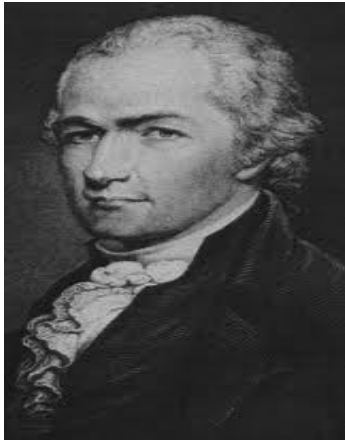


Jeffersonian Republicanism and Hamiltonian Federalism in the Progressive Era: Herbert Croly and the Struggle for Ideology



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INTRODUCTION

“My dear Mr. Croly: I do not know when I have read a book which I felt profited me as much as your book on American life. There are a few points on which I do not entirely agree with you, yet even as to these my disagreement is on minor matters...I shall use your ideas freely in speeches I intend to make. I know you won't object to my doing so, because, my dear sir, I can see that your purpose is to do your share in any way for the betterment of our national life.”
*Theodore Roosevelt to Herbert Croly, quoted in Croly to Hand Learned.*¹

A spectre is haunting the American political tradition and history: the spectre of the distinction between Jeffersonian republicanism and Hamiltonian federalism, the two first political ideologies that appeared in the United States shortly after its establishment. In the first days of the new republic the Founding Fathers did not favor the idea of parties or factions in the political system for they were connected in their minds with the politics of Great Britain and with special interests of groups and individuals². But it soon became apparent that the absence of special interests and parties that would support them was an illusion. The first party system which lasted roughly between 1792 and 1824 saw the rise of two opposite parties, namely the Federalist Party under the leadership of Alexander Hamilton and the Democratic Republic Party under the leadership of Thomas Jefferson. The ideologies of these men that shaped the political objectives of their respective parties did not only mark their era but remained the most influential and pervasive elements of the American political thought in the years to come. It seems a uniquely American practice that politicians, intellectuals and citizens tend to look back to the thought of the Founding Fathers in years of crisis in order to receive inspiration and political guidance. As Gerald Stourch underlines, this closeness of the Founders to the American present finds no parallel in the history of Europe.³

Because the term “ideology” can be broad and subject to different interpretations it should be noted here that it is defined in the same way as Eric Foner's definition of “ideology” in his book *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*. Foner uses the term to describe the free labor ideology that prevailed in the American political discourse before the Civil War. He does not present the term as synonym to a dogmatic belief or doctrine but rather as a mentality, a broad understanding of the world, a world view. In his own words an ideology is “a system of beliefs, values, fears, prejudices,

1 Quoted in Edward A. Stettner , *Shaping Modern Liberalism: Herbert Croly and Progressive Thought* (Kansas: University Press of Chicago, 1993), 76.

2 A relevant discussion concerning the anti-party mentality of the late 18th century Americans and the Founding Fathers can be found in Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1849* (Berkley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1970), 2-3.

3 Gerald Stourzh, *Alexander Hamilton and the Idea of Republican Government* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970), 2.

reflexes and commitments -in sum, the social consciousness -of a social group, be it a class, a party, or a section...an important aspect of ideology involves the way in which a group perceives itself and its values in relation to the society as a whole.’’⁴

Jeffersonian republicanism mainly consists of the notion of freedom. It is an ideology that stresses the idea that the federal government should never become powerful, because any government tends to become authoritarian; in the worst case it will even resemble the monarchy from which the American colonies separated. So Jefferson supported the idea of a free individual, a common man, mainly a well educated white farmer able to handle his affairs on his own without the annoying interference of the state or federal government. The yeoman farmer was the hero of Jefferson and the Republicans.⁵ On the next level he supported that states should keep all the powers that the Constitution did not grant to the Federal Government. As a matter of principle Jefferson abhorred the big cities which he considered as places where immorality could flourish. He supported the idea of a rural society. He also opposed the idea of a strong central bank. As Wood states, the republican ideology involved a deep hatred of overgrown central power and a fear of the political and financial mechanism that supported that power -in which he included inflated executive authority, high taxes standing armies and perpetual debts.⁶ In the foreign affairs Jefferson merely gave birth to the idea that the United States should not interfere in the affairs of other states and that it should guard its democratic system at home. The success of this system on the American soil would be a great example for the rest of the world and it would lead to a world of democratic republics in which war would be eliminated, a world in which peace would reign supreme. But this idealism did not lead Jefferson to idealistic adventures. On the contrary, he could be described as the forefather of isolationism.⁷

Alexander Hamilton was almost the exact opposite of Jefferson. Hamilton supported a strong federal government that was essential, he thought, for the development and rise of the new country. He also supported the idea of a funded national debt and the idea of a central bank in order to increase the power of the federal government, he supported the idea of concentrated power and he did not seem to care for the injustices that this system would create. Hamilton's ideas represented the will of the Federalists to make their country move forward to the final stages of industrial and commercial development. In foreign affairs he supported good relations with Great Britain -the difference between the American and the French revolution, he said, “is not less great than that

4 Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4-5.

5 Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 277.

6 Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 172.

7 Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 277.

between Liberty and Licentiousness.”⁸ He also endorsed the creation of a strong Navy that would promote the country's interests abroad. In a way, if Jefferson was the forefather of isolationism, Hamilton was the forefather of the American versions of capitalism and imperialism.⁹

This ideological struggle did not end with the death of Hamilton and the total domination of the Republican party until the era of the Jacksonian democracy and the second party system. Thus, it was present in the struggle of Jackson himself against the Central Bank of the United States when the president fought for the rights of individuals against the powerful Bank which represented the authority that American so dearly distrust.¹⁰ It was there during Lincoln's presidency when the President supported the Free Labor ideology against the South and against several powerful institutions of the quickly industrialized society which posed a threat in the ability of the common man to shape his life and rise through his hard work.¹¹ Finally it was there in the rise of the People's Party and Bryan's populism which supported the rights of the country's farmers by stressing the idea of bimetallism, and of course it was of great symbolical importance the fact that in his famous “Cross of Gold” speech Bryan recalled both Jefferson and Jackson.¹² A close study of these examples will also reveal that the distinction was never absolute. Thus Jefferson himself turned to the Hamiltonian concept of statesmanship when he purchased Louisiana from Napoleon Bonaparte.¹³ Jackson gladly ignored Supreme Court's decision on the Cherokee issue and he pushed them westwards while he maintained an active presidential style which was incoherent with his belief in Jeffersonian creed.¹⁴ Lincoln's support of the common man did not prevent him from exercising almost imperial power when he did not allow the secession of the South to take place and led the country to the Civil War.¹⁵ The Populists were generally more sincere to their Jeffersonian ideology but they never managed to send their representative to the White House.

But the period roughly between 1890 and 1920 was arguably the most interesting period in the American history concerning the interplay between federalism and republicanism. The fact is that from the era of Jefferson to the era of the People's Party the country was mainly a rural one. But during the so called Progressive Era the industrialization process which accelerated after the Civil War almost reached a peak. Rapid industrialization, urbanization, internal immigration but also

8 Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 277.

9 For a detailed analysis of the Federalist program see: Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 95-139.

10 Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (London: John Dickens and Conner LTD, 1962), 227.

11 The Republican critic of the South can be found in Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 40-72.

12 The “Cross of Gold” speech can be found in Bryan's “Cross of Gold” speech: Mesmerizing the Masses, History Matters site <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5354/>, accessed in May 25, 2010.

13 Stourzh, *Alexander Hamilton*, 201.

14 For an account of the “Trail of Tears”, the Indian's deportation ordered by Jackson see Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2008), 87-91.

15 It is interesting here the way in which Lincoln defined the Union: “On the side of the Union, [the Civil War] is a struggle for maintaining in the world, that form and substance of government, whose leading object is, to elevate the condition of men -to lift artificial weights from all shoulders...to afford all, an unfettered start, and a fair chance, in the race of life.” Quoted in Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 38.

massive arrival of newcomers from Europe and Asia created novel tensions and challenges. According to Hugh Brogan “between Appomattox and the First World War...the Jeffersonian republic of farmers from an aspiration became a memory.”¹⁶ The reason was the Industrial Revolution and the appearance of steamboats, telegraphs and railroads which managed to bind together the producers and customers within this continental country.¹⁷ But the most important issue was the rise of big corporations, of trusts, of the magnates that owned them and the enormous amounts of wealth and power concentration that they enjoyed, the threat they posed to the traditional American values of individual freedom and the fundamental questions concerning the role of the Federal Government in this new situation.¹⁸

The fear of the consolidated industrial power was not unreasonable. Already by 1888 Charles William Elliot noted that the private power was by far greater than the power of the state governments. One of his remarkable examples was that a railroad with offices in Boston had 18,000 employees and gross receipts of \$40,000,000 approximately per year while at the same time the Commonwealth of Massachusetts employed 6,000 persons and had gross receipts at around \$7,000 per year.¹⁹ In an even more impressive case, the Congressional subcommittee, named Pujo committee, which was formed between May 1912 and January 1913 to investigate the “money power” revealed that the Morgan interests at its peak held 341 directorships in 112 corporations (from insurance companies to public utilities) with total resources or capitalization of \$22,245,000,000.²⁰ The problems that these powerful individuals and institutions posed in the function of the American democracy was one of the main issues that the intellectuals, politicians, publicists and scholars who collectively are known as Progressives tried to solve.

The main academic question of the thesis will be the one concerning the solutions that one of those Progressives offered. More specifically the fundamental question will be how the ideologies of Hamiltonian federalism and Jeffersonian republicanism appeared, took shape and influenced the thought of Herbert Croly, one of the most influential thinker of that time. In this era of turbulence the generally peaceful political struggle that took place in order to define how the American society would look like in the future, was very reminiscent in certain respects of the quintessential struggle between the leaders of George Washington's cabinet. Intellectuals such as Herbert Croly, Walter Lippmann, Charles Beard, Edward A. Ross, Frederick Jackson Turner and politicians (especially

16 Brogan, *The Penguin History of the USA*, 377.

17 Brogan, *The Penguin History of the USA*, 378-379.

18 The idea of trusts was actually invented by the Rockefeller lawyers: “Under the trust arrangements holders of stock in the various oil companies handed over their shares to Rockefeller and his associates, acting as a board of trustees; in return they got trust certificates, which payed dividends but gave no power.” Quoted in Brogan, *The Penguin History of the USA*, 390. It is obvious that other companies imitated the trust model.

19 Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 229.

20 Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 230. Part of the report can be found in Richard Hofstadter, ed., *The Progressive Movement* (Englewood Cliffs N.J.:Prentice-Hall, 1963), 158-160.

Henry Cabot Lodge and the two “progressive” presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson) tried to give answers to the questions of their time and offer new interpretations of the past that could help shape the present.

Although many other intellectuals expressed their views in books and articles at that time, Herbert Croly will be the main character of this thesis, because, regardless of the fact that his books never sold many copies, he was the one who first stressed the question of Hamilton and Jefferson ideals in an era of industrialization and general change. His main argument was that in an era of corporations and trusts the Jeffersonian goals could only be achieved by Hamiltonian means (thus a strong government). His suggestion was a reconciliation between Hamilton and Jefferson.²¹ Moreover, the importance of Croly also lies on his close connections to both Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, the main progressive leaders of the era. His platform actually described Theodore Roosevelt's New Nationalism and it was a Hamiltonian approach: Roosevelt himself did not reject the corporations and trusts but he believed that there were good and bad trusts and the bad should be regulated.²² Later, Woodrow Wilson would show a more Jeffersonian approach when he rejected corporations as enemies of the common man.²³ In his most important book, *The Promise of American Life* (1909) Croly supported the idea that Hamilton's nationalism should be the creed of the American life and that the new era demanded technocrats and intellectuals, an intellectual aristocracy in a way, that could promote solutions to the problems of the new era. Later on, Croly would find out that Wilson too was more Hamiltonian than he initially thought.

A study of Herbert Croly's political thought inevitably is part of the broader discussion concerning the intellectual history of the Progressive era. Despite the fact that it was an era in which important debates in political, social and economic subjects flourished, there are still not many works written in the study of the intellectual history of the time. But in the majority of the relevant bibliography there are certain issues and core questions that the authors of the progressive era stress. First of all there is the discussion which comprehends the Progressive era as a part of a greater movement of reform which started with the Populist movement of the 1890's and was cultivated in the New Deal under Franklin Roosevelt. The Progressive era seems like a middle passage which kept the positive aspects of the Populist era, while it rejected the negative ones. In the course of

21 Arthur M. Schlesinger, “Introduction” in Herbert Croly, *The Promise of American Life* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965 edition) xxi.

22 Roosevelt characteristically notes: “But if by trust we mean merely a big corporation, then I ask you to ponder the utter folly of the man who either in a spirit of rancor or in a spirit of folly says “destroy the trusts,” without giving you an idea of what he means really to do. I will go with him if he says destroy the evil in the trusts, gladly. I will try to find out that evil, I will seek to apply remedies, which I have already outlined in other speeches; but if his policy, from whatever motive, whether hatred, fear, panic or just sheer ignorance, is to destroy the trusts in a way that will destroy all our property -no.” In “Wise and Unwise Methods for Remedying Evil Trusts: From an Address delivered in Fitchburg, Mass., September 2, 1902” in William Griffith, ed., *The Roosevelt Policy: Speeches, Letters and State Papers Relating to Corporate Wealth and Closely Allied Topics* (New York:1919), 49-56.

23 Woodrow Wilson, “The Meaning of the New Freedom” in Hofstadter, *The Progressive Movement*, 174-177.

time, the New Deal kept the positive aspects of it and rejected its defects. The second interesting discussion of the progressive era is, of course, the one concerning the role of government in an industrialized country, which also contains the relevant discussion of the role of new administrative methods and policies, the role of the technocrats and intellectuals in comparison with traditional politicians. Last but not at least, there is the issue of the living conditions of the common people. The life in the slums, the suffrage issue, the rights of minorities and the progressive demand of their assimilation, all these aspects of social life, that always compose a part of the larger image of an era, have been also discussed in some detail in the relevant bibliography. So, the problems were intellectual, political, administrative, cultural and social.

