

Avarice and Ambition in America: The Founders' Debate on the Political Place of the Selfish Passions in the Constitutional Order of the United States

Jonathan W. Pidluzny
Associate Professor of Political Science
Morehead State University

Murray S. Y. Bessette
Director of Academic Programs
Victims of Communism Memorial
Foundation

Federalists and Anti-Federalists were different kinds of republicans insofar as they offered opposite solutions to the perennial problem of republican government. The Anti-Federalists hoped to minimize faction by cultivating piety, self-control, and patriotism in the citizenry. The Federalists rejected the traditional approach. Instead, they unleashed the selfish passions for the sake of economic and military strength. To mitigate the pernicious effects of faction along economic lines, they designed the constitutional order to channel elite ambition in service to the republic. They seem not to have foreseen, however, that in unleashing human greed they risked creating an environment that would corrupt the ambition of those very elite, a problem made worse by the advent of political party. This article investigates the reasons Federalists did not institutionalize mechanisms to perpetuate those attributes of civic character that their regime in fact presumes, as well as disagreements among Federalists on the importance of religion and public morality to a well-ordered republic.

Introduction

According to Aristotle, the city comes into being for the sake of security, but continues for the sake of the good life understood in terms of happiness and virtue.¹ An enduring political problem, however, has been the disproportion between the requirements of a community likely to support virtue and happiness on one hand, and the requirements of instantiating, maintaining, and defending the regime on the other.

Avarice and ambition are the passions, innate in man, that tear political communities apart and ruin individuals. As such, they cannot be left unrestricted or unregulated. The goods sought by the avaricious are not sharable without loss to someone; the honors sought by the ambitious, likewise, are valuable only insofar as one enjoys them to the exclusion of others. Where it is possible and profitable to do so, some will turn to crime, deception, and faction to gain what they seek, even using the power of the government to oppress, enslave, and murder their fellows if they can. Despite this, the very survival of the political community is *dependent* upon these characteristics: avarice to spur individuals to expend labor to create those material things necessary for survival and prosperity; and ambition to motivate them to perform those tasks necessary for the community's survival though dangerous to the individuals themselves. Efforts to desiccate the selfish passions, or even to refine and beautify them, can contribute to the virtue and happiness of individuals; but character formation can create vulnerabilities insofar as instilling virtue generally cools the passions that drive those who generate wealth for, and fight to lead and defend, their communities. What to do about these innate human drives is therefore a dilemma in the fullest sense of the word: too little avarice and too little ambition leads to weakness and the possibility of conquest and enslavement from without; too much avarice and too much ambition leads to vice, faction, and the possibility of tyranny from within.

The *Federalist Papers* subtly articulates the American reconsideration of and solution to this problem. This article argues, first, that *The Federalist's* solution to the problem of the selfish passions—avarice and ambition—is among the most novel aspects of its political science, and was to give an altogether new character to republicanism in the modern world. Second, the solution turned out to be self-undermining. Avarice was unleashed to make the republic strong and stable; it accomplished this, but it simultaneously corrupted the republic's ambitious statesmen, of whom the Federalists expected very much, in a way they did not foresee. Finally, the Federalist solution is also more complicated than is generally appreciated. According to the common understanding, the Federalists unleashed the selfish passions within a system carefully designed to check and channel them. While this is broadly correct, some Federalists nonetheless continued to believe—with the Anti-Federalists—that religion and character formation were indispensable to the perpetuation of the American regime. This article traces the disagreements that existed among leading Federalists on this question (and on the importance of religion in particular) and concludes with a discussion of the reasons they ultimately declined to make the continued nurture of those *mores* a national responsibility.

The Disagreement Between Federalists and Anti-Federalists

On the purpose of the American regime, the Federalist Farmer could speak for all parties: “The happiness of the people at large must be the great object of every honest statesman.”² Federalists and Anti-Federalists also agree that the main obstacle in the way of a stable government suited to maintaining freedom, and promoting the happiness of the citizenry, is faction; they agree, too, as James Madison famously put it in No. 10, that “the latent causes of faction are ... sown in the nature of man.” The two sides nonetheless conceived very different remedies, their disagreement reaching to the fundamental question of the character of citizenship in the new regime and the importance of public virtue. This is probably because they conceived of freedom and human nature differently.

The Anti-Federalists had in mind classical republican ideals; for them, a free man was an equal participant in public life, bound to community by powerful bonds of affectionate patriotism. Samuel Adams’s image of a Christian Sparta captures the Anti-Federalist vision in idealized form. Farmers and craftsmen themselves (many of them soldiers during the Revolutionary War), Anti-Federalists believed Americans to be capable of becoming such citizens, at least if politics remained sufficiently local. As Centinel sums up, “a republican, or free government, can only exist where the body of the people are virtuous.”³

Good laws, shared *mores*, and a salutary public education are thus Anti-Federalist priorities. They can instill passionate devotion to the community, even a love of virtuous behavior. The gulf between private interest and the public good is thereby diminished; for as David Epstein explains, invoking Montesquieu, “love of the public good” actually “limits each citizen’s ambition to ‘the sole desire, the sole happiness of doing greater services to his country than the other citizens.’”⁴ Base passion can be transformed into beautiful action, then, but not without extensive communal effort.

Anti-Federalists insisted that these lessons inform the design of the new constitution. They believed communities would only nurture this kind of citizen “where property is equally divided”;⁵ where participation in state militias, an essential bulwark against executive usurpation, remains widespread; and where representatives actually resemble or mirror the largely agrarian population they represent. What is more, insofar as Anti-Federalists believed “the principle care of free governments is to guard against the encroachment of the great,” they insisted on a constitutional structure that would check elite influence and feared the Philadelphia document would empower bankers, merchants, and lawyers.⁶ Religion was regarded by many to be *the* indispensable support; as Charles Turner

put it, “without the prevalence of *Christian piety and morals*, the best republican Constitution can never save us from slavery and ruin.”⁷ Herbert Storing’s summation of the disagreement between the Anti-Federalists and the Federalists on this point is particularly illustrative. Anti-Federalists tended to believe that the most serious danger to American republicanism was internal and moral, not an external threat to the country’s security: “It lay, and it always lies, in the restless ambition and avarice in the heart of every man and every people; and that is where it must be met, principally by education.”⁸

Publius disagreed. He did not claim Americans would be bound together by passionate identification with the common good. In fact, in No. 10, Madison expressly denied it can be accomplished in an extended republic. Why, then, was Publius so sure the republic could be extended, and the generation of tremendous wealth encouraged, without threatening the American republican character? Why did the Federalist advocate as positively desirable all the things the Anti-Federalist opposed so vehemently: extent, wealth, and increased influence for the community’s elites?

The textbook account runs along the following lines (and highlights the radical character of their disagreement). Far from seeking to establish a regime dedicated to cultivating citizens (whose selfish passions are subordinated to the community’s common good), the Federalist imagined a republic in which those passions would be permitted generous license—for the sake of the general welfare! Liberty can nonetheless be maintained, and tyranny guarded against, by setting passion *against* passion, ambition *against* ambition. In short, rival interests can “supply the defect of better motives.”⁹ The main contention of this article is that the Federalist design presumed a higher degree of virtue, morality, and public spirit among the citizenry than is ordinarily understood, more in fact than some of the leading architects of the regime themselves realized. It is not simply that Federalists neglected to take steps to ensure the people would remain morally upright, competent to select the kind of civil servants Madison and Hamilton hoped would be elevated to national office. The deliberate unleashing of human avarice—to grow the economy and make the country strong—inadvertently planted seeds of inevitable decay, corrupting the ambitious and thereby eroding the structural checks they established. Put another way, the institutional solution depends on a morality, an ethic, that does not sustain itself and may, in fact, require deliberate nurture in a commercial republic.

