

# Protecting America: Order, Nation and Exception in Henry Carey's Social Science

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## Abstract

The essay offers a new understanding of Henry Charles Carey's (1793–1879) social science. As one of the major intellectuals of the antebellum period that actively participated in the Republican Party, Carey's works marked a reinterpretation of US nationalism in which the State became the guarantee of the exceptional American social order against social conflict and economic crisis following the capitalistic transition. Protectionism was conceived as a political measure to defend the harmony of the nation's interests. His social science should be understood as an attempt to scientifically re-legitimize the order: as a social science of the American nation.

**Keywords:** Henry Charles Carey; Social Science; Protectionism; Nationalism; Exceptionalism; American Capitalism; American State.

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## 1 Henry Charles Carey and Nineteenth-Century America

Despite his theoretical and political influence on his contemporaries, Henry Charles Carey has been widely forgotten in American intellectual history. Nonetheless, his social science, conceived as a reaction to crucial economic transformations, can still be relevant in thinking the relationship between nation, society and the State on the eve of the Civil War, when the political definition of that relationship would have proved to be crucial. By “articulating in abstract form the large-scale American relations,”<sup>1</sup> as Karl Marx, pointed out, by giving an intellectual and scientific shape to the “free labor ideology” of the Republican Party,<sup>2</sup> to American nationalism, exceptionalism and protectionism, Carey’s works stand as significant examples of American thought within a phase of constituent transition. The aim of this paper is then to interpret Carey’s protectionism, nationalism and social science as rooted in the core of the capitalist transformation of American economy and society.

Son of Matthew Carey, an Irish political exile, Henry Charles was born in Philadelphia in 1793. In 1835, he retired from the family publishing enterprise to focus on writing on economic subjects.<sup>3</sup> His volumes, pamphlets and articles, especially those published between the 1840s and the 1860s, made him the most widely read economist of the country, the first American economist to be translated abroad and the leading advocate for protective tariffs, making him known as “the Ajax of Protection.” A former member of the Whig Party, he actively participated in the construction of the Republican Party in Pennsylvania. He regularly wrote for the Pennsylvanian *North American and United States Gazette*, he founded the protectionist paper *The Plough, the Loom, and the Anvil* in 1845 and he was, between 1849 and 1857, the main economic editor of Horace Greeley’s *New York Daily Tribune*, the most influential newspaper before the Civil War, writing several unsigned articles on protection. Although he always refused to hold elected offices, he was always strongly engaged in politics. In 1856 he was a delegate to the Republican convention in Philadelphia, where he received three votes as vice-presidential candidate, and actively participated in the Frémont campaign. In 1860, during the Chicago presidential convention that nominated Abraham Lincoln, Carey imposed, through the Pennsylvanian delegation, a protective paragraph in the party platform. He had a long correspondence with Lincoln<sup>4</sup> after his election, both on economic issues and on cabinet appointments, particularly regarding the Secretary of Treasury. Carey refused to endorse the protectionist, but allegedly corrupt, Simon Cameron, instead favoring the moderate free-trader Salmon Chase, who repeatedly asked for Carey’s advice and hired his student William Elder.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Carey’s contribution was crucial in drafting the Republican Tariff approved in 1861, since Justin Morrill, the main sponsor of the bill, was himself his student and political interlocutor. Carey died in 1879 at eighty-five, thus having witnessed one of the most critical periods in the history of the United States, crucial for their growth as a nation, as a capitalist market and as a State.<sup>6</sup> As we will see, witnessing this transformation was crucial for his thought.

Since Carey’s death, only four monographic works have been devoted to Carey: Abraham Kaplan in 1931 and Rodney Morrison in 1986<sup>7</sup> both emphasize his contribution to the history of eco-

1. Karl Marx, *Gründrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, ed. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin, 1973), 888.
2. Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men. The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1970); Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial. Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: Norton, 2010), 33–41; Tiziano Bonazzi, *Abraham Lincoln. Un dramma americano*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011).
3. Abraham D.H. Kaplan, *Henry Charles Carey. A Study in American Economic Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1931); George W. Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1951); Arnold W. Green, *Henry Charles Carey. Nineteenth-Century Sociologist* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1951).
4. Henry C. Carey Papers, Edward Carey Gardiner Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
5. Arthur M. Lee, “Henry C. Carey and the Republican Tariff,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 81 (1957), 280–302; Heather C. Richardson, *The Greatest Nation on Earth. Republican Economic Policies during the Civil War*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 19–20.
6. The custom of conjugating «United States» as a singular subject became prevalent only after the Civil War, as a nationalist and ideological distortion of the English language. This paper will instead treat them as a plural entity, as they were for the most part of the nineteenth century and as Carey himself does in his writings.
7. Kaplan, *Henry Charles Carey*; Rodney J. Morrison, *Henry C. Carey and American Economic Development* (Philadelphia: Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 1986).

