

INTERPRETATION

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ALIENATION AND THE AMERICAN SCIENCE OF POLITICS

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At the close of his masterful study of the roots of American politics, Gordon Wood says of the Federalist achievement that it shattered "the conceptions of political theory that had imprisoned men's minds for centuries and brilliantly reconstructed the framework for a new republican liberty a reconstruction that radically changed the future discussion of politics."¹ The Federalist accomplishment, according to Wood, marked a watershed in Western history, inaugurating what he alternately calls a "kinetic theory of politics" or a "romantic view of politics." Whereas seventeenth-century contractarianism repudiated the idea of an organic hierarchy embracing rulers and people, thereby breaking the community into antagonistic interests, the Federalist political solution further dissolved a unified people into a mass of competing individuals. Erecting a republic on egoism, the Founders intended to rely on self-interested feeling rather than on republican public spiritedness, and they sought to guarantee freedom by means of the immediate interest of each autonomous individual.

Thus, the Federalist science of politics consisted in giving institutional form to the psychologization of politics begun by Hobbes, a process wherein appetite and desire displaced reason as the norm for man.² The Federalist transposition of political order to the appetitive and passionate level was remarked by Arthur O. Lovejoy: "Their problem was not chiefly one of political ethics but of political psychology, a need not so much to preach to Americans about what they *ought* to do, as to predict successfully what they *would* do, supposing certain governmental mechanisms were (or were not) established."³ Lovejoy noted that the effect of the Federalist "method of counterpoise" was to preserve the status quo. Others too have recognized the durability of the regime established by the Federalist "science of politics,"⁴ but adequate attention has not been given to the consequences of that overarching system of stability. Paradoxically, the preservative force of the Federalist formula for republican liberty entails the alienation of men in liberal-democratic society. It is necessary, however, to say a word

about the concept of alienation before attempting to draw out some of the implications of this “new science of politics,” as Hamilton called it.

The term “alienation” in this discussion does not bear a Hegelian or Marxist meaning. Why this is not the case may become apparent from the development of the discussion, but for the present suffice it to say that I mean something different by the term. By alienation I mean two things: first, a psychological condition when the rational and social nature of man is vitiated; second, a political condition resulting from the separation of man from his fellows. In part I shall try to indicate how these two dimensions of alienation, the personal and social, are inseparably linked. Long ago Plato perceived that the *polis* was man writ large, that there was a cycle of society and character in which society mirrored the order or disorder of its members’ souls. Although James Madison participated in the eighteenth-century revolt against the classical political tradition, he implied a somewhat similar recognition when he asked rhetorically, “But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature?”⁵ What I am suggesting is that the alienation endemic to liberal-democratic society, the estrangement of men from themselves and from their fellows, is predicated by the premises of our political tradition. Let us, then, turn to the American science of politics and examine the order of politics proposed by *The Federalist*.

The paramount problem of republican government addressed by Madison in Number 10 was the problem of faction—how to control the violence of faction within the framework of popular government. The object was to find some artificial, mechanical means of balancing competing, antagonistic interests so that neither a minority nor majority could tyrannize the rest of society. Madison took the division of society into adverse interests to be inevitable in a free society: the pride and selfishness of men wholly corrupted their reason; hence, as long as liberty exists, men’s egoism will attach their “passions” and “interests” to their fallible “opinions.” Since he did not want to abolish the cause of faction, namely liberty, the only acceptable solution was to control its effects, to mitigate the ferocity of the struggle between men. Most crucially, the unequal faculties and talents of men gave rise to unequal possessions of property; any common interest between men, therefore, was impossible. Con-

sequently, "the first object of government," Madison wrote, is to protect those "different degrees and kinds of property" resulting from men's natural inequality.⁶ Some years previously in his "North American" essays for *The Pennsylvania Journal* Madison made explicit the Mandevillean equation of private vice with public good contained in the Federalist formula for republican liberty. Implying the identity of the good and the useful, Madison declared that

the same active and predominant passion of the human breast, which prompts mankind to arrogate superiority and to the acquirement of riches, honor and power, which restricted to the selfish purposes of an individual we term *ambition*, is when extended to the disinterested object of aggrandizing a community, what we dignify with the appellation of *patriotism*—(that) the exertion of this principle being as advantageous to a republic, as it is useful to a man. . . .⁷

It is not merely the case that a private vice may incidentally accrue in some way to the public benefit; rather, the public good in itself is seen as derivative of individual pride and avidity. In fact, the condition on which the Madisonian scheme in Number 10 is based—the irreconcilable division of society into hostile interests and parties—is the very condition which must be perpetuated, in fact intensified, for the solution.

