the crisis. In this sense, part of the labor movement, the farmers of the West but also many industrialists affected by the crisis came back strongly in favor of the need for an inflationary policy that, by expanding the amount of money in circulation, could facilitate access to credit and counteract the fall in prices due to the depression²²⁴.

Already a few days after the onset of the crisis, in September 1873, the Treasury had been forced to intervene by injecting liquidity into the market through the purchase of bonds in exchange for greenbacks, but, according to many, to an insufficient extent. In Congress, representatives from the West and the South, with the support of Pennsylvania Republicans, succeeded in imposing, in March 1874, a bill, soon to be renamed the Inflation Bill, which restored the cap on the amount of greenbacks in circulation to \$400 million, as at the end of the Civil War, increasing the existing one by about \$64 million, and mandating a redistribution of bank capital to states where it was scarcer²²⁵. Although the measure was quite moderate, Grant vetoed it the following month, triggering a harsh reaction from the soft-money camp. The veto was not overridden, but in June a compromise was reached with the passage of a Banking Act that confirmed the 18 million greenbacks already issued the previous fall, while prohibiting further issuance and authorizing the reallocation of 55 million in bank capital, a measure still insufficient to counter the crisis²²⁶. Despite the compromise, the affair made blatant the depth of divisions over currency within the Republican Party, helping to weaken it in the West while simultaneously in the South it was forced increasingly on the defensive by the counterrevolutionary violence and racist propaganda of the Democrats, who in the fall 1874 elections won a majority in the House for the first time since the 1850s, largely in the wake of the discontent produced by the economic crisis²²⁷.

At this stage, facing the growing hard-money intransigence of the Grant administration, in September 1874 Carey attempted to foster a compromise by recovering a proposal drawn by Alexander Campbell during the Civil War, later taken up by Horace Greeley and even supported by the National Labor Union in 1868, which aspired to counter inflation and money scarcity together. Indeed, in a series of letters to the new Treasury Secretary Benjamin Bristow, Carey proposed the issuance of a bond on the public debt with interest at 3.65 percent, «interchangeable

²²⁴ Unger, *The Greenback Era*, 220-33.

²²⁵ Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 204; Unger, *The Greenback Era*, 234-35.

²²⁶ Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 205-6; Unger, *The Greenback Era*, 243-48.

²²⁷ Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 207-10; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 523.

with greenbacks» at any time²²⁸. To Carey, such measure could be a means of spontaneously regulating the amount of money in circulation and capping interest rates. In fact, whenever money was too abundant and interest rates fell below 3.65 percent, holders of greenbacks would exchange them for bonds, taking money out of circulation, and vice versa whenever money happened to be scarce and interest rates too high, holders of bonds would sell them to get cash back into greenbacks to invest²²⁹. Thus, «the creation of convertible bonds» would satisfy, in his perspective, «the object of anti-inflationists by diminishing deposits» and at the same time diminish «the power of banks over the property of their customers» by preventing excessive increases in interest rates²³⁰.

In his view, such a move would also stabilize the banking system by rebalancing the presence of capital in the West and South, while also nationalizing the public debt by tying it to a non-exportable paper currency and progressively decoupling it from gold²³¹. In December 1874, following Grant's and Bristow's messages to Congress calling for the abolition of the Legal Tender Act of 1862, William Kelley proposed in Congress an interconvertible bond inspired to Carey's proposal²³². In a lengthy speech, he defended the idea arguing for the need to reduce the «foreign indebtedness» that was oppressing U.S. manufacturers by allowing the federal government «to avail itself of the resources of the American people» and by allowing the purchase of securities on the public debt through greenbacks²³³. Fear of a new feud among Republicans over the currency led the party leadership to stop discussion in the House and assemble a committee of eleven senators, chaired by John Sherman, which proposed a new compromise. The soft-money faction was granted the abolition of the cap on national banknotes, and thus in effect a path to national free banking, which had long been advocated by supporters of a broader money supply, but with a concomitant reduction of greenbacks in circulation to \$300 million through the phasing in of \$80 of greenbacks for every \$100 of national banknotes issued. The hard-money faction was guaranteed the replacement of small denomination paper currency with new silver coins and, most importantly, a commitment from the Treasury to reestablish the convertibility of greenbacks to gold on January 1, 1879²³⁴. In this form, the Specie Resumption Act was passed by the Senate in December 1874.

²²⁸ Henry Charles Carey, *Currency Inflation: How It Has Been Produced, and How It May Profitably Be Reduced. Letters to the Hon. B. H. Bristow* (Philadelphia: Collins, 1874), 15.

²²⁹ Unger, *The Greenback Era*, 99-100.

²³⁰ Carey, *Currency Inflation*, 17.

²³¹ Carey, 18-19.

²³² Unger, *The Greenback Era*, 252.

²³³ *Congressional Record: Containing the Proceedings and Debates of the Forty-Third Congress, Second Session. Volume III* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1875), 20-22.

²³⁴ Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 211; Unger, *The Greenback Era*, 254.

