

The Chinese University of Hong Kong  
Graduate School  
History Division



Republicanism and Progressive Historical Interpretations of  
American Democracy in the Works of F. J. Turner, C. A. Beard  
and W. A. Williams

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for  
the Degree of Master of Philosophy

1998



## 論文提要

共和主義主導美國的政治生活多年，美國史家亦對它的內涵研究多時。但是這些史家很少提及共和主義對史學界造成的影響。集中在弗德烈·積遜·端納，查理斯·比爾及威廉·柯普文·威廉斯三位史家的著作，本文嘗試解答美國共和主義如何影響了進步史家對民主的解釋。

本文分成四章。第一章將探討共和主義幾個早為思想史家所知的特點。美國人常認為他們的共和主義源自約翰·洛克，歐洲習俗及古典共和思想的假設。但是，事實上只有古典共和主義及它的衍生思想—英國的共和主義，在美國有長遠的影響。美國人將此二者本地化為一個獨特的美式社會經濟理論。因此，雖經歲月淘洗，一些共和主義的特點已失去蹤影，但它仍影響著每個關心美國社會政治事務的知識份子如何考慮民主問題。

基於這個主張，接下來的三章將探討共和主義如何影響了進步史家對民主社會的看法。我特意挑選的第一個例子是弗德烈·積遜·端納在一八九三年發表的論文。因為它顯示了傑弗遜式共和主義的影響。端納後來寫的文章亦會一一探討，用以顯示端納在發表了一八九三年的論文後仍致力維持他忠於共和主義的立場。

同樣地，第三章將集中於查理斯·比爾的五本著作，探討美國共和主義如何影響他對民主的解釋。同時我將於本章中指出比爾的論式其實承繼了端納的共和思想模式。這將幫助讀者更加了解美國共和主義的性質。

最後，在第四章中，威廉·柯普文·威廉斯對美國外交政策史的道德取向以及他對這些外交政策所造成的對民主的不良影響的分析將顯示出共和主義是如何地影響了三位進步史家對美國民主的思考。

## Abstract

Republicanism has underpinned American political life for decades and American historians have studied its implications for many years. Nonetheless, they have seldom mentioned its impact on their own profession. Focusing on the works of Frederick Jackson Turner, Charles A. Beard and William Appleman Williams, this thesis is an attempt to answer the question of how American republicanism has influenced the progressive historians' understanding of democracy.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter will discuss the features of American republicanism that intellectual historians have recognized. Americans used to think their republicanism came from John Locke, European customs and classical assumptions, but in fact only classical republicanism and its subsequently modified British republican formula had a durable influence in America. Americans localized two sets of assumptions into a unique American socio-political theory. Therefore, inevitably, these two sets of underpinning republican assumptions, although they might lose some of their visibility in an American context, are influential to every intellectual's discussion of the country's socio-political affairs.

Based on this assertion, the following chapters will investigate how republicanism has influenced the progressive historians' perception of their democratic society. The first example I have particularly selected to investigate is Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 essay because it implicitly reveals the influence of Jeffersonian republicanism. Turner's subsequent articles will also be taken into account to see how he strove to maintain his republican standpoint after he expounded the 1893 thesis.

Likewise, the third chapter will focus on five of Charles Beard's historical works to see how American republicanism influenced his explanation of democracy.

Also, I will point out in this chapter that in some ways Beard's arguments inherited Turner's republican logic. This will help readers know more about the nature of American republicanism.

Finally, in the fourth chapter, William Appleman Williams's moralistic approach to the history of American foreign policy and his analysis of the impact of such policies on American democracy will show how republicanism has influenced three successive generations of progressive historians' thinking about American democracy.

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# Republicanism and Progressive Historical Interpretations of American Democracy in the Works of F. J. Turner, C. A. Beard and W. A. Williams

## Introduction

Republicanism and progressivism are two important topics in American intellectual history. But never has any intellectual historian discussed how these two topics influenced historians' understandings of democracy. To fill up this blank page, this thesis is, therefore, my attempt to answer the question of how American republicanism has influenced the progressive historians' understanding of democracy.

Republicanism is a key concept in the American political tradition. Ever since its appearance in the New World, it penetrated into every aspect of American's social and political life and was kept alive in America's socio-political imagination with messages informing Americans how they should govern their country. In two centuries of discussions and debates, republicanism acquired lots of definitions, depending on who has defined it. Thus, lots of contemporary historians were perplexed by the complexity of the concept and neglected this American ideology until Bernard Bailyn published his *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* in late 1960s. Following Bailyn's example, intellectual historians rewrote many of their old works.

Likewise, the existence of progressive interpretations of American history in the late nineteenth century was also a breakthrough in the historical profession. For most of the nineteenth century amateur historians occupied the profession, but by the 1880s professionally trained scholars began to dominate the writing of history. The

belief that "history should be read as a continuous progress of human society," and that "historians should objectively record how human society has progressed" were introduced into the profession and these views were quickly adopted by a number of younger historians. Progressive historical interpretations gave the profession a new set of standards that the twentieth century American historical professionals followed.<sup>1</sup>

However, the idea of progress contained in it two inconsistent implications. Contrary to the concept of progress, some believers in "progress" conceived that the evolution of human society might not carry onward as smoothly as the word suggested. Conflicts and setbacks might work together to pull back the progress human society had achieved. Besides, progress might not necessarily result in a better human life. It could cause crises, and if these crises were not skillfully tackled, they would only worsen the *status quo*. With these new considerations affixed to the central assumption, progressive historiography thus contained in it two divergent perspectives on the American past. Those historians inclined to believe in the ultimate perfection of human society saw an optimistic tendency in American history. On the contrary, those historians inclined to consider more about the conflicts Americans had suffered saw a pessimistic future.

Working together, the optimistic and the pessimistic progressive historical interpretations dominated the American historical profession for nearly five decades. But in the late 1940s, a rising consensus scholarship challenged the leading position of the progressive interpretations. Consensus historians, such as Richard Hofstadter, Louis Hartz and Daniel Boorstin, wrote numerous works to explain that rather than the conflicts as the progressive historians had described were liberal principles that Americans followed. Americans, in the consensual historians' opinion, were

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald N. Grob and George Athan Billias, eds., *Interpretations of American History: Patterns and*

concerned more about the fulfillment of their liberty. Liberalism, in those historians' opinion, gave the country a common ground which reduced social conflicts to a minimum. Gradually, the liberal interpretation prevailed and the conflict-ridden progressive historical interpretations lost most of their audience. The only place in America which was still upholding the progressive tradition was the mid-West universities. Historians who held progressive standpoints gathered at the mid-West universities and taught their students how to view America differently from the conventional liberal perspectives. The progressive historical tradition, though not at all as popular as before, was passed down to a new generation of young historians. By the 1960s these mid-West bred young historians began to refute the liberal interpretation of American history.

Coinciding with the existence of neo-progressive historians was the rise of a group of intellectual historians who were interested in republicanism to criticize that the consensual interpretation of American history was too narrow-minded.<sup>2</sup> The new republican study, however, constrained its scope in revising the liberal interpretation

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*Perspectives* (New York: Free Press, 1982), v.1, the fifth edition, 6-13.

<sup>2</sup> The best example of republican historian's decrying the consensus scholarship was J.G.A. Pocock's criticizing Louis Hartz's emphasis of John Locke. Louis Hartz had been a highly praised historian whose ascription of John Locke's political theories to American Revolution inspired generations of historians to link American political tradition with European enlightenment philosophies. "Locke dominated the political thought of a nation," Hartz wrote in *The Liberal Tradition in America*, "He is a massive national Cliché." Hartz intended to argue after this positive evaluation of John Locke's influence is the relative easiness of the American Revolution to achieve democracy in comparison to European counterparts. But Pocock did not think so. In his *Machiavellian Moment*, Pocock argued that it was not the individualist ethic of eighteenth-century liberalism, but an extremely long line of thought within the Atlantic republican tradition had shaped the basic political values of the Revolutionary generation. The working philosophy behind the revolutionary generation, Pocock continued, was adopted from the English country writers, James Harrington. But behind Harrington, it was an Italian writer, Niccolò Machiavelli and his discourse of civic humanism. Thus, Pocock's linking American Revolution to Renaissance reduced Lockean influence to minimal. See Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in American: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since Revolution* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1955) and J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republicanism Tradition*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975). See also, Stanley H. Vittoz, "The Unresolved Partnership of Liberalism and Democracy in the American Political Tradition" in *ιστορία* ed., by the Department of History of CUHK, (Hong Kong: Sapience Book Center, 1993), 284. Daniel T. Rodgers "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept" *The Journal of American History* 79 (June 1992), 17. Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 8-9.

of American history. Republican historians did not try to fuse their perspective with the progressive historical interpretations. Therefore, the influence of republicanism on progressive historical interpretations remained obscure.

It is because of these basic understandings of progressive historiography together with my limited knowledge of republicanism that I quest for their linkage. To begin with, I ask myself the following questions: Were progressive historians' interpretations of American democracy influenced by republicanism? And if they were influenced by that tradition, then, could evidence of this impact be discovered by rereading their texts? Gradually I realized that to answer these questions, one should first define what republicanism is and then choose several particular American scholars and study how republicanism has worked in their minds. With this idea, I read some representative scholarly works on republicanism, together with selected publications of Frederick Jackson Turner, Charles A. Beard and William Appleman Williams.

Turner was a well-known progressive historian. In 1893 he published a thesis which gave an alarm that the vast vacant continent available for cultivation had disappeared. Turner's message was a tremendous blow to American society. For a long time, Americans deemed their resourceful free land the ultimate guarantee of their democratic polity. Without the support of free land, democracy became fragile. Turner therefore foreboded whether democracy can survive or not in the coming centuries. But more important than Turner's agonizing of American democracy is the question of why he used to think free land an important foundation of their polity. What is the significance of such thinking? To answer these questions, we need to consider the meanings of republicanism.

Beard was a few years younger than Turner. But unlike Turner, he was an

optimistic progressive historian when he first entered the profession. He believed that continual industrial innovation would help the country to achieve a perfect form of democracy. Yet he still worried the challenge of a new industrial era to the nation's political values. Thus, his historical explanations shared Turner's anxiety, even though he was confident in the coming of the twentieth century. But still, why he worried about the coming of a new era if it should be an optimistic one? Was Beard's worry American democracy also because of the implicit influence of republicanism? To answer these questions, the underlying philosophy of Beard's historical explanation must be investigated.

Williams was a post-WWII historian. He was a mid-western student educated in progressive values. Williams' knowledge of American diplomatic history informed him that American democracy was deliberately twisted to fit a new way of social life that intellectuals of the progressive era disliked. He thus suggested a new formula to awaken Americans from the unknown danger they were facing. He hoped very much that Americans would build up in their country a new polity with new political values. Williams' opinions and hopes sounded totally different from Turner and Beard's. But a closer look at Williams' works reveal that he was as anxious about American democracy as Turner and Beard had been. Like Turner and Beard, Williams also held a vision of how future American society should be. If republicanism had influenced Turner and Beard's historical interpretations, was it also affecting Williams's historical explanations?

To answer all of these questions, I decided that the thesis should consist of four chapters. The first chapter will be subdivided into two sections. The first section will introduce the principles, features and the development of American republicanism in the nineteenth century context. The second section will discuss the

content of progressive historiography and how it is related to republicanism. In the second chapter, I will particularly concentrate on Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 essay to consider in which ways it shows the influence of republicanism. Turner's subsequent articles will also be investigated to see how republican idealism was preserved even though his standpoint changed several times after he expounded the 1893 thesis. Turner's works are very important because they give substantial evidence to testify that republicanism has influenced the progressive historians' understanding of democracy. Likewise, the third chapter will focus on five of Charles Beard's historical works to see how republican assumptions influenced his explanation of democracy. Also, I will point out in this chapter in what ways Beard's arguments inherited elements of Turner's republican logic. This will help readers know more about the nature of republicanism. Finally for the fourth chapter, an investigation of William Appleman Williams' historical works will allow me to round off my discussion of how republicanism has influenced three successive generations of progressive historians' understandings of American democracy.

## Chapter 1

### Republicanism and Progressive Historical Interpretations

1. What is Republicanism?
2. Republicanism as a Guiding Philosophy in Progressive Historical Scholarship

#### What Is Republicanism?

Ever since the Revolutionary generation, intellectuals had tried to give republicanism a definite meaning. But the concept varied its implications with different interpreters that no one could give it a satisfactory explanation. The story of unsuccessful attempts was begun with John Adams. Adams had spent a lot of time on studying the concept. But consequently he confessed to a friend that he had “never understood” what republicanism was and thought that “no other man ever did or ever will.”<sup>1</sup> Succeeding generations of intellectuals stepped into Adams’ shoes and confronted the same limitation. They either failed or were unwilling to do it again. Therefore, the significance of republicanism remained indefinite until Bernard Bailyn invited his peers to rethink the importance of this traditional concept in his *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. Bailyn’s work suggested that the concept could be read as a set of principles working behind the scenes of American social life. The profession was excited by this new idea and Joyce Appleby compared it to the discovery of a new element by chemists.<sup>2</sup> Following Bailyn’s example, a

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 95-6.

<sup>2</sup> Joyce Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 277.

number of scholarly works appeared and soon aroused yet further rounds of discussion and rethinking.<sup>3</sup> Republicanism, henceforth, became a much clearer concept.

Basically, Americans' understanding of republicanism had three sources. The first strand of republican ideas was acquired from John Locke's justification for revolution. John Locke was one of the political theorists the revolutionary generation was most familiar with. Most of the founding fathers read Locke's books and appealed to their fellowmen in a Lockean tongue to fight for Independence. In his *Two Treatises of Government*, Locke questioned the origins of government. He argued that mankind, by the natural rights with which they were endowed, should be living free and equal with the protection of laws. They formed civil society only for convenience. By giving up their private right to execute the law they create, a government was brought into existence. The existence of such a government added nothing to their rights or anything to the content of natural law; it existed only to implement what was already a part of God's creation. Its power, most importantly, was limited to those measures necessary to protect the life, liberty, and property of the members of society. But if the government was unable to fulfill its basic aims, people living in that society were legitimate to replace the government with a new one they chose. Locke's explanation offered a rationale and a justification for Americans to bring down the colonial British autocracy.<sup>4</sup>

In light of Locke's theorem, what American colonists saw in their country was a British aristocratic rule based on favoritism, hierarchy, special privilege, and exploitation of wealth they had created. The British tax system, its colonial

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<sup>3</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967); Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1969) and J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republicanism Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

bureaucracy, churches and paper money were all devices the aristocrats employed to serve British self-interest. Thus, the existence of a British aristocratic colonial government in America was directly opposed to the Lockean political scheme, and it is safe to say that John Locke's interpretation of republicanism was the immediate ideological source of the American Revolution. But rebellion and social unrest is certainly unfavorable to any society. Soon after the triumph of the revolution, Americans turned to establishing a stable social order. To achieve this goal, Lockean rebellious thoughts should be de-emphasized. Otherwise it might trigger a new round of revolution that no stable society could stand. Thus, Locke's theoretical influence, though explosive, was short-lived.

The second source of American republicanism was a custom belief. This was the belief in liberty of secure possession – the enjoyment of legal title to a piece of property without fear of arrest or punishment. The custom belief has two things taken for granted. Firstly, it works under all forms of governments. People enjoyed the liberty of possession under monarchy, aristocracy or democracy. Secondly, all forms of governments have responsibility to protect the right to be duly observed, otherwise, the polity's legitimacy would be questioned. Based on these convictions, the mother country of the American colonies – Britain – should be responsible for protecting American colonists with its Common Law and legal institutions.<sup>5</sup> But in the 1760s British authority simply denied the colonists' rights and imposed the Stamp Act, the Quartering Act, and various other objectionable measures upon American colonies. In response, the colonists protested and rebelled because British action violated all the beliefs they trusted. Britain's disgraceful taxes belied the legitimacy of its rule over

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<sup>4</sup> Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 20-1.