If the nature of man inevitably bred faction, Madison did not think that human conflict revolved around the sole issue of property. In the first place, he did not mean by property simply material goods and wealth, for in "its larger and juster meaning, it embraces everything to which a man may attach a value and have a right, and *which leaves to everyone else the like advantage.*"⁸ Thus, property includes not only land, goods, and money, but a man's opinions, the safety and liberty of his person, and the exercise of his faculties. It is the object of government to protect both kinds of property, especially a man's property in his conscience which is "the most sacred of all property" because it is a natural right, while other rights depend partially upon positive law.⁹ The sources of human contention are as varied as life: men's "opinions" on religion and government, the attraction and aversion to different personalities, even "the most frivolous and fanciful distinctions" where no real cause exists.¹⁰ Indeed, Hamilton claimed at one point that the severest controversies often arose over personal pique: "There is

nothing so apt to agitate the passions of mankind as personal considerations, whether they relate to ourselves or to others, who are to be the objects of our choice or preference.”¹¹ Moreover, among property holders serious conflict frequently arises between different kinds of property, for example, between agricultural and commercial interests. Nevertheless, Madison acknowledged, “the most common and durable source of factions” has been the unequal distribution of property, the conflict of haves versus have-nots.¹² The chief concern of *The Federalist* was to protect the minority of property holders against the majority of propertyless men. A continued rule of good and wise men, Madison feared, was not to be expected, and “we all know that neither moral nor religious motives can be relied on as an adequate control.”¹³ Therefore, some secular, institutional solution was necessary to control the effects of faction, to promote a restrained and enlightened pursuit of appetite, to avoid physical violence, and to protect personal security and the rights of property.

A majority faction must either be prevented from forming, or if it does come to exist, it must be made unable to act in concert. For this reason Madison followed David Hume and advocated, contrary to Montesquieu and others before him, the superiority of a large republic over a small one. Extending the sphere of republican government meant that it would be difficult for men to form or to act upon a shared interest. Madison delineated the solution of *Federalist* Number 10 in “Vices of the Political System of the United States,” notes composed in 1787 before he went to Philadelphia: “The Society becomes broken into a greater variety of interests, of pursuits of passions, which check each other, whilst those who may feel a common sentiment have less opportunity of communication and concert.”¹⁴ If the object of politics is to secure individual autonomy by playing one competing interest against another, this purpose will be enhanced by expanding and multiplying the manifold passions and appetites of men. “Extend the sphere,” Publius wrote, and you will produce “a greater variety of parties and interests;” you will lessen the chances for a common interest to form; even if men do feel a “common motive,” it will be difficult for them to act; and, of course, greater numbers of people will increase the isolation and distrust between them.¹⁵ In this fashion the Federalist plan for republican liberty fosters the atomization and alienation of men in society. Nor did Madison fail to perceive a parallel between civil

liberty and religious freedom. Religious disestablishment and the proliferation of sects rendered them innocuous and neutralized any tangible effect religion might have on society. Secularism and liberal democracy go hand in hand, but we must return to this point later.

In *Federalist* Number 51 Madison reverted to the same formula of fragmentation and atomization, as he sought an expedient to secure the separation of powers in the new government. Again the solution lay in the guarantee he previously offered for republican liberty generally—a balance of power between competing, private interests. This countervailing balance of individual egoism he called the “invention(s) of prudence.”¹⁶ We must explore further the relation between reason and the appetites and desires in *Federalist* theory, but for the moment we should note Madison’s understanding of prudence. He does not conceive of prudence as the deliberate habit of choosing the due means to a good end, but rather as an external constraint whereby the emancipated passions of individuals may be gratified short of mutual annihilation. The whole system of the separation of powers within government and the federal division of authority between the national and state governments was to be achieved by relying on the ambition and envy of men. “Ambition must be made to counteract ambition,” Madison proclaimed. “The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place.”¹⁷ As Hamilton explained in arguing for the re-eligibility of the President, “the best security for the fidelity of mankind is to make their interest coincide with their duty.”¹⁸ The structure of government, Madison explained, must be so contrived that one part will impose an external constraint upon another. Similarly, in describing the structure and powers of the presidency Hamilton based the success of the institution upon the triumph of certain passions over others within an intrinsically disordered condition:

His avarice might be a guard upon his avarice. Add to this that the same man might be vain or ambitious, as well as avaricious. And if he could expect to prolong his honors by his good conduct, he might hesitate to sacrifice his appetite for them to his appetite for gain. But with the prospect before him of approaching and inevitable annihilation, his avarice would be likely to get the victory over his caution, his vanity, or his ambition.¹⁹