The Federalist Argument, Part 1: A Salutary Use for Human Avarice

The Federalists rejected the older approach, which emphasized education and character formation, for two reasons: (1) the requirements of national defense in the modern world and (2) their belief that the Anti-Federalists' vision of a Christian Sparta was unattainable as it rested on a flawed understanding of human nature.

First, on the basis of their reading of history and their assessment of the European powers' interests in the new world, Federalists perceived a danger to the American colonies the Anti-Federalist did not. Hamilton pointed out that to read ancient histories is to be struck by the fragility of “the petty republics of Greece and Italy,” city-states (and confederacies) “continually agitated” and subject to a “rapid succession of revolutions by which they were kept perpetually vibrating between the extremes of tyranny and anarchy.”¹⁰ What is more, the rise of the nation state in Europe, the invention of gunpowder, and the advent of modern navigation made the North Atlantic world, dominated by imperial powers, more dangerous. As such, for Publius, “who saw utter disaster around every corner,” establishing a single, united, and powerful republic was a more urgent concern than the maintenance of upright character.¹¹

Federalists feared that, in the absence of a strengthened Union, American liberties, won at the high cost of a long and bloody revolution, “would be prey to the means of defending ourselves”—both to “the ambition and jealousy” of other American states and confederacies (were union rejected), as well as to “the ambition or enmity of other nations,” some of them conceivably allied with one or several American states.¹² If the Anti-Federalists often come across as idealistic and even willfully oblivious to the requirements of a robust foreign policy, Hamilton was the country's first realist. As he explained in No. 34, national power is indispensable in the modern world because “peace or war will not always be left to our option,” because “however moderate or unambitious we may be, we cannot count upon the moderation, or hope to extinguish the ambition of others.”¹³ He dismissed the theory espoused by some Anti-Federalists, that growing commercial ties among great powers would lead to peace, as a “deceitful dream” resting on an imaginary “happy empire of perfect wisdom and perfect virtue.”¹⁴

These insights necessitated the radical break from the understanding of republicanism championed by the Anti-Federalist. Whereas previous friends of liberty had depreciated wealth, commerce, and luxury as positively toxic to good morals and therefore good government, Hamilton boldly proclaimed in No. 23, “*Money* is, with propriety, considered as the vital principle of the body politic.”¹⁵

No single statement better encapsulates the revolutionary nature of the new, American republicanism.

As America's first political economist, Hamilton would explain in his 1791 *Report on Manufactures*, an economic system designed to generate wealth and drive innovation would be the new way to national greatness: "not only the wealth, but the independence and security of a country appear to be materially connected with the prosperity of manufactures."¹⁶ The Revolution had demonstrated that part-time militias could not compete with professional standing armies. But it was not just that military might no longer depended on the virtue of citizen-soldiers trained together and fighting with their ward for their community. A thriving national economy depended on commercial habits and motives, attributes that are not necessarily compatible with the citizen-soldier's virtues. This insight finds its full expression in No. 8:

The industrious habits of the people of the present day, absorbed in the pursuits of gain, and devoted to the improvements of agriculture and commerce, are incompatible with a nation of soldiers, which was the true condition of the people of those republics [of antiquity]. The means of revenue, which have so greatly multiplied by the increase of gold and silver and of the arts of industry, and the science of finance, which is the offspring of modern times, concurring with the habits of nations, *have produced an entire revolution in the system of war*, and have rendered disciplined armies, distinct from the body of the citizens, the inseparable companions of frequent hostilities.¹⁷

If Hamilton is right about the nature of the international system, and if his appraisal of the revolution in modern warfare is correct, national security requirements required jettisoning the citizen-soldier ideal and, with it, an important character-forming element of republican government as the Anti-Federalists imagined it. It is worth underlining, however, that Hamilton did not see "national wealth and power" as "ends in themselves." As Karl-Friedrich Walling explains, economic independence was indispensable to American political independence. The alternatives to a well-funded, well-trained, professional military are all worse from the perspective of a free citizenry's wellbeing. Would it be better for the state to "rob citizens to support [the military] in time of war," to conscript citizens and nationalize industry *en masse*, or to build a garrison state where everyone trains for war all the time?¹⁸

In all, then, Hamilton's thought contains a powerful double rejection of the classical conception of republican virtue. In the first place, modern republics require a coordinated *national* economic policy. In order to compete with the great European powers militarily and economically, the Federalists (led by Hamilton as

Treasury Secretary) would go on to propose policies that would ultimately break down local affinities in order to grow the economy: the protection of nascent industry by new tariffs; a national bank; a national scheme to assume and fund the national debt in a way that would concentrate capital among New York bankers and industrialists; the federal supervision of state economic policies that touch on interstate commerce; and before too long, ambitious internal improvements to the country's transportation infrastructure.

Second, Hamilton realized that the old moral virtues, which sought to refine or stifle the selfish passions, would actually weaken a modern republic. Unleashing the productive energy of the nation requires *fueling* the passions that motivate men, their avarice and ambition. On this point, Hamilton followed David Hume, whose economic ideas permeate his writing. As Hume explained in "Of Commerce," "it is requisite to govern men by other passions, and animate them with a spirit of avarice and industry, art and luxury."¹⁹ Hamilton recognized that industrialists "absorbed in the pursuit of gain" (his words) might not always attend to cultivating good character. But, enticed to work hard by the promise that a small portion of the surplus they produce by their labor would be acknowledged as theirs to spend on whatever luxury or commodity they desire, American workers grow the economy and drive innovation—the virtues upon which American military might, and therefore the endurance of her liberties, really depend.

Hamilton was emphatically not opposed to the moral virtues; he even refers to "virtue" as "the only unmixed good which is permitted to [man in his] temporal condition."²⁰ In the same unfinished paper, written in defense of his proposal to assume state debts as Treasury Secretary, Hamilton simultaneously acknowledges that "the same causes leading to opulence . . . naturally sharpen the appetite for it." He knows his new economic system will "promote luxury, extravagance, dissipation, effeminacy, [and] disorders in the moral and political system. . . ." But what is the alternative? As he puts it, should we "renounce improvements in agriculture, commerce and manufactures" and "explode science, learning, and knowledge?"²¹ True liberty requires "protecting the exertions of talents and industry, and securing to them their justly acquired fruits."²² Indeed, nothing "tends more powerfully . . . to augment the mass of national wealth," but with that wealth inevitably come the "mischiefs of opulence."²³ Hamilton championed his economic system in spite of its likely negative effects from a sanguine recognition that ills generally accompany new blessings. In his judgment, the blessings outweighed the ills in the modern world.