<sup>5</sup> Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order*, 17-8.

the land. Nonetheless, such colonists' beliefs suffered the same setback as Locke's argument. Once the Constitution was ratified, the colonists' property rights were protected and their particular anxiety relieved. Thus, the second origin of American republicanism lost its sharpness.

The third strand of American republicanism derived its strength from the classical Greco-Roman tradition. The classical theories of republicanism have several principles. In the first place, it emphasized the liberty of a freeman. A freeman is a man without any restriction imposed on his participation of communal activities. A freeman can do whatever he wants, provided that his action does not jeopardize the integrity of the community. But on top of all the freedom a freeman enjoys, he has the obligation to participate in the policy-making process for the community. This is what we call the liberty of a freeman.<sup>6</sup> On the basis of acknowledging the liberty of freemen and their promise to rule the community in accordance with the law they have constituted a republican society. In reverse, people without the right to participate in the policy-making process are not freemen and the community formed by non-free men is not a republican society. Thus, classical republicanism contained two mutually defining elements: personal political rights and an ideal form of government. Any failure in one aspect would naturally delimit the other.

The second principle that classical republicanism emphasized is the inevitability of conflict between human nature and civil society. The nature of humanity, in the classical republican theorists' eye, lusted after power. This insight was deduced from historical evidence. Greek and Roman historians repeatedly told people that republican governments were short-lived and ended with civil wars,

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<sup>6</sup> Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order*, 16.

tyranny and usurpation. Thus, historical realism warned the American founding fathers not to have excessively high hopes, given the lustful nature of men.<sup>7</sup>

The third principle of classical republicanism was its recognition of the natural division between men – the talented few and the ordinary many. To prevent the talented from exploiting the ordinary, a properly balanced constitution should be established. But the execution of the constitution should rest upon some men who could rise above private interests and devote themselves to the public good. Men deeply involved in their own businesses were simply unfit to do so, because their profit-seeking desires and the talents they possessed might urge them to twist the public good into private interest. A few talented people with excessive political power would only ruin the polity. To counterbalance the talented people from overpowering their ordinary fellow citizens, the responsibility of ruling must be redirected to those virtuous freemen. Virtuosity of freemen guaranteed the survivability of a republic. Therefore, alongside the third classical republican principle of natural division in human's faculty was its deep concern for people's virtuosity. Only those free men with a combination of talent and virtuousness would produce the best polity.

However, theories of classical republicanism were so rigid that they proved unworkable in the context of seventeenth-century Europe. British theorists modified the theories to fit the country's actual needs. Unable to find a perfectly virtuous figure, they made a concession to those who held property. If a British property holder did not have any intention to make money from his possessions, he might qualify for holding government offices. In the British republican theorists' assumption, without the property holders' checking, lustfulness of men would prevail. Consequently, a few people who gained ascendancy and ruled the country in their own interest would

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<sup>7</sup> Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order*, 17; and Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political*

deprive the liberty that all people enjoyed. Minimal property holding, in the British theorists' eye, as J. G. A. Pocock has said, served as a means of anchoring the individual in the structure of power and virtue and liberating him to practice these activities.<sup>8</sup> British political arrangements, however, violated the first principle of classical republicanism. In the classical republican political tradition, all freemen possess the same degree of political rights to participate. The British republican formula, however, reduced the classical liberty into a few people's exclusive privilege. The degenerated British colonial rulers exploited the privilege to oppress their American subjects. It was the unequal distribution of political rights under the British system that outraged the colonial Americans to fight for their independence. Therefore, at the point of granting property holders special privileges to check their new political institutions, Americans decided to revise it because such a British practice had violated the first principle of republicanism. British republican formula was not fair and just to all citizens. It could not help them to produce a republic. If they followed British practice, it would only corrupt their legitimacy in ruling a new America. Thus, Americans revised the British thought and separated it into two ideas, namely the principle of egalitarian distribution of wealth and the principle of equal rights for all to participate in public affairs. They believed that if property were concentrated in the hands of a few people with additional political privilege, those few might use their wealth to control other citizens, to seize political power, and to warp the republic into an oligarchy.<sup>9</sup> To prevent this tragedy, Americans resolved to crush the British aristocratic practice of granting political privilege to affluent people. They decided to

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*Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York: Vintage, 1989), 5-21.

<sup>8</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 389-91; and Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order*, 9-10.

<sup>9</sup> James L. Huston has categorized this typical system the political economy of aristocracy. "The American Revolutionaries, the Political Economy of Aristocracy, and the American Concept of the Distribution of Wealth, 1765-1900," *American Historical Review* 98 (October 1993), 1079-1105.

share their political rights on an equal basis. Sovereignty in America was not put in the hands of a few people but equally shared by every citizen. Political equality, in this regard, was the most distinguishable characteristic of American republicanism.

Colonial Americans, however, did not totally disagree with the British republican formula. They inherited some of its assumptions in arranging people's economic lives. Americans knew very well that a fair distribution of wealth was the best guarantee for the longevity of a republic. Aware of the consequence of British rule, Americans adopted the principles of an egalitarian distribution of wealth. The American way of distribution of wealth emphasized individual members of society receiving the values every individual laborer has created. Americans believed such an arrangement of the nation's wealth would be a just distribution and a natural distribution. Realistically, this kind of distribution was unlikely to be an equal one, for different people had different talents and capabilities, but the distribution would be more or less equitable, provided the country could open up enough opportunity for every citizen. In return, such an egalitarian distribution of wealth would prevent disparities of wealth from undermining political equality and republican virtue. Only then could a healthy republic last for a long time.<sup>10</sup>

Still, American republicanism could not get rid of the traditional Greco-Roman suspicion of human nature. This is exemplified by Americans' denunciation of what James Huston calls "the political economy of aristocracy." The common people would not welcome those people who exploited their fellow citizens to maximize their self-interest. Ruthless competition and the monopolization of wealth were not what Americans wanted. They deemed it would only result in corruption, luxury and vice.

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<sup>10</sup> James L. Huston described this assumption as 'the labor theory of values,' which emphasized the reciprocity between efforts one had contributed and the reward he received. "The American Revolutionaries", 1080.

They believed neither in laissez-faire policy nor in rigid regulations to govern their economic activities. What Americans trusted was their moral sensitivity. Within a tolerable range, one was free to possess, but if anyone offended these values and decided to monopolize an economic field so that he or she might swallow up their neighbors' fruit, other Americans would surely interfere. Such a republican disapproval of monopolization was best illustrated by Jackson's veto message to the Congress concerning the issue of re-chartering the Bank of the United States.

Distinctions in society will always exist under every just government. Equality of talents, of education, or of wealth can not be produced by human institutions. In the full enjoyment of the gifts of Heaven and the fruits of superior industry, economy, and virtue, every man is equally entitled to protection by law; but when the laws undertake to add to these natural and just advantages artificial distinctions, to grant titles, gratuities, and exclusive privileges, to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful, the humble members of society – the farmers, mechanics, and laborers – who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors to themselves, have a right to complain of the injustice of their Government.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, in short, American republicanism emphasized both the proper arrangement of political institutions and the proper arrangement of material foundation for the general well being of a republic. American republican doctrine celebrated the autonomous citizen whose property holdings were sufficient to avoid dependency on others. It accepted elements of commerce, manufacturing, and business, but were suspicious of those features, such as public debt, speculation, and financial manipulation, that entailed corruption and dependency, vice, and luxury.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, 20 vols. (New York: 1897), 3: 1153, quoted in Richard B. Latner, "Preserving 'the natural equality of rank and influence': liberalism, republicanism, and equality of condition in Jacksonian politics" *The Culture of the Market: Historical Essays*, ed., Thomas L. Haskell and Richard F. Techigraeber III, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 197.

<sup>12</sup> Latner, "Preserving 'the natural equality of rank and influence'," 200.

Nonetheless, American republicanism based on these principles had some shortcomings. American republicans encouraged every citizen to work hard in order to possess more so that they might enjoy a closer degree of economic equality with their fellow citizens. Thomas Jefferson's political scheme best exemplified this kind of American republican expectation. He had once remarked that his intention was to build America into "An Empire of Liberty" with enough land to sustain a nation of freehold farmers. In his view, the "Louisiana Purchase" provided plenty of space for every farmer to possess a plot of land. To solve the problem of material inequality, Jefferson suggested acquiring more land, because land provided new opportunities for people to catch up their differences in wealth. But Jefferson ignored a hard fact that land was a limited natural resource that it could never meet the ever-looming population's need. Besides, his agenda allowed immigrants' unrestricted access to free land. Giant corporations' monopolization of western lands could be easily covered up with his pro-agriculture tones. Following Jefferson's arrangement, only a little free land was distributed to farmers but most of it was reserved for giant corporations' future development. People who were in need of land for improving their lives had to seek new opportunities elsewhere. The deadlock of economic inequality in this regard has never been dissolved, and those people who believed in republicanism had to seek new means to sustain their lives as well as to preserve their polity.

Therefore if we perceive the American economic problems with a long perspective, we may say that because of the shortcomings of American republicanism the problem of unequal possession of wealth has never been eliminated. It could only be improved through frequent checking and occasional redrawing of the poverty line approved by the majority's consent.

## Republicanism as a Guiding Philosophy in Progressive Historical Scholarship

Republicanism dominated the eighteenth and the nineteenth century American political development. Alarmed by British negative ruling experience, the eighteenth century American republican believers decided that the United States should be a sovereign state with its political power equally shared by every citizen. And, in 1830s, republicanism-convinced President Jackson ordered the cease of monopolization of government offices. These implementations showed that republicanism was an effective governing philosophy of the country's political activities. However, the economic agenda of republicanism was comparatively less successful. When Jefferson delivered his message that he hoped to build America a freehold farming country, he encouraged farmers compete for more land at their greatest effort. Jefferson's message, thus, implied Americans' general acceptance of competition and monopolization as a means to earn their greatest profit, although they were unwilling to see any result of monopolization. Followed Jefferson's call, huge volume of capital flowed into the West for land speculation. Farmers who were badly in demand of free land, because of their insufficient capital, could not compete with the capitalists. As a result, The land distributed for freehold farmers was far less than the land occupied by speculators. The economic agenda of republicanism, thus succeed in limited extend. But worse still, monopolistic practices, hereafter, were legitimated.

Therefore, when the progress era came, people witnessed a rise in industries together with capitalists' introducing of monopolistic practices they had undertaken in land speculation process. To minimize the production costs, industrial workers were frequently exploited. Although these workers did resist, they could not leave the

capitalistic system since their survival was depended on the continually running manufactories. Made use of this weakness, capitalists managed to rise higher than their fellow countrymen and controlled the country's orientations at an unprecedented level. The nation's cherished values: equality, independence and democracy were distorted into privilege, dependence and autocracy.

It was in the wake of these social tensions that republican resentment of the aristocratic economy, which had helped American ancestors to refute the rule of the British monarch, revived in some of the progressive historians' works. Among them, Frederick Jackson Turner, Charles A. Beard and William Appleman Williams were the three best-known progressive historians. Implicitly a believer of Jefferson's republican principles, Frederick Jackson Turner sadly concluded in his 1893 frontier thesis that the disappearance of the frontier marked "the end of an era." Turner's message implied that the survival of American democracy after the disappearance of free land was doubtful. But Turner surely did not want this prediction to become true. He therefore spent twenty years in search of alternative, which he thought would guarantee social equality. But the deeper he probed into those alternatives, the more dissatisfaction he felt because nothing was better than free land in sustaining democracy. Jeffersonian republicanism's emphasis on free land, thus, underpinned Turner's discussion of American democracy.

Contrary to Turner's worrying about American democracy, Charles A. Beard, optimistically declared the American future should be an industrial democracy, because only an optimally industrialized society would be able to solve the basic inequality between workers and employers. Correspondingly, democracy would certainly prevail. Although Beard's argument was appeared running different from Turner's, implicitly it was also an extension of the free land – democracy argument

Jefferson had proposed. Beard only replaced Jefferson's free land proposition with his industrialization, but their aims remained the same: a better future for Americans. Beard's industrialization – democracy formula, thus, although standing in opposite to Turner's free land – democracy argument, was implicitly an extension of American republican formula.

Nonetheless, the outbreak of two world wars testified that industrialization could not result in a democratic society. The survival of American democracy was not at all depending on material abundance. It required Americans to be aware of their inalienable rights and duties had been fulfilled or not. Based on this insight, Beard decried Roosevelt's expansive diplomatic policies. The expansive overseas activities, in Beard's idea, would only distract Americans from participating into domestic affairs. In Beard's opinion, Americans should return home in order to safeguard their democracy. Beard's new assertion sounded like a return to classical republican principle which emphasized the importance of virtuosity of all citizens to a healthy republic. However, postwar Americans did not listen to Beard's advice. They inclined more to expansive overseas activities even at the price of waging wars.

Followed Beard's critique of American expansion, William Appleman Williams – a 1960s neo-progressive historian repeatedly pointed out, Americans adopted expansive diplomatic policies to enhance their economy. But such an enhancement was achieved at the price of people's democracy. The expansive diplomatic policies not only caused insurmountable tensions between America and Russia, but also undermined people's lives and the democratic values they believed. Under the pressure of ideological needs, the cherished democratic values of liberty, mutual respect of Americans and multiplicity of their lives were bent into a unified opinion to meet the expansive purpose. In this regard, political leaders had defied

people's self-determination and pushed the country to the verge of disaster. Williams deemed this tendency unfavorable to American democracy. He renounced these political orientations and put his emphasis on the importance of American citizens' self-awareness and their moral integrity if Americans were still hoping for a truly democratic society. Williams's rejection of expansive diplomatic policies revealed that his underlying philosophy very much an extension of Turner and Beard's apprehension of American democracy. It is because of these considerations that I deem three generations of progressive historians' discussions of democracy were governed by American republicanism.

## Chapter 2

### Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier Democracy: A Republican Way of Thinking

1. How Turner's thesis related frontier conditions with democracy?
2. In what way is Turner's thesis affected by republicanism?
3. A trace of republican idealism in Turner's later articles
4. Retaining the validity of his republican way of reasoning via the safety valve hypothesis: A supplement to Turner's free land – democracy relationship
5. Free land – democracy vs. Education – democracy

Following the previous chapter's discussion of the basic characteristics of American republicanism and a brief mention of three progressive historian's concerns about democracy, this chapter will provide an in-depth investigation of Turner's historical works to see how republicanism affected his understanding of American democracy. Beginning with a look at the content of Turner's famous 1893 essay, the first section will explore how he related frontier conditions to American democracy. The second section will discuss in what ways the thesis was affected by republicanism. In the remaining three sections, I will explore Turner's subsequent works to consider how his later discussion of American democracy was continuously affected by republican hypothesis.

#### **How Turner's thesis related frontier conditions with democracy?**

The Chicago World's Fair in 1893 was an unforgettable event for Frederick Jackson Turner, since it coincided with his first presentation at an academic

conference. He brought to his audience an essay titled: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History."<sup>1</sup> Soon after his introductory sentences, Turner began to argue that the recession of the frontier from east to west had made America a unique nation. The environment, Turner argued strongly at this point, has conquered the people's mind and gradually helped them to be Americanized.

The frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and put him in the birth canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. It puts him in the log cabin of the Cherokee and Iroquois and runs an Indian palisade around him. Before long he has gone to planting Indian corn and plowing with a sharp stick; he shouts the war cry and takes the scalp in orthodox Indian fashion. In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man... Little by little he transforms the wilderness, but the outcome is not the old Europe ... The fact, that here is a new product that is American. <sup>2</sup>

Following these dramatic descriptions of the frontier's impact on the frontiersman, Turner went on to analyze the effects of the westward advancement of the frontier on American society. In eight pages Turner outlined how the frontier helped America to have an ethnically mixed society, how it had decreased Americans' dependence on Europe, and how it had promoted legislation for unity under a powerful national government.<sup>3</sup> Turner's argument was fairly solid and convincing. But when he advanced the point that the frontier had helped Americans to promote democracy, he confronted a problem that he would spend twenty years trying to solve.