It is not my intention to deny the due merit of a separation of

powers and of the principle of federalism. Today, as before, Madison is well taken when he says, "you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself."²⁰ Yet perhaps we have come of sufficient historical age so that the deficiencies of the Enlightenment's mechanistic approach to politics can be recognized. Although the classical political teaching held that one cannot expect to have a good society composed of bad men, liberal-democratic theory posits that good government is built precisely upon a foundation of moral and social disharmony. *The Federalist* erected a scheme for more than a governmental structure, and we must appreciate this in order fully to understand the American political tradition. *The Federalist* attempted to institutionalize a systematic and sustained liberation of appetite and passion, a liberation more effectually achieved the more stable the external order of the regime becomes. The stability of the regime, moreover, varies directly with the instability and disorder of the individuals and groups comprising it.

The liberal state which emerged in the eighteenth century was fashioned after the image of the free economic marketplace which in turn was modeled upon the autonomous individual defined by his passions and appetites. A leitmotif of *The Federalist* is the impotence of reason in the face of irresistible passions and appetites. Publius regards reason as a calculative capacity for the effective satisfaction of desire and appetite.²¹ Even as instrument or servant, however, reason fails, for the frailty of reason leads it to succumb to the immediate and unrestrained rush of passion and appetite. A deliberate, measured gratification of passion and appetite ought to guide government, but men's reason cannot provide even the utilitarian calculus. Men will inevitably divide and fall out in the attempt to exercise reason; therefore, they must be ruled by a common passion. In a condition of disordered existence community will be possible only on the lowest, or passionate and appetitive, level. To the extent, however, that men must be ruled according to the measure of the lowest level, community is further attenuated.

"This policy," Madison wrote, "of supplying, by opposite and rival interests, the defect of better motives," permeated the whole of human life, "private as well as public."²² Madison portrays an image of society in which individual autonomy and assertion pervade all relations from the marketplace to the family. Alexis de Tocqueville

pointed out the atomizing tendency of bourgeois society. In *Democracy in America* Tocqueville explained how egoism furnished the ground of the moral and political order of America.²³ Furthermore, the increasing private chaos fostered by democratic society was far from incompatible with public order and a certain regularity of morality. Private aggrandizement needs public order for its satisfaction, and a particular species of morality is conducive to public tranquillity and industry. Some pleasures will receive social disapprobation, but those allowed by democratic society will tend to absorb men and create a sort of "virtuous materialism" which in the end "would not corrupt, but enervate, the soul and noiselessly unbend its springs of action."²⁴ Tocqueville revealed the connection between liberal democracy and capitalism along with its effect: the total politicization and commercialization of life.²⁵ All human ties and relations, all traditional institutions and intermediate powers would be swept away by the principles of self-interest and popular sovereignty. *The Federalist* expressly aimed to comprehend "in the society so many separate descriptions of citizens as will render an unjust combination of a majority of the whole very improbable, if not impracticable," to break society itself "into so many parts, interests and classes of citizens."²⁶ Tocqueville believed democracy inexorably released desires it could never satisfy: the result would be ceaseless upheaval and fragmentation, together with constant, galling dissatisfaction.²⁷

Initially, it might seem that such a fragmented, atomized society would be so unstable it would come apart at the seams. This disintegration does not occur because liberal democracy grounds public order upon private chaos. Before turning to certain other architects of bourgeois society in order to elucidate the problem, let us recall one of the principal aims of the newly proposed government. Unlike the government under the Articles of Confederation, the new regime ordained by the Constitution would act directly upon individual citizens rather than indirectly through the states representing citizens in their corporate capacity.²⁸ Hamilton enunciated the *Federalist* intent, when he argued that the Confederation, by being unable to legislate for individuals, had created a condition of anarchy. In political associations of subordinate, independent sovereignties "there will be a perpetual effort in each to fly off from the common center."²⁹ The order and stability of the regime will be secured, then,

insofar as it can intimately and forcefully attach itself to the persons of citizens in their individual status. The authors of *The Federalist*, of course, were referring to the issue of state sovereignty, but the dynamics of the formula for republican liberty tend to enervate other subsidiary groups and intermediate powers in society. The national authority, Hamilton explained, "must be able to address itself immediately to the hopes and fears of individuals; and to attract to its support those passions which have the strongest influence upon the human heart."³⁰ In the new era of the psychologization of politics the more national authority tangibly affects the lives of individuals, "the further it enters into those objects which touch the most sensible chords and put in motion the most active springs of the human heart, the greater will be the probability that it will conciliate the respect and attachment of the community."³¹ Since man is a creature of passion and appetite, the key to political success will be to "interest the sensations of the people," to touch "matters of internal concern," to operate "through those channels and currents in which the passions of mankind naturally flow."³² Nor, in the gratification and control of emancipated individuals, should rulers be unmindful that "obedience to a government will commonly be proportioned to the goodness or badness of its administration" and that the accumulated power and resources of a single authority will have an irresistible impact on "public opinion."³³