Although the Anti-Federalists insisted on claiming Montesquieu as their inspiration and philosophic authority, Hamilton better understood the tension between virtue and liberty at the center of *The Spirit of the Laws*. As Harvey Mansfield

notes in a remarkable essay, “Liberty and Virtue in the American Founding,” the Anti-Federalist “wishing to follow Montesquieu but not quite taking his meaning” simply “combined virtue and liberty by adding them together.”²⁴ The problem: virtue and liberty are not easy or automatic counterparts insofar as “living as you please” and “living as you ought” are in considerable tension. *The Spirit of the Laws* demonstrates the extent to which republican virtue in the classical sense required a hardening, even a denaturing, education—something altogether incompatible with our modern conception of liberty. Montesquieu also demonstrated that liberty and commerce could contribute to individual wellbeing: by softening *mores*, by promoting a more tolerant political personality, by creating abundance, and by helping to limit government. In Hamilton’s willingness to make a place for excellences that contribute to the success of a commercial republic, and in moderating his hope for virtue in the citizenry as well as the government’s role in cultivating it, his political-economic system is the closest thing to a this-worldly instantiation of Montesquieu’s thought that has to this point been attempted. Although he does not quite put it this way, Mansfield’s argument seems to be that Publius achieved this in large part by articulating conceptions of virtue and interest that made it possible to reduce the gulf between them.

But does Hamilton’s economic system fit with the institutional solution laid out in the *Federalist Papers*? Deliberately cultivating avarice in the people struck traditional sensibilities as a recipe for fueling faction along class lines. Related to this, by encouraging commerce and industry, does one not risk cultivating an industrial disposition in the people, a national character that alienates the citizenry from the common good? The moneyed elite—a small, but by its nature a very powerful minority faction—stood to benefit. What reason was there to believe they would not dominate a political arena dedicated to economic growth? And if they did, why not also assume the ambition of the polity’s civil servants would ultimately tend in the same direction, to favor the interests of the most powerful class in the society? It is no surprise Anti-Federalists were alarmed by Publius’s celebration of greed and suspected Hamilton of harboring oligarchic designs; as scholars have noted, Federalists seemed to be inviting “the corruption of the polity in the classical tradition.”²⁵

The Federalist Argument, Part 2: Elite Ambition as a Remedy to the Problem of Faction

We will consider the second objection first, namely, why it is that the Federalists believed faction motivated by money would not lead to oligarchic government in America. Madison's famous argument in No. 10 addresses the problem; it does so, however, by more or less denying that it constitutes a real problem. Madison was quite willing to acknowledge that factions "convulse the society," even that "the most common and durable source of faction has been the various and unequal distribution of property." He believed, however, that the tumult generated by clashing interests organized along class lines—creditors, debtors, a landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, a moneyed interest, and so on—would rather easily be mitigated by "the republican principle" so long as the enterprising faction was a minority. The majority, a constellation of various minorities loosely and temporarily held together by the dangers presented by a particular scheming interest, would easily defeat its nefarious machinations "by regular vote."

For Madison, majority faction was therefore the bigger threat to republican government. His key insight was that, precisely because the people are more likely to be animated by similar passions and interests the smaller the political community, extending the sphere to include a larger diversity of factions should, in theory, go a long way toward mitigating the danger posed by any majority faction that does emerge. Diversity of interest is the natural consequence of extent and inevitably moderates any consensus likely to hold a given majority together. Moreover, Madison boldly claims that the Anti-Federalists are wrong about the importance of wholesome *mores* and widespread religiosity; as he explains more clearly in his well-known criticism of the states under the Articles of Confederation, not even the "strongest of religious Ties" can guarantee good government. The causes of faction are sown too deep in the nature of man; salutary opinions will be worn down by the demands of private interest if they are not co-opted to dangerous employment by ambitious demagogues. What is more, where a community is bound by powerful moral convictions, communal sins offend the conscience less: "individuals join without remorse in acts, against which their conscience would revolt if proposed to them under the like sanction, separately in their closets."²⁶ Madison, then—in what seems to be a double rejection of the classical and Montesquieuean positions—asserts both that bigger is better, and that homogeneity of interest and passion leads more often to mob rule than to good republican government. He went so far at the Constitutional Convention, in fact, as to point out that "the histories of every

Country antient and modern” demonstrate that “Religion itself may become a motive to persecution & oppression.”²⁷

And yet, there is a difference between a government that does not encroach upon the rights of its citizens and one that governs well—justly, wisely, with foresight, and in the interest of the country taken as a whole. This brings us to the second reason the Federalists rejected the older solution, favored by the Anti-Federalists. Men’s interests, supported by their passions, are too strong, and their intellects too weak, to permit general enlightenment—or even the wide enough diffusion of virtue—sufficient to achieve good government by simple majoritarian government. John Adams expressed this point explicitly in a 1790 letter to Samuel Adams. Following Hume, he makes the sweeping claim that “all projects of government, founded in the supposition or expectation of extraordinary degrees of virtue, are evidently chimerical.”²⁸ Adams goes on to note that the aristocratic classes have, more often in history than the masses, defended a people’s liberty against executive encroachment. As a result, institutional structure becomes critical, not simply to create reciprocal checks among the branches, but perhaps as important, to empower wiser, at times counter-majoritarian, actors. Alexander Hamilton makes the same point in a letter to John Jay; because the multitude is so susceptible to “fits of passion,” “it requires the greatest skill in the political pilots to keep men steady and within proper bounds.”²⁹

For the Federalists, the best practical solution to the problem was somehow to institutionalize a place for statesmanship—rule by the best men (or at least reasonably enlightened men) in the interest of the whole. Michael Zuckert cogently encapsulates the general approach favored by the Federalists on this issue: “Publius never affirmed the need or likelihood for virtue in the people in the American republic, but spoke uniformly of virtue in leaders.”³⁰ To put it another way, the tasks the Anti-Federalists assigned to the virtue of the many (where virtue is understood as passionate patriotism), Publius assigns to the virtue of the few (where virtue is understood as excellence). Thus emerges the second element of the solution articulated in Federalist No. 10: representatives, “whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations” are entrusted to “refine and enlarge the public view.” After all, even (or especially) a mild majority, made up of a variety of self-interested factions petulantly competing for pecuniary advantage, is capable of making bad policy.

There is still a serious problem, though. One might even call it the perennial dilemma of democratic regimes: How does one ensure wise policymakers are elevated by a sovereign, but disappointing, people? David Epstein eloquently states the answer in general form: the people, who “as a whole cannot supply”

wisdom, must nonetheless try to “locate and employ” it.³¹ To this end, a number of structural devices were conceived by the 1787 Constitution. Large constituencies were established in the belief they would be more likely than small ones to yield quality delegates (only elites with an established *reputation* for good character were likely to be sufficiently well known throughout an extended district to be competitive), longer terms of office (for the president and for Senators) were expected to insulate officeholders from immediate electoral retribution, thereby allowing them to make unpopular decisions when the public good requires it; the indirect selection of Senators and the president was expected to increase the quality of representatives by passing them through an intermediary body of electors, themselves selected locally for their knowledge of national affairs and upstanding character; and some offices were endowed with vast powers to make them attractive to the most ambitious men.³²

Design alone cannot solve the problem, however; a constitutional structure is only as good as the actors who animate its institutions. Hamilton and Madison, in contemplating this dilemma, took the perspective of the public servant. What is the motivation, the wage for accepting, even for tirelessly seeking, so difficult and often thankless a job? Not money. The best politicians are motivated by a constellation of selfish, but less immediate and transmutable, passions: the love of honor, fame, and glory. They are prideful, or in the terms of the Federalist, ambitious. Mansfield goes so far as to call ambition “a new republican virtue, one that can accommodate greatness.”³³