The most important effect of the frontier has been in the promotion of democracy here and in Europe. As has been indicated, the frontier is productive of individualism. Complex society is precipitated by the

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," *The Frontier in American History* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1947), 1-38.

<sup>2</sup> Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History", 4.

<sup>3</sup> Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History", 22-30.

wilderness into a kind of primitive organization based on the family. The tendency is anti-society. It produced antipathy to control, and particularly to any direct control. The tax-gatherer is view as a representative of oppression.... The frontier individualism has from the beginning promoted democracy.<sup>4</sup>

Here, obviously, Turner tended to think the anarchic situation in frontier areas as a favorable condition for the growth of democracy. Without the restraint of authority, people organized their community as they wished. But such a new community was not simply a democratic society. The frontier community in contact with individualism could be a chaotic society. Individualism could be a help as well as a danger to democracy.

Democracy born of free land, strong in selfishness and individualism, intolerant of administrative experience and education, and pressing individual liberty beyond its proper bounds, has its dangers as well as its befits. Individualism in America has allowed a laxity in regard to governmental affair which has rendered possible the spoils system and all the manifest evils that follow from the lack of a highly developed civic spirit. In the connection may be noted also the influence of frontier conditions in permitting lax business honor, inflated paper currency and wild-cat banking. The colonial and revolutionary frontier was the region whence emanated many of the worst forms of an evil currency.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, Turner brought an ambiguous message to his audience. If one followed Turner's logic, one would perceive that individualism both has and has not helped Americans to establish a democratic country. Nonetheless, young Turner in 1893 was too confident on the positive effects of individualism. He, therefore, continued to emphasize the frontiers' initiation of enfranchisement, hoping this evidence would be enough to ensure the validity of his argument.

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<sup>4</sup> Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History", 30.

<sup>5</sup> Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History", 32.

The frontier State that came into the Union in the first quarter of a century of its existence came in with democratic suffrage provisions, and had reactive effects of the highest importance upon the older States whose peoples were being attracted there. An extension of the franchise became essential. It was western New York that forced an extension of suffrage in the constitutional convention of that State in 1821; and it was western Virginia that compelled the tide-water region to put a more liberal suffrage provision in the constitution framed in 1830, and to give to the frontier region a more nearly proportionate representation with the tide-water aristocracy.<sup>6</sup>

Apparently, Turner could not consistently explain his opinion that democracy in western frontier helped to promote a democratic America in general. No matter how hard he had tried to provide new evidence in proofing his assertion, his ambivalent, if not self-contradictory, attitude to the idea of individualism was always there. On one hand, he has assertively remarked that frontier individualism has urging impacts upon eastern states to enfranchise its people; on the other hand, he acknowledged that individualism also contributed some vices, which would hinder the civic spirit. He knew that individualism could be separated into liberal individualism and pure individualism. When he praised the frontier states contribution to eastern democracy, Turner praised the liberal implications of individualism. When he condemned the evils of the frontier communities, he condemned the pure individualism. The pure individualism did not promote civic spirit. Everyone working under the guidelines of pure individualism was working for self-interest. No one would work for public benefit. Turner seemed knew these differences fairly well, but he did not explain how the differences were bypassed, in order that Americans who were in believing of individualism could serve together to promote American democracy. What he did was cut his argument short and neglected to say anymore.

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<sup>6</sup> Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History", 30-31.

In my opinion, Turner has selectively linked frontier conditions with democracy. He intended to say something about the West and American democracy with the frontiersmen's individualism he proposed. But he was unable to integrate the negative side of individualism into his explanation. Turner, therefore, evaded the question of how frontier individualism had promoted democracy but convinced his audience to look at the western states' influence in promoting national enfranchisement movements.

### **In what ways Turner's thesis is a republican way of thinking?**

Turner's discussion of democracy in his frontier thesis revealed some resemblance to the eighteenth century British-American republican assumption. In the British republican theoreticians' eyes, to achieve a stable republic people should possess property and the property holders should be granted, in addition to their wealth, political rights to rule the country. The best property, in the British theoreticians' eyes, was land, because it provides means for survival and the best way of distributing land was the freehold system. Thus, British republicanism's political scheme embodied a substantial material consideration. To achieve the republican goal, land ownership was a necessity.

The early nineteenth century Americans followed suit. When Jefferson declared that he wanted to make America "An Empire of Liberty", he meant to establish on the continent an agricultural country with abundant free land for every farmer. Based on the Jeffersonian wish a fair and just distribution of political rights and economic materials could be secured. When Turner declared that American frontiers promoted democracy, he shared a similar way of reasoning. Though Turner

did not mention the necessity of a freehold system to guarantee the American socio-political life, implicitly laid in his view of frontier democracy was an idea of freehold distribution of land. This is particularly obvious when he describes the frontier's tremendous metamorphosing effects on individuals and frontier communities. In Turner's opinion, American democracy was sustained by the existence of free land. It gave Americans a new identity and a democratic imagination about how they should rule the country. Therefore, coincidentally, British republican theories, American republican expectation, and Turner's interpretation of American democracy recognized the same hypothesis that the health of a polity was depended upon how justly the country could distribute its resources for every citizen. The only difference was that Turner's phraseology replaced the British theoreticians' "republic" and Jefferson's "empire" with his American "democracy". The way they reasoned was the same.<sup>7</sup>

The British republican theorists preferred a freehold system because they deemed it natural and permanent. They ignored about that land is a kind of property not permanent enough to guarantee the health of a republic. Land is limited in supply and its ownership is transferable. But Europe in the seventeenth and the eighteenth century had no free land. The problem of land supply, thus, was left unmentioned in British republicanism. But America was different. When Jefferson declared that he wanted to make America an Empire of Liberty, his dream was not at all unrealistic, because America possessed plenty of free land waiting for cultivation. Therefore, the Americanized republicanism inherited British republicanism's free land presumptions and put it into practice. But by the end of the nineteenth century, free land was gone.

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<sup>7</sup> David W. Noble, *The End of American History: Democracy, capitalism, and the metaphor of two worlds in Anglo-American historical writing, 1880-1980* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis

America's freehold system seemed to have reached its natural limit. Therefore, if America has long been a democratic republic with free land serving as its survival means, with the cease of supply of free land, it naturally came to worry the end of the polity. Because of this kind of tragic apprehension of the closure of the frontier, Turner lamented at the end of his essay:

And now, four centuries from the discovery of America, at the end of a hundred years of life under the Constitution, the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history.<sup>8</sup>

### **A trace of republican idealism in Turner's later articles**

Turner's 1893 essay brought people's attention to the American West. He strongly argued that the frontier area had played a significant part in establishing America's political culture. Yet, this path-breaking argument was not flawless. At the very beginning of his essay, Turner had already anticipated some inaccuracies and inadequacies in his hypothesis. "This paper will make no attempt to treat the subject exhaustively," Turner declared, "its aim is simply to call attention to the frontier as a fertile field for investigation and to suggest some of the problems, which arise in connection with it."<sup>9</sup> After he read the thesis to his audience, he knew he had not explained how the frontiersmen's individualism helped the development of American democracy in general. Besides, if free land has gone, what should westerners do in order to preserve the cherished democratic tradition? These considerations pushed

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Press, 1985), 19.

<sup>8</sup> Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History", 38.

<sup>9</sup> Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History", 3.

Turner to write a series of explanatory articles. Of these articles, "The Problems of the West" came out the earliest. It was published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1896.

With a brief introduction in which he argued that the West was a society different from that of the East, Turner quickly pointed to the backwoodsmen's demand for independence during the War days. "These men's idea of self-government was quite simple." Turner illustrated this opinion with a quotation that he adapted from an unknown source. "Some of our fellow-citizens may think we are not able to conduct our affairs and consult our interest; but if our society is rude, much wisdom is not necessary to supply our wants, and a fool can sometimes put on his clothes better than a wise man can do it for him."<sup>10</sup>

In Turner's opinion, the frontiersmen's political ideal revealed some distinguish democratic characteristics. Their primary and predominant object was to cultivate and settle the prairies, forests, and the vast uncultivated lands. The vast free territories enabled them to raise a new type of democracy and new popular ideals. In the frontier area, every capable individual could have a farm. Thus, economic equality easily resulted, and this would finally mobilize them to demand political equality. Turner, thus, praised the frontiersmen's inner-quality. "Under their superficial coarseness, they were men of ideals. They dreamed dreams and beheld visions. They had faith in man, hope for democracy, belief in America's destiny, and unbounded confidence in their ability to make the dreams come true."<sup>11</sup>

The good quality of frontiersman fully exemplified itself during Andrew Jackson's presidency. Americans of the Jacksonian era experienced the rise of nationalism when a group of frontier states entered the Union with democratic

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<sup>10</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Problem of the West" *The Frontier in American History* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1947), 207.

provisions. These states showed a wholehearted devotion to the nation that had given them their lands, built their roads and canals, regulated their territorial life, and made them equals in the sisterhood of States. Turner passionately praised the triumph of Jacksonian democracy:

The new democracy that captured the country and destroyed the ideals of statesmanship came from no theorist's dreams of the German forest. It came, stark and strong and full of life, from the American forest. But the triumph of this Western democracy revealed also the fact that it could rally to its aid the laboring class of the coast, then just beginning to acquire self-consciousness and organization.<sup>12</sup>

At this point, Turner was very confident in characterizing the influence of West upon American democracy. He believed that American democracy came from those people in contact with the wilderness. He also expected that the Western pioneers could help city laborers living in the East to fight for democracy. Therefore, after three years of reflection on his first thesis, he did not change his mind. He deemed the frontiersmen's individualistic temperament an essential element contributed to the growth of the country's democratic political spirit.<sup>13</sup> He believed that the frontier was the very basis of western democracy. Turner was convinced that the secure position of a polity depended upon the availability of free land. Followed to

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<sup>11</sup> Turner, "The Problem of the West", 214.

<sup>12</sup> Turner, "The Problem of the West", 216.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Beard, a historian was also born in West, was skeptical to Tuner's assertion. "I knew in my youth pioneers in Indiana who had gone into the country of my birth when it was a wilderness. My early memories are filled with the stories of log-cabin days – of community helpfulness, of corporation in building houses and barns, in harvesting crops, in building schools, in constructing roads and bridges, in nursing the sick, in caring for widows, orphans, and the aged. Of individuals I heard much, of individualism little. I doubt whether anywhere in the United States there was more community spirit, more mutual aid in time of need, so little expectation of material reward for services rendered to neighbors." Quoted in *The Progressive Historians*, by Richard Hofstadter (New York: Alfred. A. Knopf, 1968), 145, n. 7.

what he deemed correct, he moved on to compare the democratic provisions of West and the eastern states' constitution.<sup>14</sup>

But before long, a tremendous change was arising in American society. More than just acquiring free land, frontiersmen were hoping for an industrialized West. They wanted to have railroads and numerous public facilities. If fostered by government aid, it would expose the West in an unanticipated speed. But frontiersmen were unable to act independently because no one was wealthy enough to bear the financial burden. They relied on the eastern government for protection as well as for development. Moreover, these new frontiersmen were so heterogeneous in their origins and differentiated in their expectations that cooperation between every individual was quite impossible. The new frontiersmen competed between themselves for more resources as their new living strategy. This social phenomenon generated a new challenge to Turner's "thesis". According to Turner's 1893's essay, frontier democracy had been broadly shared because of the existence of free land. But in the 1890's the Superintendent of Census declared the official close of the frontier. This message, together with an industrializing West, was really a new challenge to Turner's frontier perception. Without the guarantee of free land, the frontiersmen's dependency on the eastern 'aristocrats' increased, and the hostile competition between them became more visible. Turner, thus, had these two new problems tangled in mind: Could democracy exist for long? How could Western democracy survive under the new tide of industrial development?

This, then, is the real situation: a people composed of heterogeneous materials, with diverse and conflicting ideals and social interests, having passed from the task of filling up the vacant spaces of the continent, is now thrown back upon itself, and is seeking an equilibrium. The diverse

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<sup>14</sup> Turner, "The Problem of the West", 216-21.

elements are being fully fused into national unity. The forces of reorganization are turbulent and the nation seems like a witch's kettle.

But the West has its own centers of industrial life and culture not unlike those of the East. It has State universities, rivaling in conservative and scientific economic instruction those of any other part of the Union, and its citizens more often visit the East, than do Eastern men the West. As time goes on, its industrial development will bring it more into harmony with the East.

Moreover, the Old Northwest holds the balance of power, and is the battlefield on which these issues of American development are to be settled. It has more in common with all parts of the nation than has any other region. It understands the East, as the East does understand the West.... Its complex and representative industrial organization and business ties, its determination to hold fast to what is original and good in its Western experience, and its readiness to learn and receive the results of the experience of other section and nation, make it an open-minded and safe arbiter of the American destiny.<sup>15</sup>

For certain, Turner felt the challenge of industrialization to American democracy, but he did not worry too much about it. He was confident in the ability of the West to uphold democracy and to keep a balance between material progress and the cherished frontiersmen's values. The western states had a number of universities attracting talents from every corner of the Union. These West-bred people because of coming from every corner of the nation, Turner believed, were able to hold a balance between different contestants. The West, thus, was a determinant in keeping the country's progress balance with its democratic needs.

It was a painful experience for Turner to face the reality that free land existed no more. Originally, his confidence in western democracy was derived from his beliefs in free land. But free land was filled up with migrants. American republican formula, which has a strong commitment to free land, sounded like reaching its explanatory limit. The anxious Turner, therefore, had to search for another reliable

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<sup>15</sup> Turner, "The Problem of the West", 221.

explanation. After three years of searching and thinking of the problem, Turner hypothesized that western education might guarantee the longevity of democracy. Following the loss of free land, western universities stepped in to be the cornerstones of American democracy. Turner's new explanation, however, was actually an extension of his free land – democracy hypothesis. The republican hope of having a good society was preserved in Turner's new formula. Also, his confidence in democracy was sustained. What Turner has done was replacing free land with western universities. The element of his republican thought was changed but his republican logic remained the same.

### **The safety valve hypothesis: A supplement to Turner's free land – democracy argument**

However, soon after Turner proposed his education – democracy formula, American society confronted new problems, which urged Turner to give his formula a supplementary explanation. Accompanied to the exhaustion of Western free land was the concentration of land and concentration of capital into giant corporations together with a rising tide of trade unionism which involved the importation of socialism. In response to these social changes, the government expanded politically and commercially into lands beyond the seas. Active foreign policies, however, had torn the country into anti-imperial camps and pro-imperial camps. Turner witnessed all these changes and felt he had the responsibility to inform his country fellowmen how democratic values were preserved in the West and how it might continually work for the country's future. He put all these messages in his "Contribution of the West to American Democracy" published in January 1903, *the Atlantic Monthly*. In this article,

Turner pointed to the unsolved conflicts between democracy and industrial society and proposed a modification of his free land – democracy hypothesis.

Turner admitted that behind the rapid changes was a contest between American democracy and industrial society. He exclaimed, “we find ourselves at the present time in a time of profound economic and social transformation as to raise the question of the effect of these changes upon the democratic institutions of the United States.”<sup>16</sup> In Turner’s opinion, giant corporations were undemocratic by nature. The managerial structure of giant corporations did not welcome the general participation of employees in policy-making processes. Only stockholders could vote for their future. In contrast, America’s national polity was subject to its voters’ decisions. Thus, at the turn of the century Turner found in America a paradoxical situation. A democratic nation contained inside it some continually looming undemocratic industries. How could these two incompatible elements survive at the same time? By what means they would not collide with each other in future? To answer these questions, Turner once again referred to the frontier experience in an effort to solve these controversies. He assertively pointed out that “ long after the frontier period of a particular region of the United States has passed away, the conception of society, the ideals and aspirations, which it produced, persist in the minds of the people.”<sup>17</sup>

It seemed that Turner knew very well about the positive effects of frontier experience to the rise of industries. In the process of conquering the West, especially when frontiersmen confronted the arid land, cooperation between frontiersmen produced the best outcome. To have the land irrigated, cooperative activity was necessary and capital beyond the reach of the small farmer was required. All these

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<sup>16</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Contribution of the West to the American Democracy,” *The Frontier in American History* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1947), 244.

conditions helped Americans to cooperate and subsequently to conquer the markets far beyond the oceans they had reached before.<sup>18</sup> Turner's analysis, however, stopped here and skipped a possible option which might explain how the frontier experience would give rise to democracy and how it would persist into the future — the very question he had invoked in the 1893 essay without properly answering.