In the following days, Carey immediately lashed out in particularly harsh tones against the measure, which, while representing a compromise, effectively marked the end of the currency born with the Civil War. In a public letter to the Chairman of the House Committee on Banking and Currency, Horace Maynard, Carey insisted that paper currency tended to emerge as long as civilization and wealth developed, allowing the creation of increasingly sophisticated forms of payment and exchange that were less and less dependent on precious metals. In his view, it was precisely the replacement of an «aristocratic form of money» with a «democratic one» that had allowed in the previous decade the spread of «millions of exchanges» that, in the absence of greenbacks, would have been impossible. Exchanges of modest size but crucial to expanding the possibilities of combination and enrichment of society as a whole. «In this small machinery», Carey insisted, «we find the foundation of that great commerce which gives employment to our ships and locomotives, our wagons and our roads»²³⁵.

The Resumption Act proposed, however, to eliminate that foundation, accomplishing «a demonetization of the whole of that currency whose use is indispensable to working men and women», reducing greenbacks, like gold, «to the condition of a mere article of merchandise», allowing banks and speculators to hoard greenbacks by taking them out of circulation and imposing prohibitive interest. The law would thus have had the same consequences as the «levelling by Samson of those pillars upon which so long had rested the whole superstructure of the Temple»²³⁶. In addition to stripping away the foundations upon which the development of previous years had rested, however, Carey warned, the abolition of paper currency would have further exacerbated class conflict. Indeed, in the absence of greenbacks, workers would have demanded to be paid in metal currency, thus aggravating the burden borne by employers who, already oppressed by taxation and banks, would thus have been forced to stop production, reduce wages or lay off workers. In this way, «strikes and lock-outs» would have become «more numerous and more dangerous, the tendency thereto becoming greater from day to day»²³⁷. Only the maintenance of greenbacks and the creation of convertible bonds would have allowed a gradual and safe return to parity between gold and paper currency, while the Resumption Act would have led «assuredly, toward repudiation and rebellion, if not even revolution»²³⁸.

Despite Carey's admonitions, the Resumption Act became law on January 14, 1875, and immediately Treasury Secretary Bristow made it into an instrument of monetary contraction. At

²³⁵ Henry Charles Carey, *The Senate Finance Bill. Letters to the Hon. Horace Maynard* (Philadelphia, 1875), 2-3.

²³⁶ Carey, 4.

²³⁷ Carey, 8.

²³⁸ Carey, 12.

the same time, welding the compromise between sections in the North, the Republican Party continued its disengagement from Reconstruction, while continuing to affirm its principles. Thus, a Civil Rights Act was passed that mandated desegregation in transportation, hotels, juries and recreational venues, particularly in the South, but without providing measures for its implementation. Benjamin Butler's proposal to pass a Sixth Enforcement Act against coup attempts in Louisiana was also defeated²³⁹. Simultaneously, the protectionist tariff reduction approved in 1872 was abolished, and import duties thus returned to a 10% increase²⁴⁰. Protectionism, free banking and resumption marked the new Republican compromise on economic policy that would hold in the following years.

While Carey continued to polemicize against the return to convertibility of greenbacks, at the same time the abolition of the cap on the amount of bills in circulation and the increase in tariffs gave him sufficient reasons to continue to support the Republican Party²⁴¹. Nonetheless, the passage of the Resumption Act undoubtedly marked Carey's estrangement from Pennsylvania's industrial interests, particularly the iron masters of the Industrial League, who, in the context of the crisis, accepted the new line of resumption and fiscal moderation while denouncing as dangerous the convertible bonds proposal brought forward by Kelley²⁴². His vision of a small-scale, localized and democratic development was by then incompatible with the emergence of a highly hierarchized and concentrated industrial capitalism. In the following years, some Northern businessmen and capitalists would continue to support soft-money positions, but the business greenbackism of rising industrialists, which had been a crucial factor in the internal conflict within Northern capital since the Civil War and for which Carey had been the theorist and spokesman, largely disappeared.

The post-1873 depression thus led to the breakup of the heterogeneous coalition of "producers" that had supported the greenbacks, at a time when industrialists and capitalists grasped how, in the crisis, their own class interest coincided with monetary restriction²⁴³. To compactly support the greenbacks against resumption remained only the movement of farmers in the West organized in the National Granges and what was left of the reformist component of the labor movement, following the dissolution of the National Labor Union in 1872. The convergence of labor and agrarian greenbackism in the creation of a new political entity focused on monetary reform led, in

²³⁹ Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 213-14.

²⁴⁰ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 557.

²⁴¹ It is therefore not true, as explained below, that Carey had moved away from the Republican Party because of the Resumption Act going so far as to support the Greenback Party, as claimed by some of his biographers. See for example: Abraham D. H. Kaplan, *Henry Charles Carey. A Study in American Economic Thought* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1931), 78.

²⁴² Unger, *The Greenback Era*, 284.

²⁴³ Unger, 106; Foner, *Reconstruction*, 518.

1875, to two conventions in Cleveland and Cincinnati that marked the birth of the National Independent Party, later known as the Greenback Party²⁴⁴. In one of several largely unsuccessful attempts to involve industrialists and businessmen in the coalition, a meeting was organized in Detroit in August 1875, attended by Kelley, who had not left the Republican Party. Carey, unable to attend because of his advanced age, sent a letter that, while sympathetic, showed his distance from the discourse of the nascent party, bringing out how at the root of his heated defense of the greenbacks did not lay the problem of American producers' dependence on finance, but the problem of the nation's monetary independence in the world market. Not the labor question, but the question of empire.