The Federalists expected ambitious men, men like themselves—present in every political community and often a political problem—would be drawn to serve the public good. They were, of course, aware that ambition cuts both ways: demagogues, no less than statesmen, are motivated by the clamor of partisans and public esteem. Madison expected the link between interest and ambition would go a long way toward ensuring elected officials are “somewhat distinguished ... by those qualities which entitle them to” the distinction of office.³⁴ This is because representatives are bound to their constituents “by motives of a more selfish nature.” Ambitious men are driven by “pride and vanity,” which “attach him to a form of government which favors his pretensions and gives him a share in its honors and distinctions.” They will do well by their constituents because they “have more to hope from a preservation of [the people’s] favor, than from innovation in the government subversive of the authority of the people.”³⁵

At the same time, Madison expected the fact of their selection would endear representatives to the voters. Those with a “sensitivity to marks of honor, of favor, of esteem, and of confidence” naturally feel “affection at least to their constituents” for bestowing upon them their approval. In other words, politicians

can come to love their constituents: “Duty, gratitude, interest, ambition itself, are the chords by which [elected representatives] will be bound to fidelity and sympathy with the great mass of the people.”³⁶ The psychology at work here is familiar to every decent person: We come to love what we make meaningful contributions to, in part from the pride of contributing—to community, country, one’s marriage, family, etc. Bonds of affection can, thus, be forged out of an honor-loving man’s pride. Extending a man’s self-love outward in such a way channels his ambition in service of that which he loves.

Madison identifies two further reasons to expect the people will generally select representatives who possess the “most wisdom to discern, and most virtue to pursue, the common good of the society”: their concern to be reelected and the requirement that they too live under the laws they make. More remarkable is the fact that Federalist No. 57, the paper about elevating wise and virtuous rulers, contains no discussion of public education. That representatives’ ambition is tied to the “preservation of [the people’s] favor” does, however, raise a problem very much related to public education. The people’s favor—the qualities it honors, the demands it makes—determines the behavior of those who seek its honors and distinctions. Ambitious men will be, and do, what their constituency demands of them. The people’s character thereby exerts a profound influence on the character of its elected representatives.

Hamilton, who points to the danger posed by popular demagogues in his first and last essay, articulates a somewhat more nuanced understanding of ambition as a political virtue. It is not just that “ambition must be made to counteract ambition” and the interests of the office holder aligned with the integrity of the office. For Hamilton, “the love of fame” is “the ruling passion of the noblest minds,” and it will take noble minds in a powerful and independent office to counteract lower forms of ambition in the more popular branch.³⁷

Hamilton thus points to a distinction that Madison did not: fame and honor move ambitious men in different ways. Fame is less immediate than honor or adulation, the product of long-term accomplishment judged over time. The former, Hamilton continues, “would prompt a man to plan and undertake extensive and arduous enterprises *for the public benefit*.”³⁸ Whereas honor-lovers are always drawn to politics, Hamilton understood that the higher form of ambition would be more likely to present itself where there is an office sufficiently *capacious* that he can realistically hope to complete bold projects for the public benefit—without exceeding the bounds of the Constitution. He must also have a degree of freedom to operate. The indirect selection process Hamilton proposed at the convention, whereby electors who are themselves selected indirectly convene once and *temporarily* and for the *sole* purpose of appointing a president, was

designed to both increase the executive's independence and to add a level of refinement to the selection process.

As Mansfield explains, this constitutional "distance" also helps to create "a will in the community *independent of the majority* ... [a will] of the society itself."³⁹ In this, the design of the American executive owes a good deal to John Locke, who insists that some issues *must* "necessarily be left to the Prudence and Wisdom of those whose hands" the federative (and executive) power is in, "to be managed for the publick good."⁴⁰ Somewhat counterintuitively, then, good republican government requires strong counter-majoritarian actors. Or as Mansfield puts it, "even though the genius of republican government is in the legislature, the test of whether the republican form produces good government is entrusted to, and performed by, the executive."⁴¹ Hamilton makes the point explicit in No. 71: "When occasions present themselves, in which the interests of the people are at variance with their inclinations, it is the duty of the persons whom they have appointed to be the guardians of those interests, to withstand the temporary delusion, in order to give them time and opportunity for more cool and sedate reflection."⁴²

The Incompatibility of Part 1 and Part 2 of the Federalist Argument

However elegant on paper, the solution to the problem of the selfish passions proposed by the Federalist also turned out to be insufficient for two reasons, both having to do with the new economic system: political party and moral decline. In the years immediately following the Constitutional Convention, a species of ambition and faction wrapped together found an unexpected outlet in the United States, one that particularly alarmed Madison. No framer had predicted the emergence of political parties.

Almost immediately, however, two factions emerged among those who had argued in favor of a new national government—each led by the sort of ambitious man in whom Hamilton and Madison had intended to entrust the country. On a variety of important issues, Madison (with Thomas Jefferson) found himself at odds with the man who had coauthored his great endorsement of the American Constitution. As Treasury Secretary, Hamilton succeeded in increasing the authority of the federal government: state debts were assumed; the national debt was funded in a manner that favored bankers to the detriment of the farmers and soldiers who had borne the cost of the revolution; the national government supported emerging industries in the Northeast (by imposition of new tariffs among other policies); eventually, a National Bank was established. The point of these

measures was not just the establishment of a national economic interest for the sake of increasing the power and prestige of the United States (the better to protect Americans' liberties); nor was Hamilton acting with the narrow goal of enriching New York financiers. As Harry Jaffa points out, "the promotion of industry was a means of promoting exchanges between the localities of the Union in such a way as to break down local feeling."⁴³

Madison perceived in Hamilton's initiatives a new threat to republicanism he had previously underestimated. All of a sudden, he seems to have realized that the Anti-Federalists were correct to fear that the new Union might change the very character of the country. He was, thus, compelled to revise significantly the argument of Federalist No. 10. His own inability to check Hamilton's ambitious, nationalizing plans led Madison to conclude that he had over-estimated the ability of the majority to defeat a particular kind of designing minority by way of popular vote: the moneyed interest. In other words, one particular minority proved itself superior in strength and resources to the others, superior even to all the others together—so long, that is, as the others remained unorganized. On Marc Landy and Sidney Milkis's cogent encapsulation, Madison "began to sense that diversity and multiplicity [of interests] were fostering a circumstance in which only the elite had the wherewithal to establish connections and maintain cohesion across such a vast expanse."⁴⁴ The policies pursued by the oligarchic minority were threatening the integrity of localities throughout the country by their disproportionate influence in the new (federal) political arena.

At the local level, majorities bound by religious affinities may have remained the biggest threat to individual liberty. In Madison's 1792 *National Gazette* revision to his original position on the dangers of faction at the national level, however, "it is no longer overbearing majorities that are bad, but unnatural and designing minorities."⁴⁵ Short experience battling Hamilton and his party had taught the Virginians that "parties are unavoidable." The multiplicity of factions discussed in No. 10 would only play the role envisioned for them—acting together to check designing minorities by regular vote—if explicit steps were taken to organize them into one, moderate, majority faction. The Republican Party—a popular party led by Virginia elites—was therefore conceived as a kind of counter-poison, a counterweight to the oligarchic minority which had quickly and quietly managed to dominate in the federal arena.