What is missing, besides a modern and accurate analysis of the intellectual history of the progressive era, is a discussion concerning the function of the American political tradition in the Progressive era and the way in which this function was interpreted by the progressive intellectuals, and among them, by Herbert Croly.²⁴ The majority of the books on the Progressive era contain references to Croly, but they do not emphasize the aforementioned dualism. Thus the aim of the thesis is to show that the importance of Herbert Croly lies in the fact that he located, emphasized and theorized the most important notion that was in the core of the discussions of his time -and that it was a bold effort for its time. We may argue that his argument was even broader and relevant even to political issues of the present day -president Obama's health care system reform has to do, in a theoretical context, with the role of government within the American state something that means that Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian ideas are very relevant with the nature of the ongoing discussion concerning Obama's policies. This is exactly the remedy that Croly tried to offer to the American political thought.

The absence of detailed reference to Croly's political philosophy is somewhat redeemed by the literature that has been written specifically on him and his philosophy. Here again there are relevant discussions that tie the intellectual with his era. There are discussions concerning the influence of his parents and of their philosophy -based on Comte's work- on him. There are discussions concerning the influence of Harvard on him. There are splendid analyses concerning his political philosophy, his books, his associates and the weekly magazine that he edited. But there is not enough emphasis on the dualism of Jeffersonianism and Hamiltonianism in his thought and in

24 Until now the most accurate history of the intellectual tensions during the progressive era remains *The Age of Reform* by Richard Hofstadter, written back in 1962. The work is still important but a new account of that part of the era is needed. The bureaucratic and administrative issues of the Progressive era are discussed in Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities 1877-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) and in Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order: 1877-1920* (London, Melbourne: Macmillan Press, 1967). The political issues are discussed in Lewis L. Gould, *Reform and Regulation: American Politics from Roosevelt to Wilson* (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1986). The social issues are discussed in Michail McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

the political landscape that the rivalry between Roosevelt and Wilson created.

The first chapter will focus on the ideologies of federalism and republicanism and will stress its origins, its main aspects and its pervasiveness in the American society until the dawn of the Progressive era. The second chapter will offer a biographical analysis on Herbert Croly and will summarize his influences and his education. The third chapter will reveal the Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian ideas in *The Promise of American Life*, the *Progressive Democracy* and the articles that Croly wrote in *The New Republic*. Unfortunately because the editorials were written by Herbert Croly, Walter Lippman and Walter Weyl and they were unsigned it is not clear who wrote which. But Croly was -unofficially- the chief editor so we will assume that the published articles had his consent. The same chapter will also reveal the relations of Croly with important politicians of his time, especially Roosevelt and Wilson. The conclusion will summarize the main outcomes of the study.

CHAPTER ONE

JEFFERSONIAN REPUBLICANISM AND HAMILTONIAN FEDERALISM IN THE AMERICAN POLITICAL TRADITION

A. The Establishment of the American Ideological Dualism

The United States of America was established as an independent state after a fierce struggle against British rule. It was an effort to break free from the old world, literally and symbolically. For some it was the realization of the “city upon the hill” which eventually gained independence and allowed Americans, by starting their novel democratic experiment, to draw “the eyes of the world upon them.”²⁵ This idea of novelty can be traced in many aspects of the American history and one of the most important of them is the idea of the Founding Fathers. The term describes the statesmen who were responsible for the establishment of the new state and the formation of its institutions. Men like Washington, Adams, Hamilton and Jefferson have gained an aura of saints and they represent a perfect example of what David M. Hart defines as “hagiography”, namely the process of glorification and near worship of political leaders, a procedure based on the long term Christian tradition of creating saints out of ordinary men and women.²⁶

But the innovation of the political thought and contribution of important men should not be exaggerated. Martin Wight, the famous exponent of the British School of International Relations, once stated that “one of the main purposes of university education is to escape from the *Zeitgeist*, from the mean, narrow, provincial spirit which is constantly assuring us that we are at the peak of human achievement, that we stand on the edge of unprecedented prosperity or unparalleled catastrophe...It is a liberation of the spirit to acquire perspective...to learn that the same moral predicaments and the same ideas have been explored before.”²⁷ In line with Martin Wight's statement we may argue that the effort of the Founding Fathers to create a sustainable political system and the institutions that would keep it alive was not totally new, even if it took place in novel and revolutionary circumstances, for this has been the job of leaders and the purpose of

25 The phrase “We must consider that we shall be as a City upon a Hill...the eyes of all people are upon us” belong to John Winthrop (1587/8-1649), governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Quoted in Cushing Strout, *The American Image of the Old World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 6.

26 David M. Hart, “Washington's Birthday or President's Day: The Hagiography of Presidential Power,” The David M. Hart webpage, February 9, 2011, accessed in May 30, 2011, <http://homepage.mac.com/dmhart/Images/FrontPage/WashingtonsBirthday/index.html> Hart M. David is the Director of Liberty Fund's Online Library of Liberty Project (<http://oll.libertyfund.org/>) He holds a PhD from King's College, London for his thesis entitled *Charles Comte, Charles Dunoyer, and Early 19th Century Liberal Thought* which can be found in <http://homepage.mac.com/dmhart/Papers/CCCD-PhD/HTML-version/index.html>

27 Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991), 4.

statesmanship from times long past. What was new was the question concerning the role and maintenance of liberty in a popular state.²⁸

In this respect the great statesmen that established the American nation were inspired by previous political thinkers, philosophers and theorists from Europe, from the old world, whose ideas were interpreted and incorporated by the Founding Fathers into the political philosophy that has in its core the Constitution of the United States and is characterized by democratic ideas such as the separation of powers and the checks and balances which form the basis of the republican form of government.²⁹ Those thinkers were mainly the classical and British exponents of balanced government and English Whigs and opposition writers from which American thinkers inherited two different approaches on the issues concerning the role of liberty and government in a republican state. On the one hand Americans were taught that liberty can often put in danger by its own successes. On the other hand they learned to be concerned with corruption that can occur in free governments by ministerial influence and the seductiveness that authority and power posed to the executives of the state.³⁰ These two notions led to two different approaches concerning the role of government in a democratic state, approaches which tend to reappear in the American political discourse through the years.

One of the first incidents that brought forth this dispute was the quarrel between the Federalists and anti-Federalists concerning the ratification of the Constitution. The former (Hamilton, Madison and Jay under the pseudonym of “Publius”) supported the ratification of the Constitution in demand of a strong federal government. They wanted to remedy the problems that the Articles of Confederation could not solve.³¹ The latter (men like George Clinton, Robert Yates and Samuel Bryan) opposed the ratification by expressing distress concerning the danger that the new Constitution would bring without a statement of individual rights. The anti-Federalists demanded as little government as possible. They strongly believe that people was the fundamental element of a republic and that people should rule. They also feared that the Constitution would create an aristocratic government in a republican country.³² For the Federalists the danger lied in the

28 Lance Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 126.

29 David Mauk and John Oakland, *American Civilization: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 117-119.

30 Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion*, 126. For two detailed and somewhat differing accounts of the American Revolution see Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967) and Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

31 *The Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union* was the first written constitution of the United States of America which established a loose confederation of independent states under a very weak central government. The government consisted only of a one-house legislature with no executive or judicial branch. The confederation was could not actually function without asking from the member states what it needed. This form of government lasted between 1781 and 1788. See Mauk and Oakland, *American Civilization*, 114.

32 Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 35.

popular license, selfishness and localism while for the anti-Federalists in power.³³ In the end the Constitution was ratified, the Bill of Rights eased the worries of the anti-federalists, and Americans felt that they found a middle way in order to avoid the defects of a weak confederation and the tyranny of a traditional monarchy.³⁴ Strictly speaking the anti-Federalists lost the battle against the Constitution. But their rhetoric, based on ideas such as liberty and the importance of the common man, prevailed.³⁵ But the Constitution did not give an end to the question of liberty and government. In the following years it was going to be revitalized within George Washington's administration and institutionalized within two different ideologies and political parties.

The Founding Fathers did not favor the idea of a party system. As Richard Hofstadter stresses, the men who created the first American party system, Republicans and Federalists, considered parties or factions as “sores in the body politic.”³⁶ James Madison in Federalist 10 identified a faction as a “number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.”³⁷ Both him and Hamilton noted their bad aspects. George Washington himself in his Farewell Address presented a strict warning against the “baneful effects of the Spirit of the Party.”³⁸

The reason why the Founders were hostile to the idea of the parties was that in all the past exams that they had in mind -whether it was the republics of the historical past, their own provincial capitals or Great Britain- they saw in parties only a divisive force which represented and promoted selfish special interests.³⁹ Moreover, as Brogan notes, the leadership of the American Revolution had been generally homogeneous, united and durable. In comparison with the French Revolution no guillotine waited for those who were on the losing side and Washington hoped for less partisanship and more harmony in the government.⁴⁰

Reality proved to be different and revealed the idealism of those noble thoughts. For in very short time a dispute erupted and this one was going to characterize the very core of the American political tradition. The main issue of the dispute was Alexander Hamilton's policies which, although beneficial in the long run, were extremely divisive. Alexander Hamilton, the first American Secretary of Treasure had a clear vision about the future of his country and in this vision the United

33 Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion*, 127.

34 The Bill of Rights (1791) consists of the first ten amendments of the US Constitution. It poses a series of limitations on the power of the US federal government by protecting mainly the rights of property and liberty (including freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, a free press, free association and the right to keep and bear arms).

35 Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 36.

36 Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 2.

37 Madison James, “Federalist No 10” in *The Federalist Papers*, accessed in May,31 2011, <http://www.foundingfathers.info/federalistpapers/fedindex.htm>

38 Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 2.

39 Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 2.

40 Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 158.

States was going to become a great imperial power.⁴¹ His policies which included the funding of the revolutionary debt, federal assumption of states obligations, creation of a national bank and governmental encouragement of American manufactures were all leading to that direction.⁴² Hamilton did not believe in the sacredness of individual rights and, as Wood states, he was primed to think nationally and he focused his attention to the government of the United States.⁴³

One of the main purposes of Hamilton's policies was to link the fate of the federal government with the fate of the rich elite classes of his country -merchants, financiers and manufacturers. The government should attach men's selfish interests to its own fate and success.⁴⁴ And that was another key idea of his philosophy: a strong belief in the inadequacy of the human nature, a recognition of the selfishness, arrogance and possible malice of the human condition and the need of the government to appease and control these sentiments.⁴⁵ In his -probable- own quote: "If men were angels, no government would be necessary."⁴⁶ Moreover he believed that good relationships with the former enemy, Great Britain, were of the highest importance. He actually tied the government to policies that would secure the interests and prosperity of the traders in a steady commercial flow of British imports, thus accepting the subordination of the United States to the Great Britain: his country would be an agricultural exporter depending on England's manufactures.⁴⁷ What Hamilton's policies implied was that the federal government should be strong, energetic and it should support the concentration of capital in the hands of a selected few. This would be an essential precondition for commercial investment and economic growth. According to Joseph Ellis, Hamilton endorsed the idea that "when money was spread out, it was only money. When concentrated it was capital".⁴⁸ The collaboration between the government and those who owned that capital was essential. And this idea for the role of the government was the key issue of his philosophy and the reason that led Jefferson and his followers to organize an opposition party.

Hamilton policies were too divisive and they directly assaulted the revolutionary sensibilities of some of his countrymen a fact that led to a furious debate concerning the principles of a republican state.⁴⁹ The opposition was organized mainly by the two Virginians, Thomas

41 Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion*, 127.

42 Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion*, 127.

43 Gordon S. Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 125-126.

44 Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion*, 135.

45 Brogan, *The Penguin History of the USA*, 258.

46 Hamilton Alexander or Madison James, "Federalist No 51" in *The Federalist Papers*, accessed in May,31 2011, <http://www.foundingfathers.info/federalistpapers/fedindex.htm>

47 Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to George Bush* (Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press,1993), 64.

48 Joseph J. Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 2001), 64.

49 Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make*, 64.

Jefferson and James Madison.⁵⁰ Thomas Jefferson was a different man from Hamilton. His background was that of a patrician farmer. He believed that the United States should conquer its continent but that would need time (around 1,000 years according to his predictions). He believed that the farmer, the yeoman, the common man should be in the center of the American republic⁵¹. The core of his beliefs was the one of individualism: Americans should live their lives in independence and have as little government, state or national, as possible. Once Jefferson said “state a moral case to a ploughman or a professor. The former will decide as well, and often better than the latter, because he has not been led astray by artificial rules.”⁵² Indeed this notion that the common man was the core of a republican state was the basis of the idea that society has beneficial traits while government evil ones. Jefferson linked all social iniquities and deprivations -such as social honors, perquisites of office, excessive property and wealth- with the government and he believed that they flowed from connections and relations with governmental power.⁵³ His position in foreign affairs was that America should become a powerful state like Great Britain, a state characterized by “a central bureaucracy, a professional standing army and the ability to wage wars on equal terms with other nations.”⁵⁴ But this greatness did not mean interference in European affairs. On the contrary, as Washington and Hamilton stated in Washington's Farewell Address, Americans should abstain the vicissitudes of of European politics and alliances.⁵⁵ In many respects he was the forefather of isolationism.