It is said that to install new public utilities, people must leave their self-interest a while and join together as a community to discuss and to bargain for their common benefit. This situation constituted an ideal environment for the development of democracy.<sup>19</sup> But Turner did not explain the process of democratization in this way. He provided an alternative explanation for the same process. He proposed a “safety valve” hypothesis to explain how the West democratized the nation.

[It] has been the fact that an area of free land has continually lain on the western border of the settled area of the United States. Whenever social conditions tended to crystallize in the East, whenever capital tended to press upon labor or political restraints to impede the freedom of the mass, there was this gate of escape to the free conditions of the frontier. These free lands promoted individualism, economic equality, freedom to rise, and democracy. Men would not accept inferior wages and a permanent position of social subordination when this Promised Land of freedom and equality was theirs for the taking. Who would rest under oppressive legislative conditions when with a slight effort he might reach a land wherein to become a co-worker in the building of free cities and see States on the lines of his own ideal? In a word, then free lands meant free opportunities. Their existence has differentiated the American democracy from the democracy which have preceded it, because ever, as democracy in the East took the form of highly specialized and complicated industrial society, in the West it kept in touch with primitive conditions, and by action and reaction these two forces have shaped our history.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Turner, “The Contribution of the West to the American Democracy”, 264.

<sup>18</sup> Turner, “The Contribution of the West to the American Democracy”, 258.

<sup>19</sup> Stanley Elkins and Eric Mckittrick, “Turner Thesis: Predictive Model,” *American History and the Social Science*, ed., Edward N. Saveth (New York: Free Press, 1964), 379-99.

<sup>20</sup> Turner, “The Contribution of the West to the American Democracy”, 259-60.

Turner's "safety valve" hypothesis was a mechanical explanation of how the democratic West could influence the nation's politics in general. But the validity of the "safety valve" hypothesis is questionable. Soon after Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase was settled, the first group of British immigrants quickly moved into the new land for agricultural purposes. But by the time Turner expound his thesis, there was no more free land available for immigrants. The trend of the socio-economic development showed that urban centers at the turn of the century were more attractive than rural areas to Americans. Thus, whether a "safety valve" had really been functioning in American history was open to discussion. It might work but the direction was in opposite to Turner's analysis.

But most important of all, Turner's safety valve argument revealed the consistency of his republican mentality. In other word, the way he argued in the 1903 was similar to the way he argued in the 1893. In the first defensive article he wrote in the 1896, Turner saw no hope in the sustainability of free land for democracy, he, therefore changed his free land – democracy assumption to an education – democracy assumption. But republicanism was still a dominant logic in this new explanation. In Turner's idea, education was aimed at solving conflicts arising from industrialization. Properly educated Americans would help the country to refrain from vice and to dream for a better future. The education formula remained very much the same as his 1893 thesis had argued. Both explanations were intended at showing how the country survived under republican guidelines. Therefore, Turner in 1896 was a progressive historian whose perception of American democracy was deeply affected by republicanism. By the time he expounded the safety valve hypothesis, America's national strength was growing. New overseas markets gave Americans new hopes for democracy. Turner's creativity was aroused. He thus delivered the safe valve

hypothesis. Nonetheless, his safety valve hypothesis revealed nothing more than a repetition of his free land – democracy explanation. Throughout his explanation, free land was still an essential element in the democratization of America. In Turner's opinion, American land was continually distributing off under the guidance of egalitarian principle. In this regard, free land has an undeniable positive effect in promoting democracy. It is by the token of Turner's persistent beliefs in free land that I deem him a progressive historian whose understanding of American democracy was characteristically bounded by republicanism.

### **Free land – democracy vs. Education – democracy**

Turner knew that the western pioneers were born individualistic. Their primary ideal was to conquer the continent. They hoped for personal development and freedom. They came from a civilization based on individual competition and brought with them the concept of competition. Also, they hated aristocracy, monopoly and special privilege; they believed in simplicity and rule by the people. The effective force behind this kind of American belief was the presence of free land. The almost unlimited supply of free lands compelled the pioneers to neglect any danger of inequality.<sup>21</sup>

However, in reality the pioneers did not only undertake westward expansion. They depended on the eastern economic forces to provide bank credit to buy farm machinery. Therefore, the pioneers' increasing interaction with eastern businessmen reduced their coarse individualism. The eastern government was less like a necessary

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<sup>21</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, "Pioneer Ideals and the State University," *The Frontier in American History* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1947), 271-3.

evil and more like an instrument for the perpetuation of democratic ideals. The pioneers began to shift from believing in free land to using legislation for leveling social inequalities and from their ideal of individualism to the ideal of social control through regulation by law.

Finally, free lands disappeared and eastern industrial conditions took command of the West. Traditional American individualistic democracy lost its basis. Legislation totally replaced the frontier areas' direct democracy. What this newly industrialized society offered to its people was a representative democracy. This new democratic polity was distant from the people. This made Turner very anxious about Americans' future.

American society has reached the end of the first great period in its formation. It must survey itself, reflect upon its origins, consider what freightage of purposes it carried in its long march across the continent, what ambition it had for the man, what role it would play in the world. How shall we conserve what was best in pioneer ideals? How adjust the old conceptions to the changed condition of modern life?<sup>22</sup>

To solve these problems, Turner relied on the proliferation of education, as the Founding Fathers believed.<sup>23</sup> Universities, in Turner's opinion, offered opportunities to people rose in whatever direction their peculiar abilities entitled them to. There was an avenue of promotion. The development of the West, after the disappearance of free land and the encroachment of industrial society, changed into industrial aspects. It needed scientific and liberal thought to secure its achievements. Education, in this

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<sup>22</sup> Turner, "Pioneer Ideals and the State University", 281.

<sup>23</sup> President George Washington in his first annual address to Congress noted, "Nor am I less persuaded that you will agree with me in opinion that there is nothing, which can better deserve your patronage than the promotion of science and literature. Knowledge is in every country the surest basis of public happiness. In one in which the measures of government receive their impressions so immediately from the sense of the community as in ours its proportionately essential. To the security of a free constitution it contributes in various ways." Quoted in Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, *A Basic History of the United States* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1944), 154-56.

regard, became more important than ever for the West's future. A complex social question needs not only general knowledge but also knowledgeable experts. It was the only thing that could guarantee the safety of democracy.<sup>24</sup>

The need for well-educated leaders was great because industrial society had already created new classes. And if one day Americans tended to divide themselves by class, it would be too late to find any common ground between the contestants. Without such a commonly accepted ground, it might cause great trouble to American social progress. Turner, therefore, wholeheartedly believed that only educated leadership could help the country to set bulwarks against both the passionate impulses of the mob and the sinister designs of those who would subordinate public welfare to private greed.<sup>25</sup>

Evidently, Turner wanted to explain how education could help people to save their democracy from being jeopardized. Western free land as a determinant to American democracy was giving way to an institutionally oriented interpretation based on the existence of western universities. When Turner expounded his idea that Western universities could be a new foundation for American democracy, his logic was the same as his 1893 frontier essay. He, therefore, confidently declared that, "American democracy was born of no theorist's dream; it was not carried in the *Sarah Constant* to Virginia, nor in the *Mayflower* to Plymouth. It came out of the American forest, and it gained new strength each time in touch with a new frontier. Not the Constitution, but free land and an abundance of natural resources open to a fit people, made the democratic type of society in America for four centuries while it occupied its

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<sup>24</sup> Turner, "Pioneer Ideals and the State University", 269-89.

<sup>25</sup> Turner, "Pioneer Ideals and the State University", 285-86.

empire.”<sup>26</sup> Obviously, what Turner believed was very much the same as his 1893 essay had delineated that western territory was a key element to the success of American democracy.

Turner pressed on assertively to claim that the industrialized West in the *postbellum* era did not lose its democratic ideals because state and local level legislation had already taken up the place of free lands as a means of preserving democracy. Individualistic capitalism might not jeopardize democracy if they could be kept in balance by legislation. What an industrial society needed was a multiplication of motives for ambition and the opening of new lines of achievement for the strongest persons. To achieve this goal, schools and universities were two ideal institutions which guaranteed to widen the intellectual horizons of the people, help them to lay the foundations of a better industrial life, and show them new objective to strive and inspire them with more varied and higher goals.<sup>27</sup>

When Turner wrote “The Contribution of the West to American Democracy”, he did not intend to give up his free land – democracy argument and embark on a new education – democracy argument. His new argument was an extension of his 1893 beliefs. He modified American republicanism’s free land presupposition with education but the argument’s logic remained the same as his 1893 thesis because behind all these arguments there was a keen republican hope of preserving people’s liberty and moral values. Repeatedly, his new articles echoed what he had expounded in 1893: that American democracy originated with Western free land. Turner, therefore, never give up his republican standard of judgement. Also, when he suggested the safety valve argument and the protective nature of western universities

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<sup>26</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, “The West and American Ideals” *The Frontier in American History* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1947), 290-310.

to American democracy, his understanding of democracy was still a republican one. His aim was to save democracy and to save it specifically in the context of democracy in the West.

From the 1890s to the 1910s, American society was rapidly transforming that traditional ideas seemed impossible to survive in an industrialized society. The powers of the machines working under giant corporations' monitoring were so irresistible that old ways of life had to change. Turner sensed the crisis of the loss of old values and readily changed his mind several times in order to maintain the validity of his 1893 premises. Thus, Turner's interpretation of American democracy could be summed up in a four-stage pattern. First he expounded his free land – democracy argument in his 1893 essay based on an ambivalent understanding of individualism. Three years later, he detected these two divergent tendencies in his theory and then strove to supply more hypotheses to retain the coherency of his theory. Among these succeeding theories, his education – democracy argument and safety valve hypotheses were the two most distinguished ones. But detailed analysis of these two statements shows that the logic of republicanism were remained unchanged in new articles. Therefore, Turner was not only a progressive historian he was also a believer in republicanism. Every time he wrote historical articles, republican values determined what he wanted to explain and how the issue should be explained.

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<sup>27</sup> Turner, "The West and American Ideals", 305, 307, 309 and 310.

## Chapter 3

### **Industrial Democracy and American Civilization: The Two Sides of Charles A. Beard's Republican Thinking**

1. Charles Beard and Industrial Democracy: An Optimistic Republican Consideration: 1901 — 1918.

*The Industrial Society* (1901)

*An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (1913)

*Contemporary American History, 1877-1913* (1914)

2. America as a Civilization, 1919-1948: Charles Beard's Moralistic Republican Explanation

*The Rise of American Civilization* (1927)

*The American Spirit* (1942)

I have argued in the previous chapter that behind Turner's tragic prediction about American democracy there lay a deep-seeded republican way of thinking. Though he tried many ways to explain how the crisis of American democracy could be solved, his new explanations were remained republican-bounded. The more Turner struggled to explain his thesis, the more anxious feeling aroused. The disappearance of free land was visualized a crisis to democracy. To save the country, various interest groups formulated new suggestions. But bounded by a commonly held frontier perception, numerous Americans, regardless of whether they were businessmen or farmers, could not think for new ideas other than active overseas activities. To these people, it was the only means to save America from democratic declension.

In oppose to the imperialistic opinions clustered around Turner's pessimistic prediction, a young political scientist of Columbia University named Charles Austin Beard raised his optimistic view of the American future. Intellectually, Beard was a

generation younger than Turner. Also, some of his ideas originated with Turner. But Beard held a perspective different from Turner's. Rather than seeing the end of the frontier expansion as a tragedy, Beard was confident in the sustainability of democracy. He believed that the fundamental laws of science and technology would help people to progress both materially and politically. Ultimately, people would be able to counterbalance the irrational forces of capitalism.

Nonetheless, following the lines of Beard's works, I find his arguments, though in some ways different from Turner's opinions, were also affected by republican way of thinking. That is to say, Beard's optimistic view of American democracy was intrinsically affected by republicanism. In the following paragraphs, I will explain in what aspect Charles Beard's understandings of democracy were underpinned by republicanism.

### **Charles Beard and Industrial Democracy: An Optimistic Republican Consideration: 1901 — 1918**

During the years he was studying political science at Oxford University and Columbia University, Beard had already shown a keen interest in history and politics. But he conceived himself a scientific-mind student responsible for improving human's sensitivity. He deliberately distanced himself from the moral judgement of politics. He believed that it was "not the function of the student of politics to praise or condemn institutions or theories, but to understand and to expound them; and thus for scientific purpose it is separated from theology, ethics and patriotism."<sup>1</sup> Such a pro-science

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Beard, *Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1908) 14, quoted in Bernard C. Borning, *The Political and Social Thought of Charles A. Beard*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1984), 6.

tone was a benchmark of Beard's perception of history and democracy for the first two decades of his professional career.

### *The Industrial Society (1901)*

In 1901, when he was studying in England, Beard published his first book: *The Industrial Society*. In this book, he explained to his readers how industrialization could help democracy to sustain.<sup>2</sup> The combination of rational science and the abundance of industrial products might result in a more durable democracy. There was no possibility of democracy during the medieval and capitalist periods, Beard stated, because limited wealth caused classes or individuals to act selfishly and oppress other classes or individuals. But "The central theme of history" was mankind's triumph over "priestcraft, feudal tyrants, and warring elements." Therefore, the coming of the eighteenth century was a breakthrough. It marked the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. "Man, who through the long centuries had toiled with his hands, aided by crude implements, to wrest a pitiful substance from nature, suddenly discovered that the blind forces against which he had been struggling could be chained to do his work," Beard exulted. "Suddenly, almost like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, were ushered in the storm and stress of the Industrial Revolution, the mechanical inventions of the centuries were eclipsed in less than one hundred years."<sup>3</sup> The Industrial Revolution, in Beard's eyes, was opening up a magnificent future of plenty. Beard expressed a hope that, as the industrial revolution continued, "the people, instead of a few capitalists, will reap the benefits," and that modern technology would give "a

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Beard, *The Industrial Revolution* (London: S. Sonnenschein & Co., 1901).

material key to man's spiritual progress."<sup>4</sup> Celebrating the liberating power of industrialization, he envisioned an evolutionary process beneficial to all people. Through the power of reason, Beard argued, all nations would transcend their outmoded cultures. In this regard, the end of the frontier would not lead to the destruction of a virtuous American democracy, as Turner had feared. With the aid of science-minded professionals and an enlightened citizenry, Beard sincerely believed that Americans would have a better future.

Beard's optimistic prediction was definitely an antithesis to Turner's 1893 essay. But, intrinsically, Beard's underlying assumptions were similar to Turner's republican assumptions. Turner foreboded that the encroachment of capitalism might exterminate American democracy. Like most republican theoreticians, he took for granted that free land was the foundation of American democracy. He was too rigidly bounded by a perception that the existence of abundant land guaranteed the success of a polity and that if the material foundation were exhausted, the polity would then be overturned. Therefore, in Turner's mind, when the Superintendent announced in 1890 that there was not more free land available in the West, it simply meant that capitalism has overwhelmed American democracy. But that was not what Turner wanted; he, therefore, searched for new resource to replace free land as a new sustaining means for American democracy. Turner employed individualism and western universities to substitute for free land. Nonetheless, this explanation was futile. Therefore, throughout his career, Turner accepted a negative perception of capitalism and was never able to escape from his tragic apprehension of frontier democracy. But Beard

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<sup>3</sup> Beard, *The Industrial Revolution*, 21, quoted in David W. Noble, *The End of American History: Democracy, Capitalism and the Metaphor of Two Worlds in Anglo-American Historical Writings, 1880-1980* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 27.