What Madison seems not to have perceived is that his solution to this unexpected problem threatened to undermine an important part of the broader Federalist design. The grassroots Democratic societies that sprung up in response to "Hamiltonian finance and Federalist elitism," and which supported the nascent Republican Party, also began to challenge the "assumptions about deference to political

leadership” that constituted the heart of Publius’s theory of representation.⁴⁶ In sum, minorities were a greater threat than Madison originally envisioned; by way of *popular party*, he and Jefferson sought to organize the majority such that it could *and would* perform the function ascribed to it in No. 10; the emergence of popular parties, however, transformed the nature of (and even the country’s tolerance for) elite stewardship (or as we today call it, leadership).

A dilemma—if not altogether unforeseen by the Federalist then certainly not explicitly addressed—thus emerges with the legitimization of political party. With the country’s multiplicity of interests organized by established factions, entrenched across election cycles, party leaders (aspiring to command majority support) become indispensable to the organization of government. The legitimization of political party in the public mind gave honor-loving men a new outlet for their ambition, an outlet likely to bend and channel their ambition in a more pernicious manner than the Founders had envisioned. Party leaders—that is, leaders of self-conscious partisans—are inevitably driven by partisan objectives. These men bear more resemblance to leaders in the lower house of the legislature (whom Madison feared and Hamilton viewed with outright contempt) than they do to those officials who were to be selected indirectly and endowed with a will independent of the people, the statesmen who were to play an exceptionally important role in the constitutional framework.

With the establishment of a “permanent electoral machinery that might fuse the national leadership with the voters,” an alien (if inevitable) idea until Madison and Jefferson almost accidentally set it in motion, ambitious men could be—increasingly, *had to be*—motivated by the prospect of gaining partisans, partisans who would help elevate them to power in an increasingly competitive environment.⁴⁷ Andrew Jackson’s 1828 campaign for the presidency demonstrated the new dynamic. As Marvin Meyers notes, “Jackson’s contemporary rivals damned him for appealing to class against class. . . . Beyond question, his public statements address a society divided into classes invidiously distinguished and profoundly antagonistic.”⁴⁸ By the late nineteenth century, even “barriers to presidential ambition erected by the Jacksonian party organization” were being overcome;⁴⁹ presidents (and would-be presidents) had become the leaders of their parties, newly eager to appeal “to the partisan public in novel ways, and moved to dominate the conduct of party campaigns.”⁵⁰ Where the president has a party, the constitutional distance indirect selection was supposed to create is for all practical purposes annihilated. The modern president cannot be counted on to check the rise of a demagogue; he is, rather, under immense pressure to become one. The problem spills into the other branches as well. If the advent of political party tied the executive to a particular faction, the progressive democratization of the country’s political

institutions and public discourse—direct election of Senators, the open primary, daily surveys of public opinion, the 24/7 news cycle and 140-character sound bite—have tied political ambition to public whim and fancy more closely than anyone in 1787 could have imagined.

According to the logic of *The Federalist*, the character of the people should become all the more important as a constitution becomes more majoritarian. Far from seeking to encourage good character in the multitude, however, the Federalists deliberately unleashed that species of pursuit that narrows an individual's focus to what is good for him or her *qua* private individual—competition for pecuniary advantage. As we have seen, the Federalists both doubted the people could ever become virtuous or enlightened enough to rule well on fully democratic grounds, and realized national power would depend on the economy in the new world. As we have also seen, however, *The Federalist's* institutional arrangement presumed that the people would remain sufficiently patriotic and sensible to select upright and able politicians (and humble enough to subordinate their judgment to their representatives' much of the time). If Publius was right that good government is the product of the virtue and patriotism of an honor-loving and ambitious elite, and to the extent the honor-loving elite is motivated primarily by the esteem and approbation of the people, the abandonment of the cultivation of virtue in favor of unleashing the selfish passions necessarily impacts the likelihood that wise and virtuous statesmen will be elevated to office. Publius's solution to the problem of faction seems, thus, to be at odds with his high hopes for the salutary channeling of ambition in America. In fact, the novel American solution to the problem of the selfish passions presented in *The Federalist* is, in the end, to some considerable extent self-undermining.

The alternative, that the people would ultimately have to remain morally upright and united by bonds of friendship and patriotism, is only suggested in passing by Publius. And then, it is John Jay, not Madison or Hamilton, who raises the possibility most explicitly. Speaking of the first Continental Congress, Jay suggests that the demagogues who have always constituted a threat to the American republic can only reliably be defeated when the majority of the nation's citizens are of sufficiently noble character as to resist their seductive appeals to private interest.

Countervailing ambition is not enough. Immunity to the machinations of those "whose ambition aimed at objects which [do] not correspond to the public good" requires, for Jay, a form of patriotism that induces a veritable pride in the subordination of private interest to public good, one that is usually associated with the Anti-Federalists. Unity in the people, a homogeneity of opinion of the sort he believed "Providence [had] been pleased to give this one connected country,"

is important. America was fortunate, Jay explained, to be made up of citizens “descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs, and who, by their joint counsels, arms, and efforts, fighting side by side throughout a long and bloody war, have nobly established general liberty and independence.”⁵¹

Federalist Reservations: Reflections on the Moral Prerequisites of Republican Government

Though the problem identified here—that a people lacking virtue will not reliably select virtuous leaders, especially where selection is direct—is not one Publius focuses on in *The Federalist*, most Federalists seem nonetheless to have at least sensed its significance at some point over the course of their lives. And yet, unlike the Anti-Federalists, they did not propose concerted public effort to support virtue and morality among the people. There are two reasons for this. First, they did not believe it to be the indispensable precondition of good government. The people would have to remain sufficiently upright to choose decent representatives most of the time. But the design of the Constitution was more important still, capable of stymying enterprising ambition, channeling the best men to highest office, and insulating them from immediate public disapprobation. Second, the Federalists seem to have presumed that the moral-religious sphere, constitutionally separated from the political sphere at the national level, would remain sufficiently strong locally to keep the people public-spirited and honest, and decent adjudicators of character. That, combined with some degree of humility—of the sort that inclines citizens to subordinate their own interests to the discernment of well-educated and patriotic officeholders—would be enough to ensure the people elected virtuous and wise politicians, enough of the time.