What was at stake here was the role of government and the limits of power. The Jeffersonians influenced by England's radical wings and American anti-Federalists believed that public officers were the expression of the people's will but they stressed the fact that there was a tendency for the officer to seek its self interest by cheating the public. For the Jeffersonians this was not inconsistent with their belief on the goodness of the common people. For it was the power of the office that had this corruptive effect here. They were believers of the Lord Acton's law that power

50 Madison was friend of Hamilton and they were co-authors of the *Federalist Papers*. Hamilton felt disappointment and distress for the alliance between his old friend with his greatest foe. In any case it should be noted that despite the fact that the dualism in the American political tradition is personified in Hamilton and Jefferson, Madison's contribution should not be neglected. Lance Banning stresses the fact that we rely on Madison to comprehend the intellectual foundations of the new republic, who was the mind behind the Constitution. See Banning Lance, *The Sacred Fire of Liberty: James Madison and the Founding of the Federal Republic* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), 2. Richard Hofstadter also notes that Madison “was a more systematic...deliberate and profound thinker than Thomas Jefferson; as the philosopher of the Constitution, he gives the clearest and more authoritative statement of the conflict between the rationale of the Constitution and the spirit of party...the greater achievement of Madison was to provide for his contemporaries a statement of the checks-and-balances view of government in which a pluralistic view of society itself was linked to the plural constitution structure.” See Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 54-55.

51 One could underline here that his ideal was the one of a white man with property.

52 Jefferson as quoted in Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 10.

53 Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 10-11.

54 Wood, *Revolutionary Characters*, 136.

55 Cushing Strout, *The American Image of the Old World*, 22.

corrupts and that absolute power corrupts absolutely.⁵⁶ But where the Jeffersonians underlined the corruptive tendencies of power, Hamilton underlined the responsibility as a virtue of the public officer. And in an address to the New York Legislature early in 1787 he gave a straightforward reply to his critics:

We are told it is dangerous to trust power any where; that power is liable to abuse, with a variety of trite maxims of the same kind. General propositions of this nature are easily framed, the truth of which cannot be denied, but they rarely convey any precise idea. To these we might oppose other propositions equally true and equally indefinite. It must be said that too little power is as dangerous as too much, that it leads to anarchy, and from anarchy to despotism. But the question still recurs, what is too much or too little? Where is the measure or standard to ascertain the happy mean? Power must be granted, or civil Society cannot exist; the possibility of abuse is not argument against the thing.⁵⁷

With such different positions it is not surprising that the Jeffersonians opposed fiercely Hamilton's policies. By organizing themselves into two different parties, the Democrat-Republicans under Jefferson and the Federalists under Hamilton, these men laid the foundations for the essential distinction which has defined the American political tradition ever since. These two ideologies coexisted in a fragile balance, that no one would like to admit, for the rest of the American political history. Almost a century later an American public intellectual was going to inform his fellow citizens not only that this balance should be recognized but it should be pursued for their own benefit. But first we will have a look at this fragile balance from the time of Jefferson's victory to the Progressive Era in which Herbert Croly lived.

⁵⁶ Stourzh, *Alexander Hamilton*, 184.

⁵⁷ Hamilton Alexander as quoted in Stourzh, *Alexander Hamilton*, 182.

B. The American Ideological Dualism from the Time of the Founders to the Progressive Era

The struggle for power within Washington's administration ended with the victory of the Republicans. But before that happened, one more interesting aspect of the American political system was revealed: the tendency of Americans to resort to conspiracy theories in order to explain the motives of their opponents. Jefferson and his followers seems that they really believed that Hamilton was trying to re-establish monarchy, while Hamiltonians thought that Jefferson wanted to subvert Christianity.⁵⁸ In the long run the Jeffersonian accusations against the “interests” of plutocrats that wanted to subvert the American democracy prevailed and the “moneyed power” became the abstract and omnipresent enemy of the common throughout the American history.⁵⁹

But if the pervasiveness of the conspiracy theories was one thing that came out of the rival between these influential Founding Fathers, the other was the fact that, despite the theoretical and philosophical differences, in the field of practical politics the differences were never so extreme or contradictory. In fact after his rise to power, Jefferson did not dismantle the Hamiltonian system. According to Jefferson: “we can pay his debts in 15 years: but we can never get rid of his financial system. It mortifies me to be strengthening principles which I deem radically vicious, but this vice is entailed on us by the first error. In other parts of our government, I hope we shall be able by degrees to introduce sound principles and make them habitual...What is practicable must often control what is pure theory.”⁶⁰

Even the national bank which was under attack when the Republicans where in the opposition survived and its responsibilities were extended under the Secretary of Treasury, Albert Gallatin, who assured Jefferson that it was useful.⁶¹ But the most remarkable event of the adoption of Hamiltonian elements was the purchase of Louisiana, one of the greatest achievements of Jefferson's presidency, which could have never been possible without the foreign loans that the country could receive due to Hamilton's solid establishment of the US credit.⁶² According to Skowronek, Jefferson clearly understood the inconsistency of the fact that the man who had blasted executive usurpation by the Federalists during Adam's presidency now tried to acquire new territory

58 Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 72.

59 The rise of the idea of a solid “moneyed power” conspiracy that tried to subvert democracy actually appeared in full force in the Age of Jackson. See Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 91.

60 Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 159.

61 Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System*, 159-160.

62 Brogan, *The Penguin History of the USA*, 263.

which was as large as the nation itself. He understood that he did not have the constitutional authority for such an action. But he also would not allow a matter of propriety to become a barrier to the nation's interest.⁶³

But if the national bank survived the rise of Jefferson it did not survive the rise of Andrew Jackson. The era of Andrew Jackson has been called the Era of the Common man and not without a reason.⁶⁴ Jackson was the first populist president, the first one of humble origins. In his inauguration day a triumphant mob entered the White House to celebrate the victory of Old Hickory, as Jackson's nickname was, an event that led to damages in the building and linked Jackson with the image of a crowd trashing the White House.⁶⁵ His supporters stressed the cause of equal access to property and wealth and they underlined the fact that their hero was a small farmer and an apprentice saddler- hiding the fact that he owned 150 slaves or that he had a mansion near Nashville as elegant as the one that his enemy Nicholas Biddle, the president of the Second Bank of the United States, owned.⁶⁶

Jackson was the perfect Jeffersonian hero -soldier, democrat, farmer, common man. He considered himself a true defender of the American freedom and he decided to destroy all the aristocratic corruption and restore integrity to republican institutions.⁶⁷ According to Henry Clay Jackson's purpose was to “cry down old constructions of the Constitution...to make all Jefferson's opinions the articles of faith of the new Church.”⁶⁸ As his political forefather before him he decided to fight the same dreadful enemy: the “money power” and its main expression, the national bank. Kazin argues that the bank was perceived as evil because it was a public creation holding public bonds- but it was operated as a private business in an extreme level.⁶⁹ Jacksonians perceived the bank and the “money power” as the main problem of the American democracy and they decided to crash it. But Jackson, like Jefferson, was very keen on exercising strong central authoritarian power when the situations demanded it and this was more than obvious in the case of the Trail of Tears and the expulsion of Cherokee Indians from their lands. When Chief Justice John Marshal supported the Indians, Jackson ignored him by saying: “John Marshal has made his decision: -now let him enforce it.”⁷⁰

The same rhetoric in a different version appeared before the Civil War (1861-1865) and it was mainly expressed by the Republican party in what Eric Foner calls “free labor” ideology. It was

63 Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make*, 64.

64 Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 10.

65 Jon Meacham, *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House* (New York: Random House, 2008), 61.

66 Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 19.

67 Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make*, 131.

68 Henry Clay as quoted in Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make*, 131.

69 Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 20.

70 Andrew Jackson quoted in James Q. Wilson, *American Government: Institutions and Politics* (D.C.Heath and Company,1986), 393. For a detailed analysis of the era of Jackson see Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc, 2005).

an ideology, in a broad sense, that justified the northern society. It underlined the fact that a vibrant, expanding capitalistic society could be achieved and its basis was the product of the dignity and the work of the average laboring man.⁷¹ Because the main conflict of the era was slavery, the Republican party stressed the issue of free labor in comparison to the slave labor of the South. It was the southern “slave power” this time, the great conspirator who wanted to subvert the freedom of the land and which already had seized the federal government as some Republicans argued.⁷² One interesting aspect of the ideology is that the creed of the common worker was based on the fact that he could work in order to acquire capital himself and then hire workers. It was an idea of the self made man. For those who did not manage to survive there was no salvation. The failed man had to blame only his own defects not any dysfunctions of the system which supposedly functioned perfect⁷³. It was a middle class perception of the social order which implied economic progress and social mobility. Lincoln was the hero of the era, but as Jefferson and Jackson before him he did not deny to exercise strong central power when he sent the federal troops to confront the Southern secession.

The next important appearance of this theoretical debate occurred during the so called Populist movement. The Populist movement was also Jeffersonian in nature. As Hofstadter argues, its dominant themes were “the idea of a golden age; the concept of natural harmonies; the dualistic version of social struggles; the conspiracy theory of history; and the doctrine of the primacy of money.”⁷⁴ It was a movement that underlined the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian traditions of the agrarian myth, the common man and liberty and which identified again as an enemy the allied hosts of monopolies, the moneyed power, great trusts and railroad corporations, who try to influence the law in order to achieve their goals.⁷⁵ During the populist movement the idea of a conspiracy against the common man reached its extremes: now it was an international conspiracy.⁷⁶ The rise of the People's Party which was formed in Omaha, Nebraska in 1892 was the most important event of the era which ended with the failure of William Jennings Bryan, who led the Democratic party under a populist platform after a collaboration with the populists, to become president in the Presidential election of 1896.⁷⁷

Populism, according to Hofstadter, was the first modern political movement of practical importance in the United States that demanded that the federal government should have certain

71 Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 11.

72 Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 9.

73 Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 23.

74 Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 62.

75 Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 64.

76 Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 74.

77 Bryan is the most recognizable figure of the Populist movement. For a detailed biography see Michail Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (New York: Anchor Books, 2007).

responsibilities in order to promote the common interests of people.⁷⁸ But in this respect it served as an introduction to a most important movement which was going to stress in the most novel ways the need for a responsible and active central government and remind to the American citizens the merits of Hamilton's political thought. The movement was the Progressive one and Herbert Croly was the intellectual who would elaborate theoretically on the need to revive Hamilton.

The Progressive era has been important and a lot of issues have been stressed in the relevant bibliography. But in the majority of the relevant bibliography there are certain issues and core questions that the authors of the progressive era underline. First of all there is the discussion which comprehends the Progressive era as a part of a greater movement of reform which started with the Populist movement of the 1890's and was cultivated in the New Deal under Franklin Roosevelt. The Progressive era seems like a middle passage which kept the positive aspects of the Populist era, while it rejected the negative ones. In the course of time, the New Deal kept the positive aspects of it and rejected its defects. The second interesting discussion of the progressive era is, of course, the one concerning the role of government in an industrialized country, which also contains the relevant discussion of the role of new administrative methods and policies, the role of the technocrats and intellectuals in comparison with traditional politicians. Finally, there is the issue of the living conditions of the common people. The life in the slums, the suffrage issue, the rights of minorities and the progressive demand of their assimilation, all these aspects of social life, that always compose a part of the larger image of an era, have been also discussed in some detail in the relevant bibliography. So, the problems were intellectual, political, administrative, cultural and social.

The discussion concerning the role of Herbert Croly in the Progressive Era will be, of course, relevant with the discussion concerning the role of government in a republican state. But the effort to view his work from a broader historical perspective and to understand his interesting opinions on the thought of the Founding Fathers will offer important insights and innovative views on the intellectual history of the Progressive era.

⁷⁸ Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 61.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MAKING OF AN AMERICAN INTELLECTUAL

When trying to understand the thought of an important author it is fundamental to trace his intellectual origins. This offers us a better insight in the elements that shaped his opinions and beliefs and enables us to acquire a solid understanding of his point of view. The majority of Herbert Croly's biographers stress three important aspects which shaped his thought: the influence of his parents, the influence of Auguste Comte's positivism and the influence of his professors at Harvard University.⁷⁹ This chapter presents Croly's influences that are directly linked to the main question of the paper, namely Croly's ideas about the role of government in a popular state.

Both Croly's parents were immigrants from Europe. His mother, Jane Cunningham Croly, was born in England in 1829 and when she was eleven her family moved to America, first to Poughkeepsie and then to New York City. At the age of twenty-six she already ventured forth into a journalist career which allowed her to become one of the most prominent women journalists in American history. She signed the majority of her articles under the pseudonym "Jenny June" and she is considered to be the first woman writer that had her columns syndicated. She worked for a variety of magazines and wrote or compiled nine books. According to estimations, she had millions of readers every month for over thirty years and she was highly influential in shaping the social life of the average American woman of her time. Besides her passion for journalism, she was also active in the field of women association. In 1868, as a reaction to the exclusion of women from a honorary reception dinner to Charles Dickens, who was visiting the States back then, she created Sorosis, the first important women club in America.⁸⁰ She wrote about every aspect which was important to the women of the late 19th century (the suffrage issue among others) but her opinions were not consistent -a problem that has been attributed to the fact that she believed in all the values of the Victorian morality but she failed to obey this code due to her active personality.⁸¹ Thus, she sometimes supported traditional ideas by arguing that the main role of women should be to take care of the family and raise children while at other times she encouraged women to work and

79 These influences are underlined in all the books that analyze Croly's thought but especially in David W. Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic: The Life of and Thought of an American Progressive* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) and Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*.

80 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 4-11.