Greenbacks, in fact, in Carey's perspective had to be defended first and foremost as a «non-exportable circulation» capable of shielding the U.S. domestic market from the fluctuations and financial crises of the world market, thus guaranteeing an «industrial and financial independence» that would allow the United States to emerge from the condition of «mere purveyors and transporters for the manufacturing nations of Europe»²⁴⁵. Indeed, it had been thanks to the large amount of paper currency not convertible into gold in circulation in the United States that, in 1866, the banking crisis in England had not impacted across the Atlantic. «Our currency», Carey wrote, «was of a character not liable to be affected by the financial movements of a neighboring nation that seeks to control the universal monetary movement»²⁴⁶. Prior to the Civil War, U.S. financial history had instead consisted of alternating speculative bubbles and crises according to the wishes of British bankers, while greenbacks had created a barrier that had at the same time guaranteed «to the people a larger supply of the machinery of exchange»²⁴⁷. Beginning with McCulloch's appointment, however, a crusade had begun by the «men of the east, bankers, wealthy men» to replace greenbacks with «gold-bearing six-per-cent bonds» and thus restore monetary dependence on Britain²⁴⁸. Moreover, beginning with McCulloch, Treasury policy had radically transformed the nature of the U.S. public debt arose with the Civil War, systematically seeking to sell bonds abroad while operating monetary contraction in the domestic market, thus creating too much foreign debt relative to the amount of money in circulation in the United States. It was this «inverted pyramid» that according to Carey had planted the seeds of the crisis erupted in 1873²⁴⁹.

²⁴⁴ Unger, *The Greenback Era*, 293-97.

²⁴⁵ Henry Charles Carey, *Monetary Independence. Letter of Mr. H. C. Carey to the Hon. Moses W. Field* (Philadelphia, 1875), 1.

²⁴⁶ Carey, 3.

²⁴⁷ Carey, 9-10.

²⁴⁸ Carey, 8, 12.

²⁴⁹ Carey, 13-14.

Instead, in order to put the U.S. financial structure back on a sound footing it was necessary to expand the money supply and issue debt securities convertible into greenbacks. In conclusion, however, Carey acknowledged that at the root of this clash over money laid different conceptions of the role of the state and the legitimacy of its intervention in the economy. To those who objected that «legal tender notes are not sanctioned by the Constitution», Carey nevertheless responded that the Constitution «gave to Congress the power to provide for the ‘general welfare’, leaving to that body full discretion as to the measures required for effecting that object»²⁵⁰. Thus, it was the general welfare clause in Article I that constitutionally grounded the role of the state envisioned by Carey as necessary to support development in the domestic market and to build American imperial power in the world market. A clause on which anti-slavery advocates had grounded the federal government’s power to emancipate four million slaves but which now, Carey denounced, seemed insufficient to legitimize the issuance of a paper currency. «What we most of all need today for the promotion of that ‘welfare,» he thus concluded, «is the establishment of that monetary independence which results from maintaining absolute command over the machinery of exchange used within our own borders»²⁵¹. It was precisely this command of the state over money, and more generally over the domestic market, that to Carey could ground the global projection of its power and that had been the goal of his interventions in the debates on trade and monetary policy. It was in fact this state command in the domestic market that, through protectionism and currency, constituted the goal of the industrial reconstruction of U.S. capitalism in a new post-slavery arrangement, to place domestic accumulation and its external projection on a new and more solid foundation.

The question of empire and especially of the relationship with Britain, which had marked all of Carey’s economic and political thinking in the preceding decades, returned once more the following year, in a series of letters addressed to the *Times* of London in response to an anti-protectionist polemic in the newspaper. Citing Carey as «the redoubtable champion of the protective system in the United States», the *Times* had attacked his critique of free trade as hypocritical, as an attempt to assert a U.S. «industrial power» through which to «overwhelm all creation with their goods». In his rebuttal, Carey took the opportunity to reiterate his critique of British imperialism and its effects in impoverishing the colonies. In fact, the goal of protectionism was to ensure a «diversification of employments» that would bring producer and consumer closer together, save labor and make it more productive by stimulating trade on a local scale, in accordance with the teachings of Adam

²⁵⁰ Carey, 15.

²⁵¹ Carey, 16.

Smith, which he read differently from the free-traders²⁵². Instead, British trade policy in the last century had consisted of systematic warfare against the «domestic commerce» of other nations in order to secure the monopoly of British manufactures in foreign markets. In this sense, Carey denounced in detail the British imperial policy in China, with the imposition of the opening of Chinese markets to the opium trade²⁵³, in India, where the production of textile manufactures had been banned, sanctioning the death of the local economy, and where the importation of textiles produced in Britain had been forced²⁵⁴ and finally in Japan, where extremely disadvantageous trade treaties had been imposed and until a few years earlier had been prevented from being changed²⁵⁵.