In one venue or another, many prominent Federalists identified Christianity, in particular, as an important support for the Constitutional arrangement they had advocated. George Washington, for instance, urged Americans in his first message to Congress “to discriminate the spirit of liberty from that of licentiousness—cherishing the first, avoiding the last.” In his “Farewell Address” (1796), America’s foremost model of a man of first character elevated to high republican office made this remarkable exhortation to his fellow citizens:

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and citizens.... And let us

with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that National morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.⁵²

John Adams agreed. As he famously put it, “we have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”⁵³ Benjamin Franklin, in an admonishing letter, warned against public criticism of religion for its potential to damage an important foundation of the political community. Very few men, he wrote, “find it easy to live a virtuous Life without the Assistance afforded by Religion.” A small number reason their way to the “advantages of Virtue” and possess the “Strength of Resolution” to live according to rational apprehension; the “great . . . Proportion of Mankind,” in contrast, are “weak and ignorant”; they “have need of the Motives of Religion to restrain them from Vice, to support Virtue, and retain them in the Practice of it till it becomes *habitual*.”⁵⁴

Even Alexander Hamilton, upon leaving government some eight years after the Constitution was ratified, made this ominous declaration: “Ah, this is the constitution. . . . Now mark my words! So long as we are a young and virtuous people, this instrument will bind us together in mutual interests, mutual welfare, and mutual happiness. But when we become old and corrupt, it will bind us no longer.”⁵⁵ Upon reading of the horrible excesses of the French Revolution, he is said to have gone even further, remarking in George Washington’s home that “Religion and morality are essential props” for the arrangement established by the American Constitution.⁵⁶ In an unpublished fragment, Hamilton attributed the horrific calamities of the French Revolution to its anti-religious enthusiasms, and expressed concern that similar “apostles and disciples of irreligion and anarchy” are increasing and “alarmingly visible” in the United States.⁵⁷

James Madison would never go quite as far. He believed republican government required a citizenry possessing distinct attributes of character; but he did not believe Christianity to be an essential contributor to that civic character. Harriet Martineau, an English visitor, recorded a conversation she had with Madison in 1834 or 1835 in which he expressed an “enthusiastic faith in the possibility of an immortal republic” citing Americans’ republican vigilance, an aspect of character he believed would endure in the citizenry absent any religious support.⁵⁸ He explained to her that the republic would persist indefinitely “not only

because the people, its constituency, never dies, but because the principles of justice in which such a commonwealth originates never die out of the people's heart or mind."⁵⁹ This is consistent with Madison's contributions as Publius on the subject of the people's character. The clearest acknowledgement in the *Federalist Papers* that public virtue is important to the health of a republic (John Jay aside) is an observation in No. 57, where Madison recognizes that "above all, the vigilant and manly spirit which actuates the people of America" is the final guard of liberty.

Madison's exhortation on the subject at the Virginia ratifying convention runs along similar lines. Addressing Anti-Federalist fears that representatives elected to a distant capital might "do every mischief they possibly can," Madison countered with a question: "Is there no virtue among us?" He goes on to explain that he can confidently advocate the delegation of so much power to a new, national, government because he trusts "that the people will have *virtue* and *intelligence* to select men of *virtue* and *wisdom*" (emphasis added). To Madison, it was simply a truism that good government would never issue from a vicious *or* stupid people. He bluntly denied that constitutional design is sufficient on its own: "No theoretical checks—no form of government can render us secure. To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in the people, is a chimerical idea. If there be sufficient virtue and intelligence in the community, it will be exercised in the selection of [virtuous and wise] men."⁶⁰

Important though Madison believed the perpetuation of civic virtue to be, however, he proposed few concrete measures to help sustain it. Indeed, he insisted that public support for religion is more often a threat to republican government than a bulwark in service to civic virtue, an opinion he stated forcefully in his famous "Memorial and Remonstrance," penned in opposition to the Virginia state legislature's 1775 proposal to allocate public funds to support teachers of the Christian religion. As Lorraine and Thomas Pangle have noted, unlike Hamilton, "Madison never softened his rejection of religion as an instrument available to government for civic education."⁶¹

Thomas Jefferson, unsurprisingly, concurred with Madison on both the importance of civic education and in his depreciation of religion's public importance. The former opposed "putting the Bible and Testament into the hands of the children" and seemed to believe a civic-humanist-technical education, directed at its heights to "geniuses" annually "raked from the rubbish" at a young age, would be sufficient to cultivate a "natural aristocracy."⁶² In an 1813 letter to John Adams, Jefferson reiterates the hope, put forth twenty-six years earlier in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, adding that the best form of government is that which "provides the most effectually for a pure selection of these natural aristoi into

the offices of government.”⁶³ On the question of selection, Jefferson remained an optimist: “the best remedy is exactly that provided by all our constitutions, to leave to the citizens the free election and separation of the aristoi from the pseudo-aristoi.... In general they will elect the real good and wise.” While he proceeds to acknowledge that the people are likely to err from time to time, he doubts they will err “in sufficient degree to endanger the society.”⁶⁴ He goes on, in fact, to venture the suggestion that the errors will be more frequent and more severe where there is a “strict alliance of church and state”—in Massachusetts and Connecticut especially—because the citizenry will subordinate honest judgment of character to considerations of social authority and inherited reputation.

In all then, and as Stephen Lange has demonstrated, it is not that the Federalists believed civic virtue and civic education to be unimportant or dispensable. If they did not underline the importance of civic character frequently or emphatically, it is because public education generally—though a precondition for good government at every level, including the national level—was nonetheless to remain the responsibility of the states.⁶⁵ It seems, moreover, that they implicitly assumed society would do a tolerably good job in the arena absent concrete initiatives on the part of the federal government. Indeed, any attempt to establish a uniform program for the inculcation of virtue across the thirteen states would have threatened to sunder the Union insofar as local approaches to education (and religious education) varied so significantly. Just as a guiding purpose of American federalism was to localize issues on which there could be no national consensus, an important original purpose of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment was to *protect* the states’ very different approaches to public religiosity from national meddling. On this issue, the real difference between the thought of Madison on one hand, and Washington and Adams on the other, turns on the relative importance each side ascribes to religion’s importance to the formation of healthy, republican *mores*. Whether their solutions are adequate, and in Madison’s case, whether America’s “vigilant and manly” spirit is maintainable in a commercial republic in large part dedicated to unleashing human avarice, remain hotly debated questions to this day.

Conclusion

For help venturing a thought or two on the issue, it is impossible not to think of Alexis de Tocqueville who, according to Allan Bloom, was “dedicated” to “the formation of free men and free communities founded on egalitarian principles.”⁶⁶ Tocqueville’s emphatic disagreement with Madison on the moral requirements of perpetuating healthy republican institutions has been noted, but remains understudied. How striking, indeed, that the work of political science, only second in importance to *The Federalist* on the subject of the American republic, resembles the papers written to sell its establishment so little in focus and orientation. It is almost as though Tocqueville intended *Democracy in America* to take up the questions Publius left out of his arguments in favor of ratification. Where Hamilton and Madison focus on America’s institutions, Tocqueville focuses on habits of the heart, the spirit that animates laws and institutions conceived in parchment. He considered *mores* “to be one of the great general causes to which the maintenance of a democratic republic in the United States can be attributed.” Tocqueville’s new political science is largely devoted to teaching Americans—and democrats everywhere—how to maintain healthy ones.⁶⁷ James Ceaser has gone so far as to suggest *Democracy in America* constitutes “a supplement to, if not a partial correction of, *The Federalist*.”⁶⁸

Two of the supports for salutary republican *mores* Tocqueville emphasizes are particularly important for present purposes. The New England township, which Tocqueville called the “seed of free institutions,” and American Christianity, so uniquely supportive of upright democratic government, have wilted since he wrote.⁶⁹ Local self-government, and the civic associations which spring from it, did at least three important things. First, participation at the local level counteracts the democratic tendency to withdraw, and to place private interest above public good, by demonstrating to Americans the many ways their private interests intersect with the public good. Second, the pride men draw from contributing to their communities in meaningful ways lead them to love their communities, thereby inducing them joyfully to sacrifice private interest when the public good requires it. Third, townships and associations constitute new “secondary bodies” in the place of the great families and estates democracy destroys, thereby erecting new checks against administrative centralization and mild despotism. Money poisoned the soil in which local self-government, that “seed” of free institutions, grows and thrives, however. Industrialization, urbanization—and the new Progressive ideas about the scope and purpose of government that resonated in a modernizing America—ultimately dealt a deathblow (perhaps inevitable) to localism in America.