To understand the Federalist formula for republican liberty one must refer to the writings of certain English thinkers who influenced the Founding Fathers, particularly Thomas Hobbes and James Harrington. Hobbes revolutionized Western political thought by devising a means of restraining the mob of liberated, passionate individuals. The ordering principle of Hobbes's entire work is fear of the greatest evil, death. That "mortal god," Leviathan, imposed an artificial, external control upon the instincts of autonomous, appetitive individuals. Beyond securing self-preservation through terror, Hobbes's artificial state would preserve order by promoting material gratification, what he called "commodious living."³⁴

For Madison physical survival and happiness, arising out of the instinct for self-preservation, are the ends of political association.³⁵ Universal anxiety and the desire to obviate death admit two solutions: erecting "a will in the community independent of the

majority”³⁶ as in a monarchical regime, or, more securely, establishing an extended, federal republic. Just as in the state of nature where the weak are at the mercy of the stronger and “even the stronger individuals are prompted, by the uncertainty of their condition, to submit to a government which may protect the weak as well as themselves,” so too in civil society precarious majorities will “be gradually induced, by a like motive, to wish for a government which will protect all parties, the weaker as well as the more powerful.”³⁷ Madison offered the extended, federal republic as the instrument for obtaining physical survival and material comfort. Throughout, Publius directs his argument to the passions and appetites of his readers: the new national government will best provide physical security and commercial prosperity.³⁸

This plan of *The Federalist* followed the teaching of David Hume who insisted rulers must take men as they are and govern them according to their passions and interests. A commercial society fostered the power and stability of a state not only because it produced a profusion of goods, but because it instilled “a spirit of avarice and industry” in men and tended to “gratify the senses and appetites.”³⁹ A commercial society, Hume admitted, unleashed insatiable desires; yet the more or less equal gratification of appetites would bind the interests of egoistic individuals to the state.

“The science of politics,” wrote Hamilton, “like most other sciences, has received great improvement.”⁴⁰ His survey of history led Hamilton to see it as unrelieved, dismal failure characterized by recurring political instability and decline. This legacy resulted from the fact that “the ancients” ill understood certain principles for perfecting popular government, principles such as the separation of powers and a system of checks and balances. Particularly critical for political stability and durability was the principle of enlarging the orbit on which government operated. As the Federalist formula suggested, however, the key to political success lay not only in enlarging the geographical orbit of government, but in expanding the ambit of human possibility and altering the level of the relationship between government and citizens.

A century before the new American science of politics was constructed, the English political writer James Harrington outlined the direction of the Federalist formula for republican liberty.

Harrington described an imaginary society, *Oceana*, as “a commonwealth for increase,” a society built “upon the mightiest foundation that any has been laid from the beginning of the world to this day.”⁴¹ That foundation was equality of opportunity. The authors of *The Federalist* were struck, as Harrington and Hobbes and others were at the dawn of the modern era, with the decline and failure of all former governments. Harrington contended that the stability and permanence of government rested in uniting the material interest of each individual citizen to it. An equalitarian, competitive society, he predicted, would create such a distribution of political power that no individual or group would have the inclination or capacity to disturb it: “the perfection of government lies upon such a libration in the frame of it, that no man or men in or under it can have the interest, or having the interest, can have the power to disturb it with sedition.”⁴² Only an “equal commonwealth,” Harrington maintained, contains this “full perfection.”⁴³

Hamilton viewed men as so animated by blind passion that neighbors make natural enemies, unless their common weakness can force them into a dependence upon each other.⁴⁴ The evil indicated the cure for Hamilton. The durability of government could be secured by attaching a multitude of private interests to it, and the centrifugal tendencies of an atomized society could be checked by making men’s gratification dependent upon the stability of the whole. For this enterprise a moral and social order were irrelevant. Already Harrington had declared the ancient belief good men are necessary to create good laws to be demagoguery: “But ‘give us good orders, and they will make us good men,’ is the maxim of a legislator, and the most infallible in politics.”⁴⁵

Harrington’s design of the everlasting, bourgeois commonwealth coincides with the Federalist plan at a number of points, including the factor of mobility and perpetual change. He discerned the need for constant and rapid movement in order to preserve the equality which is the cement of society. A process of ceaseless deracination formed a prerequisite of external order, for “in motion consists life, and the motion of a commonwealth will never be current unless it be circular.”⁴⁶ The commonwealth, he warned, “if it be not in rotation both as to persons and things, it will be very sick.”⁴⁷ Anticipating the Federalist solution of social atomization and the multiplication of factions, Harrington wrote:

So that if you allow not a commonwealth her rotation, in which consists her equality, you reduce her to a party, and then it is necessary that you be physicians indeed, or rather farriers; for you will have strong patients, and such as must be haltered and cast, or yourselves may need bonesetters.⁴⁸

Harrington argued, before the eighteenth century discovered the “invisible hand,” that the common interest of society (a conception which by the seventeenth century replaced the common good of society) derived from the preponderant weight of private interests. “Whereas the people, taken apart,” he said, “are but so many private interests; but if you take them together, they are the public interest.”⁴⁹ This public interest, the sum of individual appetites, Harrington called “right reason,”⁵⁰ a concept similar to what Hamilton meant by the “general or remote considerations of policy, utility, or justice” in contrast to men’s “momentary passions” and “immediate interests.”⁵¹ The bourgeois commonwealth Harrington compared to a human organism where the arteries of the heart “by a perpetual circulation” suck in and spout out “the vital blood.”⁵² This type of government would be more durable than life itself because, like the earth, generations may pass, but it will remain forever. With the proper “architecture” such a commonwealth might never dissolve, at least from internal causes, and if an appetitive balance is maintained, “you must bring the world in such a case to your balance.”⁵³ Set on this foundation, “the empire of the world”⁵⁴ shall not escape the grasp of the everlasting commonwealth.

The idea of a secular society, the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century solution for political order, constitutes a significant element of Federalist theory. From his vantage point in the early nineteenth century Tocqueville believed his predecessors had been wrong:

The philosophers of the eighteenth century explained in a very simple manner the gradual decay of religious faith. Religious zeal, said they, must necessarily fail the more generally liberty is established and knowledge diffused. Unfortunately, the facts by no means accord with their theory.⁵⁵

It may be questioned whether on the terms of his own analysis Tocqueville was warranted in drawing this conclusion, but for our present purposes let us simply take account of his predecessors’ intention. Indebted especially to David Hume for his political

philosophy, Madison took from Hume the formula of separation and division in society.⁵⁶ Hume believed that formula would guarantee both civil and religious liberty by multiplying, and hence neutralizing, rival factions. Secular society was the counterpart of liberal society; the formulas for civil and religious liberty were identical. As Madison expressed it, "It consists in the one case in the multiplicity of interests, and in the other in the multiplicity of sects."⁵⁷ Both would be enhanced, he held, by promoting a maximum of variety, mobility, expansion, and movement: "The degree of security in both cases will depend on the number of interests and sects; and this may be presumed to depend on the extent of country and number of people comprehended under the same government."⁵⁸

The men of the Enlightenment did not have in mind merely religious freedom and toleration. In a sense Tocqueville was correct; "religious zeal" had not abated when he visited America, but "enthusiasm," as Hume called it, was compatible with a secular society, that is, a society in which religion was a private, other-worldly affair divorced from all dimensions of social and political existence. In an essay entitled "Of Superstition and Enthusiasm" Hume proposed to treat what he termed "two species of false religion" which threatened civil society. Superstition gave rise, he argued, to "priestly religion," that is, organized, institutional, ecclesiastical religion such as Anglicanism or, more perilously, Catholicism. Enthusiastic religions like the radical Protestant sects were more furious, were noisier, at first, but Hume saw that they eventually atrophy. "Priestly religion" endangered civil society because it could make an impact on it. On the other hand, when the first passion of enthusiasts is spent, "men naturally, in all fanatical sects, sink into the greatest remissness and coolness in sacred matters."⁵⁹ "Priestly religion," in contrast, can exercise an influence upon society; hence, concluded Hume, "*superstition is an enemy to civil liberty, and enthusiasm a friend to it.*"⁶⁰ Add to this the fact, he continued, that enthusiasts are typically free-thinkers with no theological formation, and secularists should recognize they have nothing to fear. Before long these enthusiasts will become indistinguishable from them; they will become latitudinarians and deists. For Hobbes also secularism provided the final solution to the political problem of stability. The rational state of the modern era cannot allow the fear of God to overcome the fear of death, the desire for

security. To do so would weaken the very foundation of political order. The fear of God must be eliminated, a task achieved by the disenchantment of the world, by rationalized religion, by popular enlightenment.⁶¹

The disenchantment of the world and the rationalization of religion will be furthered, if religion is reduced to a matter of private opinion and its value is measured by its success in the marketplace. In his 1785 *Memorial and Remonstrance* to the Virginia legislature in support of Jefferson's Bill for Religious Liberty, Madison offered a defense of religious freedom which prefigured the secularist intent of the Constitution and *The Federalist*. He held religion a matter of individual reason and private conscience "because the opinions of men, depending only on the evidence contemplated by their own minds, cannot follow the dictates of other men."⁶² A matter of private opinion, religion is an affair between the individual and the Deity; civil society is totally autonomous, and "Religion is wholly exempt from its cognizance."⁶³ Each individual's religious faith comprises one competing interest among many. Those who make claims for an established church are afraid to put the merits of religion up to the free marketplace of competition. Finally, Madison argued, experience shows that establishment destroys the moderation of sects along with public order and prosperity.