Resistance to British commercial imperialism through protectionism, therefore, was necessary for Carey not only in the «new countries», but in all countries that wished to develop their own resources and build their own autonomy²⁵⁶. Beginning in 1861, the United States had in fact begun to show that it could «speedily achieve an industrial independence and thus emancipate itself from the system», which was why, according to Carey, British newspapers multiplied their attacks against protectionism, in the knowledge that «the American market had been lost, and had been so because of a protective tariff»²⁵⁷. Not only, however, had protectionism enabled the development of domestic industry, particularly textiles and steel, but it had also enabled exports to increase, for «it is precisely as we make our own iron, and our own cottons and woollens, that we are enabled to become larger customers to the various non-manufacturing nations of the earth»²⁵⁸. Once again, then, Carey's protectionism, from an anti-imperial defensive measure emerged as a means of projecting U.S. capitalism into the world market. On the other hand, as he had also reiterated in his writings on currency in previous years by recovering the mercantilist doctrine, to attract precious metals it was not necessary, in his view, to go into debt through the sale of bonds abroad but rather to maintain a surplus balance of trade through the growing export of industrial manufactures²⁵⁹.

Carey's last public speeches coincided with the epilogue of Reconstruction and particularly with the 1876 election campaign. In August of that year, Carey published a short pamphlet entitled *To*

²⁵² Henry Charles Carey, *Commerce, Christianity, and Civilization versus British Free Trade. Letters in Reply to the London Times* (Philadelphia: Collins, 1876), 3-5.

²⁵³ Carey, 19-20.

²⁵⁴ Carey, 24-29.

²⁵⁵ Carey, 23. Carey had a direct knowledge of the Japanese attempt to revise treaties that accorded Great Britain the status of «most favored nation», since Erasmus Peshine Smith had participated in it as legal advisor to the Japanese emperor sent by the United States. *Erasmus Peshine Smith to Henry C. Carey*, March 25, 1872, «Henry C. Carey Papers» (box 18, folder 4), Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²⁵⁶ Carey, 6-7.

²⁵⁷ Carey, 11.

²⁵⁸ Carey, 18.

²⁵⁹ «We must have the balance of trade in our favor, enabling us to retain the metals that are mined». Carey, *Currency Inflation*, 19.

the Friends of the Union Throughout the Union, to warn about the dangers of a victory of the «secessionist party», arguing that «maintenance of the Union» was once more at stake in the fall's presidential election. While Carey disagreed with the Republican Party's choices on monetary policy, he nevertheless supported it for its adherence to the cause of the Union and, above all, for its protectionism. Carey, then, did not leave the Republican Party to support the Greenback Party as some historians have suggested²⁶⁰. While Carey cited the previous month's massacre of blacks in Hamburg, South Carolina, as evidence of the violence and discord caused by the Democratic Party, what concerned him was predominantly the return to an entirely free-trade policy promised by the «platform upon which the Confederates are now to stand»²⁶¹. To Carey, therefore, it was necessary to defend the achievements made by the Republican Party since the Civil War, which had less to do with the emancipation of four million slaves and the granting of civil and political equality to blacks than with the implementation of a «national policy» that had allowed for the economic connection of North and South, particularly through the construction of railroads to transport Southern cotton to Northern manufactures.

The intensification of this «intercourse» represented, in his perspective, «the means of harmonizing, to a great extent, not only the commercial but the social relations of men who, but a few years since, were in arms against each other»²⁶². In the previous fifteen years, therefore, by developing these «internal connections», the Republican Party had played a decisive role in the mission «of carrying the nation upward toward that position in the world at large to which its wonderful resources so well entitle it to make a claim». In contrast, the Democratic Party had always produced division, war and subservience to British trade policy because of its defense of financial interests in the North and cotton interests in the South, and it continued to do so by proposed, in its program, an abolition of the protectionist tariff. Therefore, Carey concluded, «Democratic success must now, as it so nearly has been in the past, be fatal to the continued existence of the Union»²⁶³.

Carey's indifference to the fate of Reconstruction was in tune with the positions taken during the campaign by the Republican Party and its candidate Rutherford Hayes, whose criticism of violence in the South incited by the Democratic Party was coupled with an increasing unwillingness to intervene militarily in defense of Reconstruction governments. While Republican rhetoric continued to refer to the Civil War, it simultaneously abandoned any explicit defense of black rights²⁶⁴. On the other hand, the Democrats, while choosing a candidate like Samuel Tilden

²⁶⁰ See: Kaplan, *Henry Charles Carey*, 78.

²⁶¹ Henry Charles Carey, *To the Friends of the Union Throughout the Union*, 1876, 1.

²⁶² Carey, 3.

²⁶³ Carey, 4.

²⁶⁴ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 567.

connoted predominantly by the battle for anti-corruption reform, in the South mobilized the white electorate through an overtly racist discourse, organizing a systematic violence to prevent blacks from voting and to forcibly recapture the governments of the last Southern states still in Republican hands, namely Florida, Louisiana, North and South Carolina²⁶⁵. The long political and constitutional crisis that followed the elections was resolved, in February 1877, by the gradual emergence of a new political arrangement in which the Republican Party obtained the Hayes' presidency and the Democratic Party secured a desistance of the federal government from Reconstruction and the affirmation of "home rule" for the South. Simultaneously, the federal government certified the victories of Democratic candidates for governor in South Carolina and Louisiana (where Hayes's victory was simultaneously recognized), and several Democrats or otherwise enemies of Reconstruction were appointed in the administration. Two months later, federal troops were withdrawn from South Carolina and Louisiana²⁶⁶.