conomic thought; George Smith, in 1951, reconstructs Carey's intellectual path as highly influenced by the deepening of the sectional crisis;<sup>8</sup> and Arnold Green, again in 1951, properly reads Carey as the first American social scientist.<sup>9</sup> Green's interesting hypothesis is that, while being indebted to French social thinkers like Fourier and Comte, Carey deeply influenced Durkheim, who read and quoted his *Principles of Social Science*.<sup>10</sup> Partial historical accounts of Carey's thought have been provided by historians of American economic thought,<sup>11</sup> of American commercial policy,<sup>12</sup> of the Republican Party during the Civil War<sup>13</sup> and by economists.<sup>14</sup> However, five studies on nineteenth-century America are particularly relevant in understanding Carey's protectionism and social science. Foner's 1970 seminal study of Republican thought reads Carey's theory within the wider intellectual movement that shaped the 1850s free-labor ideology, highlighting Carey's protectionism as a measure to favor the diversification of regional markets and to build a society based on small-scale production and local communities, in which the interests of capitalists and workers would have been in perfect harmony.<sup>15</sup> Here can be traced a clear link between Carey's harmony of interests and Lincoln's idea of free labor. In Daniel Howe's monograph on the Whig Party, Carey's social science is studied as a perfect example of the Whig progressive, optimistic and capitalist vision of American development.<sup>16</sup> Carey's theory is also taken into account in Ross' reconstruction of *The Origins of American Social Science* (1991) as an expansive version of American exceptionalism<sup>17</sup> and as an optimistic interpretation of classical political economy, grounded in the difference of the American nation. Nicholas and Peter Onuf's *Nations, Markets and War* (2006) frames Carey as the economist who, more than others, played a critical role in fostering a national sentiment in the years before the Civil War, providing the North with the conception of the nation as a moral union. In this respect, Carey's vision of society is simultaneously his vision of the nation: a nation of local communities, homes and neighborhoods, strongly bonded by economic development.<sup>18</sup> Distinct from Ross, they refuse to understand Carey's nationalism as exceptionalism, claiming that he considers the United States, not an exceptional nation, but instead the country in which the laws of nature are respected. As we will see, both Ross and the Onufs are partially correct: this paper will argue that Carey's theory is an attempt to scientifically reinterpret American exceptionalism by linking it to a natural social order. Finally, Heather Richardson's study of Republican economic policies during the Civil War recognizes Carey, together with Francis Wayland, as the major intellectual source for the party, describing him as "the most broadly influential

8. Smith, *Henry C. Carey and American Sectional Conflict*.

9. Green, *Henry Charles Carey*.

10. Émile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, (New York: Free Press, 1964), 393–394.

11. Paul T. Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity: America's First Political Economists*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980); Joseph Dorfman, *The Economic Mind in American Civilization*, vol. 2, (New York: Kelley, 1946); Malcom R. Eiselen, *The Rise of Pennsylvania Protectionism*, (Philadelphia: The University of Philadelphia Press, 1932); Ernest Teilhac, *Pioneers of American Economic Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, (New York: Russell, 1967); John R. Turner, *The Ricardian Rent Theory in Early American Economics*, (New York: The New York University Press, 1921); 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 (1990), 547–581.

12. Ugo Rabbeno, *The American Commercial Policy*, (New York: Macmillan, 1895); Frank W. Taussig, *Tariff History of the United States*, (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1914).

13. Richard Hofstadter, "The Tariff Issue and the Civil War," *American Historical Review*, 44 (1938), 50–55; James L. Huston, "A Political Response to Industrialism: The Republican Embrace of Protectionist Labor Doctrines," *The Journal of American History*, 70 (1983), 35–57; Reinhard H. Luthin, "Abraham Lincoln and the Tariff," *American Historical Review*, 49 (1944), 609–629.

14. Stephen Meardon, "Henry Carey's 'Zone Theory' and American Sectional Conflict," *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 37 (2015), 305–320; Michael Perelman, *Marx's Crises Theory. Scarcity, Labor and Finance* (New York: Praeger, 1987); Ariel Ron, "Henry Carey's Rural Roots, 'Scientific Agriculture,' and Economic Development in the Antebellum North," *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 37 (2015), 263–275.

15. Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 19–20, 36–39.

16. Daniel W. Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs*, (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 108–122.

17. Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science*, (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 44–48.