81 Dorreboom Iris, *The Challenge of Our Time: Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Croly, Randolph Bourne and the Making of Modern America* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991), 83.

become financially independent.⁸²

The most interesting aspect of “Jenny June's” thought was that she explored the role of women in the larger economic environment of America. In her book *Thrown on Her Own Resources; Or, What Girls Can Do* (1891) she stressed the fact that the concentration of business in larger enterprise was “law” and that it was a natural outcome of the growth and expansion of the era. People, especially women, had to adapt but the society as a whole had the responsibility to support them by improving their living conditions.⁸³ Apart from this very thought, which definitely influenced Herbert Croly, there are not so many other aspects of direct influence of the mother to the son. In general, the active social life of “Jenny June” meant that she frequently forgot her maternal responsibilities, something that is supported by the fact that Croly rarely mentioned his mother in his papers and autobiographical letters.⁸⁴ According to Edward Stettner the things that Herbert inherited from his mother were mainly the interest in political and social issues, his mother's concern for individual rights, her interest in economic issues and the rejection of laissez-faire and of radical socialism, her club societies and the idea that the problems of the industrial era could be solved by social solidarity, and, last but not at least, the notion that writing about social issues is a way to solve them.⁸⁵

But if the influence of the mother was fragmentary and not acknowledged by Croly himself, the influence of his father was definitely of great importance. David Goodman Croly was born in Ireland and came to the United States when he was still a boy. He had a remarkable journalist career like his wife, although he never became so influential as she. He wrote for several papers (*The New York World* and *The Record and Guide* among them) and he also wrote several books. One of the most remarkable events in his career was the writing and publishing of a pamphlet entitled *Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro*.⁸⁶ The pamphlet was anonymous and it supported the idea that it is desirable for the white man to marry the black woman and the white woman the black man. The writer stressed the fact that the best example in this case was the marriage between Irish immigrants and black Americans. The argument was that the result would uplift Irish who were considered inferior than the black.⁸⁷

82 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 7-8.

83 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 11-12.

84 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 12.

85 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 13.

86 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 4-11. A detailed account of that can be found in Sidney Kaplan, “The Miscegenation Issue in the Election of 1864” *Journal of Negro History* 34, no. 3 (Jul.1949): 274-343.

87 David Croly was himself an Irish immigrant. It is interesting that his wife also expressed racist feelings. She did not allow black women to participate in her associations. Also she had called the immigrant as “an unlettered, ignorant man” and she considered that citizenship was granted to the immigrant very easily. The fact that they were both immigrants did not affect their racist ideas. See Levy, *Herbert Croly and the New Republic*, 9. It is very interesting that Herbert Croly himself expressed similar ideas. In his discussion of the Civil War he does not only accuse the South but the abolitionists too. He believed they tried to subvert the Constitution and the republic by attacking the rights of the South: “The Southern slave owners were not unclean beasts...they were right, moreover, in believing that the negroes

The aim of the pamphlet was to praise in this peculiar way the Northern cause and stir racist anxiety against the Republican party. Notably David Croly's *New York World* paper presented opinions of race purity.⁸⁸

In any case, David Croly's worldview and philosophy was quite solid and based on the philosophy of French thinker Auguste Comte⁸⁹. The latter was one of the main exponents of positivism. It is worth mentioning that one of his most important treatises, a book entitled *The Course of the Positive Philosophy* (1830-1842), was placed in the 9th position in a list of the most harmful books of the 19th and 20th century published by the American weekly *Human Events*.⁹⁰ The reason that *Human Events* placed Comte's work in this list was that Comte denied the existence of God by asserting that “man alone, through scientific observation, could determine the way things ought to be.”⁹¹ Indeed, Comte's placed mankind in the center of his attention. His theoretical model is based on three stages of human development: the theological, the metaphysical and the positive. The main idea is that mankind developed from the first to the latter stage. Thus in the first stage, people believed in one God, in the second in abstract forces like Nature and in the third and most advanced level, the positivist one, they would abandon the absolutes and seek answers for the main questions of their lives on their own empirical experiences, on observed facts.⁹²

Moreover, Comte believes that the scientific study of society and the science of sociology are the main instruments in order to understand and solve the social problems. He stresses the fact that this approach can reveal some unchanging natural laws that can explain social behavior. According to Comte human beings cannot change the natural laws, but the understanding that the scientific approach can offer will allow them to submit rationally to them and thus achieve true liberty.⁹³ Comte believes that the progress of societies means that they tend to become more complex. This complexity leads inevitably to a specialization of men's functions and abilities, a fact that it may lead to different and contrasted interests and thus cause a problem, or even become a threat, to society. Comte's argument was that the way to avoid this is what he calls “the social

were a race possessed of moral and intellectual qualities inferior to those of white men.” See Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 81.

88 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 14.

89 For a detailed biography of August Comte see Mary Pickering, *August Comte: An Intellectual Biography* (3 volumes) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). The second and the third volumes were published in 2009.

90 The list is mentioned in Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte: An Intellectual Biography, Vol. 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1. It can also be found online in *Human Events: The Most Harmful Books of the 19th and 20th Century*, 31 May, 2005, <http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=7591> It should be noted that John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* and John Maynard Keynes' *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* can be found in the list. Both Dewey and Keynes contributed to Herbert Croly's *New Republic* magazine. *The Promise of American Life* by Herbert Croly was also candidate book but it did not enter the top ten list. It is not surprising that in the website of *Human Events*, the magazine describes itself as “the leading conservative media since 1944.”

91 “The Most Harmful Books of the 19th and 20th Century,” *Human Events*, 31 May, 2005, <http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=7591>

92 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 29.

93 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 31-32.

destination of government”, namely a government that must “intervene in the performance of all the various functions of the social economy, to keep up the idea of the whole, and the feeling of interconnection; and the more energetically, the more individual activity tends to dissolve them ... Moreover, this ruling function must become more, instead of less necessary as human development proceeds.”⁹⁴ A supplemental element of Comte's philosophy was an ethic of extreme altruism, the idea that people should offer to humanity and live for the others.⁹⁵

There were also two more elements in Comte's philosophy which influenced David Croly and, later on, his son. The first was the notion that positivism should unite people and, in order to achieve this unity, it should be a political movement rather just an intellectual scheme. He believed that positivism is composed essentially of a philosophy and a politics, which are inseparable and which constitute the basis and the goal of the same universal system.⁹⁶ Mental and moral unity among men should be achieved and this goal demands activism.⁹⁷ But the most important aspect of Comte's work was his attack to the upper classes and his will to contain their abusive power. He believed that the industrialists' preoccupation with satisfying people's needs, their specialization and their assumption that they created the material well-being of the society made them arrogant, selfish and alienated from other people. They forgot the needs of the society. But Comte believed that they could become generous civil public servants, like the Medici in the Renaissance.⁹⁸ According to Pickering, he endorsed the idea that the key to making industrialists a legitimate power that would not exploit its authority was a strong spiritual power that which would use “education, persuasion, blame and moral repression to change their behavior.”⁹⁹

For a devoted disciple of Comte such as David Croly these ideas were fundamental parts of his general mentality. Thus he believed that the industrialization process was not inherently evil, but on the contrary inevitable, a part of the progress of mankind. He even urged his countrymen to reconcile themselves with the political rule of the “captains of industry” which was the future norm according to him.¹⁰⁰ He thought that the capitalists should perform the extreme altruism that Comte prescribed and use their fortunes for the benefit of the society as a whole.¹⁰¹ In his own words: “...there is a class of thinkers in this country who are profound dis-believers in the whole republican or democratic theory government. But we are not, therefore, either Imperialists or Monarchists. We do not advocate going back to any obsolete political institutions. Progress is our motto. There is

94 August Comte quoted in Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 32.

95 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 33.

96 Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 336.

97 Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 336.

98 Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 336.

99 Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, 340-341.

100 Gillis J. Harp, *Positivist Republic: Auguste Comte and the Reconstruction of American Liberalism, 1865-1920* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 45.

101 Harp, *Positivist Republic*, 45.

something in the future as much better than republicanism is better than monarchy, and that is the rule of wealth controlled by moral considerations.”¹⁰² David Croly rejected laissez-faire theory and he believed in an active and interventionist government.¹⁰³

Consistent with his beliefs David Croly underlined the fact that the trusts and the consolidation are inevitable elements of the modern industrialism.¹⁰⁴ According to Levy, he supported the idea that large corporations that eliminated competition have positive effects upon the community as a whole. He even suggested that monopolies offer better products and in general that concentration of capital can be more effective than competition.¹⁰⁵ When he encountered the problem of industrialists who did not want to exercise the social responsibility that the elder Croly suggested, he returned to the pattern of the dualism in the American political tradition, to Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton in order to find a remedy. David Croly considered that the Constitution should be amended because it was a text of an old era in which a false mentality had prevailed: the mentality of Thomas Jefferson. He believed that the fear of the government was a part of the metaphysical era, which was important in order to destroy the theological society, but quite useless in the positivist stage of mankind.¹⁰⁶ Thus he believed that “the only solution of the war against the corporations would be the assumption of control over them by the Federal Government, and this would be utterly antagonistic to the Jeffersonian ideal of government.”¹⁰⁷ He preferred a Hamiltonian promotion of a strong central government.¹⁰⁸ He stated this belief in an eloquent way when he supported that “all corporations must be subordinated to the greater corporation which sits in its place of power at Washington.”¹⁰⁹ The opinion that economic power should be regulated by the government and, also, by public opinion were elements that would influence the thought of Herbert Croly.¹¹⁰ The latter recognized the fact himself, when after his father death in 1889 he stated that one of his first memories were the one of an excursion to Central Park with his father. There David spoke to his son about the solidarity of mankind.¹¹¹

If the influence of his parents and, subsequently, of Auguste Comte were the first important influences in Herbert Croly's life, his studies at Harvard University were the second. Herbert spent almost a decade in Harvard (from 1886 to 1895) without managing to finish his BA studies. His bachelor's degree was awarded to him in 1910 as a recognition of *The Promise of American Life*.¹¹²

102 David Croly as quoted in Harp, *Positivist Republic*, 45.

103 Harp, *Positivist Republic*, 46.

104 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 38.

105 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 39.

106 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 41.

107 David Croly as quoted in Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 41.

108 Dorreboom, *The Challenge of Our Time*, 83.

109 David Croly as quoted in Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 40.

110 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 12.

111 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 16.

112 Dorreboom, *The Challenge of Our Time*, 86.

At Harvard, Herbert's father philosophical beliefs (thus Auguste Comte's beliefs) were challenged. In Cambridge, Massachusetts Herbert Croly encountered some influential professors with different and innovative ideas that challenged the positivist doctrines in which he was baptized.¹¹³ The most important professors in Croly's education at Harvard were William James, Josiah Royce and George Santayana.¹¹⁴ This so called triumvirate dominated Harvard philosophy in the 1880's and 1890's and their influence on Croly should be discussed briefly.¹¹⁵

James (who later became a very famous and important philosopher and the founding father of psychology) rejected the idea of a harmonious whole and stressed the fact that reality was diverse, multiple and contradictory.¹¹⁶ Moreover he believed that human life and the universe could be shaped by human action. The difference between Comteanism and James's beliefs (which can be placed in the broader context of pragmatism) is that the first respects the natural laws while the latter denied the existence of absolutes.¹¹⁷ According to Dorreboom, Croly owes to James his latter activist approach to social problems.¹¹⁸ Josiah Royce had similarities with James such as an voluntarist and empirical approach to science. But Royce believed in a transcendent, omnipresent Unity. It was a unity of God and man in creation but also a unity of different parts of society. Royce deeply believed that humans should have a loyalty to their community.¹¹⁹ Moreover both of them were theists and that disturbed Croly's belief in the Religion of Humanity -he expressed an interest in Christianity and religion studies.¹²⁰ Finally George Santayana taught "Aesthetics" to Croly and his ideas were closer to idealism than positivism, which seemed indifferent to him.¹²¹ Herbert also had the chance to encounter the laissez- faire theories of men like Charles F. Dunbar and Frank W. Taussig, who promoted the ideas of a small government , the reduction of trade barriers and the free play of individuals within a competitive environment.¹²²

The influence of Harvard on Croly cannot be easily measured. It is a fact that it influenced his religious views and it led him to abandon the Religion of Humanity entirely. But in the most important aspect, which is Croly's political and economic approach, Harvard did not replace his father and Comte. Croly simply emerged from Harvard with a reformed and eclectic sort of

113 The verb "baptize" here is not accidental. Herbert was allegedly the first American who was baptized in the Religion of Humanity, the religion that Auguste Comte created. Comte replaced God with the Goddess Humanity. See Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 3.

114 The importance of these three men on Herbert Croly's thought and his acceptance of elements of pragmatism at the expense of his positivism are stressed in Forcey Charles, *The Crossroads of Liberalism: Croly, Weyl, Lippman and the Progressive Era, 1900-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 16-25.

115 Harp, *Positivist Republic*, 187.

116 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 50.

117 Dorreboom, *The Challenge of Our Time*, 87.

118 Dorreboom, *The Challenge of Our Time*, 87.

119 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 37.

120 Harp, *Positivist Republic*, 190-191.

121 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 78.

122 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 54.

positivism.¹²³ He was ready to begin his career as an influential public intellectual of the Progressive era.

123 Levy and Harp agree on that issue and Herbert Croly's opinions in *The Promise of American Life* support the argument. See Harp, *Positivist Republic*, 192 and Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 67.

CHAPTER THREE

THE AMERICAN IDEOLOGICAL DUALISM IN HERBERT CROLY

A. The Promise of American Life

Herbert Croly left Harvard for the first time in 1888 and then in 1899-1900 he abandoned it entirely, never to return. During the next years of his life he worked for *The Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* until 1891, a position which was passed to him by his father, who died in 1889. Then he worked for *The Architectural Record* and he also wrote two books concerning architecture in America. In 1909 he published the most important work of his life, a book called *The Promise of American Life*. Although the period between Harvard and the publication of *The Promise* seems not so important for the study of his political philosophy, there are at least two interesting aspects which should be emphasized before we proceed to the study of his most important theoretical work.