Carey did not pronounce himself on this outcome, but he likely supported it, having since 1867 contested the policies of Radical Reconstruction, arguing for the need to favor those aimed at ensuring the development of the South. Along these lines, William Kelley, until the end Carey's closest political ally, in a letter to Hayes in December 1876, argued for the need for Republicans to redefine the party's basis in the South, abandoning its Reconstruction coalition, made up of blacks and carpetbaggers, in order to bring together the old Whig and Unionist base²⁶⁷. His position now enjoyed a wide following within the party. As has been written, the Republican Party's abandonment of Reconstruction was thus a cause, rather than a consequence, of the crisis of 1876-1877, for it would never have happened without the Republican unwillingness to prevent violence and guarantee the rights of freedmen, further stiffened by the conservative turn that had followed the onset of the economic crisis²⁶⁸. While a counter-revolution of property was accomplished in the South²⁶⁹, the defeat of Reconstruction did not, however, mark the end of the class conflict that had opened since the Civil War. Three months after the end of the electoral crisis, in fact, the United States was crossed by the Great Strike of 1877, when tens of thousands of railroad workers went on strike across the country, from Pennsylvania to California, against further wage cuts. For two weeks, the general strike paralyzed cities such as Chicago, Pittsburgh, where two thousand train cars were set on fire, and St. Louis, where black and white, skilled and unskilled workers united to demand higher wages, the eight-hour workday, a ban on child labor, and an end to arrests of the

²⁶⁵ Foner, 569-74.

²⁶⁶ Foner, 575-82; Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom*, 230-34.

²⁶⁷ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 577.

²⁶⁸ Foner, 582.

²⁶⁹ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 622.

unemployed. The strike was suppressed through the organization of private militias financed by industrialists and, where necessary, by the federal army, whose intervention in the states' internal affairs, in this case, aroused no opposition among either Republicans or Democrats²⁷⁰.

After the end of Reconstruction, Southern elites had a free hand in shaping a new order based on labor control and black subordination. While full racial segregation and political disenfranchisement of blacks would not be fully established until the 1890s, since the late 1870s the new Southern governments attempted to reestablish the command of planters over the black labor force on plantations, with the passage of vagrancy laws inspired by the Black Codes of Presidential Reconstruction and a tightening of the penal code to expand the pool of forced labor obtainable from prisons. Despite persistent resistance from Blacks, the end of Reconstruction thus entailed a drastic alteration of power relations in favor of capital. The new racial and class hierarchies, however, were imposed in a context irreversibly marked by emancipation and the abolition of slavery, in which blacks could continue to rely on the recomposition of autonomous households, the existence of a network of social and religious institutions, a system of education (albeit scaled down from previous years) and a new system of labor relations based on sharecropping and no longer on gang labor controlled by whites²⁷¹. Simultaneously, the reaffirmation of planters' command was accompanied by a racial segmentation of the labor force, with blacks essentially forced to work on plantations and whites admitted to employment in the textile mills that spread particularly to the Upper South. A segmentation that made racism, once again, a public and psychological wage to compensate white workers for the exploitation they endured and that allowed wages for both whites and blacks to be compressed²⁷². Contrary to what Carey had argued, however, neither the penetration of Northern capital nor the spread of manufacturing, which in any case remained limited, allowed the Southern economy to disengage from a colonial pattern based on the production of raw materials for exportation or for the Northern market²⁷³. The new South that emerged from Reconstruction, therefore, would struggle for a long time to recover the agricultural productivity levels of the slave era, while in the North and West capitalist development would take the road of full industrialization.

Thus, U.S. capitalist development in the last quarter of the nineteenth century took off even in the absence of many of the economic and political conditions theorized by Carey, without the industrial diversification of the South and without a political control over the currency such as to ensure its

²⁷⁰ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 583-85; Foner, *History of the Labor Movement Vol. 1*, 464-74.

²⁷¹ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 593-96, 602-3.

²⁷² Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 700-701.

²⁷³ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 596-97.

abundant supply. Instead, it happened in a context highly differentiated and hierarchical which was only reinforced by high duties. Far from allowing a local diversification of production, in fact, protectionism contributed to the concentration of capital in some areas of the country, while leaving behind many others. Nonetheless, while remaining always the object of political dispute, protectionism played a decisive role in the acceleration of industrialization and in the economic rise of the United States in the world market that, beginning in the late nineteenth century would enable a new imperial projection of U.S. power on the global stage. Capitalism, in other words, went far beyond Carey's vision, without facing the problems of order and legitimation that his reflection had tried to face in the attempt to prevent social conflict.