18. Nicholas Onuf, Peter S. Onuf, *Nations, Markets and War: Modern History and the American Civil War*, (London-Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 283–285.

economist before the Civil War.”<sup>19</sup>

Drawing mainly on primary sources, but taking into account the available historiography, this paper proposes a new understanding of Carey’s nationalism as grounded in his social science and of his protectionism as the keystone of the relationship between State, nation and society. First, I argue that his nationalism and exceptionalism originated in his conception of the natural and harmonic order of American society: the social science defines his idea of the nation, its exceptional character and its universal mission. Second, I try to outline the fundamental elements of Carey’s conception of American society, particularly its progressive, harmonic and ordered character. Then, I explain how his protectionism was conceived as the necessary condition of this order, as a political measure to defend the American exception from its crises, from social conflict and from a turbulent economic change. Finally, I conclude that, through protection, Carey developed a conception of the State as the guarantee, within the capitalist transition, of societal order, of the American exception and of the American nation. To do so, I take into account Carey’s most relevant works, particularly the *Principles of Political Economy* (1837–1840), *The Past, the Present, and the Future* (1848), *The Harmony of Interests* (1851), *The Slave Trade* (1853), and the three volumes of the *Principles of Social Science* (1858–1860).<sup>20</sup>

## 2 Nation, Exception and Nature: Social Order as the Mission of America

It is true, as Onuf points out, that in Carey’s perspective the exceptional character of the nation does not originate in a moral diversity between America and Europe and that the history of America is the history of the world. It is also true, as claimed by Ross, that Carey sees America as an exceptional nation, but in a slightly different way from the tradition of American exceptionalism.<sup>21</sup> In Carey’s writings, there is a new understanding of the exceptional character of the United States and a new source of legitimacy for the American nation. The American difference relies in the highest rate of the nation’s economic and social development, which is due to a higher respect for the laws of nature. “The course pursued by the United States” is due to the fact that “they, less than other people, have interfered in the great natural laws under which man lives.”<sup>22</sup> The naturality of America is the reason for its exceptional character: “in the growth of the United States we have the exemplification of the natural system.”<sup>23</sup> The United States are exceptional because they are the nature’s nation.<sup>24</sup> Other countries can reach them, provided that they follow the same path: the American mission consists precisely in helping them to do so.

The United States have a universal mission of freedom because of the opportunities offered by their social system, with its promise of upward mobility for the worker and its promise of self-government. At its core, Carey’s idea of the American mission, widely shared by the Republican Party,<sup>25</sup> is the equal opportunity to access private property and to rise to a full economic self-sufficiency. As we will see, protection, as opposed to the British free-trade system, by defending this order, by raising the value of land and labour, by promoting morality and enabling everyone to access property “more readily,” is a means of fulfilling the American mission.

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. Such is the true MISSION of the people

19. Richardson, *The Greatest Nation of the Earth*, 19.

20. Henry C. Carey, *Principles of Political Economy* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1837–1840), *The Past, the Present, and the Future* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1848), *The Harmony of Interests* (New York: Myron Finch, 1856, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1851), *The Slave Trade* (Philadelphia: Hart, 1853), *Principles of Social Science* (Philadelphia: Lippincott & Co., 1858–1860).

21. Jack P. Greene, *The Intellectual Construction of America. Exceptionalism and Identity from 1492 to 1800*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

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

23. *Ibid.*, 296.

24. Onuf, Onuf, *Nations, Markets and War*, 298.

25. Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 11–18.

of these United States. To them has been granted a privilege never before granted to man, that of the exercise of the right of perfect self-government.<sup>26</sup>

America not only has to build and maintain social harmony at home, but it must also spread it around the world: the concept of an expansive empire stands as the final goal of the American mission of equalization. The reference is to a Jeffersonian empire of peace voluntarily joined, but still an empire through which the American union should expand including all the countries in the world. All humankind deserves to join the harmonic social order enjoyed by the American people, its wealth and its opportunities: “the people of the United States owe this to themselves, and to the world. ... Westward, the star of empire wends its way.”<sup>27</sup> Maintaining its social and economic order, remaining faithful to the real substance of its exceptional mission, the American nation will spontaneously affirm itself throughout the world.

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.<sup>28</sup>

The economic and social order is then the material condition of the American exception and the foundation of the nation’s universal mission. Here, nationalism is grounded in exceptionalism and shaped by a vision of society: the American exception is a social order and in this social order lies the source of legitimacy of the American nation, which, before being an “imagined community,”<sup>29</sup> is an imagined society. Carey, then, reformulates American nationalism and American exceptionalism by grounding them in a scientific study of society, in a social science with the task of explaining the coincidence between the history of American development and the laws of nature and with the task of preserving that coincidence. Carey’s theory, then, being a social science of the American order, is also a social science of the American exceptional nation.

### 3 The Order of the American Exception: Progress, Society and the Harmony of Interests

First, the American order is one of progress, of growing production and wealth: the history of the American people is a process of growing emancipation from need. The first man, “the Robinson Crusoe of his day,”<sup>30</sup> is depicted as engaged in a fight against nature to elevate himself through work: “the desire of improving his condition impels man to desire the aid and co-operation of his fellow men.”<sup>31</sup> Reversing Malthus’ principle of population<sup>32</sup> and Ricardo’s principle of diminishing returns,<sup>33</sup> in Carey’s perspective improvement is possible because men always begin with the poorer soils, the easiest to be immediately cultivated, and only after having invented instruments through cooperation with other men, they can pass to the better soils, those initially covered by trees they cannot fell and by

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26. Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 228–229.

27. Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 446–447

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

29. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1983).

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

31. Carey, *Principles of Political Economy*, vol. 1, 339.

32. Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population and Other Writings*, (London: Penguin Random House, 2015).

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

swamps they cannot drain. Social cooperation is crucial to development, since it increases production by facilitating the cultivation of new and better lands and by improving the quality of already cultivated lands through machinery. Cooperation guarantees a growing productivity of labor through the increase of instrumental capital.

His family has increased, and he has obtained the important advantage of combination of exertion. Things that were needed to be done to render his land more rapidly productive, but which were to one man impracticable, become simple and easy when now attempted by himself and his half dozen sons, each of whom obtains far more food than he alone could at first command, and in return for far less severe exertion.<sup>34</sup>

With men always moving to cultivate better soils and with cooperation breeding production, against the “Ricardo-Malthusian doctrine” which makes man “the victim of a sad necessity,”<sup>35</sup> Carey can assume increasing marginal returns and a principle of cooperation (as a reversed principle of population) as the axioms of his economic doctrine:<sup>36</sup> he can assume an American theology of prosperity against the British theology of scarcity. Believing in God’s benign providence, Carey can depict the American economic order as one of indefinite and boundless growth.<sup>37</sup> The American science of economics should therefore be a complete reversal of classical political economy, aiming at the same level of universality,<sup>38</sup> and therefore a reversal of its political consequence: “the British system of free-trade, whose tendency is the production of discord among men and nations.”<sup>39</sup>

The American exception is instead an order of concord and its progressive growth benefits all members of society: the American order is a system of harmonies. Once again, while Ricardo and Malthus have to assume conflicting interests among the various social classes and an increasing contrast with the development of capitalist accumulation, Carey postulates a metaphysic harmony among all social interests. The social mechanism of the harmony derives from a dynamic of values. Carey’s main assumption is that the process of growth is due to an unlimited increase in labour’s productivity, a constant decline in the quantity of labour required to produce the same amount of goods, and therefore to reproduce the same amount of instrumental capital. Thus, according to Carey’s theory of labour-value as centered on the cost of reproduction,<sup>40</sup> capital tends to lose value as compared to labour.<sup>41</sup> Capital can therefore demand a constantly diminishing proportion of the product of labour. With the progress of development, then, workers gain control of increasing shares of the product, seeing their wages constantly rising because of a structural scarcity of labor’s supply and because of the competition among capitalists for the purchase of labor.<sup>42</sup> The amount of the overall increase of wealth is nonetheless such that capital, while losing proportionally shares of the product, still increases in its amount, being at the same time assured about the workers’ docility. In the end, this growth of the labourer’s share of the product allows him to accumulate wealth and, in some years, to become himself a small capitalist by accessing property of land or of machinery. Workers themselves, through rising wages, are thus the agents of the accumulation of capital.

With the growth of population and wealth there is produced a constantly increasing demand for labour; and its increased productiveness, and the consequently increased facility of accumulating wealth are followed necessarily and certainly by an increase of the labourer’s proportion. His wages rise, and the *proportion* of the capitalists falls, yet now

34. Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 12.

35. *Ibid.*, 248.

36. *Ibid.*, 17–26, 77–93.

37. *Ibid.*, 13–14.

38. Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity*, 262.

39. Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, III.

40. Morrison, *Henry C. Carey and American Economic Development*, 8–18.

41. Joseph A. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 518.

42. Carey, *Principles of Social Science*, vol. 3, 235.

the latter accumulates fortune more rapidly than ever, and thus his interest and that of the labourer are in perfect harmony with each other.<sup>43</sup>

Carey's theory of distribution goes further than claiming the harmony of interests between social classes. It directly tries to deny the existence of social classes, by accepting the distinction between capital and labor only as a temporary one, since today's worker will be tomorrow's capitalist.<sup>44</sup> Thus, Carey's harmonism can be better described as a monism: there is harmony since there is only one interest, that of capital, conceived merely as an instrument of production. Carey wants to demonstrate that in the American exceptional order there is no such thing as a permanent class of waged workers. By describing the necessary social rise of the workers to ownership, Carey shows how private property is the very goal of the harmony of interests. The subject of his social science is a community of male individuals "possessing each *his own* land, and *his own* house, upon which he concentrates his exertion for *his own* improvement; and *his own* wife, and *his own* children."<sup>45</sup> Through ownership, individuals become self-sufficient, thus capable of economic and political self-government, thus deserving freedom. Waged workers are not actually free, but they can become so by accessing property. The mission of America consists of this path of social elevation for those deserving it.<sup>46</sup> The opportunities offered by American society nevertheless imply work as a duty: "the time seems to be at hand when every man must work, if he would maintain his position in society."<sup>47</sup> As Lincoln would after him, Carey depicts a «race of life»,<sup>48</sup> where individuals can accumulate wealth and they can become free, but they must show their willingness to work for production: "the laws of nature require that if man would improve his condition he must work."<sup>49</sup> Carey, then, is still strongly influenced by the eighteenth-century and republican conception of British freedom as independence.<sup>50</sup> Economic autonomy and property are considered the necessary conditions for freedom and the wage relationship is legitimate only if temporary and only as a means of social rise. In this respect, Carey, along with Lincoln and the Republican ideology of free labor, stands before the "transvaluation" of labor which legitimized wage labor as free in itself.<sup>51</sup> The social rise of the labourer, making individual self-government possible, becomes the road to collective self-rule as well.<sup>52</sup> Carey's harmony of interests as a social order, being the material condition and the limit of American freedom, is thus the material constitution of American democracy, and therefore the necessary condition of the American exception.