First of all, already from his articles in *The Record and Guide*, Herbert expressed his will to search for a “middle way” between consolidated capital and consolidated labor and to underline the importance of the federal government as a mediator.¹²⁴ It was a position seemingly inherited by his father and, in order to stress it properly, Herbert would revitalize the old dualism that reigns supreme in the American political tradition, namely the struggle between Jeffersonian republicanism and Hamiltonian federalism. David Levy describes one of Croly's earliest editorials in *The Record and Guide* in which Croly underlined that trusts and monopolies are distinctive features of the new age of American history and they have an immense capacity for efficiency and low prices. Nevertheless they can be potentially dangerous and the danger lies in the “unyielding belief in laissez-faire theory and Jeffersonian government.”¹²⁵ There is a very interesting discussion between Croly and a reader of the magazine in which the intellectual presented the beliefs with which he was going to be associated in the American consciousness.¹²⁶ “I am an old subscriber,” the reader goes, “and an older Jeffersonian, a believer in the good doctrine under which this nation has increased so marvelously in numbers and wealth -that the activity of the 'State,' outside of very narrow limits, is evil; and that the individual is much better qualified and much more able to manage his own affairs and look his own interests than a lot of politicians.” Croly's reply in many

124 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 75.

125 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 73.

126 It should be noted that Levy believes that this dialogue can be fictional, thus we should not disregard the possibility that Croly wrote both parts of the conversation. See Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 73.

respects presents an early attack on the Jeffersonian laissez- faire (and on socialism) which would be analyzed more thoroughly in his later works: “It is worth pointing out to our Jeffersonian friend that the long reign of Individualism in this country...has been preparing the way and is still preparing the way for Socialism...The Jeffersonian idea might continue to be the safest guide if this country continued as it was under Jefferson. But in many respects we are as far away from Jefferson as from Sesostris.”¹²⁷

The next interesting aspect has to do with his work on architecture. The analysis of this part of Croly's work is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it should be noted that Croly presented a contrast between Europe and America by noting the severe criticism of American culture by experts such as his professor George Santayana. They accused American (architectural) culture of being gaudy, showy and materialistic while they glorified European art.¹²⁸ Croly searched for what is distinctively American and expressed sympathy for indigenous American architecture. It was obvious that he believed that American art could be uplifted to the level of the European one, even that it could surpass it. He yearned for the “nationalization” of American architecture.¹²⁹ In a way, as Iris Dorreboom notes, the same could apply to the American intellectual and political life. While he was indebted to European thinkers (Auguste Comte should be the first in line) his criticism of America had a characteristically American quality. He believed that, despite the difficulties of his time, it was the destiny of his country to be better and more important than the other countries of the world. The main task of his work, he thought, was to remind the American people of their destiny and offer them novel ways of acquiring this level of superiority.¹³⁰ Thus, Croly's work should not be viewed separately from the bulk of American literature that stresses the exceptional characteristics of the United States of America.

In 1909 Herbert Croly published *The Promise of American Life*. It was an instant success for Croly, despite the fact that it did not sell more than 7,500 copies during his lifetime. It was read and praised by men who were going to be important in the American politics of the era, men such as Learned Hand, Walter Lippman, Robert Moss Lovett and of course Theodore Roosevelt.¹³¹ Moreover, it convinced Harvard to award him his BA degree despite the fact that he did not meet the requirements for that: *The Promise* was evidence enough of erudition.¹³² Finally, it impressed William and Dorothy Straight who read the book when they were in China (William was a customs inspector there); they were impressed by its argument and later they would fund the author's most

127 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 73. Sesostris was a legendary king of ancient Egypt.

128 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 80.

129 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 89.

130 Dorreboom, *The Challenge of Our Time*, 85.

131 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 134-138.

132 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 141.

important endeavor, the publishing of the *New Republic* magazine.¹³³

The main argument of *The Promise of American Life* is that America is a promised land. In Croly's own words "an America which was not the Land of Promise, which was not informed by a prophetic outlook and a more or less constructive ideal, would not be the America bequeathed to us by our forefathers."¹³⁴ But the main problem that appeared during the new, industrialized era was the fact that there seemed to be a disharmony between the individual interests and the national welfare.¹³⁵ The reason of the disharmony could be traced on the fact that Americans thought that the Promise was self-fulfilled, it could be achieved by successful individuals but this "traditional American confidence in individual freedom has resulted in a morally and socially undesirable distribution of wealth."¹³⁶ The solution that Croly prescribes is the rejection of laissez-faire theory and the acceptance of the idea of national planning in order to ensure this better future of the country.¹³⁷

In his struggle for an ideology for the American state, Croly resurrected the old quarrel between Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. But he decided to underline their positive and negative aspects and reconcile them in a fruitful and productive combination, in what he called "national democracy," namely the combination of nationality and democracy, of the Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian traditions¹³⁸ Croly adopted a historical approach in order to explain and express his argument in an intensive study of the American history from the era of the Revolution to his age. The country was mainly established in the era between the American independence and the Civil War in what he called the "pioneer period." This period offered three legacies of great importance.¹³⁹

The first and most important legacy is the one of the rise and establishment of the dualism in the American political tradition. This period saw the rise of two schools of political thought which were symbolized in the figures of Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. Herbert Croly, as his father, is very straightforward in his personal preference: "I shall not disguise the fact that, on the whole, my own preferences are on the side of Hamilton rather than of Jefferson. He was the sound thinker, the constructive statesman, the candid and honorable, if erring, gentleman..."¹⁴⁰ What Croly admires in Hamilton's vision was the fact that he promoted "a vigorous, positive, constructive national policy...that implied a faith in the powers of an efficient government to advance the

133 Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, Vol. V: Sketches of 21 Magazines, 1905-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), 192-193.

134 Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 3.

135 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 97.

136 Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 23.

137 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 34.

138 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 35.

139 The analysis of the three legacies of the "pioneer period" draws from Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 97-105.

140 Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 29.

national interest.”¹⁴¹ It was of grave importance that the government would be active and would interfere in the political, social and economic life in order to regulate and guide the nation.¹⁴² But Croly is honest enough to expose the defect of his hero: Hamilton, this great promoter of American nationalism, feared democracy and believed that the new government had to be based on the wealthy and well-educated classes.¹⁴³ But this led a lot of Americans to link Hamilton's nationalism with aristocracy and to establish a fierce and effective opposition. The leading figure of the opposition was, of course, Thomas Jefferson.

Croly did not like Jefferson but he found one important positive characteristic in his personality, the fact that he believed in the American people.¹⁴⁴ He was “the amiable enthusiast, who understood his fellow-countrymen better and trusted them more than his rival, but who was incapable either of uniting with his fine phrases a habit of candid and honorable private dealing or of embodying those phrases in a set of efficient institutions.”¹⁴⁵ The reason of the latter was, of course, that Jefferson refused to establish governmental institutions due to his deep belief in as little government as possible.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Jefferson's democracy was not an effective one but it was a narrow democracy that was based on “a collection of individuals, fundamentally alike in their abilities and deserts...”, it was a democracy “tantamount to extreme individualism.”¹⁴⁷ In the end Jefferson prevailed and his definition of democracy survived throughout the American history. Croly identifies Andrew Jackson as a Jeffersonian and the only American statesman that managed to escape Jefferson's shadow and represent a constructive political leadership was Abraham Lincoln.¹⁴⁸

The second legacy is the Western Democrat of ante-bellum America which appeared as the ideal American, the symbol of the nation.¹⁴⁹ It was the pioneer with impressive personal traits such as energy and practicality, who promoted the democratic ideal. But he was driven by one motive: the search of personal wealth.¹⁵⁰ In the conditions of the frontier and wilderness in which he had to survive he had to be flexible and versatile: the America of that time despised the experts and specialists.¹⁵¹

The third legacy, according to Levy, was a specific definition in the popular mind of the Promise of American life. It was an economic promise, its main goal was material prosperity. This growing prosperity was combined with the idea of growing personal freedom that would be

141 Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 38-40; Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 98.

142 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 98.

143 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 98.

144 Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 42-43.

145 Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 29.

146 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 35.

147 Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 42-42; Levy W. David, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 99.

148 For Croly's account on Andrew Jackson see Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 52-71. For his account on Lincoln see Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 87-99.

149 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 100.

150 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 100.

151 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 100-101.

protected by free political institutions.¹⁵²

These three legacies led to a combination of “Jeffersonian government, frontier individualism and home in the unfolding future”, which represent a laissez-faire ideology that seemed efficient in the past, but not any more.¹⁵³ In the industrialized America of the early 20th century fundamental aspects of the Jeffersonian doctrine were already violated by reality. One important aspect of these doctrines was the notion of equality of rights or equality of opportunity. Croly's attack on laissez-faire was based on the idea that the long celebrated idea that the American system offers an equality of opportunity was false. People who begin their life with property have a substantial advantage and there is no real opportunity in the system.¹⁵⁴ In Croly's own words: “The democratic principle requires an equal start in the race, while expecting at the same time an unequal finish. But Americans who talk in this way seem wholly blind to the fact that under a legal system which holds private property sacred there may be equal rights, but there cannot possibly be any equal opportunities for exercising such rights. The chance which the individual has to compete with his fellows and take a prize in the race is vitally affected by material conditions over which he has no control...Those who have enjoyed the benefits of wealth and thorough education start with an advantage which can be overcome only by very exceptional men.”¹⁵⁵ Croly believed that the Jeffersonians tended to choose egalitarianism in expense of liberty in a way that suppressed even the fruitful inequalities. He was against a money aristocracy but he supported an aristocracy of merit and promoted the idea of a national democracy that would allow an equality of opportunity for able individuals.¹⁵⁶

Croly's attack on Jefferson did not include Jefferson's love for democracy. On the contrary that was the great mistake of Hamilton and the main political proposal of *The Promise* was the pursuit of Jeffersonian ends by Hamiltonian means which Forcey calls “Croly's prescription for a new liberalism.”¹⁵⁷ On the important issue of trusts and big corporations Croly expressed vigorously that the federal government should abandon its useless fight against them by asking the repeal of the Sherman Act while he proposed the support of these corporations on the grounds of their potential effectiveness.¹⁵⁸ Croly proposed federal regulation which could mean complete

152 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 102.

153 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 103.

154 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 42.

155 Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 181; Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 42-43.

156 Here Stettner emphasizes the fact that Croly misinterpreted Jefferson. Jefferson did not necessarily promote a democracy of equals but he mentioned the merits of a “national aristocracy”. See Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 43- 44. In a letter to John Adams, Jefferson wrote: “I agree with you that there is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents...May we not even say, that that form of government is the best, which provides the most effectually for a pure selection of these natural aristoi into the offices of government?” Jefferson as quoted in Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 182.

157 Forcey, *The Crossroads of Liberalism*, 29.

158 Forcey, *The Crossroads of Liberalism*, 33. The Sherman Antitrust Act was passed in 1890 and it was the first federal statute to limit cartels and monopolies.

expropriation with government ownership and management. In cases of corporations that have grown to large as to become “natural monopolies” Croly suggested expropriation with compensation.¹⁵⁹ Overall his ideas included the creation of a strong centralized government, the promotion of labor unions and the aforementioned restraint and subsequent nationalization of big business, but not its destruction.¹⁶⁰ Thus he wanted to keep alive the big trusts but also to ensure that they would remain social servants.¹⁶¹

Overall Croly proposed a kind of democratic Hamiltonianism in which the strong government would ensure that people should abandon their devotion to money making and support goals that could be beneficial not only for the individual but for the society as a whole.¹⁶² By changing their mentality and supporting mutual loyalty and disinterested pursuit of the common welfare the Promise could be fulfilled.¹⁶³

The book was highly theoretical but also directly attached to the events of Croly's present day and the author made an effort to promote his ideas in the sphere of practical politics. The most important element of that is the fact that Theodore Roosevelt is present in the book as the new Lincoln, as the man who could lead America to the path of a national purpose. Croly mentions that when an accident placed Roosevelt in the presidential chair he “consistently uses the power of the Federal government and his own influence and popularity for the purpose of regulating the corporations in what he believed to be the public interest.”¹⁶⁴ And all that because throughout his career he stood for an idea, which of course could be no other but the national idea.¹⁶⁵ By linking his present day hero with his favorite Founding Father, Croly stressed the fact that Roosevelt was reviving the Hamiltonian idea of constructive national legislation.¹⁶⁶ But Croly suggested that Roosevelt was even better leader of a national idea than Hamilton. He was a Hamiltonian with a difference and this is based on the fact that while Hamilton tried to establish the Federal organization as a barrier against the rise of democracy, Roosevelt's New Federalism or New Nationalism¹⁶⁷ was not inimical to democracy: “more than any other political leader, except Lincoln, his devotion both to the national and to the democratic ideas is thorough-going and absolute.”¹⁶⁸ But even Roosevelt was not perfect. Croly found elements of Jeffersonianism in Roosevelt's “Square Deal”, which according to Croly was a revival of the assumptions if equal

159 Forcey, *The Crossroads of Liberalism*, 34.

160 Forcey, *The Crossroads of Liberalism*, 34.

161 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 113.

162 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 116.

163 Dorreboom, *The Challenge of Our Time*, 100. As mentioned above, loyalty to the community was an influence from Royce's pragmatism.

164 Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 167.

165 Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 168.

166 Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 168.

167 For a definition of New Nationalism and New Freedom see next chapter.

168 Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 169.

rights, including the assumption that businessmen were acting like dishonest sharpers.¹⁶⁹ But still Roosevelt's effort were highly positive.