Through the study of Carey's political and intellectual trajectory between the 1860s and the 1870s, then, it is possible to grasp the hostility of Northern capital and its theorists to Radical Reconstruction in the South, which greatly contributed to its defeat as it pushed the Republican Party toward a progressive disengagement from the South. After opposing the emancipation of blacks as threatening to the continuation of U.S. development, Carey thus opposed any reform of the South that would make blacks anything more or different than an exploitable and racially subordinated workforce in the fields and manufactures. If, therefore, on the issue of currency Carey appeared to be an outspoken voice within the Republican Party, by looking at his stances on Reconstruction, his distance from the conservative component of the Party appears vastly reduced. In the end, the defeat of Radical Reconstruction constituted a necessary precondition of the industrial and imperial rise of the United States, since the transformation of the South it had aimed to realize threatened to give black labor a political role capable of challenging the racial and class hierarchies of U.S. capitalism.

Conclusion

«The American Civil War has brought in its train a colossal national debt and, with it, a heavy tax-burden, the creation of a finance aristocracy of the vilest type, and the granting of immense tracts of public land to speculative companies for the exploitation of railways, mines, etc. In short, it has brought a very rapid centralization of capital. The great republic has therefore ceased to be the promised land for emigrating workers. Capitalist production advances there with gigantic strides»¹.

With these words, in the last pages of his *Capital*, Karl Marx offered a first evaluation of the Civil War's economic and political consequences for U.S. capitalism. Historians have largely confirmed Marx's intuition that the war and its aftermath had marked an epochal shift, permanently and irreversibly transforming the conditions of capital accumulation in the United States². In addition to lead to the abolition of slavery in the South, the conflict had brought the acceleration of industrial development, a new revenue system, a protective tariff, the creation of a national banking system, the consolidation of an unprecedented public debt and the creation of a federal homesteading system to dispose of land in the West, which in the following decade would fuel the railroad boom. The U.S. economic and social system that emerged from the Civil War and Reconstruction hardly resembled that in which, in the first half of the nineteenth century, Carey had started his career as an economist. Understanding this historical shift is crucial for a conclusive assessment of Carey's reflection, since, as the last chapter has shown, he increasingly struggled to cope with the magnitude and consequences of this transformation.

As this dissertation has reconstructed, throughout his long intellectual trajectory, which closely followed the shifts and crises of nineteenth-century U.S. history, Carey had scientifically and politically attempted, by successive approximations, to affirm and legitimize capitalism against its several obstacles, both those subjectively posed by black and white labor and those structurally deriving from the world market. In the 1820s and 1830s, against the first (white) labor insurgence of journeymen mechanics and factory operatives, Carey had outlined an economic science of harmony and improvement that represented the United States as a classless society and as a democracy of capital in which everyone could rise by diligently working and in which social conflict

¹ Karl Marx, *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume One.*, ed. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1976), 940.

² Eric Foner, *Reconstruction. America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863 - 1877*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2014), 1–34; Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton. A Global History* (New York: Knopf, 2014), 242–73; Nicolas Barreyre, *Gold and Freedom. The Political Economy of Reconstruction* (Charlottesville-London: University of Virginia Press, 2015), 43–110; Nicolas Barreyre, “Les avatars politiques de la dette américaine: la crise de la sécession et les transformations de l'État fédéral (1861-1913),” in *Les Crises de La Dette Publique: XVIIIe-XXIe Siècle*, ed. Gérard Béaur and Laure Quennouëlle-Corre (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 2019), 475–93.

appeared useless. Only by submitting to wage labor, in his view, U.S. workers could hope to better their condition. Then, starting in the 1840s, acknowledging the persistent difficulty of U.S. manufactures to compete, but also the increasingly unrestrained Westward movement of white workers, Carey had called for the state to place itself within capital in order to foster and govern its affirmation. In his view, through protectionist tariffs in particular, the state had to tie both capital and labor to the local places of production with the goal of reproducing the social relations that grounded accumulation. Protectionism, he claimed, would allow a small-scale, localized diversification of production that could both foster capital accumulation and keep the workers in Northeastern manufacturing centers, while at the same time building U.S. independence and power within the world market.

Simultaneously, between the 1830s and the 1850s, against the emergence of a radical abolitionist movement and the growing insubordination of slaves, Carey had outlined a gradual, limited and ordered vision of emancipation, arguing that the end of slavery had to happen «under the control of the masters» and according to their interests, as a consequence of economic development in the South (made possible by protection) and only upon the condition that slaves could be «prepared for freedom». Until then, emancipation had to be postponed and black laborers had to be kept at work as slaves in the fields. At the eve of the Civil War, then, in the midst of the most severe crisis in nineteenth-century U.S. history, on the one hand Carey directly engaged within politics, trying to affirm his vision of gradual emancipation through protection within the Republican Party against its more radical anti-slavery factions. On the other hand, he went back to science, reinterpreting his previous economic theory in terms of a Newtonian science of society that described it as a «societary machine», arguing that only through «subordination» to its order could individuals aim to participate to its accelerating movement and profit from capital accumulation.