<sup>4</sup> Beard, *The Industrial Revolution*, 86, 53 and 42, quoted in Robert Allen Skothenim, *American Intellectual Histories and Historians* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966), 88.

perceived differently. He thought industrialization could help Americans to overcome the negative impacts of capitalism. He, thus, also accepted that capitalism was irrational and antidemocratic. But unlike Turner's pessimistic prediction of capitalistic encroachment, Beard believed that if industrialization could be fully implemented, capitalism would lose its sharpness and therefore, people would be benefited rather than suffering from the industrial progress. Following Turner's anti-capitalistic beliefs, Beard projected a different vision of the future than Turner. In Beard's prediction, capitalism did not pose an eternal threat to democracy. It represented a chaotic contest between a reactionary medieval aristocracy and a progressive technological movement. The result of this contest was predetermined. The technological power would triumph at last because it expressed the universal laws of reason. It would help people to sweep away inequalities and to liberate themselves from dependency.<sup>5</sup> Obviously, Beard was a believer of human progress. Also, he had a strong conviction typically shared by most republican believers. Like Jefferson's and Turner's envisioning for an egalitarian agricultural America, Beard projected in his first book an industrialized American society realizable in near future. Such a new society, in most republican believers' perception, would help people to bring cherished republican values such as equality and liberty into full form. The colorful future image painted by Beard in his *Industrial Revolution* shared a similar characteristic. It held an optimistic perception to future society. It feared nothing about capitalist's encroachment. It is because of these characteristics that I deem Beard's historical interpretation was governed by republican thoughts.

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<sup>5</sup> David W. Noble, "The Reconstruction of Progress: Charles Beard, Richard Hofstadter and Postwar Historical Thought" in Lary May, ed., *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cold War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 64-5.

But optimistic Beard had overlooked the subtle relationship linking between technology and capitalism. Technological advancement in Europe was coincided with the rise of capitalism but it has not contributed to the fall of capitalism. There was no precedent showing that capitalism would be destroyed by technological progress. Rather, there was much evidence showing that industrialization and technology could strengthen the power of capitalism. Turner was aware to such correlation. He, therefore, did not agreed with the method of employing technology to solve the dilemma between preserving democratic values and keeping the society in progress. For many years he was finding a more durable means, which would guarantee the sustainability of democracy in against to the encroachment of capitalism. Beard, on the contrary, welcomed material progress and optimistically predicted it would overcome the shortcomings of capitalism. He predicted that advanced technologies and rational thinking would help democracy survive under the challenge of capitalism and it would triumph over inequalities created by capitalism.

Beard returned to America in 1902 and started his teaching career at Columbia University in 1904. Beard's training was primarily in political science and his appointment at Columbia was in the department of public law. Nonetheless, he did not confine himself to one discipline. He joined James Harvey Robinson, a professor in the history department, to advocate new-sprung scholarship. Robinson was propounding a "New History". New Historians would study the process of human progress and, in general, concentrate on the aspects of the past most relevant to the great public problems of the present. Thus Robinson's history emphasized change rather than continuity and invoked the authority of social science for the reform of scholarship. All of these opinions appealed strongly to Beard.

Beard had long thought of himself as a scientific-minded intellectual. He thought the chief problem of his generation was the sustainability of democracy. But political scientists' emphasis on abstractive legal principles could not help people to face this challenge. Should these scholars withdraw and embrace newer and more applicable interpretations? For Beard, the answer to this question was "yes". He therefore urged his colleagues to abandon their assumption that law was created under some hypothetical principles. He encouraged them to look into the social and economic "realities" discoverable behind legal principles and governmental forms. In Beard's judgement, the abandonment of abstract, largely a priori analysis of law and sovereignty permitted political science to look more closely into motives, interests, and practical results. Such a new scholarship would enhance people's understanding of humanity and promote democracy in particular.<sup>6</sup> This was an extension of James Harvey Robinson's opinions. While Robinson was triggering a revolt in historical profession, Beard was also preparing to revolt against the traditional interpretations of American legal doctrine.

### *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (1913)

Finally, in a monograph titled *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*, Beard fired his unconventional sentences at the very foundation of American democracy. In the introductory chapter, Beard acknowledged two most influential men in his monograph. The first man was Frederick Jackson Turner. Turner

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<sup>6</sup> John Higham, "Charles A. Beard: A Sketch" *Writing American History: Essays on Modern Scholarship* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 132-3. See also, Harvey Wish, *The American Historian: A Social-Intellectual History of the Writing of the American Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 269.

had once remarked that the economic interpretation of American history had long been neglected. The second man was James Madison. Madison's *Federalist 10* had indicated an explicit linkage between the economy and the legal system and that the principal task of government was to protect and regulate this linkage.<sup>7</sup> Beard then proposed two hypotheses:

Suppose it could be shown from the classification of the men who supported and opposed the Constitution that there was no line of property division at all; that is, that men owning substantially the same amounts of the same kinds of property were equally divided on the matter of adoption or rejection – it would then become apparent that the Constitution had no ascertainable relation to economic groups or classes, but was the product of some abstract causes remote from the chief business of life – gaining a livelihood.

Suppose, on the other hand, that substantially all of the merchants, money lenders, security holders, manufacturers, shippers, capitalists and financiers and their professional associates are to be found on one side on support of the Constitution and that substantially all or the major of the portion of the opposition came from the non-slaveholding farmers and the debtors – would it not be pretty conclusively demonstrated that our fundamental law was not the product of an abstraction known as “the whole people,” but of a group of economic interest which must have expected beneficial results from its adoption? Obviously all the facts here desired cannot be discovered, but the data presented in the following chapters bear out the hypothesis, and thus a reasonable presumption in favor of the theory is created.<sup>8</sup>

Beard divided 1787 Americans into two main categories: people who have realty and people who have personal property. Owners of realty were divided into three subgroups of farmers. The largest agrarian group consisted of small farmers, who were identified in general as the debtor class. Another smaller group of farmers consisted of wealthy manor lords, who were sympathetic to those “debtors”. The third group comprised southern slaveholders. On the other hand, those people who had

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<sup>7</sup> Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1935), 5-6.

personal property were divided into four groups: moneylenders, public security holders, manufacturing and shipping businessmen, and land speculators. People involved in these four areas were suffered from the conditions prevailing under the Article of Confederation. The representatives of these professions had tried to amend the Articles of Confederation to secure their interests but the rigid setting of the Confederation stopped them from reaching the goal. The leaders thus prepared to create a new legal device in order to secure their interests. Delegates were chosen in one fashion or another mainly from members of personal property holders. Beard illustrated this situation by writing each delegate an economic biography in the fifth chapter of his book. Among these delegates, Alexander Hamilton was given special attention. In Beard's opinion, he was the man knowing how a new government should be constructed.<sup>9</sup> Then, in two consecutive chapters, Beard invited readers to look into *The Federalist*, in which Hamilton had penned a number of articles in favor of the new Constitution. Beard concluded at the end of the seventh chapter of his monograph that the ideas expressed in the *Federalist* were the political doctrines of the most members of the Convention.<sup>10</sup> Beard claimed that the Constitution was an economic document drawn with superb skill by men whose property interests were immediately at stake and it appealed directly and unerringly to identical interests in the country at large.<sup>11</sup> Ratification was another part of the Constitution-making process that Beard attacked. Again, in two consecutive chapters, Beard argued that the delegates at Philadelphia won the ratification by marginal victory. To secure the victory, lots of voters were disenfranchised to prevent those people disagreed with the new Constitution from voting. Still, among eligible voters, some cast their vote against the

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<sup>8</sup> Beard, *An Economic Interpretation*, 14-8.

<sup>9</sup> Beard, *An Economic Interpretation*, 115.

Constitution. The number of anti-ratification votes came so near to defeat the pro-Constitution votes at the polls.<sup>12</sup> Beard concluded at the end of the tenth chapter that in regions where mercantile, manufacturing, security and money interests prevailed, people generally preferred a new government. While those people in opposition to the Constitution were almost uniformly arising from the agricultural regions. Such a difference naturally led Beard to conclude in the final chapter that economic conflict had divided the country into a money-minded interest group and an agricultural debtor group. The Constitution, in this regard, was not created by the whole people, but drafted by the leaders of the money-minded interest group.<sup>13</sup>

Soon after Beard's publication his monograph, critics and adorers wrote numerous articles to condemn and to praise this unusual work. High-ranking government officers such as ex-President Taft condemned it an impudent work on American jurisprudence. The New York Bar Association was outraged by the book that they set up a committee and summoned Beard to appear before it. When Beard refused to appear, they denounced him. Also, Beard's colleagues criticized his interpretation as a Marxist work.<sup>14</sup> Though Beard roundly defended his standpoint in an introduction to the 1935 edition, throughout his career he could not stop critics from challenging his explanation.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, critics seldom went far enough to

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<sup>10</sup> Beard, *An Economic Interpretation*, 216.

<sup>11</sup> Beard, *An Economic Interpretation*, 188.

<sup>12</sup> Beard, *An Economic Interpretation*, 252.

<sup>13</sup> Beard, *An Economic Interpretation*, 325.

<sup>14</sup> Beard, "Introduction to the 1935 edition," *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1935) pp. viii-xiv. See also Arthur Schlesinger, *In Retrospect: the History of a Historian* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1963), p.35.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Beard defended in his 1935 edition of *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*. "It may be employed, to be sure, to condemn one interest in the conflict or another interest, but no such use of it is imposed upon an author by the nature of the interpretation. Indeed an economic analysis may be coldly neutral, and in the pages of this volume no words of condemnation are pronounced upon the men enlisted upon either side of the great controversy which accompanied the formation of and adoption of the Constitution. Are the security holders who sought to collect principal and interest through the formation of a stronger government to be treated as guilty of impropriety or

question the ideological background of Beard's economic interpretation of the Constitution. Other than the influence of James Harvey Robinson, was there an unseen but long-term influence of republicanism working on his historical interpretation?

Beard knew very well that industrialization in Europe was happening at the same time America was fighting for its independence. Ignoring a hard fact that "large and important groups of economic interest were adversely affected by the system of government under the Articles of Confederation," the victorious Americans adopted freehold system to distribute land.<sup>16</sup> But freehold system only hindered the capitalists' interest. It blocked their expansion into new markets. In response, the capitalist tried several times to amend the political setting, but failed. Finally, they sought for a new constitution to regain their control of the country. Pinpointed at the capitalists' sufferings and their anti-Confederation actions, Beard's *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*, was intended to convince Americans that the Constitution of 1789 was the antithesis of democracy.

Why the Confederation failed to live on? Beard replied that it was because Americans of the Confederation years did not fully recognize the hard fact that complex bodies of differentiated capitalistic interest groups were suffering under the

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praised? That is a question to which the following inquiry is not addressed. An answer to that question belongs to moralists and philosophers, not to students of history as such. If partiality is taken in the customary and accepted sense, it means "leaning to one party or another." Impartiality means the opposite. Then this volume is, strictly speaking, impartial. It supports the conclusion that in the main the men who favored the Constitution were affiliated with certain types of property and economic interest and that the men who opposed it were affiliated with other types. It does not say that the formers were "straight-thinking" and that the latter were "narrow." It applied no moralistic epithets to either party. Among critics, Robert E. Brown and Forrest McDonald produced two most well known works. Robert E. Brown, *Charles Beard and the Constitution: a Critical Analysis of "An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution"* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1956); also, Forrest McDonald, *We the People: the Economic Origins of the Constitution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958, reprinted by Transaction Publishers of New Brunswick in 1992). In addition, Lee Benson gave Brown and McDonald's opinions a good reappraisal. Lee Benson, *Turner and Beard: American Historical Writing Reconsidered* (New York: The Free Press, 1960) 95-213. Moreover, Robert A. McGuire and Robert L. Ohsfeldt supported some of Beard's observations in their revision article. "Economic Interests and the American Constitution: A Quantitative Rehabilitation of Charles A. Beard" *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. XLIV, No. 2 (June 1984), 509-19.

freehold system. "Some large and important groups of economic interest were adversely affected by the system of government under the Articles of Confederation."<sup>17</sup> In other words, Beard assumed that capitalism and the republican freehold system were two contending political agendas. Capitalism was an aggressive economic system. But freehold economic system was aimed at having a harmonious society. It was a static and non-aggressive economic system. Sooner or later capitalism would bring the freehold system to an end. This new constitution, thus, was more than a new standard of social justice. It embodied capitalists' desire of interest and security. The Constitution, in Beard's opinion, was not adopted to check ambition but to rationalize capitalists' selfishness in a more articulate fashion.<sup>18</sup>

If we read Beard's words carefully, we may discover that his *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* was written under the influence of several mutually supporting republican assumptions. In the first place, Beard accepted that the freehold system was an essential element of democracy. Secondly, he assumed that capitalism was corruptive force. Thirdly, the Constitution, which classical republicans believed to be the most effective means to check human ambition, could be twisted to serve selfish ends. A twisted constitution might not check people's ambition but helped them to rationalize their selfishness. All these presumptions can be found in Beard's *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*. All these presumptions were characteristically belonged to American republicanism. Hence, for sure, while Beard was writing the monograph, he took republicanism for reference.

### ***Contemporary American History, 1877-1913 (1914)***

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<sup>16</sup> Beard, *An Economic Interpretation*, 63.

<sup>17</sup> Beard, *An Economic Interpretation*, 63.

<sup>18</sup> Noble, *The End of American History*, 34.

Soon after the publication of *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*, WWI began in Europe. Beard was excited because he thought his republican dream of an industrial democratic society might be realized soon. Beard believed that the war would bring the Old World and capitalism to an end and that industrial democracy would prevail in the future for the entire world. Beard gladly told in his *Contemporary American History, 1877-1913* how this expectation would be realized.

Beard was aware that Germany had become the most industrialized of the European nations. The economic basis for democratic politics, therefore, had been established in Germany. Nonetheless, the country was suffering from the reactionary political power of the Kaiser. Beard believed that military defeat would drive these leaders from power and result in a political revolution to link democracy with a high degree of industrialization. However, the situation in America was not better than in Germany. For a long time, capitalism in America was protected. The capitalists of the Revolutionary years used the Constitution to protect their property. When the Civil War was over, the capitalists made use of the advantage of their victory to add the Fourteenth Amendment to enhance their security. In Beard's opinion, American capitalists possessed an impenetrable shield against any attempt by the nation to regulate their interest on behalf of the public interest. If Americans would only look at England, Beard urged, they would see that the logic of industrialism was overcoming the class divisions and leading to a new kind of democracy. Unlike freehold democracy, industrial democracy would be characterized by social and economic planning. This planning could achieve the goal of republican virtue, the "perfect partnership of all citizens and all values." No longer would capitalists be "ruling in the name of the whole" and "moving toward despotism and the corruption of its own

values.” But if Americans were to engage in such social and economic planning, they must free their legislatures from judicial control. The sovereign people must become free to express itself directly and completely through its legislative bodies.<sup>19</sup>

Beneath Beard’s industrial prophecy, his republican way of thinking obviously prevailed. In this new book, as in two previous works, he linked industrial prosperity with a democratic polity and this correlation was a typical example of American republican thinking. An equally distributed material life, in republican assumption, determined the survivability of a polity. Hence, looking at the first two decades of Beard’s career in general, it is safe to say that from 1901, the year Beard published his first book, he has already plunged himself into republicanism and this ideology kept on inspiring him in subsequent years. While *Industrial Society* positively stated his visionary dream with lots of republican arguments, his 1913 work was a criticism of the origins of American capitalism. Both works invited his readers to look into the possibility of realizing an industrial democratic society in America. In 1917, he continued to employ such a rationale to encourage his readers to dream for a bright new future. Therefore, republicanism was persistently working in his mind throughout the first half of Charles A. Beard’s intellectual career.

### **America as a Civilization, 1927-1948: Charles Beard’s Moralistic Republican Explanation**

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<sup>19</sup> Noble, *The End of American History*, 37.