Roosevelt himself read *The Promise of American Life* and he commented that he found it very profitable for him and he also told Croly that he was going to use his ideas in his speeches.¹⁷⁰ One of the most interesting aspects on *The Promise's* influence on American politics of the era is the question of whether it influenced Roosevelt or no. Historian Hugh Brogan, in his *Penguin History of the United States*, writes that “He (Roosevelt) read Herbert Croly, he began to preach what he called 'the New Nationalism' (a popularization of Croly's ideas) and he went on a huge speaking tour in a vain effort to hold the Republicans together and stave off their defeat.”¹⁷¹ William Leuchtenburg also stresses the fact that many contemporaries of Roosevelt believed that his New Nationalism doctrine was inspired by Croly's work.¹⁷² Roosevelt definitely read the book after the suggestion of Learned Hand and Henry Cabot Lodge, he became friend with Croly and, as mentioned above, he told him that he was going to use his ideas.¹⁷³ Croly's spirit is apparent in many speeches of Roosevelt, like the one in Osawatomie where he lounded his New Nationalism campaign, one year after the publication of *The Promise of American Life*.¹⁷⁴ But the truth is that Roosevelt was already a devoted Hamiltonian before he read Croly's work. As Forcey underlines Roosevelt liked Croly's book and he mediated in the Jeffersonian- Hamiltonian dualism, but for him it was not something new: “I think the worship of Jefferson a discredit to my country; and I have small use for the ordinary Jeffersonian”, he wrote to an English author of a book on Hamilton in 1906.¹⁷⁵ Forcey also offer us a quote from 1906 in which Roosevelt expressed his admiration to Lincoln which foretold Croly's description of the Great Emancipator: “Lincoln...was superior to Hamilton... because he was a politician and was a genuine democrat and therefore suited to lead a genuine democracy.” And eight months before the publication of *The Promise* he wrote “I have no use for the Hamiltonian who is an aristocrat, or for the Jeffersonian who is a demagogue. Let us trust the people as Jefferson did, but not flatter them; and let us try to make our administration as

169 William E. Leuchtenburg, “Introduction” in *Theodore Roosevelt: The New Nationalism*, ed. William E. Leuchtenburg, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc,1961), 15.

170 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 136.

171 Brogan, *The Penguin History of the USA*, 457.

172 Leuchtenburg, “Introduction,” 11.

173 Leuchtenburg, “Introduction,” 11.

174 One of the most brilliant examples is Roosevelt's speech at Osawatomie on August, 31 1910: “Every special interest is entitled to justice -full,fair and complete, -and,now, mind you, if there were any attempt by mob violence to plunder and work harm to the special interest, whatever it may be, that I most dislike, and the wealthy man, whomsoever he may be, for whom I have the greatest contempt, I would fight for him, and you would if you were worth your salt. He should have justice...The Constitution guarantees protection to property, and we must make that promise good. But it does not give the right of suffrage to any corporation.” In another part he states “It has become entirely clear that we must have government supervision of the capitalization, not only of public service corporations...but of all corporations doing an interstate business.” And “The New Nationalism puts the national need before sectional or personal advantage...The New Nationalism regards the executive power as the steward of public welfare.” See Leuchtenburg, *Theodore Roosevelt: The New Nationalism*, 21-39.

175 Roosevelt as quoted in Forcey, *The Crossroads of Liberalism*, 128.

effective as Hamilton taught us to have it. Lincoln...struck the right average.”¹⁷⁶ In the end Leuchtenburg's argument that the majority of the arguments of Croly's book had been expressed by Roosevelt before 1909 and that Croly was also influenced by Roosevelt, seems convincing. In three messages to Congress in 1907 and 1908 he had expressed almost the entire platform of the New Nationalism: federal regulation of business, legislation to benefit labor and so on.¹⁷⁷

Nevertheless the fact that Croly presented him as the new Lincoln was apparently flattering for a devoted Lincoln fan as Roosevelt. And despite the fact that the book was not so influential on the -soon to be- leader of the Bull Moose Party, it was still important.¹⁷⁸ It definitely helped Roosevelt to reshape and clarify his thoughts and it gave a theoretical base for the Progressive Movement. In the end, as Levy notes, the important thing is not whether Croly influenced Roosevelt but the fact that Herbert Croly's generation had no doubts about the relationship between *The Promise of American Life* and Roosevelt's new policies.¹⁷⁹

176 Roosevelt as quoted in Forcey, *The Crossroads of Liberalism*, 128.

177 Leuchtenburg, “Introduction,” 12.

178 The Bull Moose Party, officially called the Progressive Party, was the party created by Theodore Roosevelt after the split of the Republican Party between President Taft and ex-president Theodore Roosevelt. It participated under Roosevelt in the elections of 1912 but it was defeated by the Democratic Party under Woodrow Wilson which promoted a similar progressive agenda under the motto of New Freedom.

179 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 141.

B. Progressive Democracy

The Promise of American Life is considered to be Croly's most enduring masterpiece. The second important book that he wrote was entitled *Progressive Democracy* (1914) and it was a publication of his Godkin Lectures at Harvard University in 1913-1914.¹⁸⁰ The book was more partisan and less theoretical than *The Promise* and, in a way, it seems that its purpose was to serve as a platform for the recently founded Progressive Party, under Theodore Roosevelt. As Stettner eloquently states, it was a book written from “within” progressivism.¹⁸¹ Nevertheless, the book never received the high reputation of its predecessor. As David Levy argues the “old reformers remembered the importance of *The Promise of American Life* in helping to create the reform spirit of the age; none of them would ever assign the same importance to *Progressive Democracy*. The friends who memorialized Croly at his death chose to mention the book only in passing, and historians of the progressive era have never discovered in *Progressive Democracy*, as they have in *The Promise of American Life*, a seminal and constructive influence upon the time for which it was written.”¹⁸² Even Croly himself in a letter to Roosevelt mentioned that the book carries further the message of *The Promise* but, in his mind, it was only a supplement and he wished that the two books had been combined in one.¹⁸³ Nevertheless, the book contains some interesting elements concerning the evolution of Croly's thought on the grounds of the American dualism in the American political tradition, thus some important aspects of it should be presented here.

The book was written in an era of optimism for the Progressive movement. In 1912 Theodore Roosevelt announced the formation of his Progressive Party and Herbert Croly was highly enthusiastic. In a letter to Learned Hand, he wrote that this new party “contains more promise for future good government than any recent movement in American history. You will find it driven by the logic of its own...situation towards nationalism.”¹⁸⁴ In defining the positive traits of the new party, he mentioned that it took over the Democratic tradition of the popular rule, it took over the Republican tradition of national responsibility and by the combination of those principles it made the American nation responsible for the realization of a social democratic ideal.¹⁸⁵ According

180 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 78.

181 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 78.

182 Levy, *Herbert Croly and the New Republic*, 174.

183 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 174.

184 Croly quoted in Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 87.

185 Herbert Croly, “A Test of Faith in Democracy” *American Magazine* 75, November 1912, 23; Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 87.

to Stettner, the notion of “social democratic” indicated an evolution in Croly's thought which would become even more apparent in *Progressive Democracy*.¹⁸⁶

Progressive Democracy indeed begins with a praise of the Progressive movement and of Theodore Roosevelt who remained Croly's hero. He states that Americans during the 1912-1914 witnessed the end of an epoch and the beginning of a new era: “a movement of public opinion, which believes itself to be and calls itself essentially progressive, has become the dominant formative influence in American political life.”¹⁸⁷ He believes that the most important fact of this new movement is its pervasiveness and its influence on both the Democratic and the Republican party. Already from the introduction, Croly tries to formulate a narrative concerning the heroes of the Progressive movement, namely Theodore Roosevelt and -the then US president, under the banners of the Democratic party, Woodrow Wilson-, explain their progressivism and express his support toward Roosevelt's version of progressivism. Roosevelt's progressivism, Croly stresses, had many ambiguities, but it had its merit. It was committed to a drastic reorganization of the American political and economic system, it wanted to substitute the individualism of the past with a frank social policy and to realize this policy by the use of efficient government instruments.¹⁸⁸ On the other hand, Croly supports that the progressivism of Wilson was ambiguous in this essential respect. While Wilson was sincere and no doubt could be expressed about that, “his deliberate purpose seems to have been to keep progressivism vague -with a vagueness that is elusive and secretive than merely flexible.”¹⁸⁹ According to Croly, Wilson's progressivism could be interpreted as an effort to emancipate an otherwise excellent system from “corruptive and perverting parasites.”¹⁹⁰ In the end, it was a type of progressivism “carefully crafted not to be too progressive, and, like the superseded reform movements, poses as a higher conservatism.”¹⁹¹

In continuing his criticism on Wilson's interpretation of progressivism, Croly goes on to express his viewpoints on Wilson's New Freedom platform as the opposite of Theodore Roosevelt's New Nationalism. Because these two notions are key ideological and political elements of the Progressive Era, it is appropriate to offer some definitions of the terms, before we proceed to Croly's understanding of them. According to Lewis Gould, Roosevelt's New Nationalism combined the themes of strong executive authority, more active regulation, and the pursuit of general welfare programs that he had been moving toward since 1904. It stressed ideas of justice, equality and a powerful broker state, while it was depended on a strong presidency, on non partisan experts in a

186 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 87.

187 Herbert Croly, *Progressive Democracy*, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1914), 1-2.

188 Croly, *Progressive Democracy*, 15.

189 Croly, *Progressive Democracy*, 15.

190 Croly, *Progressive Democracy*, 15.

191 Croly, *Progressive Democracy*, 15. No doubt here that when Croly speaks about the “superseded reform movements,” he has in mind the Populist movement of the 1890's.

¹⁹² In the elections of 1912 the main elements of the New Nationalism were Roosevelt's support of a strong, fundamental administrative commission to maintain a permanent and active supervision over industrial corporations engaged in interstate commerce.¹⁹³ It also promoted the idea of the “new competition” which implied that notions such as stability, agreement and negotiation under the blessings of the government would replace competition. A world of large corporations would be function much better under arrangements between socially responsible and enlightened corporations and the federal government.¹⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the most important element was the acceptance of corporate power as an inevitable fact of the modern era, the increase of the supervisory functions of the national authority and the use of an expanded bureaucratic machinery to regulate economy.¹⁹⁵

On the other hand, Wilson's New Freedom was, in many respects, the opposite of New Nationalism. The main arguments of this platform were written by Wilson and Louis D. Brandeis, an attorney from Boston and progressive thinker. The main difference lied in the issue of trusts. Wilson was very critical on Roosevelt idea that there are “good” and “bad” trusts and that the latter should be regulated. In one of his speeches, he made a specific reference to Roosevelt himself: “You know that Mr. Roosevelt long ago classified trusts for us as good and bad, and he said that he was afraid of the bad ones. Now he...proposes that they should all be made good by discipline, directly applied by a commission of executive appointment. All that it is proposed to do it to take them under control and regulation.”¹⁹⁶ But then Wilson totally rejected this idea: “I absolutely protest against being put into the hands of the trustees...under the plan I am proposing, there will be an avowed partnership between the government and the trusts. I take it that the firm will be ostensibly controlled by the senior member. For I take it that the government of the United States is at least the senior member...”¹⁹⁷ Brandeis also was in agreement with these thoughts. He believed that the very large units are not so efficient as the small ones, he asked from Wilson to support the idea that competition should be the mean of regulating monopoly and to create a federal commission to enforce the antitrust laws. According to Gould, when Roosevelt promoted a federal policy that would accept consolidation and the use of regulation to supervise corporations, Wilson and Brandeis stressed a restoration of competition and a reliance on government to achieve and maintain a competitive balance.¹⁹⁸ Wilson's New Freedom was enhanced by a Jeffersonian rhetoric

192 Gould, *Reform and Regulation*, 139.

193 Gould, *Reform and Regulation*, 170.

194 Gould, *Reform and Regulation*, 170.

195 Gould, *Reform and Regulation*, 170.

196 Woodrow Wilson, “On The Meaning of the New Freedom,1912” in Hofstadter, *The Progressive Movement*, 174-175.

197 Wilson, “On The Meaning of the New Freedom,1912,” 175-176.

198 Gould, *Reform and Regulation*, 172.

that supported the common man against the evils of power concentration. He believed that in the modern world of business dominance, men were not individuals but “fractions” -that very fact diminished their freedom.¹⁹⁹ But in a competitive society each man's reward would be in accordance with his efforts.²⁰⁰ Thus his policies were heading to the abolition of the privilege of the monopolies and to support the new entrepreneur against the rising monopolies.²⁰¹

In some respects, the distinctions between the programs of the two progressive leaders revitalized aspects of the old Jeffersonian -Hamiltonian dualism. For Croly, who had analyzed this dualism in *The Promise of American Life*, it was a perfect time to stress his opinions on the two leaders under this framework. In a critical way, he writes that the New Freedom under Mr. Wilson implies “that the history of human liberty is the history of the restriction of governmental functions.”²⁰² He identifies the tariff reform and the eradication (ruthless, he calls it) of any monopolistic control over business transactions as the core of Wilson's program. No wonder that he identifies New Freedom as a revival of Jeffersonian individualism.²⁰³

Under these conditions, Croly tries to offer a new definition of American history and a platform for the Progressive movement. And, as we saw in the discussion above, the debate on nationality and democracy and the demand for their combination, that predominated in *The Promise of American Life*, is still apparent in *Progressive Democracy*, although it is not its main argument. But according to Stettner, Croly here introduces the idea of a “progressive democratic ideal” or “democratic progressive faith”.²⁰⁴ This very notion suggests that Croly was more receptive towards the notion of democracy than he was in *The Promise*, in which he mainly stressed the notion of nationalism. In *Progressive Democracy*, Croly mentioned the idea that society is not consisted only of individuals but also of groups with different interests.²⁰⁵ So these groups have legitimate purposes and goals but they are beneficial only when they remain subordinated to the sense on unity for which he urged in *The Promise*, a sense of unity derived from “their faith in the holiness of the city”.²⁰⁶

This acceptance of democracy is apparent in *Progressive Democracy* and, according to Levy, is the general principle of the book. More specifically he quotes from *Progressive*

199 William E. Leuchtenburg, “Introduction” in William E. Leuchtenburg, ed. , *Wilson Woodrow: The New Freedom*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1961), 8.

200 Leuchtenburg, “Introduction,” 8.

201 Leuchtenburg, “Introduction,” 9.

202 Croly, *Progressive Democracy*, 16.

203 Croly, *Progressive Democracy*, 16.

204 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 92-92. Croly uses in several parts this term, for example: “The progressive democratic faith carries with it the liberation of democracy from this class of social pseudosciences,” or “In the preceding chapter the faith necessary to the fulfillment of the progressive democratic ideal was characterized as implying to sharply distinguished attitudes towards two different types of political and social knowledge.” Respectively in Croly, *Progressive Democracy*, 176 and Croly, *Progressive Democracy*, 184.