Thus, up to the Civil War, Carey had argued for the need to ground accumulation, through the state's power of coordination, upon a specific form of society that could anchor both labor and capital to the local level and to a small-scale, diversified economy. Only this form of social relations, in his vision, could give capital a solid and broadening base for accumulation, while at the same time preventing the emergence of social conflict. In fact, to Carey this locally based form of accumulation would give increasing opportunities for investment to (white and male) owners thanks to the new forms of «combination» allowed by limited-liability corporations and joint-stock companies. This vision certainly aimed to tie workers to capital, but to some extent also required capital to territorialize itself within local communities and regional economies, prioritizing nearby «commerce» over long-distance «trade», and production over finance, in order to avoid the social

troubles brought by the large-scale dimensions assumed by British industry. Carey's scientific and political reflection, in other words, facing the problem of order and aiming to build a stronger legitimation for capitalism as a system of social relations, argued for the need to limit the scale of capital accumulation to overcome the obstacles to its overall affirmation, while at the same time disciplining labor into accepting its command. Thus, in the attempt to save capital from social conflict Carey had to treat finance, large-scale industry and the international division of labor not as the logical result of the unfolding of capitalist relations but as a dangerous contradiction and as a distortion of the natural economic laws³.

However, Carey's effort can hardly be said to have succeeded either in disciplining labor or in confining capital to a small-scale dimension, not simply because of a lack of scientific and political influence but rather because, throughout the nineteenth century, the movements of both proved impossible to harness. In fact, white workers in the North kept seeing no harmony between their own and their employers' interests, refusing to diligently submit to wage labor as the sole path to self-improvement and denouncing it instead as a form of coercive extortion similar to slavery. Between the 1820s and the 1870s, they kept striking and organizing in trade unions, first at the local level and then, after the Civil War, at the national level, while at the same time moving in increasingly massive numbers towards the West in search of a piece of land that could guarantee them an existence free from dependency.

Meanwhile, black workers in the South kept refusing to acquiesce to slavery, let alone to patiently wait for gradual emancipation, thus enacting forms of day-to-day resistance in plantations, escaping *en masse* towards the North and collectively rebelling, up to the point of forcing immediate emancipation «on the wheels of insurrection»⁴ during the Civil War. During Reconstruction, then, black workers made it clear not to be satisfied with a freedom limited to the possibility of selling their own labor, either in plantations or in manufactures, instead demanding land, citizenship and self-determination, while also politically organizing to transform Southern society. Women as well, whose improvement Carey had described as consisting in the devotion to reproductive labor and to their role as wives in the home, refused to accept domesticity as a destiny of separation and subordination, trying to turn it into a vehicle of political action and vocally demanding equal rights and full citizenship, particularly after the Civil War. Throughout the decades, then, Carey's reflection had to face a society that kept moving in unforeseen and undisciplined directions, with

³ Marx noted this contradiction discussing Carey's wage theory: «A step further, and he will perhaps discover that the one evil in capitalist production is capital itself». Marx, *Capital. Volume One*, 1976, 705–6.

⁴ Frederick Douglass, «The Significance of Emancipation in the West Indies [1857],» in *The Portable Frederick Douglass*, ed. Henry Louis Jr. Gates and John Stauffer (New York-London: Penguin Books, 2016), 291.

black and white labor systematically rejecting the subordinate, preordained positions that his science and politics tried to prescribe them.

At the same time, in the 1860s, even capital started to move in a direction increasingly incompatible with Carey's vision. Between the Civil War and Reconstruction, as noted by Marx, U.S. capitalism underwent a change that transformed its scale and pace, placing it on the road of full industrialization, of mass production and of centralization in gigantic industries and corporations. Even the establishment of the protectionist commercial policy that Carey had directly sponsored, far from shaping a localized economic diversification, accelerated the concentration of large-scale industrial production in a few urban Northeastern and Midwestern centers, while leaving the South in a predominantly agricultural condition. In this context, during Reconstruction Carey identified the greenbacks and monetary abundance as instruments to counter such tendencies both economically and politically. His attempt, however, was defeated precisely because of the new coalition of financial and industrial élites that had come to dominate the Republican Party, as well as the federal government. More precisely, those emerging industrialists that in the previous decades had supported Carey's protectionism and greenbackism, by the time of the 1873 crisis had found their interests increasingly aligned to those of finance and large-scale industry and increasingly at odds with any "producerist" coalition. In other words, the fault line between capital and labor had widened up to the point that it could no longer be recomposed neither scientifically, as Carey had tried to do in his protectionist and monetary thought, nor politically, as the Republican Party had managed to do before the Civil War.