Among their purposes, the authors of *The Federalist* delineated the kind of political order necessary to establish a powerful commercial nation. The pattern of alienation contained in the Federalist formula for republican liberty derives from commercial society; thus, we must seek the roots of the psychologization of politics in the nature of commercial society. It may be instructive, then, to turn our attention to the man who above all others in his age fashioned the political economy of the wealth of nations, Adam Smith. Smith's reflections on the effects of commercial society and on religion and education arise from the problem of political order in a society of liberated passions and appetites.

Prior to Smith it had been observed that commercial society was marked initially by a moderate but pervasive and incessant desire for gain which, when gratified, in time created a larger appetite. "Thus," Montesquieu wrote, "he who has gratified his desire of gaining a little raises himself to a situation in which he is not less desirous of gaining a great deal."⁶⁴ With the emancipation of economic activity in free

republics commerce became everywhere mixed with public affairs. Once unleashed, the passions and appetites would lack all restraint, Montesquieu perceived, for the dynamics of capitalism promoted limitless acquisition. In the absence of an intelligible order and any directive principle, more is better: "It is difficult for a country to avoid having superfluities; but it is the nature of commerce to render the superfluous useful, and the useful necessary. The state will be, therefore, able to afford necessaries to a much greater number of subjects."⁶⁵ An architect of modern political economy, Smith endeavored to make normative the appetitive and passionate elements in human nature, thereby psychologizing morality and politics. Reducing the ethical question to a problem of functionality, Smith viewed man as a set of psychological reactions and construed the dysfunctional as immoral. In his *Lectures on Justice* and again later in *The Wealth of Nations* Smith explained how self-interest forms the ordering principle of all human action and how commercial society exacerbates this element of human nature. Since commercial society is directed toward either immediate consumption or the increase of fixed or circulating capital, that man is "crazy" who seeks neither present pleasure for future profit: "A man must be perfectly crazy who, when there is tolerable security, does not employ all the stock which he commands, whether it be his own or borrowed of other people, in some one or other of those three ways."⁶⁶

Smith maintained that commercial society produced much good and fostered certain desirable human qualities such as probity and punctuality. But, he conceded, there were "some inconveniences" to it, namely, the stupification and debasement of the mass of laboring people. The division of labor confined men's attention to a few, routine tasks so that "in every commercial nation the low people are exceedingly stupid;"⁶⁷ their concern was restricted to immediate, material benefits; education was neglected and the family weakened; the moral and social senses were sapped, and gradually men grew effeminate by "having their minds constantly employed on the arts of luxury."⁶⁸ In short, said Smith, "His dexterity at his own particular trade seems, in this manner, to be acquired at the expense of his intellectual, social, and martial virtues."⁶⁹

Since the vast majority of people in what Smith called "civilized society" would be brutalized and alienated, he proposed that government support "those most essential parts of education," that is, "to read, write, and account."⁷⁰ Accordingly, in Smith we find an

early proposal for mass public education, education conceived as the acquisition of skills and vocational certification. The acquisition of these utilitarian skills could be encouraged, he suggested, by awarding "little badges of distinction to the children of the common people who excel in them."⁷¹ Most importantly, mass public education would be politically advantageous because it would make the masses more enlightened and, therewith, more docile and tractable. "The state, however," Smith emphasized, "derives no inconsiderable advantage from their instruction. The more they are instructed, the less liable they are to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition which, among ignorant nations, frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders."⁷² "An instructed and intelligent people" would be orderly; it would possess a passion for respectability and be inclined toward obedience; it would have a capacity of "seeing through" the "interested complaints of faction and sedition;" it would be indisposed "to judge rashly or capriciously" the actions of government.⁷³ In later years Madison similarly stated the case for public education. Popular government made public education indispensable because self-government requires knowledge, and knowledge is power. There should be a common class interest in public education, for aside from its many, incontestable, utilitarian benefits, public education contributed to social order and cohesion. Public education would provide "the best security against crafty & dangerous encroachments on the public liberty;" the study of geography and history, particularly, would enlighten the masses and break down "local prejudices;" finally, "the leisure of the labouring classes" would be occupied.⁷⁴