This progressive and harmonic order is regulated by two mechanistic principles. The principle of concentration is what makes division of labor and social cooperation possible, allowing the diversification of production and market. Carey's principle of concentration implies the vision of a proto-capitalist economy, a society of small and self-sufficient communities, each with a diversified internal market and a diversified production. Concentration is then the shape of social relationships in Carey's vision of the American order, a dynamic principle, which brings a constantly increasing intensification of social interactions and of the "power of association": concentration is what creates society. Association is the process of producing and constantly reproducing society through labour.<sup>53</sup>

Through the harmony of interests and his theory of development, then, Carey builds a theory

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43. Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 67.

44. Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 20.

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

46. *Ibid*, 214.

47. *Ibid*, 219.

48. Abraham Lincoln, "Message to Congress in Special Session," July 4, 1861, in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy Basler (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 8 vols., 1953–1955), vol. 4, 438.

49. Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, p. 38.

50. Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, (New York: Norton, 1998), 7–9.

51. *Ibid*, 58–68.

52. Robert Wiebe, *Self-Rule. A Cultural History of American Democracy*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 39.

53. Carey, *Principles of Social Science*, vol. 1, 138.

of social order, or, more precisely, a theory of American society as an order,<sup>54</sup> in which individuals can be free and progress can be realized only through hard work. Society, with its necessary laws of gravitation bonding individuals to each other, stands as the condition of their existence and of their freedom.<sup>55</sup> The American man becomes a “societary man”<sup>56</sup> and the American freedom becomes a societary freedom. Only within the order of society and after a subjugation to it, can individuals exist and be free.<sup>57</sup> The fundamental conclusion of Carey’s social science is that in the American exceptional order, social conflict must be avoided, since it would be inconsistent with the natural functioning of the societary system. Carey’s point is that only capitalist accumulation can guarantee freedom and improvement for the (male) worker, but, in his science, this principle of social order becomes also a nationalist principle. Since the order of harmony and progress makes the United States exceptional, Carey’s theory, by describing and prescribing this order, stands as a social science of the American nation, a science of the material conditions of its legitimacy and persistence. In Carey’s perspective, protective tariffs are essential to maintain and defend this social order and thus the American nation. The social science of the nation implies protection.

#### 4 Protecting the American Exception: Social Order and the State

Carey’s call for tariffs is of course rooted in the Pennsylvanian and American protectionist tradition of the early republic. His father’s writings, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson’s call for a diversification of economic activities, Alexander Hamilton’s *Report on Manufactures*, Henry Clay’s “American System” and in general Whig economic policies were all crucial in influencing Carey’s protectionism. Still, his protectionist doctrine is far more ambitious, being shaped as a social science and being anchored in his conception of social order as the American exception.

In some ways, protection, in Carey’s social science, comes at the end. Only in the second half of the 1840s does he complete his intellectual turn towards protectionism, but without denying his vision of society, already contained in his first writings. In some ways, Carey understands the need for a foundation to that vision and protection comes as the keystone of his system and the keystone of his conception of American social order. His Newtonian and mechanistic conception of society<sup>58</sup> lacked a clockmaker God.

Since the end of the 1840s, Carey calls for protection as the political tool necessary to defend the persistence of the American exceptional order. Only protection and higher tariffs would have made possible every single aspect of American society as he envisioned it. Writing a tariff history of the previous decades,<sup>59</sup> Carey tries to demonstrate, using a huge mole of statistical data, that periods of free-trade policies, between 1816 and 1828, between 1833 and 1842, and after 1846, always caused economic depression, decreasing production and wages. On the other hand, periods of protectionist closure, such as after the tariff approved by Congress in 1828, which originated the nullification crises with South Carolina, and after the Whig tariff of 1842, brought economic growth, rising wages and increasing production.