## *The Rise of American Civilization (1927)*

Quite a number of American intellectuals welcomed the coming of WWI. But the result of war turned out to be a great disappointment, and to Charles Beard it was a great frustration in particular. Throughout the first twenty years of his career, Beard embraced an industrial democratic dream. But the war proved that rational industrial development could not save the world from corruption. Instead of helping people to live better, it created disasters. Thus, Beard's optimistic assumptions were shattered. Nonetheless, disappointed, Beard refused to back down. He strove to maintain the validity of his optimistic conviction. He was confident in achieving an industrialized democratic society in the future. But he was no longer confident in having a global success. He believed in Americans because the American experience was so exceptional that it could not be compared to the experience of people in other parts of the world. Unlike other western countries, America was the only country that went through industrialization without suffering the disastrous results of WWI. Thus, according to Beard's new assumptions, the only country fit for realizing an industrial democratic future was America. With a keen hope in America's future, Beard remarked that "if there is promise of any kind for the future of America, that promise inheres in the past and present in American history."<sup>20</sup> And, if "some form of socialism based on machine industry, lies beyond the present regime, it will certainly take a civilized people to operate it."<sup>21</sup> Working in collaboration with his wife, Mary,

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<sup>20</sup> Noble, *The End of American History*, 41.

<sup>21</sup> Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), vii-xv.

the Beards presented this idea in a multi-volume historical opus: *The Rise of American Civilization*<sup>22</sup>.

Through the Beards' poetic and lyrical sentences, a forgotten history of America was revived. Shown before early immigrant's eyes was a large piece of land endowed with great natural resources waiting for cultivation. It invited them to pour out their efforts and to articulate an identity separate from that of their Old World counterparts. Gradually, their unique pattern of working and living turned the land into a country. The land, in turn, transformed the immigrants into Americans. In other words, Americans were inseparable from their land.

They [the pre-colonial farmers] were not peasants, in the European sense of the word, surrounded by agricultural resources already exploited and encircled by ruling orders of landlords and clergy armed with engines of state and church for subduing laborers to social discipline. On the contrary, these marching pioneers were confronted by land teeming with original fertility, by forests and streams alive with game and fish and they were, under the sun and the stars, their own masters. In these circumstances, a new psychology was evoked.<sup>23</sup>

Gradually, the 'new psychology' was transformed into a classless belief and subsequently it condensed into a democratic spirit, which required an equal share of participation and responsibility among citizens. When the American Revolution came and the new country was born, this conviction again helped Americans to construct new political organizations. Thus, in the Beards' opinion, democracy was a traditional conviction that flowed from the pre-colonial past toward modern America. It was a unique conviction shared by every generation of Americans.

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<sup>22</sup> Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization* (New York: Macmillan, 1927). The Macmillan has combined the Beard's works in 1933 with one-volume edition. The quotation in this thesis hereafter adapted is based on the 1933 edition.

<sup>23</sup> Beard and Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization*, 88.

In this immense domain sprang up a social order without marked class or caste, a society of people substantially equal in worldly goods, deriving their livelihood from one prime source – labor with their own hands on the soil. <sup>24</sup>

Statesmen and soldiers led by and taught by lawyers, resorted mainly to charters, laws, prescriptive rights, parchment, and seals for high sanction, thus giving a peculiar cast of thought and ornament to the linguistic device of the fray. When these weapons broke in their hands, they turned, not to theology, but to another secular armory – nature and the imprescriptible rights written by sunbeam in the hearts of men. <sup>25</sup>

The Beards' words reassured Americans' long tradition in believing democracy. But the Beards hardly knew their explanation was actually grounded at Turner's land-democracy hypothesis. In Turner's republican formula, agricultural virtuousness and equal distribution of rights and responsibility among citizens guaranteed the success of democracy. Turner thought such a society would be harmonious and democratic by nature. Thus, when he realized that America was an ever-changing society with lots of challenges coming from capitalism, he began to doubt the prospects for democracy. Charles Beard, however, had a long record of believing in the durability of democracy. Thus, he could not help himself from criticizing Turner's frontier thesis. "Certainly free land and the westward advance of settlement alone" were inadequate pivots for an interpretation of American democracy. Had the frontier evoked laws that strengthened the power and extended the activities of the national government? Turner, said Beard, had exaggerated this interpretation. The West had perhaps promoted the development of political democracy, but the British experience showed that the frontier was not a necessary condition for the

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<sup>24</sup> Beard and Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization*, 534.

<sup>25</sup> Beard and Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization*, 103.

existence of democracy.<sup>26</sup> But the WWI experience shattered Beard's optimistic dream of having a global scale industrial democracy. He therefore shrank back from his optimistic prediction. Beard changed his mind to seek new assurance that the society could have a balance between industrialization and democracy. These sincere hopes pushed Beard and his wife to write *The Rise of American Civilization*. Nonetheless, once they asserted that Americans had started tilling the land with a belief in democracy, they fell into Turner's republican logic. Land and people's individualism coexisted in their poetic description of early America as Turner's work had exemplified. The only difference is that Beard did not rigidly ascribe democracy to free land. In the Beards' thoughts, it survived even without free land because it had transcended the limitation of free land and was transformed into liberal democratic values shared by every generation of Americans.<sup>27</sup> The Beards thus could confidently say that democracy was always there even though capitalism has temporarily overwhelmed the American society. Sooner or later, if Americans were familiar enough with their democratic past, they would embrace a higher form of socialism as the Beards had pointed out in the introductory chapter of *The Rise of American Civilization*.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Charles A Beard, "Review of *The Frontier in American History* by Frederick Jackson Turner," *New Republic* 25 (February 16, 1921), 349-50. Quoted in Ellen Nore, *Charles A Beard: An Intellectual Biography* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 114.

<sup>27</sup> Beard's biographer, Ellen Nore holds a different position from mine. Her explanation was inclined to environmental determinism. After a sketch of *The Rise*, she concluded in these sentences: Democracy in its political, economic, and social forms did not arise from ideology, was not inherent in certain sacred forms and institutions. It had been possible because of the presence of unique material base. The future depended on who controlled the mechanism of abundance, of new technology, and for what ends. Nore, *Charles Beard*, 124.

<sup>28</sup> See also footnote no. 21. Beards' "Socialism" did not contain any pro-Marxists' meaning. Rather it should be perceived as a republican hope of having better social life.

## *The American Spirit* (1942)

Although *The Rise of American Civilization* was planned to tell readers what kind of unique tradition Americans' possessed, the first two volumes contained long stories of conflicts between different interest groups. Thus, to fulfill their promise to readers, the Beards wrote *The American Spirit*.<sup>29</sup> "Having attempted," wrote Mary R. Beard, "to tell the story ... of action... which brings us to the great conflict between domestic improvement and foreign escape, we fell under obligation to offer our readers, if any continue to exist, a report on the American mind as it has concerned itself with the idea of civilization in America."<sup>30</sup>

*The American Spirit* was thus the Beard's intellectual history of American democracy. It emphasized Americans' virtues. It was the capstone of *The Rise of American Civilization* collection. What American civilization needed, in the Beards' view, was a tradition that embodied a social imperative and a humanist ethical perspective. The progress of a nation had to be moral as well as material.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the *American Spirit* symbolized Beard's complete reversal of his first twenty years belief in industrial democracy. But the reversal did not cause him to abandon his faith in America. On the contrary, his emphasis on moral values meant a stronger commitment to his ideal America. Not only material abundance would affect people's social life, the integrity of people's morality expressed in their dealing of social and political affairs weighted equally important. Unscrupulous progress in material life, the Beards warned, would only reduce people's commitment to their cherished central beliefs of equality, independence and democracy. To save the country from the danger of losing

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<sup>29</sup> Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, *The American Spirit: A Study of the Idea of Civilization in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1942).

<sup>30</sup> Mary R. Beard to Folla La Follette, September 4, 1941, quoted in Nore, *Charles Beard*, 190.

its cherished values, the Beards' advised their fellowmen to hold a balance between material advancement and upholding their moral standard.

Such a belief in the importance of moral values had never been formally emphasized in Beard's previous works. And, contrasting this new idea with the presumptions of American republicanism that I discussed in the first chapter, we could easily discover that his new idea was predominately affected by a typical branch of American republicanism. American republicanism has three points of emphasis. Early Beard took republicanism's material standpoint firmly. It was not until the shattering effects of WWI that Beard started to think of the importance of morality in American social life. At the first sight, the Beards' emphasis on 'morality' was rather odd. But if we look back into the content of American republicanism, we will notice that their emphasis on people's virtuosity and morality was a continuation of republican political values Americans had inherited from classical thought. Classical republican though emphasized at the foremost the citizens' upholding of moral values while fulfilling their political duties. The Beards inherited this belief and put it into work. Therefore, although it was a tremendous change that Beard's shifted from emphasizing industrial democracy to stressing the importance of morality, Beard's discussion of American democracy has never left too far from republican assumptions. In the first twenty years of his intellectual career, Beard emphasized material considerations more. But the tragic outcome of WWI altered his thinking. Henceforth, he and his wife shifted to believe more in the durability of Americans' moral values, which, in the Beards opinions, could safeguard the United States to secure a durable democratic-polity. It is because of this balanced consideration of material progress and

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<sup>31</sup> Beard and Beard, *American Spirit*, 475.

morality in Beard's works that we can confidently conclude that Charles A. Beard was a Progressive historian with strong republican beliefs.

## Chapter 4

### William Appleman Williams' Inheritance of Progressive Historians' Republican Tradition

1. *American Russian Relations: 1871-1947 and The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*
2. *The Contours of American History*
3. *The Great Evasion and Empire as a Way of Life*

Throughout his professional career, Charles Beard was committed to the republican assumption that democracy and capitalism were two incompatible systems. Before WWI, he thought scientific progress might help people to reach a higher form of cooperation in order to counterbalance the rise of industrial capitalism. But the outcome of the war was a great disappointment to him. Capitalists had employed science to destroy the world. Realized that industrial democracy through war was unachievable, Beard's confidence in science was now shattered. He shifted to emphasize the importance of moral values to American democracy. Americans, in Beard's eyes, had plunged into capitalistic competition at the cost of their democratic tradition. Americans joined the World Wars with good intentions to help other countries to have democracy. Yet, the wars only resulted in catastrophes. Also, inside America, capitalistic competition was still the country's most notable form of economic activity. To save American democracy from being totally cast off, Beard spent the last few years of his life preaching to Americans the importance of looking at their domestic affairs. However, Americans received Beard's advice unenthusiastically. They believed, as the government told them, that standing in front

of America was a hostile communist Soviet Union. Americans believed their democracy was not threatened by capitalism. Americans believed that they were living under the threat of by Russians' expansive communism. Beard's advice thus lost their audience.

Throughout the 1950s, most Americans believed in their government's propaganda. And, students who used to follow Beard's interpretation changed their minds too. Among them, Richard Hofstadter was perhaps the most distinguished person. Hofstadter had once admitted that Charles Beard's historical interpretations had heavily influenced his early historical understanding. But with the complexity of international confrontations rose to unprecedented levels, Hofstadter find Beard's interpretation inadequate to explain the internal unity of American society. He left Beard's conflict approach but changed to mention more about harmonious aspect of American life. Hofstadter's colleagues welcomed this opinion. Thus, post-war historians who shared similar opinions with Hofstadter dramatically changed the topography of historical scholarship. They constituted a new scholarship of American history known as the consensus school, which was aimed at revising the progressive approach to the American past. Like most post-war Americans, these historians also believed in America's responsibility to prevent Communism from spreading across the world. America, in these historians' perception, was the only country capable of checking the Soviet Union's aggression. Therefore, the popularity of consensual scholarship rose quickly and throughout 1950s and early 1960s it prevailed. The internal inconsistency between democracy and capitalism was dismissed as if it had never existed at all.

However, the progressive historical tradition was not totally discarded by historians. A few dissenting historians from mid-West era universities upheld the

progressive era's anti-capitalistic convictions. One of them was William Appleman Williams.<sup>1</sup> He was a naval officer during the Second World War but his active participation in the civil rights movement was not welcome by the Navy. The Navy, eventually, forced to retire from the fleet. He then enrolled in the University of Wisconsin at Madison to study history. From there he learned the controversial historical idea such as Charles A. Beard's arguments. After years of study, Williams's interest in diplomatic history was gradually consolidating into a sharp criticism of prevailing historical interpretations. It was said that Williams's mentor, Fred Harvey Harrington, had arranged Williams's first major appearance at an academic gathering: the American Historical Association (AHA) meeting of 1950, for a symposium on foreign policy. At the meeting, Williams did not conform to what historians were expected to do. He denounced America's ambitions in seeking overseas markets. It was the time when McCarthyism was in power. Williams seemed to many of his listeners like a spokesman for the enemy or simply an untamed young historian who might ruin his own career by voicing such unwise opinions.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, Madison was a center of intellectual resistance to Cold War politics and scholarship, resistance that stood outside both the Marxist and the liberal traditions.<sup>3</sup> Williams was nurtured by this mid-Western tradition, thus, dared of voicing his opinions.

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<sup>1</sup> Gene Wise has suggested that historians who opposed to Hofstadterian consensual style of historical interpretations with a belief in re-directing Americans to recognize what democracy is best suit into the category of "Neo-Progressive historians". Gene Wise, *American Historical Explanations* (Homewood, Ill: Dorsey Press, 1973).

<sup>2</sup> Paul M. Buhle, and Edward Rice-Maximin, *William Appleman Williams: The Tragedy of Empire* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 52.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan M. Wiener, "Radical Historians and the Crisis in American History, 1959- 1980" *Journal of American History* 76: 2(September 1989), 406.

*American Russian Relations: 1871-1947*  
And  
*The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*

*American Russian Relations: 1781-1947* was Williams's first book based on his Ph.D. thesis completed in 1950. After a reevaluation of American-Russian foreign policies, he concluded that Americans' commitment to capitalistic values led the country to join the WWI and to quarrel with Russia. Soon after Americans started to industrialize their society, they realized an industrializing America was relying very much on European countries to provide capital for investment and to absorb its products. American manufacturers, as the most prolific producers, needed Europeans' market to continue their business. However, when European powers kicked off the war on the basis of the rising tide of nationalism, Americans' commercial activities in Europe were suddenly halted. The American manufacturer might have to face a catastrophe, if their government could not help them. Added to the predicament, Russian's proletariat revolution set a precedent to American laborers that the country's political and economic system could be destroyed to fulfil their dreams of having an absolute economic equality. The worrisome American government thus had to move in advance to secure their market not from impaired and to prevent Lenin's revolutionary ideas from smuggling into the country. Williams went on to point out that such a hostile foreign policy to Europeans, in particular to Russians, was continued into Roosevelt's presidency. His foreign policies were remained remarkably consistent with Wilson's capitalistic perception of world order since Roosevelt was not a defender of democracy. He was willing to use war, not to sustain the balance of power, but as a means to force the nations of the world to conform to an American

vision of the international order. Williams thus concluded that the American Russian relations were changed from economic conflicts into ideological confrontations.

From 1781 to present, Russian and the United States have adjusted policy with regard to the conflict between each country's territorial and economic expansion and the actual or potential value of each nation to the other in terms of a world balance of power. Prior to the Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917, ideological considerations were clearly secondary.<sup>4</sup>

In Williams analysis, when the Bolshevik party of Russia won the revolution in 1917, it was also the time America's financial and industrial powers were looking abroad for new opportunities.<sup>5</sup> But the Bolshevik Revolution brought to the world a sharply different set of assumptions to those of capitalism. It aimed at crushing property rights – the very foundation of the American capitalistic economy. Thus, Russia's new government appeared to American capitalists a barrier to their market expansion. It should be removed if Americans wanted to secure overseas markets. Assuming that the world's future would be one dominated by corporate capitalism, they were prepared to repress any revolution that did not conform to capitalistic ideals. Seeing American diplomatic policy from an economic perspective, therefore, Williams warned his readers that American leaders' continuation of this policy would indeed destroy democracy in the United States. "Freedom," he declared, "is not nurtured by states preparing for war. Rather it finds more opportunity to flower in the atmosphere of mutual accommodation achieved and sustained through negotiated settlements."<sup>6</sup> An aggressive and monopolistic economic system, in Williams's opinion, could not allow a political value, which encouraged multiplicity in people's thoughts and tolerance to dissent opinions to survive. It was running in contrary to

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<sup>4</sup> William Appleman Williams, *American Russian Relations: 1781-1947* (New York: 1952), 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Williams, *American Russian Relations: 1781-1947*, 23.

the democratic spirit Americans cherished. To Williams, capitalism contained in it a desire for interest that wars and other suppressive means would be an inevitable process to fulfil the ends. The democratic values, in this regard, were sacrificed to commercial interest. In Williams's opinion, Americans could save their democracy only if they changed their mind to live together with a communist Russian neighbor.