205 “Individual pilgrims or groups of individual pilgrims can live spiritually upon the will to realize some specific social program and purpose.” See Croly, *Progressive Democracy*, 190.

206 Croly, *Progressive Democracy*, 191; Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 193.

Democracy: “The character of a nation, like the character of the individual, is wrought not by submissive obedience to the Law, but by the active assertion of the needs and purposes of its own life.”²⁰⁷ This very quote brings forward the new distinction that Croly underlines in his book. If in *The Promise* he introduced the Jeffersonian- Hamiltonian dualism, here he introduces the dualism between the popular sovereignty and the will of Americans to restrict their own power by means of a “self-denying” ordinance.²⁰⁸ It was a distinction between “The People” and “The Law,” in which he also added the idea that the Constitution of the United States was a paper of the past and it should be changed in order to offer to the government more power, but also because in its drafting, popular control had not be exercised.²⁰⁹ In an interesting evolution of his thought, the intellectual, who was very careful on issues considering the people's rights and power, now stressed the notion that the state and federal system comprised an abdication of popular power at exactly the same moment when Americans expressed the will to exercise that power.²¹⁰ Thus this great exponent of nationalism expressed the idea that people had the ability and the duty to control their destiny.²¹¹ In support of Levy's argument, Stettner notes that the notion of democracy is much more predominant in this book rather than in *The Promise*, something that is apparent in the importance that Croly offers to the tradition of direct democracy in New England town meetings.²¹² Croly states that “The importance of this assertion by the people of New England of the reality of ultimate popular political responsibility can scarcely be overestimated...Here on American soil, for the first time since the birth of representative institutions, and among a people who had been accustomed to representative government, the custom of merely consulting public opinion about political essentials was converted into direct popular control.”²¹³ This assertion leads Croly even to make a positive comment on Jefferson and the Jeffersonians, the fact that during Jefferson's presidency the notions of democracy and nationalism merged.²¹⁴

It was not an acceptance of Jeffersonianism but an understanding of some positive aspects of it. This is more than apparent in the different definitions of democracy that Stettner reveals and stresses, between *The Promise* and *Progressive Democracy*. In *The Promise*, Croly noted that democracy's essence is “to promote some salutary and formative purpose. The really formative purpose is not exclusively a matter of individual liberty, although it must give individual liberty abundant scope. Neither is it a matter of equal rights alone, although it must always cherish the

207 Levy, *Herbert Croly and the New Republic*, 164; Croly, *Progressive Democracy*, 167.

208 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 163.

209 It is stressed in Dorreboom, *The Challenge of Our Time*, 134.

210 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 163.

211 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 169.

212 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 78.

213 Croly, *Progressive Democracy*, 32.

214 “The practical fusion of Federalism and Republicanism which occurred soon after the election of Thomas Jefferson to the presidency, was the inevitable consequence of the Constitution and the Democracy.” See Croly, *Progressive Democracy*, 59.

social bond which that principle represents. The salutary and formative democratic purpose consists in using the democratic organization for the joint benefit of individual distinction and social improvement.”²¹⁵ In a different, more receptive to democracy mood, he stressed in *Progressive Democracy* “Democracy is not government by peculiarly qualified people or by a peculiarly qualified part of the people. It is or it should be government in which the largest possible proportion of the adult citizenship of the country effectively participate.”²¹⁶ Stettner believes that Croly became more positive towards the idea of democracy due to the optimism that he felt about progressivism and because of the rising public support of the progressive movement. Moreover it was possible that these arguments would be more difficult to be attacked by Wilson than the elitism that he expressed in *The Promise*.

Levy believes that the similarities between *The Promise* and *Progressive Democracy* lie in the fact that they are organized identically, they are characterized by a historical approach and they both discover a major tension in American history (the tension between Hamiltonian federalism and Jeffersonian republicanism in the former and the tension between democratic freedom and constitutional restraints in the latter). They also promoted a similar political platform: centralization of governmental functions, rationalized state governments, increased administrative authority and support towards intellectual, scientific and technical experts.²¹⁷ The main difference lied in the latter's enthusiasm about the mechanisms of direct democracy.²¹⁸

215 Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 207; Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 45.

216 Croly, *Progressive Democracy*, 308; Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 308.

217 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 175.

218 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 175. Another difference that Levy stresses is that there is no reference in foreign policy in *Progressive Democracy*. Croly's views on foreign policy will be discussed in the next section, concerning the *New Republic*.

C. *New Republic*

Both *The Promise of American Life* and *Progressive Democracy* represent the peak of Herbert Croly's theoretical work. They contain the main aspects of his political philosophy and they are the main works in which the reader, who is interested in acquiring a better understanding of the political thought of this intellectual of the Progressive era, should turn to. They are also the more well-known works of the author -both his work on architecture and the two biographies that he wrote are scarcely remembered today, despite their merit.²¹⁹ But the most important and influential endeavor of his life was not a book, but a magazine. Its name was the *New Republic* and soon after its first issue, it became one of the most important magazines of the Progressive era. The very fact that it was a magazine entails the fact that its content was less theoretical and more based on practical daily political issues. Nevertheless, its influence and importance make a short description and analysis necessary.

The birth of the *New Republic* did not occur in the Eastern coast of the United States, not even in the American continent, but in Asia.²²⁰ The seed of its creation was based on a reading of *The Promise of American Life* by William and Dorothy Straight, an American couple who worked in China. William Straight, for whom later Croly would write a biography, was working there as an agent of New York bankers and railroad magnate. A devoted imperialist, he believed that the connection between progressivism and imperialism was the basis for a new American patriotic nationalism.²²¹ His wife had close relations with Theodore Roosevelt, and, according to Levy, perhaps it was Roosevelt himself who offered to them Croly's book.²²² In any case, they were impressed by the book and they immediately decided, upon their return to New York, to find the author of the book. Mott argues that there was no paradox in this: "wealth was interested in social reform, all within the capitalist system; and confirmed imperialists had strong leanings toward the Progressive movement in contemporary politics."²²³ They became good friends and in one of their meetings, Croly expressed his disappointment for the fact that an important magazine of the era, *Harper's Weekly*, under the editorship of Norman Hapgood, had not taken a bold, liberal and

219 Croly wrote a biography of Marcus Alonzo Hanna, the Republican senator from Ohio who was the campaign manager of the successful Presidential candidate, William McKinley, in the elections of 1896, and a biography of William Straight, the man who funded the publication of the *New Republic*. See Herbert Croly, *Marcus Alonzo Hanna: His Life and Work* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912) and Herbert Croly, *William Straight* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924).

220 Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, 192.

221 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 186.

222 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 186.

223 Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, 192-193.

progressive stand.²²⁴ In fact, Hapgood, who was Croly's classmate at Harvard, had fell under the influence of Louis Brandeis, thus the pages of his magazine denounced Roosevelt and praised the Wilsonian version of progressivism that Croly despised.²²⁵ The result of the discussion was that they would create a weekly magazine that would promote their version of progressivism: Croly would be the chief editor and Straights would put the money, until the magazine would become self-sustained.²²⁶

Croly immediately tried to find the most brilliant minds of the progressive movement to fill the ranks of his newborn creation. He recruited Walter Lippmann, the brilliant former student of Santayana at Harvard, who at the age of twenty-three wrote a book entitled *A Preface to Politics*, a brilliant and successful book in which he urged for the same active government that Croly had urged for in *The Promise*.²²⁷ He also invited Walter Weyl, whose book *The New Democracy* had promoted a greater democratization of government and the idea of socialization of industry.²²⁸ Croly, Lippmann and Weyl would form the triumvirate of the *New Republic* and would write the majority of the articles in the first years, although Croly always retained the unofficial status of chief-editor due to the respect that the others had for him. According to Mott, it was an interesting progressive mix but not without differences of opinion: "The Hamiltonian Croly, the Jeffersonian Weyl...and the pragmatic Lippmann might be expected to disagree occasionally..."²²⁹ But disagreements remained within limits and in general the function of the magazine was smooth. Besides the three leaders, a greater number of progressive thinkers collaborated with the magazine in a permanent or occasional manner: some of the names include Philip Littell, Francis Hackett, Randolph Bourne, John Dewey, Learned Hand, Felix Frankfurter, Charles Beard and, Croly's professor, George Santayana.²³⁰

In a letter to William Straight, Croly expressed the purpose of the *New Republic*: "I am trying to do a very difficult thing. I am trying to make a radical social and political policy persuasive to an audience which is far less radical. I succeeded in my first book in doing something of the kind."²³¹ According to Stettner, Croly's will was to further the arguments he supported in his two theoretical books: not only the short-run arguments, but mainly his deep belief that America needed an essential reform of its political values.²³² Stettner identifies the main elements of the *New Republic*, in relation to Croly's books. He argues that Croly still promoted a political theory very

224 Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, 195.

225 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 188.

226 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 188.

227 Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, 196.

228 Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, 196.

229 Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, 197.

230 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 108.

231 Croly as quoted in Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 109.

232 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 109.

much alike with the one presented in *Progressive Democracy* and he continued to express the pluralism that characterized this book, especially the idea that people may have allegiances not only to the nation-state, which was the main aspect of *The Promise*, but also to other groups.²³³ In general, Croly and his associates continued to emphasize aspects such as a centralized national power and economic planning.²³⁴ In any case, there are two elements in the *New Republic* which should draw our attention, in respect of the Jeffersonian -Hamiltonian dualism of the study: the evolution of Croly's opinion towards leaders of the Progressive movement, namely Roosevelt and Wilson and the *New Republic's* stand towards the most important global event of the era: the First World War.

In the first editions of the magazine, Croly supported Roosevelt in the same wholeheartedly manner in which he did it in *Progressive Democracy*. One should note an (unsigned) article in the second issue of the first volume entitled “Timid Neutrality” in which *New Republic* praises Roosevelt's decision not to accept any idealistic peaceful attitude but to endorse the idea that disarmament of peaceful nations will not produce peace, on the contrary it would be dangerous for peace:

We have seen the Hague conventions, to which our signature is attached, torn up and thrown to the winds. undefended towns have been bombarded, exorbitant levies made, hostages taken. We have not even protested. We have watched the paper structure of good-will collapse. And yet when a man like Roosevelt insists that we must create no more valueless paper, he is denounced as an American Bernhardt and the twin of the Kaiser. On the same score THE NEW REPUBLIC will no doubt be accused as a militaristic organ, hostile to the good faith of the world.²³⁵

This article explicitly shows the will of the magazine to endorse Roosevelt and also promote the idea of a ready to fight for democracy state. But at least in the domestic affairs, Woodrow Wilson had already started to promote a progressive legislation that started to win the sympathy of Croly. The Kern- McGillicuddy Act that provided workmen's compensation for federal employees, the Keating-Owen Act that prohibited products of child labor in interstate commerce and the Adamson Act that legislated the eight hours day on the railroads were important examples.²³⁶ The growing satisfaction towards Wilson move on in parallel with a growing dissatisfaction towards Roosevelt.

233 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 110.

234 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 114.

235 “Timid Neutrality,” *New Republic* 1 (November 14, 1914),7.

236 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 117.

In an article entitled “The Newest Nationalism” the magazine criticized Roosevelt, finding him inadequate both in domestic and international affairs: “Mr. Roosevelt's program...resembles Mr. Wilson's message in being scrupulously explicit and concrete in some of its recommendations, and disquietingly vague and ambiguous in others.”²³⁷ It is obvious that the magazine's attitude towards the two leaders was still cautious but that changed after Roosevelt's endorsement of the Republican candidate in the elections of 1916.²³⁸

The bitterness was severe. In an article entitled “The Progressive Party- An Obituary” the *New Republic* stated: “A consequence of revising Progressivism so as to make it acceptable to Republicans, Mr. Roosevelt left himself and his party none but a personal issue with the Republicans; and after his speeches and writings of the past year he must subordinate every personal grievance against the Republicans to the personal issue against Wilson. He has been castigating the Democratic administration as the public enemy. His quarrel, like that of the Republicans, is with Mr. Wilson...Mr Roosevelt will survive as a political leader, to whom the Republicans owe much and whose assistance they need. But the Progressive party is dead, and with it must die the present hope of converting a national party into a faithful agent of progressive political and social ideas.”²³⁹ The *New Republic* buried the Progressive party but there was a difference of opinions concerning whom of the Presidential candidates of 1916 they would endorse. There was a split as Lippmann and Weyl supported Wilson, and Willard Straight supported Hughes (as Roosevelt did). Croly in the end rallied behind Wilson. In an unsigned article entitled “Woodrow Wilson” (which Stettner believed that is written by Croly) the magazine supports Wilson in a way that reminds the rhetoric of Croly: “In Mr. Wilson's present program there is scarcely a shred left of the fabric of his Jeffersonian revival. With every development of his policy he has been approximating to the spirit and creed of a Hamiltonian nationalist. Our own opinion of Mr. Wilson as a statesman has improved just in proportion as the indiscriminate and irresponsible individualism of his earlier views has yielded to a preference for responsible nationalistic organization.”²⁴⁰

From then on the *New Republic* would support Wilson to the point that Walter Lippmann one day would say that “the legend grew that the *New Republic* was Wilson's organ, and once to our intense surprise the stock market reacted when an issue of the *New Republic* appeared in the news stand. The paper was never the organ of Wilson's administration...Occasionally the President and Colonel House took an idea from the *New Republic* as they took it from many other sources.”²⁴¹ It should be noted that Lippmann's statement contradicts Forcey's argument that the

237 “The Newest Nationalism”, *New Republic* 5 (January 29,1916), 320.

238 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 119.

239 “The Progressive Party- An Obituary,” *New Republic* 7 (June 17,1916), 161.