In Carey’s perspective, protection positively affects every single aspect of his vision of American social order. Protection increases production and consumption by stimulating growing manufactures, it increases population and thus the possibility of social cooperation, augmenting quality and quantity of the machines of production.<sup>60</sup> Protection simultaneously improves the condition of the worker and of the capitalist, of the slave and of his master, of the manufacturer and of the farmer, of the small

54. Maurizio Ricciardi, *La società come ordine. Storia e teoria politica dei concetti sociali*, (Macerata: EUM, 2010), 15–53.

55. Ibid, 17–18.

56. Carey, *Principles of Social Science*, vol. 3, 406.

57. Ibid, vol. 3, 469–470.

58. Bernard Cohen, *The Natural Sciences and the Social Sciences: some critical and historical perspectives* (Boston: Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, 1993), 17–22.

59. Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 10–40.

60. Ibid, 41–51, 86–91, 78–86.

landowner and of the planter.<sup>61</sup> Protection brings peace and it improves the condition of women and the political condition of all men, improving their morality.<sup>62</sup> All the consequences of protection can be reduced to one: protection allows the functioning of concentration.<sup>63</sup> Protection, by permitting the growth of manufactures and the diversification of the internal market, allows the principle of concentration to improve the power of association, therefore triggering the increase of production and establishing a harmony of interests. In other words, protection enforces all the productive social ties within society.

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 suffers 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.<sup>64</sup>

In this respect, Carey's protectionism goes further than the tradition of American protectionism. Carey calls for a closure from importations regarding not only manufactural, but also agricultural and primary goods, and, as a matter of fact, this was the structure of Morrill Tariff in 1861.<sup>65</sup> Distinct from the American protectionist tradition, Carey was not an industrialist. Rather than being a mere economic measure to defend infant industries and manufactures from international trade, Carey's protectionism is a political measure, meant to strengthen social bonds and to defend society from its crises, mainly from social conflict. Protection preserves the material conditions of the American exception, keeping society bonded and ordered.

In *The Harmony of Interests*, at each step in his reasoning, Carey takes into account two or more social groups with potentially conflicting interests and tries to show that, with protection, they would be in a perfect harmony. However, by trying to demonstrate that every single social fracture would be healed by protection, Carey does nothing more than show how much society can be fractured and his tremendous fear of this fragmentation. In this way, he appears to be aware of an ongoing decomposition of the exceptional social order he envisioned. The fact itself that Carey looks for a general unitary reconstruction of the social order shows that such unity is desperately needed and that the harmony of all interests is already exploding along a multitude of directions. Carey's society needs to be kept together through protection because it is falling apart. By calling for protection, Carey is trying to answer the crises of the American order he is witnessing.

In other words, for Carey protection, and protection only, can guarantee the functioning of the exceptional order of American society: protection is what maintains society in its "natural" shape. Carey arrives then to the paradox of claiming protection to re-establish and to maintain the order of natural laws. The supposedly spontaneous and natural development of divine laws therefore requires a political intervention to function: it needs to be restored, removing the "disturbing force of prodigious power"<sup>66</sup> impeding it, which means the British free-trade system, but more in general the growing disorder of society. Carey's conception of nature appears therefore to be heavily political: the natural order of American society is a political order and the natural development of capitalist society can be saved only "by artificial means,"<sup>67</sup> as highlighted by Marx, who critically but carefully read Carey's work.<sup>68</sup> The meaning of Carey's protectionism relies in the role of the State.

61. Ibid, 141–161, 161–185, 91–141.

62. Ibid, 193–217.

63. Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 469.

64. Carey, *The Harmony of Interests*, 49.

65. Richardson, *The Greatest Nation on Earth*, 136–137.

66. Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 470.

67. Marx to Engels, June 14, 1853, in Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *The Civil War in the United States*, ed. A. Zimmerman, (New York: International Publishers, 2016), 10.

68. Perelman, *Marx's Crises Theory*.

Carey, however, whose point of departure is the American emancipation of bourgeois society from the State, ends with the call for State intervention, so that the pure development of bourgeois relations is not disturbed by external forces, as in fact happened in America. ... Hence, the State, which was at first branded as the sole disturber of these “*harmonies économiques*,” is now their last refuge. ... Where the economic relations confront him in their truth, i.e. in their universal reality, his principled optimism turns into a denunciatory, irritated pessimism. This contradiction forms the originality of his writings and gives them their significance.<sup>69</sup>

Calling for protection, Carey is thus assuming the State, the most artificial political invention, as the only actor with the power to maintain the spontaneous and natural order of society and to save it from its crises. The State, as a “great pyramid”<sup>70</sup> bonding together all individuals and communities, is essential to the social order since, by guaranteeing security and property through the monopoly of violence, it makes production and development possible. It allows the functioning of the economic system and the explication of the harmony of interests: “the union of all adds to the power of each, for the maintenance of that perfect security of person and property which is so essential to the growth of wealth and force, and to the further extension of cultivation over the richer soils.”<sup>71</sup> The State is therefore the necessary condition of the existence of social order. There can be no development, growth of wealth nor harmony without the enforcement of the State: only through its command, the social bond of concentration can be effectively implemented.