Williams' understanding of democracy and capitalism was an extension of Beard's perception. Beard believed that the traditional moral values of American people could help the country resist the encroachment of capitalism. Williams inherited this mentality, but advanced to advise Americans not only should they look back into history to know how the democratic values worked for the country but also should they change their mind to accept a neighbor they had ignored for long time. Beard spent his final years discussing national policy, particularly diplomacy and foreign affairs. But Beard distrusted communism. He knew too well that it was not only an anti-capitalist ideology, it was also an anti-democratic ideology. Williams's opinion, however, showed a favorite to Russians. Williams suggested negotiation as a way to settle America's different interest from Russia's. He believed in co-existence and communication to shorten the difference lain between American and Russian governments. Nonetheless, what Americans had done disappointed him.

The policy of the United States toward the Soviet exemplified the victory of those domestic forces that, though generally labeled isolationist, in fact desired the further and unrestricted overseas expansion of American economic and political power.<sup>7</sup>

Far from isolation, the American policy of these interwars years was one characterized by decision and actions taken with sole reference to unilaterally determined goal – decision and actions for the consequences of which Washington disclaimed all responsibility.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Williams, *American Russian Relations: 1781-1947*, 283.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, *American Russian Relations: 1781-1947*, 157.

<sup>8</sup> Williams, *American Russian Relations: 1781-1947*, 192.

Disappointed, Williams shifted to condemn the origin of these aggressive policies. In an article titled "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy", he criticized Turner's thinking.<sup>9</sup> "One of the central themes of American historiography is the 'There is no American Empire'," but the hard fact was that "the United States has been a consciously and steadily expanding nation since 1890." To facilitate this process, Turner's frontier thesis gave American overseas expansion a rationale. "Turner's frontier thesis," Williams argued, "made democracy a function of an expanding frontier."<sup>10</sup> It gave decision-makers a ground that the political health of the nation depended upon the development of an overseas frontier. Williams attacked Turner for providing a justification for American capitalism to become expansive and imperialistic in the new century. "Turner," Williams declared, "gave Americans a national world view that eased their doubts, settled their confusions, and justified their aggressiveness."<sup>11</sup> In contrast to Turner's case, Williams highly praised Beard's isolationism. "Beard," Williams declared, "was a brilliant student of history keenly aware of the consequence of imperial expansion." In Beard's opinion, the New Dealer's commitment to an overseas frontier "would lead to war and tyranny" and "democracy would be negated."<sup>12</sup>

Williams did not appreciate Turner's frontier thesis. But Turner's frontier thesis has inspired Williams to look in detail at the significance of the 1890s as a turning point in the history of American foreign policy. Therefore, after he finished the review article, Williams decided to search for the origins of the country's diplomatic predicaments. Williams thought that Americans need a new

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<sup>9</sup> William Appleman Williams, "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy" *Pacific Historical Review* 24 (November 1955), 379-95.

<sup>10</sup> Williams, "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy", 380.

*Weltanschauung*, or basic worldview, in terms of which a truly democratic society could be achieved. Williams synthesized these expectations in two book-length studies, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*<sup>13</sup> and *The Contours of American History*.<sup>14</sup>

In *Tragedy*, unlike Turner and Beard who viewed democracy and capitalism as two incompatible elements in American society, Williams viewed them as two integral parts of American history. He envisioned a dialectical relationship between democracy and capitalism continuing after the 1890s, because this was the time America's Open Door policy makers employed "exporting democracy into other countries" as a slogan to legitimate their diplomatic policy. In Williams's eyes, the Open Door policy makers' slogan only exposed their wishing for "casting the economies and the politics of the poorer, weaker, underdeveloped countries into a pro-American mold."<sup>15</sup>

The flaw in this fatalistic assumption did not become clear until WWI. Side by side with President Wilson's war proclamation that the world "must be made safe for democracy" was Americans' overseas market expansion. On behalf of saving democracy, American corporations expanded into warring countries with their products and values that might not be welcomed by the foreigners. Americans however naively supported Wilson's proclamation. Standing on a high moral cause, Americans perceived their political values always sounding and universally acceptable. Their interference thus was deserving of respect from the other countries. They ignored to look at their neighbors' response. They also ignored to look at what their

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<sup>11</sup> Williams, "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy", 383.

<sup>12</sup> Williams, "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy", 390.

<sup>13</sup> William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: W. W. Norton: 1959, 1962 and 1972).

<sup>14</sup> William Appleman Williams, *The Contours of American History* (Cleveland, 1961).

<sup>15</sup> Williams, *Tragedy*, 49.

corporations had really done in overseas areas. Therefore, when Mexicans fought for an independent country, Americans did not perceive any mistake in their military operations. What they perceived was Mexicans' posing a threat to the rights of secure possession of property – the very foundation to the United States' socio-political system. That was why President Wilson opposed the Mexican Revolution and subsequent American leaders opposed all revolutions that did not correspond to American interest. It was this ideology that enlisted the United States to coerce those nations when they rebelled against the Open Door policy. The expectation of exporting democracy, thus, could be abused to help American corporations achieve their profit-seeking ends. The Open Door policy was thus a deceptive plan. It did not help the world to have a peaceful order. It only created more conflicts.

In Williams' opinion, President Hoover had perceived the danger of promoting commerce at the expense of democracy. But he was not decisive enough to stop the danger growing into a disaster. Unalarmed, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Hoover's successor, did not take action to stop the danger it. Rather, he began to define America's interests with capitalistic assumptions when his New Deal policies were ready for enactment. The outcome of Roosevelt's identification of America's national interest with capitalism, Williams pointed out, was a new cycle of military actions. "Beginning in 1938 and 1939, the evolving corporate coalition called in the military to execute a policy that they – the civilians – were formulating and adopting. It was the civilians who defined the world in military terms, not the military who usurped civilian powers."<sup>16</sup>

Harry Truman's government continued Roosevelt's policy. Thus, he drove the United State directly into conflict with the Soviet Union. Williams sadly told his

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<sup>16</sup> Williams, *Tragedy*, 185.

readers that this decision represented the final stage in the transformation of the policy of the Open Door from a utopian idea to an ideology, from an intellectual outlook for changing the world into one concerned with changing America's designated future.<sup>17</sup>

This lamentation repeatedly appeared in *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*.

The tragedy of American diplomacy is not that it is evil, but that it denies and subverts American ideas and ideals. The result is a most realistic failure, as well as an ideological and a moral one; for in being unable to make the American system function satisfactorily without recourse to open-door expansion (and by no means perfectly, even then), American diplomacy suffers by comparison with its own claims and ideals, as well as with other approaches. (*Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 1959, p. 110.)

In Williams's opinion, American democracy since 1890 had always been accompanied by expansion, and that if Americans let this tendency continue, tragedy would be inevitable. The only way to save the country from disaster was to prevent the American establishment from abusing democracy.<sup>18</sup> Williams repeatedly advised his readers how American democracy should be perceived. But the way he appealed was different from Turner's and Beard's. Turner and Beard worried about the sustainability of democracy, therefore, they sought new materials and new systems to save it from bankruptcy. Turner tried to supplement free land with education and various new options but none of them could satisfactorily save democracy from the encroachment and anti-democratic tendencies of capitalism. Beard's situation was similar. He once believed in industrial progress to promote and to protect democracy. But WWI shattered his confidence in industrial progress. He therefore shifted his emphasis to American civilization. Before WWI, Turner and Beard did not fully perceive that democracy as a political rhetoric could be employed by capitalists to

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<sup>17</sup> Williams, *Tragedy*, 205-06.

<sup>18</sup> Williams, *Tragedy*, 309.

expand their business in foreign areas. Williams, however, knew the interrelations between democracy and capitalism when he was young. Historical evidence showed that these two systems were working together in the 1890s under the name of the Open Door policy. Thus, capitalism and democracy were not necessarily in conflict within America's economic and political settings. But, in the long run, if Americans let the situation remain uncontrolled, capitalism would certainly jeopardize America's democracy. With this expectation in mind, Williams analyzed a series of diplomatic events to illustrate how this process worked. Throughout his book, he employed his analytical power not to find material alternatives for saving democracy, but suggested his readers to look back into their democratic tradition. He advised Americans to withdraw from overactive overseas commercial activities by paying more attention to their own home affairs. In Williams's opinion, only Americans' active participation in home affairs with a high degree of self-awareness to their political responsibility would help American democracy to gain a new strength. Therefore, it is safe to say that Williams' understanding of democracy was founded on an ideal percept that capitalism should not mix up with democracy. A democratic society, in Williams's percept, was not simply sustained by abundant material prerequisite. It needed people of the society to exercise the rights they endowed. The people are also required not to abuse the rights. Within the limits, a democratic society would survive the best. Williams's expectation looks like an echo to classical republican theoreticians' words. Williams in 1959 was a historian who also believed in republican values.

## *The Contours of American History*

In *Tragedy*, Williams confidently told his readers that America's Open Door foreign policy of 1890s was indeed a capitalistic expansion. With this underlying assumption borne in mind, Williams extended his scope of inquiry to the whole spectrum of American history to seek a precedent for the 1890s Open Door policy. Williams assumed that America's expansive outlook in 1890 must have had a longer line of development. The result of his inquiry was *The Contours of American History*.

In *Contours*, Williams divided American history into three stages of development. He labeled the first stage "The Age Mercantilism", because European colonists came to the New World with "a corporation conception of society," which stressed the relationship and responsibilities between man and man. The colonists believed that "the state had [an] obligation to serve society by accepting and discharging the responsibilities for the general welfare." But these characteristics were undermined by the mercantilist commitment to imperialism because the colonists also believed that "the chief way for a nation to promote its own wealth and happiness was to take them away from some other nation."<sup>19</sup> Jefferson, for Williams, was a major figure in this movement to choose expansion to the exclusion of both a small government and a moral community. Jefferson, he wrote, "personified the dream that was already beginning to haunt Americans: a society of free and independent men made equal and prosperous by the bounty of nature." He quoted Jefferson saying that America's political success furnished "a new proof of the falsehood of Montesquieu's doctrine, that a republic can be preserved only in a small territory. The reverse is the

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<sup>19</sup> Williams, *Contours*, 33, 40-41.

truth.”<sup>20</sup> Although Jefferson has sincerely wished for an agricultural America, his encouragement to conquer western land resulted in numerous tragic Indian stories. Jefferson, in Williams’s eyes, was most responsible for the rise of American mercantilism.

The mercantilism of the Revolutionary Age was metamorphosed into laissez-faire beliefs during Jackson’s presidency, because the key to Jacksonian democracy, which acknowledged no need for social responsibility, was both westward and marketplace expansion. Williams described this change as a triumph of laissez-faire ideology because it provided opportunities and liberties, and the successes enjoyed by Americans who benefited from the achievements of the marketplace. But he also called attention to the social cost of laissez faire. Since the moral vision of the Founding Fathers was completely replaced by interest-seeking motives and when northern Democrats “defined laissez-faire in terms that excluded the South,” civil war became inevitable. The laissez-faire age, in Williams’s eyes, was a time when the generation of Jackson and Lincoln rejected the mercantilist concepts of social responsibility and planning for the public good. They no longer had a philosophy that understood compromise and they had no appreciation of how to use institutions to bring about gradual reform. Committed to expansion as the solution to all problems, they had no choice but to use the marketplace metaphor of head-to-head competition as the way to solve their disputes in slavery. <sup>21</sup>

Americans gave up their laissez-faire ideas after the horrible experience of the Civil War. They embraced a third new set of political-economic assumptions – corporate capitalism. Corporations replaced the individualized, competitive practices

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<sup>20</sup> Williams, *Contours*, 177,179. Quoted in David W. Noble, *The End of American History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 128-30.

<sup>21</sup> Noble, *The End of American History*, 130.

of the laissez-faire economic system. Since 1880s, an increasingly coordinated and interrelated system, which promoted private property and the marketplace, has underpinned the nation's development. "The spokesmen and directors of the new order, though they accepted the traditional premise of private property and the vital role and necessity of an expanding marketplace," Williams wrote, "defined economic activities as making up an interrelated system. The political economy had to be extensively planned, controlled, and coordinated through the institution of the large corporation if it was to function in any regular, routine, and profitable fashion."<sup>22</sup>

Under the neo-mercantilism of corporate capitalism, the 1890's corporate leaders and their political allies took command of a national consensus that endorsed domestic growth by means of overseas expansion. And Americans throughout the twentieth century, because of their strategic advantage, escaped much of the destructive competition of nineteenth-century democracy. But for Williams, the fatal flaw of colonial mercantilism, and its assumption of the necessity of imperial expansion, remained untouched. "Having defined the frontier as utopia and lived by that ideal for most of their history," Williams maintained, "Americans had finally been faced by the harsh fact that the frontier as utopia produced the very stalemate it had been designed to circumvent."<sup>23</sup> One of the first signs that the corporate Progressives were evading the need to develop a moral definition of community was apparent in the way in which they slid into a position of encouraging mindless consumerism. Williams renounced this kind of new dependency created under the undemocratic control of economics, politics, and culture by the corporate system in American society. The 1960s was the right time to initiate a new period in American

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<sup>22</sup> Williams, *Contours*, 350-51.

<sup>23</sup> Williams, *Contours*, 477-78.

history, Williams declared, a period in which Americans should seek an alternative, non-imperial way of life by creating a democratic, socialist society.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout Williams's *Contours*, democracy was placed in a special position. It first appeared as a set of moral values together with mercantilism during the colonial era, which emphasized reciprocity and the mutual obligation of individuals and society. But when Jefferson took his fatal step of creating an "Empire of Liberty," democracy as a social goal was set aside. The freehold system Jefferson promoted only helped Americans to exploit the West at the expense of Indians. The land Americans acquired, however, was not distributed in accordance with every capable farmer's need. Land speculators took over most of free land. Thus, Jefferson's wish was transmuted into an unrealized social goal and resulted in more inequalities to Americans' economic lives. The pervasiveness of Jefferson's freehold system was sharply reduced, which eventually gave mercantilism an overwhelming role in the political establishment. Jefferson, in Williams's eyes, altered the path of American democracy and resulted in the imbalance between democracy and people's economic life.

Nonetheless, Williams's analysis of American democracy was not limited to criticizing Jefferson. He moved on in *Contours* to advise his readers to bring the undermined democratic values back into American society. After Jefferson's land acquisition, the subsequent variation of economic strategies such as the rise of laissez-faire ideology and twentieth century corporate capitalism did not help American society to maintain a healthy democracy. Americans only created more disasters and more bitterness for themselves. Therefore, to stop Americans from suffering more,

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<sup>24</sup> Henry W. Berger, ed., *A William Appleman Williams Reader: Selections from His Major Historical Writings* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1992), 116, 133, 156, 162, 221 and 239.

Williams, in the concluding chapter of *Contours*, encouraged people to adopt an alternative political agenda.

America produced a man [Eugene Debs] who understood that expansion was running away, the kind of escape that was destructive of the dignity of men. He also believed and committed his life to the proposition that Americans would one day prove mature and courageous enough to give it up as a child's game; that they would one day "put away childish things" and undertake the creation of a socialist commonwealth. Americans therefore do have a third choice to consider alongside that of an oligarchy and that of a class-conscious industrial gentry. They have the chance to create the first truly democratic socialism in the world.

