

Student's Name
Professor's Name
Course
Date



The Unbound Prometheus

David Landes is a renowned professor of history and economics. He has authored several books that focus on economic history and especially on industrial revolution. In the book *Unbound Prometheus*, he explores the concept of industrial revolution in Britain, as well as its spread to the rest of Western Europe. However, he emphasizes modern industrial revolution, which took place after the Second World War. The author tactfully starts this section by describing inter-war years and then progresses to explain reconstruction and growth of European economy after 1945. Landes' main argument is that Europe and the rest of the world can only sustain themselves in the coming years through continuous industrial revolution. He, therefore, favors second industrial revolution, which the book refers to as the technological revolution (Dickinson).

The author describes his arguments by employing various methods. The most prevalent one is the historical perspective. He begins the book by clarifying reasons why Europe was the first continent to get industrialized. The analysis is largely considered as Eurocentric due to overconcentration on the way Europe has dominated and surpassed other countries of the world. He notes that the industrial revolution started in Britain in the 18th century and later expanded to the rest of the world. Through this view, he can compare the first industrial revolution with the second one. The explanation gives the

learner a comprehensive understanding of the relationship existing between the two. Thus, foundations of the second revolution are well articulated and the link is clearly seen.

Landes also employs a social perspective in arguing his points. The author underscores contributions of social structures that existed in Britain during the industrial revolution. Through this analysis, he succeeds in convincing readers that the flow of ideas among people of different social strata contributed to the rise of Britain into an industrial power. Therefore, he reasserts his claim that knowledge is the most essential component in attaining the second industrial revolution.

The author also uses comparative studies. He compares modern continental Europe with the old one. The author notes that old continental Europe was characterized by high poverty levels and poor infrastructural facilities such as roads, canals, and navigable rivers. As a result, effective channels of communication were not available and the flow of ideas was limited. However, he notes that modern Europe is characterized by new technologies such as internal combustion engine, electricity communication technologies, and new raw materials. Moreover, he compares the inter-war years. In this case, he analyzes the period before and after World War I. In addition, he comprehensively covers causes of the Great Depression. These arguments form an insight, in which the main thesis is founded. Comparisons also directly contribute to one of his major assertions that the second industrial revolution could be based on these technologies.

Landes also infers benefits of the 18th century revolution to explain benefits that are likely to be found in the second industrial revolution. He notes that the highest economic growth was seen between 1870 and 1890, which lied at the heart of the industrial

revolution. Such industrial progress had never been experienced before throughout the history of Europe. This time also saw improvement in the living standards due to increased productivity. In addition, social amenities such as health and sanitation improved (Landes). Moreover, technological development led to the construction of fast and efficient machinery that replaced human labor. Analysis of these benefits has made him come to a conclusion that the only way countries of the world can sustain themselves in the near future is through second industrial revolution.

However, he does not completely rely on the first industrial revolution to support his thesis, but also underscores current structures that favor industrial revolution. He notes that second industrial revolution has already taken roots in some parts of Europe such as Britain, France, Germany, Low Countries, Japan, and the United States (Perez). By describing these structures, he asserts that continued industrial revolution is already real and should be exploited further.

On the same note, Landes underscores techniques that are necessary for exploring full potential of the technological revolution. Hence, he describes science management theory in detail. He calls these techniques complimentary practices that would help to maximize benefits of the revolution. He also explores political trends that have affected economic progress. He notes that economic progress was staggered by the First World War. The post-war years experienced a decline in economic growth due to hangovers resulting from the war. Implementation of the Marshalls Plan and its effect on economic growth is also emphasized. Moreover, consequences of Europe non-membership in the EEC, as well as refusal to participate in trade distorting common agricultural policy have been well documented (Perez).

I agree with Landes' arguments due to a number of reasons. First, new technology has formed a model of developments in all sectors of the economy. Countries that have embraced modern technology such as China and North Korea have seen tremendous progress. In industries, technology improves efficiency, quality, and productivity. Therefore, Landes' proposal for the industrial revolution is consistent with current trends of development. He notes that current development in Europe happens thanks to the development and adoption of new technology. According to Dickinson, technological revolution is the only way countries in the third world can achieve rapid economic growth like the one witnessed in the United States. He adds that Britain can attain higher economic progress by restructuring its models of industries as they exist today. However, this view is firmly opposed by the New Growth Theorists who emphasize significance of knowledge and human capital. Nonetheless, it forms a strong foundation for understanding economic structures of different countries in the world, especially Britain. Secondly, Landes proposes best practices as a core for attaining maximum benefits from the technological revolution. He, therefore, does not only rely on technology, but also uses the best practices that should be accompanied by it. He also notes that for Britain to recover from the effects of World War I, it had to renew the worn-out capital stock and adopt the American best practice. These assertions are consistent with globalization trends. Globalization has facilitated an efficient flow of ideas, resources, and capital from one section of the world to another. As a result, technology has spread very quickly, thereby forming the basis of economic progress. In addition, the book stresses significance of financial stability in sustaining the technological progress. Thus, the book underlines trade liberalization, planning, and aid, which are core to the prosperity of any economy. Interestingly, the issue is analyzed from inter-war perspective in the book. The author might have intentionally done this to depict dangers that political upheavals

have in regards to the economy. Considering all these proves, I can confidently support Landes' argument that the technological revolution is mandatory in order to attain desired sustainability in the near future (Perez).

The argument has various merits. First, the argument is systematically analyzed from the viewpoint of the 18th century industrial revolution with its connection with the modern revolution, which he refers to as technological revolution. The topics are well arranged in chronological order, thus making the flow of ideas consistent. Secondly, Landes takes an interdisciplinary perspective in discussing the issue. He analyzes natural resources with the entrepreneur at the heart of the discussion. The most captivating feature is application of rationality in analyzing emulation of continents, Britain's initial industrialization, and comparative studies of different economies (Perez). Therefore, all aspects of economic progress are analyzed in relation to the technological revolution. Therefore, the model of argument is clear, subtle, strong, and non-dogmatic.

However, there are various defects evident in the book. First, though the book emphasizes the technological revolution, it accentuates other issues such as liberalization and aid, which to some extent do not fit well the context, in which they are analyzed. These analyses are incorporated in a section dedicated to the post-war period, which cannot be understood properly by persons who are not conversant with the Great Depression. Additionally, this may imply that the argument concerning technology is not satisfactory or convincing enough, thereby forcing the author to adopt other explanations. Secondly, Landes does not feel that there might be a crisis in the old heavy industries that relied on coal. This crisis is likely to affect areas where these countries operate. Moreover, he does not comprehensively analyze the industrial landscape of Europe,

which is an important aspect in determining the industrial expansion. Issues that conspicuously miss out are revival and renewal of pre- and proto-industrial areas that have been overshadowed by the pale technic wave. Landes also ignores widely known negative effects of industrialization and focuses on positive effects only (Landes). These positive effects have formed a foundation for his arguments. This may serve to show biases in the argument.

All in all, the book offers adequate information on the second industrial revolution. The book provides accurate, reliable, systematic, and verifiable information. The book is therefore informative and interesting to read. Though it has some defects, the information is satisfactory beyond any reasonable doubt.

Work Cited

- Dickinson, H. T. (2004). "The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present." *The International History Review* 26.3 (2004): 624-627.
- Landes, David S. *The unbound Prometheus: Technological change and industrial development in Western Europe from 1750 to the present*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Print.
- Perez, Carlota. *Technological Revolutions and Financial Capital: The Dynamics of Bubbles and Golden Ages*. Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 2003. Print.