Thus, U.S. capitalism had not only reached a new scale, but had entered a new phase, pursuing an unrestrained growth even at the cost of producing a highly centralized, quasi-monopolistic economy and a highly conflictual society. In the last decades of the century, in fact, the lowering of wages, the further proletarianization of working masses and the hierarchization of the workforce, fueled by the boom of European immigration, would trigger one of the most violent periods of confrontation between capital and labor⁵. Capitalism, in other words, had affirmed itself as a social and economic system without caring much about the problems of order and legitimation that Carey's reflection had tried to face in the previous decades. It had managed to overcome its obstacles, but according to an articulation of science and politics very different from that proposed by Carey. Scientifically, in fact, his death in 1879, chronologically coincided with a fundamental turn in U.S. economic and social thought. On the one hand, the success of Herbert Spencer's

⁵ Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers. Labor in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1989), 113–210; David R. Roediger and Philip Sheldon Foner, *Our Own Time: A History of American Labor and the Working Day* (London-New York: Verso, 1989), 101–75.

interpretation of Darwinism in the United States sanctioned the emergence of a social science that depicted social evolution as the result of a struggle in which only the fittest could prevail⁶. The scientific legitimation of capitalism thus renounced, at least for some time, to represent it as a universally beneficial system based upon a harmony of interest, instead justifying it through an explicit vindication of its conflictual and competitive nature. On the other hand, in those same decades, the marginalist or neoclassical turn in economic thought led to the formalization of the discipline, detaching it from the historical and political problems that had permeated Carey's economic reflection. Politically, Carey's death coincided with the end of Reconstruction, with a reshaping of the Republican Party's coalition and social composition, as well as with the consolidation of the state's expanded authority, which would not be deployed to guarantee a balanced and localized accumulation, but to foster the centralization of capital and to repress the labor movement, while implementing segregation in the South.

After his death, then, Carey's scientific influence rapidly faded both within economic science and within social science. It persisted, for a few years, at the University of Pennsylvania, where his disciple Robert Ellis Thompson (1844-1924) taught his system of social science before being dismissed precisely because of conflicts with the younger generation of marginalist, German-trained economists⁷. In 1881, Thompson was also the first dean of the Wharton School of Finance and Economy, created by Joseph Wharton, an industrialist who was himself a protectionist and an admirer of Carey, which would have a long history as one of the most prestigious business schools in the country. His political influence remained for a few decades within the Republican Party's protectionist factions, particularly through figures such as James Blaine⁸, but twisted in support of a form of industrialization that he would have hardly recognized. Instead, it was abroad that Carey's ideas and his protectionism had a larger audience, particularly in countries such as Germany or Japan that still had to undertake their path towards industrialization.

The history of Carey's global influence has been recently and carefully traced⁹, but in itself it cannot tell much about his relevance in the intellectual history of capitalism. In fact, the eclipse of Carey's influence did not entail the obsolescence of the scientific, ideological and political strategies he had elaborated to overcome the obstacles to capital. On the contrary, while his scientific system was forgotten as such, many of the ideas and concepts he had forged in the thick of the nineteenth-

⁶ Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* [1944] (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

⁷ Luther L. Bernard and Jessie Bernard, *Origins of American Sociology. The Social Science Movement in the United States* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1943), 425. See also: Robert Ellis Thompson, *Social Science and National Economy* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1875).

⁸ Marc-William Palen, *The "Conspiracy" of Free Trade: The Anglo-American Struggle over Empire and Economic Globalization, 1846-1896* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

⁹ Eric Helleiner, *The Neomercantilists: A Global Intellectual History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021).

century social conflicts would continue to be used as ideological pillars in the legitimation of U.S. capitalism well into the twentieth century. Above all, the idea of the United States as a harmonious and classless, albeit non-egalitarian, society in which every industrious worker could improve and socially rise through hard work would remain as a fundamental element of the U.S. political discourse until today. Elaborated by Carey and by other early-nineteenth-century U.S. economists as an anti-labor tool to delegitimize strikes and trade unions and to legitimize class hierarchies, throughout the decades it allowed to supply an exceptionalist and ideological representation of U.S. society that denied the existence of social conflict and of fixed social boundaries. Also, the equation between the level of wages and labor productivity according to which the former varied only according to the latter's variations, proposed by Carey in his first writings to counter the trade unions' claim for higher wages, would be repeatedly endorsed by economic science in the following century. The partially consequent idea that wage increases had to accompany increased production, so that high wages and expanding consumption opportunities could represent a form of compensation to exploitation, inherent in Carey's protectionism, would represent a fundamental assumption of Fordism and of the ideological discourse of the U.S. consumer society. The idea of the state as responsible for fostering the accumulation of capital and for guaranteeing the health and the progress of the social body would come back in full swing at times of economic and social crises. Moreover, Carey's critique to the idea of scarcity would be recovered by later economists such as Simon Patten and John Kenneth Galbraith, just as his vision of monetary abundance as essential to capital accumulation would be echoed by John Maynard Keynes' rejection of the quantitative theory of money. Finally, Carey's idea that high duties and tariffs could afford «protection to American labor» against the competition of foreign cheap labor would be recovered by the most conservative wings of the Republican Party since the 1990s, and most recently by some of Donald Trump's economic advisors.

All of this is not to argue that Carey had a direct influence upon all these historical and intellectual episodes, but to conclude that studying his scientific and political reflection within history and within social conflicts allows to understand how many of the fundamental ideological pillars of capitalism were not elaborated within a clash with the subjects that rejected its command. In the century following Carey's death, in fact, those who would face, in the United States as abroad, problems similar to those he had confronted during the nineteenth century, from class struggle to national economic independence, would recur to similar arguments even in different contexts, in the attempts to foster the affirmation and legitimation of capitalism. The history of his scientific and political reflection can therefore prove relevant in illuminating some crucial ideological tools deployed against the obstacles to capital.

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