That opportunity is the only real frontier available to Americans in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. If they revealed and acted upon the kind of intelligence and morality and courage that it would take to explore and develop that frontier, then they would have finally broken the chains of their own past. Otherwise, they would ultimately fall victims of a nostalgia for their childhood.<sup>25</sup>

This new idea immediately brought Williams's thought into contrast with Turner's and Beard's republican beliefs. When Williams criticized Turner, he never expected he would follow Turner's footsteps. He was an idealistic historian. But only a few years after his critical review of Turner's republican argument, he changed to emphasize socialism. But Williams' goal was not a socialistic one. His relying on socialism as an alternative political agenda to help the development of American democracy was aimed at preserving democratic values. His goal and conviction remained idealistic and moralistic because he did support ultra-socialists' bloody resurrection. His threefold analysis of American history presented in the *Contours* and his belief in the moral values of democracy proved that his socialistic historical interpretation was indeed affected by republicanism. He was not just a socialist

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<sup>25</sup> Williams, *Contours*, 487-88.

historian. He was also a historian whose discussion of American democracy remained in the framework of republicanism.

### *Great Evasion and Empire as a Way of Life*

Williams did not stop his writing after *Contours* was published. He wrote another book as a supplement to his *Contours*. The result of Williams's effort was *The Great Evasion*.<sup>26</sup> In this new book, Williams hoped Americans would learn from the teaching of Karl Marx of how a democratic new American society might be established. But Williams knew very well that Americans had been taught to believe in their uniqueness. America was the only country that achieved capitalism without triggering off any socialistic revolution, because Americans knew how to distribute their wealth in a just way. It was because of this embedded idea that Americans could not accept alternative means to solve their social problems and thus, refused to confront Marx. To persuade Americans to change from their habituated perception, Williams, thus, wrote these sentences.

Americans have never confronted Karl Marx himself. We have never confronted his central theses about the assumption, the costs, and the nature of capitalist society. We have never confronted his central insight that capitalism is predicated upon an overemphasis and exaltation of the individualistic, egoistic half of man functioning in a marketplace system that overrides and crushes the social, humanitarian half of man. We had never confronted his perception that capitalism is based upon a definition of man in the market place that defines the dialogue between men as a competitive struggle for riches and power. And we have never confronted his argument that capitalism cannot create a community in which how much men produce an own is less important than what they make, less important than their relationship as

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<sup>26</sup> William Appleman Williams, *The Great Evasion: An Essay on the Contemporary Relevance of Karl Marx and on the Wisdom of Admitting the Heretic into the Dialogue about American Future* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964).

they produce and distribute those products, less important than what they are as men, and less important than how they treat each other.<sup>27</sup>

Williams, then, set out to demonstrate how accurate Karl Marx's prediction was. Under Williams's pen, not only was America's expansive diplomatic history brought into the light of Karl Marx's analysis, westward expansion of American culture was also touched upon. He invited readers to look at the brutal treatment of Native and Afro-Americans and the cultural implications of the aggressive war against Mexico in 1846 by the hegemonic Anglo-American powers. Williams, then, pointed to 1960s America's economic misery. With the aid of statistical data, Williams presented to readers how serious the extent of poverty existed in America. Williams also invited readers to look at America's prosperity sustained by the exploitation of underdeveloped country's citizens. Finally, Williams employed Marx's concept of alienation to explain the decline of voters' participation in election and adolescent's anti-establishmentarian psyche. Marx had argued that capitalism would betray its utopian promise if it has to continue to seek profit from exploitation and competition. It would only increase laborers' dependency on the capitalists. And if laborers protest, capitalists would suppress them. Capitalism, in this regard, would only change into a repressive socio-political establishment. Williams responded that the history of corporate capitalism in the United States had fulfilled that prediction because wage earners were becoming more dependent on capitalism to survive. It was inevitable, Williams concluded, that the loss of meaningful participation in the productive economic system would lead these wage earners to feel alienated from the political system. The average citizen "is becoming a mere consumer of politics as well as a mere consumer of goods. The sharing of profits is mistaken for the sharing of

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<sup>27</sup> Williams, *Great Evasion*, 19-20.

direction and control of the enterprise itself, just as the sharing of the leader's charisma is mistaken for the sharing of power."<sup>28</sup> It was Williams's hope in 1964 that if Americans were willing to confront Marx, they would come to understand that "a free society is that in which the individual defines himself, and acts, as a citizen of a community rather than as a competing ego. In a very real sense, therefore, the frontier for Marx is the space and resources made available for human development by loving thy neighbor as thyself." Williams advocated drastic decentralization of the nation as a political unit because a "true community is more easily obtainable, and more extensively developed, in small rather than large units."<sup>29</sup>

Obviously, Williams's *Great Evasion* was colored with socialism. But, if we look at Williams' criticism from a different angle, we shall see that his criticism was indeed rooted in republicanism. When he advocated that a new American society should be small in scale and its people actively participated into public affairs, he was actually reasoning in republican tones. Williams hoped, liked classical republicans had wished, that Americans would become aware of the importance of their identity as American citizen. The problem of encroachment of capitalism and the increasing dependency of laborers on capitalists could only solve by people's active participation in social and political discussions. Though Williams had refuted Turner's frontier thesis and criticized the progressives' unclear understanding of the relationship between capitalism and democracy,<sup>30</sup> Williams, in his *Great Evasion*, was indeed, seeking alternatives as Tuner and Beard did to sustain his belief in American democracy not from being outmoded by capitalism. Thus, the way he argued in *The*

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<sup>28</sup> Williams, *Great Evasion*, 164.

<sup>29</sup> Williams, *Great Evasion*, 173,175.

<sup>30</sup> Williams had criticized Beard's simple definition of capitalism only in laissez-faire terms, thus, threw his support to the New Deal in 1933. Beard, in Williams's opinion, confused the new role of the national government in saving the major corporate structures in the economy with the achievement of a

*Great Evasion* repeated what previous progressive historians had undertaken. But unlike Turner's pessimism and Beard's over-optimistic reliance on industrial development, Williams's political agenda was idealistic with Americans' moral integrity heavily emphasized. And if we compare these three historians' concern about democracy, we will see their thoughts were representing three different approaches to the question of democracy, but their central themes were characteristically underwritten by republican values.

By the late 1960s, however, Williams began to doubt the applicability of Marx's thought to American democracy. For example, in *The Great Evasion* he accepted Marx's position that industrial capitalism was a necessary stage in the progress of history. Nonetheless, factual evidence showed that it was industrial capitalism that generated the engines of productivity and made a privileged few more accessible to affluence than most of the people in the world. The bureaucracies necessary for capitalistic expansion and the accumulation of wealth destroyed the possibility of true community. Williams, therefore, criticized the growth of an American empire, first in the West and then overseas, which promised increasing wealth. Williams also questioned whether Marx's belief of unlimited wealth led to huge bureaucracies in socialist and communist countries. Unfortunately, he discovered that the Soviet Union, with its vast bureaucracy, was the mirror image of the United States. Even though its political ideology was in opposite to America's, Russia was unable to stop herself from expansive activities. Williams, therefore, believed Marx had mistakenly led him to trust in the applicability of socialism to achieve a democratic America.<sup>31</sup>

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fraternal democracy. Williams, "Charles Austin Beard: The Intellectual as Tory Radical" in Harvey Goldberg, ed., *American Radicals* (New York, 1957).

<sup>31</sup> Noble, *The End of American History*, 135.

Williams, thus, returned to embrace his idealistic hope of having a democracy in which people's morality would supersede their economic drives. In 1980, Williams made this idea clear in *Empire as a Way of Life*.<sup>32</sup> "Once people begin to acquire and take for granted and waste surplus resources and space as a routine part of their lives, and to view them as a sign of God's favor," it is difficult for them to give up the habit. But Williams insisted that Americans must try to "create a culture on the basis of agreeing upon limits," even though limits meant that everyone must make some economic sacrifice. But empire as a way of life was more destructive than the price of sacrifice. It will lead to the nuclear death of all. Williams suggested that the way to save America from such danger was to establish decentralized communities. "Community as a way of life lead for a time to less than is necessary. Some of us will die. But how one dies is terribly important. It speaks to the truth of how we have lived."<sup>33</sup> Henceforth, Williams retreated from advocating Marx's thoughts. His idea of limits brought him back into traditional republican understanding of democracy. He knew that only agreed limits could help America to stay with its democratic principles. Williams's *Empire*, thus, was an expressive of his intrinsic republican beliefs.

Williams worked industriously throughout his professional career. But his efforts, especially some of his radical opinions such as what he had said in *Tragedy* and *Contours* were in sharply contradiction to mainstream scholarship. Williams's uncompromising attitude prevented his works from receiving impartial judgements.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> William Appleman Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life: An Essay on the Causes and Character of America's Present Predicament Along with a Few Thoughts about an Alternative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

<sup>33</sup> Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life*, 213.

<sup>34</sup> In 1959, the year Williams's *Tragedy of American Diplomacy* was published, *American Historical Review*, which was governed by consensus mode of thinking did not consider it deserving as a book to be reviewed in its "Review of Books" section. Instead, it was designated to appear in the section titled "Other Recent Publications" with one paragraph critique only. Williams's other works received the same treatment for several years. Quoted from Jonathan M. Wiener, "Radical Historians and the Crisis in American History, 1959- 1980" *Journal of American History* 76:2 (September 1989), p. 404. See also Foster Rhea Dulles, "Notes on *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*," by *American Historical*

Yet, Williams remained silent. His high hope of establishing a democratic society based on republican morality was repeatedly expressed in his works. Perhaps, this could explain why he kept on revising *Tragedy* without giving up his original view.<sup>35</sup> Although critics frequently pointed to his incoherent use of evidence to support his arguments, the reputation of *Tragedy* kept growing after it had been published for a decade.<sup>36</sup> A poll of members conducted by the Organization of American Historians in 1971 showed that the *Tragedy of American Diplomacy* was the most influential book of diplomatic history used in colleges. Steadily, his colleagues accepted Williams's radical opinions and in 1980 he was elected to take the presidency of the Organization of American Historians (OAH). Williams's radical interpretation of American diplomatic history based on republican moral values, thus, gained acceptance.

In short, throughout Williams's career, he believed that capitalism was incompatible with democracy. He employed his analytical power not to find alternatives to sustain democracy as Turner and Beard had. Though he had turned to Marx to safeguard American democracy, he retreated later and returned to advise Americans to concern more about their basic values to safeguard their democracy. Thus Williams's thought shared some similarities to Turner's and Beard's republican convictions. He was not only a historian but also a republican idealist.

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*Review* 64 (July 1959), 1022-1023. It was not until 1984, Bradford Perkins remarked in his review essay, that Williams's fundamental questions about America and the world that have become conventional premises for examining United States foreign policy. Williams's scholarship was recognized then. See Bradford Perkins, "The Tragedy of American Diplomacy: Twenty-five Years After" *Reviews in American History* 12 (March 1984), 1-18.

<sup>35</sup> After the first publication of *Tragedy* in 1959, Williams revised it twice in 1962 and 1972. He increased its length by half, added more details, and extended the chronology. He also made scores of changes. See Bradford Perkins, "The Tragedy of American Diplomacy: Twenty-five Years After", 2.

<sup>36</sup> Robert James Maddox, *The New Left and the Origins of the Cold War* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), 13-37.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, American republicanism was rich in complexity. It was not only a political philosophy working in the early days of the United States, as intellectual historians in the 1960s argued, it was also an influential ideology that governed three generations of progressive historians' discussion of democracy. This is evidently shown in the works of Turner, Beard and Williams.

American republicanism was not a monolithic concept. In fact it has two main origins. Ever since its presence in ancient time, numerous thinkers had contributed their wisdom to re-interpret this concept. Renaissance thinkers such as Nicolò Machiavelli contributed a significant effort in the formation of a modern understanding of republicanism. Nevertheless, Renaissance republicanism was too far away from the American experience. Americans were more adapted to British republicanism.

British republican theoreticians thought free land was the best means to guarantee a fair and just social life. However, the limited supply of land and the class-ridden society of Britain constrained Britons not to put their assumptions into socio-political life. But America was different. It has a tradition of self-government and a vast land waiting for cultivation. Thus, when British kings wanted to tighten their control of American colonies, Americans revolted and fought for independence. But upon the issue of parceling off and for all Americans, so that a republic would survive longer, Americans returned to adopt British free land assumptions and modified them to fit Americans need.

By 1890s, however, all western free land disappeared. It was a heavy blow to Americans. They used to think that a limitless supply of free land was the foundation of a healthy republic. With the diminishment of western free land, it would naturally

lead people to worry about the country's future. It was under this circumstance that Frederick Jackson Turner's discussion of American democracy appeared. Aware of no more free land to sustain American democracy, he tried many times to suggest new means to secure the country's most cherished socio-political values. He suggested education and numerous other means to protect democracy. However, no matter what Turner suggested, they only assured that Turner's worrying was affected by republican values.

Unlike Turner's concern about democracy, Charles Beard was confident in future. Beard was Turner's contemporary. He also witnessed the dreadful picture Turner had perceived. But he was more confident in scientific achievements to secure American democracy. Throughout the first decade of his intellectual career, Beard wholeheartedly devoted his times to advocating the ultimate triumph of democracy if science and industry could prevail. The argument in his *Industrial Society* best exemplified Beard's sincere beliefs. Although Beard's optimistic prediction was running in opposite to Turner's pessimistic analysis, they adopted the same assumption that material foundation determined the healthiness of American democracy. Beard, thus, was an optimistic historian who had republicanism borne in mind. Nonetheless the destructive effects of the WWI saved Beard from tangling with material considerations. Beard, thereafter, changed to emphasize the importance of tradition and moral values to modern Americans. Working together with his wife, the Beards completed four volumes *The Rise of American Civilization*. However, Beard's change to emphasize the importance of American traditional values does not mean that he deserted his republican values. Rather, he re-entered into democracy discussion with a new set of republican assumptions. Therefore, throughout Beard's career, he was consistently a republicanism-bounded historian.

However, progressive historiography was repudiated in late 1940s and 1950s. It was not until 1960s that progressive historians' beliefs were reintroduced into the profession. Among those neo-progressive historians who shared Turner and Beard's worry of American democracy, William Appleman Williams's discussion of democracy came closest to what Turner and Beard had penned. Williams, however, did not only perceive the problem of American democracy as a system weakness. He believed the problem of American democracy was grounded on its lack of moral unity in planning national affairs. Therefore, in his *Tragedy of American Diplomacy* and his *Contours of American History*, Williams repeatedly advised his readers not to mix up capitalism with American democracy. Seeking material basis to sustain their polity was less important than their active participation into politics. In Williams's opinion, Americans should actively participate in home affairs, only then would American democracy gain new strength. He even tried to bring Karl Marx's ideas into American society to give democratic discussion a new perspective.

By the late 1960s, however, Williams began to doubt the applicability of Marx's thought in advancing American democracy. Marx's proletariat was opposite to democratic assumptions. Moreover, bureaucracy working in the Soviet Union was nothing better than its American counterpart. Thus, in *Empire as a Way of Life*, Williams returned to suggest establishing decentralized communities with good moral people living in it. Williams's reemphasis of moral values provided a good example of his ascription to republicanism, because one of the characteristics of American republicanism was exactly its emphasis on moral values to a healthy polity. Throughout Williams's career, his understanding of democracy was based on an ideal percept that capitalism should not mix up with democracy. From *American Russian Relations* to *Empire as Way of Life*, Williams's moralistic assumptions consistently

appeared. Williams, thus, was a rare twentieth century historian with republican values governed his writings.

All in all, Turner, Beard and Williams's works evidently prove that republicanism was a dominating ideology in progressive historiography. But because American republicanism has two origins – Renaissance period and Britain, these three progressive historians, therefore, did not uniformly follow to a particular aspect of republican values. While Turner's arguments were more inclined to British republican assumptions, Williams's opinions were more assimilated with classical believe of the importance of moral values. Only Beard's discussion of American democracy experienced a change from British republican orientation to classical republican moral value orientation.

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