Tocqueville believed American Christianity could have a similar, salutary effect on men's *mores*. Where "democracy favors the taste for material enjoyments" and gives birth to a pernicious new individualism, religion can have an edifying effect: It is *the* "general, simple, practical means of teaching men the immortality of the soul."⁷⁰ That men and women continue to believe they have a soul is vital where they are free to live as they please because once we come to believe "that all is nothing but matter," theoretical materialism transforms democratic individualism into a selfish and narrow materialism. Theoretical materialists tend to be practical hedonists, unable to discern any good reason to restrain selfish passion. Although Tocqueville identifies two ways religions die—religious energy can be transferred to some other concern; and worshippers, appalled by the crimes committed by vain churchmen, can accidentally blame religion itself—a third culprit lurks in the background of *Democracy in America*.⁷¹ If Tocqueville is right that the genesis of religious feeling is the uniquely human longing for satisfactions beyond those easily packed into sixty mortal years, to distract citizens from the higher longings that distinguish man from beast (by present enjoyments, luxurious indulgence, the restless struggles fueled by greed and vanity, etc.) might well end by dissipating the religious impulse altogether. Montesquieu, one of Tocqueville's great teachers, observed that "the comforts of life" and "the hope of fortune" can throw the soul itself into a kind of indifference, sapping all concern for otherworldly pursuits.⁷² Tocqueville seems to have perceived that democracy's most insidious offspring—individualism and materialism—threatened not only to "detach[] the soul from religion," but to enervate great longing and lofty ambition save the inexhaustible ardor for pecuniary gain.⁷³ Recall Hamilton's proud assertion that money is the vital spring of modern republics; the restless pursuit of it, Tocqueville teaches, threatens to transform the character of republican citizenries and, indeed, the nature of ambition (and so, the character of statesmen) in the modern world. The problem: The Federalists' constitutional order depends on elite statesmen, driven to serve their country by an older, nobler, form of ambition.

Religion has not fared much better than local government in contemporary America. As Alan Wolfe concludes (approvingly) in his work, *The Transformation of American Religion*, Christianity has been diluted and distorted beyond recognition in the United States. He argues that for most people, democratic individualism has penetrated to the core of American religiosity by turning congregations into commodities that one shops for according to his or her preference.⁷⁴ Others argue that Christianity played a prominent and salutary role in public life until the beginning of the twentieth century and attribute its erosion to new, German ideas. Thomas Engeman, for instance, posits that "[u]ntil the Progressives' demand

for a secular, liberated society, the Founders' friendly competition [between the public and the religious sphere] was the norm."⁷⁵ Still others argue that the logic of the American Revolution could not but erode American religiosity and the inherited moral capital that long animated the country's institutions.⁷⁶ What is impossible to deny is that Christianity's public importance has declined. Commentators only disagree as to whether it was inevitable, and whether it has been for the better or for the worse.

In contrast, no Founder would be surprised by the fact that the transformation of Americans' character has exerted an impact on the operation of the country's institutions. For as Madison and Hamilton both understood, public opinion is the anchor to which the ambition of most men is tied; where the standards of the community change, so, inevitably, does the form they give to the ambition of those who occupy its offices. What is more, the emergence of political parties, unforeseen if perhaps inevitable in a popular regime, tethered elected officials to public opinion—a link that progressively tightened as the parties and the country's institutions democratized. In his intellectual history of the American Presidency, Forrest McDonald identifies political partisanship and the character of the public's expectations of and from the executive office as the factors that have shaped the institution's evolution. "What the nation expects of itself it expects in turn of the president," he writes.⁷⁷ Although McDonald has in mind specifically the extent of presidential authority, his logic extends to the character of the men and women who will occupy the office. One explanation for his later observation that "the caliber of the people who have served as chief executive has declined erratically but persistently from the day George Washington left office" is the explanation offered here: The unleashing of avarice, of petulant economic competition untethered from any moral responsibility, has changed the character of the citizenry, our political parties, and therefore, the character of the country's eminent politicians.⁷⁸ In other words, the institutional controls the Federalists proposed require *mores*—historically inculcated by localism and Christianity—that their system did very little to perpetuate, and which the promotion of a commercial ethic did more than a little to erode.

The decline of the Roman republic is a striking, historical analogue. Like the United States, it was a diverse and extended republic that tolerated, and even encouraged, faction. On Machiavelli's account of Rome's excellence, the character of the people mattered a great deal: "where the matter [the people] is not corrupt, tumults and other scandals do not hurt; where it is corrupt, well-ordered laws do not help."⁷⁹ Or, speaking from the perspective of an ambitious man, "one has to seek glory in a corrupt city by modes other than in one that still lives politically." Even a good man like Manlius—a hero elegized in the *Discourses* who served

Rome while his countrymen were virtuous republicans—would have behaved ignominiously, in the manner of Sulla or Marius, had he been born into their debauched time instead. It matters to an honor-loving man whether he is surrounded by, and seeking to lead, self-interested materialists or patriotic Romans, themselves firm believers in the city’s gods.⁸⁰ Perhaps it is for this reason that Publius says the electoral college affords a “moral certainty” that the office of the president will be “filled by characters preeminent for ability and virtue.”⁸¹ Concern for character matters. Unless the citizenry exemplifies virtue, and demands the same from those who aspire to lead, men and women of preeminent virtue and ability will rarely seek public office or, more scarcely still, be elected.

Notes

1. Aristotle, *Politics*, 2nd ed., trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 1252b29–30.
2. Herbert Storing, ed., *The Anti-Federalist: Writings by the Opponents of the Constitution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 2.8.9.
3. Storing, *The Anti-Federalist*, 2.7.9.
4. David F. Epstein, “The Political Theory of the Constitution,” in *Confronting the Constitution*, ed. Allan Bloom (Washington, DC: The AEI Press, 1990), 96.
5. Storing, *The Anti-Federalist*, 2.7.9.
6. Storing, *The Anti-Federalist*, 6.12.17.
7. Herbert Storing, *The Complete Anti-Federalist*, vol. 1 (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1985), 221.
8. Herbert Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 21.
9. For an excellent articulation of Madison’s view of representation in a republican, see Lance Banning, *The Sacred Fire of Liberty: James Madison and the Founding of the Federal Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 221–23.
10. Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Clinton Rossiter (New York: Signet Classic Printing, 2003), No. 9.
11. In contrast, as Judith Shklar has noted, “The uneasiness of the anti-federalists was diffuse. They did not see immediate dangers ahead, but anticipated distant, irreversible consequences.” Judith Shklar, “Publius and the Science of the Past,” *The Yale Law Journal* 86, no. 6 (1977): 1287.

12. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 8 and No. 34.
13. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 34.
14. Karl-Friedrich Walling, *Republican Empire: Alexander Hamilton on War and Free Government* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 175.
15. The idea that wealth, luxury, and opulence pose a threat to morality, and that the erosion of morals can damage the polity, suffuses ancient and modern political thought. For articulations some of the Framers would have been familiar with, consider Rousseau's *First Discourse*, Montesquieu's *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline*, and Plato's *Laws*.
16. Alexander Hamilton, "Report on the Subject of Manufactures" in *Writings*, ed. J. B. Freeman (New York, The Library of America, 2001), 691–92.
17. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 8. Emphasis added.
18. Walling, *Republican Empire*, 175–76. An unfinished and undated paper Hamilton wrote to defend his proposal as Treasury Secretary for the national government to assume state debts contains a lengthy discussion of the relationship between economic prosperity, national creditworthiness, and the requirements of national defense. Alexander Hamilton, "Defense of the Funding System" in *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 8, ed. Henry Cabot Lodge (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 429–92.
19. David Hume, "Of Commerce," in *The Founders' Constitution*, ed. P. Kurland and R. Lerner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), I.iv.5.
20. Alexander Hamilton, "Defense of the Funding System," 438.
21. Hamilton, "Defense of the Funding System," 438.
22. Madison makes the same point in *Federalist*, No. 10: "The diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate, is not less an insuperable obstacle to a uniformity of interests. The protection of these faculties is the first object of government. From the protection of different and unequal faculties of acquiring property, the possession of different degrees and kinds of property immediately results; and from the influence of these on the sentiments and views of the respective proprietors, ensues a division of the society into different interests and parties."
23. Hamilton, "Defense of the Funding System," 438.
24. Harvey C. Mansfield, "Liberty and Virtue in the American Founding" in *Never a Matter of Indifference: Sustaining Virtue in a Free Republic*, ed. Peter Berkowitz (Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 2003), 17.

25. Jessica L. Kimpell, "Neo-Republicanism: Machiavelli's Solutions for Tocqueville's Republic," *European Political Science Review* 1, no. 3 (2009): 383.
26. James Madison, "Vices of the Political System of the United States" in *The Writings of James Madison*, vol. 9, ed. Gaillard Hunt (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), 356.
27. James Madison, *Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987), 76.
28. John Adams, "Letter to Samuel Adams" in *The Works of John Adams*, vol. 6, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Charles C. Little & James Brown, 1851), 415.
29. Hamilton, *Writings*, 44. James Madison agreed prior to ratification but would later adjust his thinking as a result of his disagreements with Hamilton and growing unease about the growth of national power.
30. Michael Zuckert, "The Virtuous Polity, the Accountable Polity: Liberty and Responsibility in 'The Federalist,'" *Publius* 22, no. 1 (1992): 136.
31. Epstein, "The Political Theory of the Constitution," 131.
32. James Ceaser offers the most comprehensive discussion the design of the presidency in relation to those it attracts. James Ceaser, *Presidential Selection: Theory and Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).
33. Mansfield, "Liberty and Virtue in the American Founding," 17.
34. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 57.
35. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 57.
36. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 57.
37. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 72.
38. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 72.
39. Harvey Mansfield, "Republicanizing the Executive," in *The Federalist Papers and the American Founding*, ed. Charles Kesler (New York: Free Press, 1987), 177.
40. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 366.
41. Mansfield, "Republicanizing the Executive," 177.
42. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 71.
43. Harry Jaffa, *Equality and Liberty* (Claremont: The Claremont Institute, 1999), 27. See also Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 48.

44. Marc Landy and Sydney Milkis, *Presidential Greatness* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 45.
45. Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788–1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 266–68.
46. Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, 55–69. See also Gordon Wood, “The Democratization of Mind in the American Republic” in *The Moral Foundations of the American Republic*, ed. Robert Horwitz (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1990).
47. Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy*, 50.
48. Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 18.
49. James Ceaser, *Presidential Selection*, 37–38.
50. Daniel Klinghard, “Grover Cleveland, William McKinley, and the Emergence of the President as Party Leader,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2005), 736.
51. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 2.
52. “Washington’s Farewell Address 1796,” Avalon Project, Yale Law School, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp.
53. John Adams, *The Works of John Adams*, vol. 9, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Charles C. Little & James Brown, 1854), 229.
54. Benjamin Franklin, *Benjamin Franklin: Autobiography, Poor Richard, and Later Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1997), 9–10.
55. George Washington, *Recollections and Private Memoirs of Washington*, ed. Parke Custis (New York: Nabu Press, 2010), 484.
56. Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 507.
57. Hamilton makes the point at greater length in an unpublished and undated meditation on the French Revolution, in which he expresses serious concerns about “a league ... cemented between the apostles and disciples of irreligion and anarchy” who argue that “religious opinion ... is unnecessary to society.” Alexander Hamilton, “Fragment on the French Revolution” in *The Works of Alexander Hamilton, Vol. VIII*, ed. Henry Cabot Lodge (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1904), 425–29. In Hamilton’s opinion, the calamities that issued from the French Revolution were largely the result of its antireligious bent:

It has served as an engine to subvert all her ancient institutions, civil and religious, with all the checks that served to mitigate the rigor of authority; it has hurried her headlong through a rapid succession of dreadful revolutions, which have

laid waste to property, made havoc among the arts, overthrown cities, desolated provinces, unpeopled regions, crimsoned her soil with blood, and deluged it in crime, poverty and wretchedness; and all this as yet for no better purpose than to erect on the ruins of former things a despotism unlimited and uncontrolled; leaving to a deluded, an abused, a plundered, a scourged, and an oppressed people, not even the shadow of liberty to console them for a long train of substantial misfortunes, of a bitter suffering.

Hamilton goes on to venture his concern that “symptoms of the too great prevalence of this system in the United States are alarmingly visible.”

58. Donald Burke, “James Madison’s Dystopian Vision: The Failure of Equilibrium,” *The American Journal of Legal History* 43, no. 3 (1999): 276.
59. Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel*, vol. 2 (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), 75.
60. James Madison, *The Writings of James Madison*, vol. 5, ed. Gaillard Hunt (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1904), 225.
61. Lorraine Pangle and Thomas Pangle, *The Learning of Liberty* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 192.
62. Thomas Jefferson, *Writings*, ed. Merrill Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 271–73.
63. Jefferson, *Writings*, 1306.
64. Jefferson, *Writings*, 1306–7.
65. Stephen Lange, “Civic Virtue and the American Republic: Federalism and the Formation of Citizen Character” (Paper delivered at the Statesmanship Symposium, Lexington, KY, 27 June 2013).
66. Allan Bloom, “Introduction” in J.-J. Rousseau, *Emile: Or, On Education*, trans. A. Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 5.
67. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. H. Mansfield and D. Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 274.
68. James Ceaser, *Liberal Democracy and Political Science* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 17.
69. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 27–29.
70. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 519.
71. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 186.
72. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, eds. A. Cohler, B. Miller, and H. Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 489.

73. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 418, 509.
74. Alan Wolfe, *The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
75. Thomas Engeman, "Religion and Politics the American Way: The Exemplary William Dean Howells," *The Review of Politics* 63, no. 1 (2001): 110.
76. For example, Robert Bork argues that the American constitutional system succeeded thanks to inherited moral capital it made no provisions to replenish, and worse, eroded by priorities inherent to the regime, in particular the emphasis on individualism. Robert Bork, *Slouching Toward Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2003).
77. Forrest McDonald, *The American Presidency: An Intellectual History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 278.
78. McDonald, *The American Presidency*, 481.
79. Nicolo Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. H. C. Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), I.17.3.
80. Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, III.8.2.
81. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 68.