Within the overarching problem of political order the question of religion and morality is inseparable from that of education. For Smith, as for Hume, secularism and sectarianism were inseparable; religious factionalism was the correlative of political factionalism. Smith's formula for political and religious liberty followed exactly the plan adopted by *The Federalist*: numerous, conflicting groups and sects would atomize the people, neutralize each other, and render negligible the cumulative effect of religion on society. In the end, he hoped, religious liberty and sectarianism would lead to a "rational religion," for

the concessions which they would mutually find it both convenient and agreeable to make to one another might in time probably reduce the doctrine of

the greater part of them to that pure and rational religion, free from every mixture of absurdity, imposture, or fanaticism, such as wise men have in all ages of the world wished to see established.⁷⁵

Like Hume and the authors of *The Federalist*, Smith thought people, above all common people, committed to moral or religious principles were deleterious to political order. Seeking a way to "correct whatever was unsocial or disagreeably rigorous in the morals of all the little sects into which the country was divided,"⁷⁶ Smith turned to the final solution for political order in liberal, secular society. An unsociable, disagreeable morality in the masses could be eliminated in two ways: first, through popular enlightenment, that is, through the popularized study of philosophy and science, "the great antidote to the poison of enthusiasm and superstition;"⁷⁷ second, through a measured hedonism and skepticism induced by various public diversions and amusements. Austere, intractable beliefs and practices among the common people could be debunked and ridiculed by public entertainments. In this manner order is restored among the mob of emancipated individuals by rooting it in their constant gratification. The progressive enlightenment of *déracinés* becomes an exercise in the manipulation of public opinion. Smith noted in passing that such popular enlightenment would be supplied by academic competition between members of the middle class which would furnish plenty of safe teachers.

Less than a half century after the new American science of politics had taken form Alexis de Tocqueville discerned the paradoxical nature of liberal-democratic society. Having dissolved the traditional bonds of community, democratic society casts men in lonely isolation from one another. Democracy severs the organic links of society, cuts every man off from his ancestors, descendants, and contemporaries, and "throws him back forever upon himself alone and threatens in the end to confine him entirely within the solitude of his own heart."⁷⁸ The men of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries intended to found a new science of politics on "good orders" alone, as Harrington put it, and to derive public benefit from the release of private vice. The Federalist formula for republican liberty was based upon the atomization of society and relentless pursuit of self-interest. Tocqueville perceived how democratic individualism at last enervated the whole of human life, and he grasped the paradox of the successful gratification of men's appetites and

desires. A measure of gratification merely stimulated misery, anxiety, and the pursuit of new pleasures. The American "clutches everything, he holds nothing fast, but soon loosens his grasp to pursue fresh gratifications."⁷⁹ Life becomes a duration of unrelieved restlessness, apprehension, regret, and envy in an elusive quest to satisfy the appetites and desires. Although the new science of politics promised eternal life for the public body and material prosperity for its members, "Death at length overtakes him, but it is before he is weary of his bootless chase of that complete felicity which forever escapes him."⁸⁰

The juxtaposition of political order alongside personal and social disorder was suggested by Tocqueville in what appeared to him as the monotony of an "excited community." A love of riches lay at the bottom of everything Americans did, and eventually this love served to homogenize the passions of men together with the actions whereby they gratified those passions. Thus, a regularity of habit and conduct emerged from moral disorder: "The stronger the passion is, the more regular are these habits and the more uniform are these acts. It may be said that it is the vehemence of their desires that makes the Americans so methodical; it perturbs their minds, but it disciplines their lives."⁸¹ Observation and reflection persuaded Tocqueville that while democratic society liberated the desires of men and disposed them to perpetual change, at the same time it diminished the capacity of each individual and required a settled order for the gratification of those desires.

Harrington predicted that the maintenance of the appetitive balance in an equalitarian society would bring the empire of the whole world under the sway of the everlasting commonwealth. As Tocqueville viewed the prospect two centuries later, variety was disappearing from the human race as all men, insensibly and in isolation from one another, drew nearer to one another. Men were becoming alike without ever having imitated one another, and a similar condition of society developed everywhere as the democratic order spread. The final result, Tocqueville thought, might not simply be constant change but the extinction of humanity through an absorption in "bootless and solitary trifling."⁸² While men will remain "in continual motion . . . humanity will cease to advance."⁸³ The paradox of the modern science of politics is that the more individual and social disorder are heightened, the more stable

political order becomes; the more estranged men grow from themselves and from each other, the more alike they become. Tocqueville and others have claimed that the American science of politics was the best possible under historical circumstances. Perhaps political success can only be achieved in proportion to the diminishment of the person and attenuation of community.