240 “Woodrow Wilson,” *New Republic* 7 (June 24, 1916), 186.

241 Walter Lippmann, “Notes for a Biography”, *New Republic* 63 (July 16,1930), 251; Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 130-131.

intellectuals of the *New Republic* (especially Croly, Lippmann and Weyl) “hovered like moths on the flaming edges of power.”²⁴² He suggests that they had violated fewer of their principles by supporting Wilson than the now militarist and conservative Roosevelt but their will to remained attached to the leaders of the country suggested that “the bright light of power held more allure for them than firm principle.”²⁴³ In any case, we should remember that Croly's will was not only to express his opinion but to change his country in a more progressive direction, thus his relations with the prominent leaders should not be viewed in such a negative light.

The relation of Croly and Wilson was combined with the foreign policy adventure of the First World War and the conclusion of this story would lead Croly to disillusion, disappointment and mysticism. Croly discussed issues of foreign policy from the early time of *The Promise of American Life*. In the tenth chapter he mentioned that the foreign policy of a vigorous nationalistic democracy should be that of active search of the national interest. More specifically, the American nation should assume a more definite and responsible place in the international system and the world affairs.²⁴⁴ In his favorable manner, he accused Jefferson for his efforts to link the nation's foreign policy with an alliance with France, an alliance based not on “the firm ground of national interest, but on the treacherous sands of international democratic propagandist.”²⁴⁵ He was also critical of Hamilton -in a more modest manner- for in his contribution to Washington's Farewell Address, he was mainly guided by the present needs and dangers.²⁴⁶ Both Washington and Hamilton tried to avoid the Jeffersonian adventure of an idealistic foreign policy and they led the country to a tradition of isolationism. But Croly does not accuse Hamilton, for he may failed to identify the interest of the country with a positive democratic purpose but in any case, he was not a “thorough-going democrat.”²⁴⁷

Croly adopted an even more Hamiltonian attitude in an article that he wrote in 1916 for the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* entitled “The Effect on American Institutions of a Powerful Military and Naval Establishment.” According to Croly, the American military tradition is one that stressed the un-Americanism of large armies. It demanded a small standing professional army, merely a national police force. Its personnel was not adjust to international conditions and it could not anticipate invasion.²⁴⁸ But in the new era, Americans should neither renounce nor glorify military preparedness but do what they can to “make their

242 Forcey, *The Crossroads of Liberalism*, 5.

243 Forcey, *The Crossroads of Liberalism*, 262.

244 Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 289.

245 Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 289.

246 Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 292.

247 Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, 293.

248 Herbert Croly, “The Effect on American Institutions of a Powerful Military and Naval Establishment,” in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 66 (July 1916): 171.

country equal to its newly assumed responsibilities.”²⁴⁹ And he concludes that if Americans want their national military and naval establishment to be a boon rather than a curse for their country they should turn their efforts and attention to the business of formulating it, because upon the democratization of American foreign policy lies the issue of the democratization of the institution that traditionally Americans fear: their military and naval establishment.²⁵⁰

The *New Republic* view on the war issue was similar. It supported a kind of middle way of aggressive pacifism, that intervention in order to enforce peace.²⁵¹ But the war was traumatic for the *New Republic*. Bourne became a pacifist and attacked Croly. Lippmann went on to work for Wilson and disagreed with Croly, when the latter opposed the censorship that Wilson administration enforced on leftist newspapers. Croly supported Wilson's argument for a “Peace Without Victory” and he supported Wilson's rhetoric for a nonpunitive peace treaty with Germany, only to be fiercely disappointed by the Versailles Conference, which he concluded was punitive. He believed that the Treaty violated everything that the *New Republic* had stood for and he denounced Wilson by opposing the ratification of the treaty.²⁵²

The war destroyed many things, and one of them was the optimism of the original *New Republic* team. Its members scattered in disillusion and only Croly remained, leading a group of new editors, until his death. Lippmann would live to see the next wave of reform, F.D. Roosevelt's *New Deal*, but this time he would be in the conservative opposition -as Forcey states he even voted for the Republican Alfred Landon in 1936.²⁵³ Croly went to support Hoover and his last great fight was an impressive resistance against the paranoia of the “Red Scare” of 1919 and 1920 and a moderate understanding of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 which led the most prominent Cold Warrior and the father of containment, the diplomat George F. Kennan, to state that “had the views of the *New Republic* on the Russian problem in the final stages and aftermath of World War 1 been heeded, the Western governments could have saved themselves some grievous mistakes...What more could the editors of a weekly journal hope to have said of their labors from a distance of forty years?”²⁵⁴ In the end he was clearly disappointed by the fact that his theories and ideas never took life in the field of the real politics, at least as he had envisioned them. In conclusion, his main contribution was not political but intellectual, and as this thesis argues, it was the resurrection and exploration of two different approaches of government. If he helped Americans to understand this dualism and mediate upon their political tradition, then maybe his work had not been in vain, despite the disappointment of the War.. The fact that politicians such as Roosevelt and Wilson

249 Croly, “The Effect on American Institutions,” 171.

250 Croly Herbert, “The Effect on American Institutions,” 172.

251 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 127.

252 Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 134-143.

253 Forcey, *The Crossroads of Liberalism*, 298.

254 George F. Kennan as quoted in Stettner, *Shaping Modern Liberalism*, 139.

mediated upon his thoughts, even for a while, makes his contribution to the struggle of Americans to identify an ideology for their nation, even more important.

As a conclusion, it should be mentioned that it is difficult to access the influence of an intellectual. Intellectuals are not politicians, generals or even artists in order to have followers and they do not appeal to the sentiments of the public, but, in the majority of the cases, to its reason. Only few intellectuals managed to cause radical changes in their societies and even fewer caused immediate political and institutional revolutions. Ideas need time to mature in the public consequence. In the case of Croly, the appeal to the sentiment was almost diminished -his attack to the Jeffersonian creed of the American republic could be appreciated only by like-minded progressives who understood the need of an active government in an era of turbulence. Gordon Wood once wrote for Alexander Hamilton, the Founding Father that Croly admired the most, that Hamilton will never acquire a warm place in the hearts of most Americans. Many liberals admire his vision for a positive Leviathan state but they do not like his realpolitik views. Republicans admire his vision for a strong military machine but they do not like the idea of a powerful active state. In the end, many Americans visit Washington's Mount Vernon, Jefferson's Monticello and Madison's Montpelier, but only few visit Hamilton's home, the Grudge, in northern Manhattan.²⁵⁵

Probably Americans will continue to behave towards Croly in the same way they do towards Hamilton. In his era, Croly influenced a lot of people within the corridors of power. His work was read mainly by educated people, not from the common men. He never was and never managed to become a hero in the American consequence.²⁵⁶ But this does not mean that his influence was not important. He offered an articulate expression of the progressive- liberal movement and he influenced the New Deal generation through his books, but mostly, through the *New Republic* magazine. This magazine still exists and it is interesting that within its pages the spirit of Herbert Croly is still alive. In an article entitled “Man Without a Plan: Obama's Short -Sighted View on US Politics” which was published on July 6,2011 in the website of the *New Republic*, Michael Kazin harshly criticized Obama's policies. The author mentions that, upon election, Obama was hailed as the new FDR, but this soon proved to be wrong. He mentions that the President still avoids to express what Kazin calls the durable recipe for political success: a compelling vision of what kind of policies Americans need and a set of powerful institutions that can move and mobilize voters. If the President fails to express that, then, Kazin argues, progressivism in America will suffer the consequences. He also states that Obama understands that Keynesian stimuli, strict regulation of the financial industry and decent health care benefits are the only solutions to America but he fails to

²⁵⁵ Wood, *Revolutionary Characters*, 123.

²⁵⁶ There are probably more fans of philosophers/authors such as Ayn Rand, the author of *Atlas Shrugged* and devoted enemy of any kind of active government, in American society than of intellectuals like Croly.

accomplish them. Refraining from these progressive ideas is a tragedy for America.²⁵⁷ It is not only the use of the word “progressivism” but the whole style of the article that gives us the impression that Herbert Croly is apparent and that he tries to influence a liberal president like Obama to become more progressive, in the same manner that he tried to persuade progressive presidents like Roosevelt and Wilson to adopt more progressive policies. The fact that the spirit of Croly is still alive in his own creation, the *New Republic*, is a clear evidence that his influence is still important, despite the fact that it never created a political revolution -in the end, we should keep in mind that this was never the vision of his moderate approach.

257 Michael Kazin, “Man Without a Plan: Obama's Short -Sighted View of US politics,” *New Republic*, 6 July , 2011, <http://www.tnr.com/article/not-even-past/91367/obama-presidency-roosevelt-economy-election-progressives>

CONCLUSION

For a period of almost twenty years, from the publication of *The Promise of American Life* until the massive stroke of 1928, which led to his death two years later, Herbert Croly worked intensively in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the American past and to offer an ideological and theoretical platform that would lead his country to the twentieth century. This platform was based on the idea of a strong central government that would make the state active in the several important issues of the time, such as the business question, the labor problems, the social issues and the foreign policy. Croly's proposals may have varied over time, but the core of his argument remained the same, at least until the end of the First World War which, as we saw, was a period of disillusionment and disappointment for many progressives.

One could argue that this disappointment was an indication of the failure of the progressives, and especially the progressives around Croly -and Croly himself- to understand the complexities of the problems of the early twentieth century America and to propose substantial policies that would help the nation to promote vigorously its goals in the domestic and foreign fields. But we should keep in mind that Croly was an intellectual, not an active politician. He created a theoretical framework which could offer some solutions to the problems of a highly industrialized era, but ideologies and theoretical frameworks are works of the mind and their implementation in the field of practical politics is not without difficulties. That is exactly what Croly realized in his political relations with both Roosevelt and Wilson. They were practical politicians who could accept elements of the intellectual's work, but this acceptance could go on only until it did not contradict their agendas. Croly was disappointed by their reluctance to stay true to his progressive ideals, but from their side they did what practical men do, namely adapting to the situations.

But this does not mean that Croly's work did not have practical implications. His books and his magazine were influential and they were read by the reformers of the era. As Levy underlines he may not have been influential only in his era, but even later. For example, the administration of Franklin Roosevelt, which implemented the New Deal policies some years after Croly's death, were men and women who likely had read the *New Republic* editions.²⁵⁸ Several aspects of the New Deal, which was an era of government activism and reform, may remind us some aspects of Croly's

258 Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 188.

thought.²⁵⁹

But despite the importance of Croly's political influence, the most important part of his work was his intellectual work, his historical approach and his struggle to reveal and understand the dualism between a strong government and the individual rights in America, namely the Jeffersonian Hamiltonian dualism. In his work he traced its origins from the colonial and Revolutionary period, he explored its functions during his time in the New Nationalism and New Freedom platforms, and by stressing its importance he also anticipated that it would continue to be a permanent part of the American history. The disillusionment and disappointment of the last years of his life, after the traumatic experience of the war, should not make us ignore the bulk of the work that he completed when he was an optimistic and vigorous thinker of the progressive cause.²⁶⁰

The events followed his death revealed the importance of the dualism that Croly resurrected and the need of Americans to understand it, and think upon the need of a combination between the two creeds that Croly proposed in his work. During the New Deal and Roosevelt's activism the question of the role of the government appeared again, as it did in the era of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, this era of domestic reform which accomplished what Franklin Roosevelt had started. The era was characterized by the Hamiltonian creed that Croly endorsed. This concept appeared again during the rise of Ronald Reagan and the conservative realignment of the '80's, when the role of government started to be restrained, thus showing a return to a more Jeffersonian attitude. Recently, the efforts of Barack Obama to promote a health care reform which would expand the coverage of the uninsured and would allow people to keep coverage upon leaving or changing jobs, and the fierce opposition that it met by the Republicans, brought forth for one more time, the debate between an active government and the demand for as less government as possible.

Herbert Croly discussed this tension between Jeffersonianism and Hamiltonianism and his proposal was that a fruitful blend of these two mentalities would be the suitable solution to the problems of America. Unfortunately his idea did not manage to fulfill the promise of American life. He did not solve the riddle of the American political tradition but it is not his own fault, for this tension is still strong and may never be resolved. In the recent years we have seen strong elements of this tension between the relations of the Republican and the Democratic party. There are different approaches within the parties: it is not so rare to see liberal Republicans or conservative Democrats.

259 There are several accounts of the New Deal era. A classic one can be found in Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*. Also see Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

260 In the end of his life he denounced some parts of his Hamiltonian creed and turned to religion. He even started writing a book entitled *The Breach of Civilization*, the main argument of which was the solution for societies was religion and that progressive men and women should resurrect the medieval version of a single catholic community. Franfurter convinced him not to publish it, for it was a confession of defeat for all the past efforts of Croly. The book was never published, although some parts of it exist in several libraries. See Levy, *Herbert Croly of the New Republic*, 291-292.

Recently some Republicans attacked Democrats from the left, because of their intentions to impose cuts in Medicare. Moreover, Republicans have actively proposed a stronger federal policy in order to support the role of religion in the American society and oppose issues such as gay rights. In the same vein, Democrats have in many cases implemented a more liberal policy in the economic field than the one that their rhetoric suggests. It is obvious that the same questions that politicians such as Hamilton and Jefferson, and intellectuals like Croly tried to resolve are still present.

Jefferson and Hamilton are the main characters of the American political tradition and Herbert Croly had the insight to notice that and form a theoretical framework, based on a historical approach, around the ideas of these two central figures of the American history. He also noticed parallels with the events and person of his time. Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt were emblematic figures which suited into the costumes of Jefferson and Hamilton, thus giving Croly the main elements to stress the importance of his framework in his own era. Of course, theories, patterns and core ideologies are never enough to explain every historical event and every era of a country. But they may offer us some basic fundamental elements that can give us the tools to understand permanent patterns through history. Herbert Croly managed to stress one of the most important patterns in American history, and such an effort should not be neglected.

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