Carey tries to frame the State intervention as a one-time intervention to restore the natural order, subsequently leaving it to its course. But protection is not a one-time measure. As he is forced to admit, “it becomes soon obvious” that the functionaries of the State “must act as umpires” coordinating “the movement of the societary body, as to call into activity all the powers of its members” the objective being that of “removing obstacles which stand in the way of association and combination.”<sup>72</sup> The task of the State is then to allow concentration by forcing individuals to work productively. The State has the same duties assigned, in the physical body, to the brain, for it is “the political head”<sup>73</sup> of the social body. As much as the brain does not only intervene at the beginning of life, Carey’s State, like a Newtonian God, appears to be busy in a general control of all social relations, in a continuous and meticulous intervention to maintain the conditions of social cooperation and production. Carey’s State holds the reins of social relationships steady and protection is the means to increase its control over society. Protection is a political measure to build and reinforce the relationship between State and society.

Carey’s social science, then, which in the *Principles of Political Economy* began with a hymn to the solitary settler struggling to improve his condition and succeeding because of the opportunities of the American natural and exceptional society, ends in the third volume of the *Principles of Social Science* with the invocation of the State’s intervention to save the exceptional features of American social order. Through protection, the State becomes the political guarantee of society and of its anchorage to the natural laws of development and thus the political guarantee of America as an exceptional nation.

## 5 Conclusion: Capitalist Transition and the Crises of the American Exception

Between the 1820s and the Civil War, a process of productive transition changed the American economy, transforming the United States from a horizontal country of side-by-side self-sufficient local

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69. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 885–887.

70. Carey, *The Past, the Present, and the Future*, 288.

71. Carey, *Principles of Social Science*, vol. 3, 211.

72. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 409.

73. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 414.

communities and regional markets, into a country vertically integrated on the national level.<sup>74</sup> The proto-capitalist and agricultural production for subsistence entered in a growing tension with the production for the market.<sup>75</sup> The development of transportation and the expansion of markets were narrowing the Atlantic space, thus making the United States more vulnerable and dependent on international trade.<sup>76</sup> The economic development was deepening the sectional division and the fracture in the national union between a North-West damaged by international trade and a South vitally leaning on it.<sup>77</sup> The growth of manufactures and the commercialization of agriculture were contesting the economic system based on small farms, eroding the self-sufficiency of farmers and artisans, making them workers dependent upon wages:<sup>78</sup> the household was declining as the fundamental center of production.<sup>79</sup> The economic transformation was building a permanent class of waged workers, particularly in cities like New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Baltimore,<sup>80</sup> paving the way to the formation of a working class increasingly conscious of its condition and willing to fight to improve it.<sup>81</sup> The territorial expansion of the nation and the unrestrained westward migration were accelerating the end of the frontier and the closing of the American space. In other words, the preindustrial world of the self-sufficient farmers and of the independent mechanic was fading into obscurity.<sup>82</sup> Carey's proto-capitalist conception of American society as a harmonic order of small producers was being contested by economic development. The material conditions of the American exception were falling apart.

All together, these processes represented the culmination of the transition of American economy towards a capitalist mode of production. However, capitalist development, far from leading workers towards a growing power over the product of labour, as Carey thought, resulted in a complete loss of control over the conditions of labour. The market revolution was deskilling and proletarianizing the independent labourers, increasing the disparities between journeymen and masters, requiring an increasing quantity of capital to set up one's own business, thus making it increasingly difficult to abandon the condition of wage labourer.<sup>83</sup> As Marx pointed out in criticizing Carey's harmony of interests, the increasing productivity of labour in no way could benefit the labourer, but only capital.

The growth of the productive forces expresses itself in a continuous decline of the part of capital consisting of labour compared with that laid out in advances, machinery, etc. Carey's entire bad joke ... rests on his transformation of the labour time into labour time *belonging* to the worker, whereas this time belongs in fact to capital, and an even smaller portion of it remains for the worker in proportion to the growth of the productive forces of labour.<sup>84</sup>

Capitalist development, contrary to Carey's expectations, was not allowing the labourer to buy the machines of production but it was instead destroying his independence, opening "an infinite gap between his labour and the *conditions* of its employment."<sup>85</sup>

74. Wiebe, *Self-Rule*; Tiziano Bonazzi, "La guerra civile americana e la nazione universale," in *La guerra civile americana vista dall'Europa*, eds. Tiziano Bonazzi, Carlo Galli (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004), 463–502.

75. Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution. Jacksonian America 1815–1848*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3–33.

76. Marco Mariano, *L'America nell'Occidente. Storia della dottrina Monroe (1823–1963)*, (Roma: Carocci, 2013), 83–94.

77. Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South*, (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1961).

78. Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers. Labor in Nineteenth-Century America*, (New York: Noonday Press, 1989), 16.

79. Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*, 55.

80. Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic. New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class*, (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1984).

81. David Montgomery, *Beyond Equality. Labor and Radical Republicans 1862–1872*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1981, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1967), 3–44.

82. Laurie, *Artisans into Workers*, 46.

83. Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 25–26.

84. Marx, *Gründrisse*, 580.

85. *Ibid*, 581.

In America, as long as the worker there still appropriates a part of his surplus labour for himself, he may accumulate enough to become e.g. a farmer etc. (although that too is already coming to a halt now). In places where wage labour in America can still get somewhere rapidly, this happens through the reproduction of earlier modes of production and property on the foundation of capital (e. g. the independent peasantry).<sup>86</sup>

Marx understood that Carey's harmonic order was only possible in a proto-capitalist economy, only at the beginning of capitalist development, only in a moment of persisting coexistence between the capitalist mode of production and its predecessors. Thus, because of the capitalist transition, the American dream of a harmony of interests was being disrupted.

Carey reacted to this process, trying to understand how to keep society ordered and how to preserve the American exception within this tumultuous transition. His solution was, through protection, the definitive construction of the American State, begun with the Revolution but still in process: his solution was to build the State as the agent of the capitalist transition,<sup>87</sup> and he could conceive this solution because he could see a State already implementing economic development.<sup>88</sup> Despite his repeated invocation of the spontaneous character of development as a result of providential design, Carey revealed, in the end, a deep distrust of society, which could develop by itself, but could not be ordered and safe without the State. Only by charging the State with the control of this transition, capitalist development could be kept on an ordered path and the exception could be saved. Only by creating a national integrated and differentiated market, by isolating it from international trade and from the shrinking of the Atlantic space, by concentrating the economic resources in the East, thus keeping open the American frontier and controlling the mobility of the workforce, the tumultuous transition could be politically governed. Above all, Carey's State had to build and maintain, in the capitalist transition, the harmony of interests between capital and labor, the main condition of the American order as exceptional. This meant vesting the State with the herculean task of favoring capitalist accumulation while guaranteeing the improvement of the labourer's condition, or, more precisely, the task of favoring capitalist accumulation while neutralizing social conflict. Carey's State had to become the political actor enforcing peace between capital and labor. Carey's utopia was therefore the construction, through the State, of a capitalism without class struggle.

Carey understood that the proto-capitalist order of farmers, local communities and regional markets was being transformed, but, to him, this transformation meant a structural crisis of the material conditions of the American exception. From his point of view, the American mission could not be realized without an economy making the social mobility of the laborer and the harmonic growth of wealth possible. It could not be realized in a heavily industrial society, with large-scale corporations and a permanent working-class. Carey thought that only the State could maintain capitalist development in the path of an ordered and harmonic society and that only the State could save the American exception from the European specters of poverty and class conflict. What Carey did not understand was that such a task was too challenging, even for what was to become the most powerful State in the world. Moreover, he did not understand that after the economic transformation of the first half of nineteenth-century, capitalist accumulation and the harmony of interests could not coexist anymore in the United States and that class conflict was a price that capitalism would have been forced to pay by the restlessness of the American working class. Finally, he did not understand that protection, by favoring the growing of large-scale industries, would have deepened, instead of softened, the crisis of his social order, and that class conflict would have risen in the Reconstruction also as a result of the industrial concentration brought by protection.<sup>89</sup>

Carey's social science should therefore be understood as a reaction to the transition of the American economy to industrial capitalism, a transition contesting the material foundations of his concep-

86. Ibid, 579.

87. Matteo Battistini, "A National Blessing: debito e credito pubblico nella fondazione atlantica degli Stati Uniti d'America," *Scienza & Politica*, 48 (2013), 13–31.

88. Raffaella Baritono, *Uno Stato a "bassa intensità"? L'esperienza storica statunitense*, in *Lo Stato globale*, eds. Raffaella Gherardi, Maurizio Ricciardi (Bologna: CLUEB, 2009), 81–110.

89. Eric Foner, *Reconstruction. America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2014, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1988).

tion of the American exceptional order, thus compromising the legitimacy of the American nation. With his social science depicting the order of harmony and the ways to preserve it, Carey tried to offer a new source of legitimacy to the American nation, thinking the State, through protection, as its necessary condition: a scientific theory of the persistence of the American order at the eve of its breakdown. Carey's social science is therefore a science of the American nation as exceptional because of its social order, but a nation and a social order produced, maintained and made exceptional only by the State and within the State. Denying the idea of America as a "nation without State," Carey's protectionism conceives, on the eve of the Civil War, the United States as a "nation because of the State." Carey's social science of the nation thus marks a reinterpretation of American nationalism centered on protection as the means of maintaining the harmonic order of society as the material conditions of the American exception: a reinterpretation conceiving the State as the guarantee of society and of the nation.

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