¹ Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), p. 614.

² See Leo Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: Its Basis and Its Genesis*, trans. Elsa M. Sinclair (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), ch. vi.

³ Arthur O. Lovejoy, *Reflections on Human Nature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1961), pp. 46-47. Among the extensive writings on Federalist political theory the essay of James P. Scanlan, "The Federalist and Human Nature," *Review of Politics*, 21 (1959), 657-77, deals with the psychologization of politics, though Scanlan does not develop its implications. In a recent essay, "Political Obligation and the Brutish in Man," *Review of Politics*, 33 (1971), 95-121, Ellis Sandoz links the deterioration of community in America to the "libidinous" orientation of its politics, maintaining that modern reform may be seen as "a conscientious attempt . . . to optimize the satisfaction of the acquisitive lust of the entire citizenry through social, economic and political reform" (p. 114). If Sandoz had interpreted the Federalist achievement differently, he would not be forced to view our subsequent experience as discontinuous.

⁴ See Wood, pp. 612-15; also Martin Diamond, "Democracy and *The Federalist*: A Reconsideration of the Framers' Intent," *American Political Science Review*, 53 (1959), 52-68; and Martin Diamond, "The Federalist," in *History of Political Philosophy*, eds. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972), 2nd ed., pp. 631-51. Diamond's analysis is acute but neglects to pursue the implications of perpetuating the new regime.

⁵ Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist*, no. 51. All citations from *The Federalist* are taken from the edition of Clinton Rossiter (New York: New American Library, 1961).

⁶ *The Federalist*, no. 10.

⁷ James Madison, "The North American No. 1," in *The Mind of the Founder: Sources of the Political Thought of James Madison*, ed. Marvin Meyers (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), p. 36.

⁸ James Madison, "Property," *ibid.*, p. 243.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

¹⁰ *The Federalist*, no. 10.

¹¹ *The Federalist*, no. 76.

¹² *The Federalist*, no. 10.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ James Madison, "Vices of the Political System of the United States," in *The Mind of the Founder*, p. 91.

¹⁵ *The Federalist*, no. 10.

¹⁶ *The Federalist*, no. 51.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *The Federalist*, no. 72.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *The Federalist*, no. 51.

²¹ See, for example, *The Federalist*, nos. 42, 48, 49, 50, 55, 72.

²² *The Federalist*, no. 51.

²³ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Phillips Bradley (New York: Vintage—Random, 1945), II; see esp. pt. II, bk. II.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, ch. xi.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pt. I, chs. xiv, xv, xvii.

²⁶ *The Federalist*, no. 51.

²⁷ See Tocqueville, pt. II, bk. II, ch. xiii. In his two essays cited above Martin Diamond states that the Federalist formula for republican liberty corresponds to what Tocqueville called "the principle of self-interest rightly understood" (see pt. II, bk. II, ch. viii) and that it demands the absence of any rigid barriers to the ceaseless pursuit of immediate interest. Diamond rightly points out the complementary nature of the Madisonian solution, the public dimension of democracy, and Franklinian utilitarianism, the private aspect of the democratic spirit. Neither he nor Tocqueville pressed the utilitarian defense of democracy to its conclusions. Diamond expresses some apprehension over the effects of the utilitarian calculus for the life of the mind in America. Tocqueville, more radically, indicated the possible moral and social consequences, if certain beliefs and institutions did not continue to mitigate the impact of the calculus, but he stopped short of saying there was nothing to prevent the logic of the calculus from ultimately corroding those very mollifying beliefs and institutions.

²⁸ *The Federalist*, nos. 15 and 20.

²⁹ *The Federalist*, no. 15.

³⁰ *The Federalist*, no. 16.

³¹ *The Federalist*, no. 27.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ For this reading of Hobbes I am indebted to Leo Strauss. See *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes*, ch. ii, and *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 166-202.

³⁵ *The Federalist*, no. 43.

³⁶ *The Federalist*, no. 51.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ See *The Federalist*, nos. 1-3, 14, 20, 23, 42, 45, 56, 85.

³⁹ David Hume, "Of Commerce," in *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 269.

⁴⁰ *The Federalist*, no. 9.

⁴¹James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1887), p. 14.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁴⁴*The Federalist*, no. 7.

⁴⁵Harrington, p. 69.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹*The Federalist*, no. 6.

⁵²Harrington, p. 187.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 246.

⁵⁵Tocqueville, pt. I, ch. xvii.

⁵⁶See Hume's essays, "That Politics May be Reduced to a Science" and "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" in *Essays*. Douglass Adair established Madison's debt to Hume, and Irving Brant has shown the conjunction between civil and religious liberty for Madison. See Douglass Adair, "'That Politics May be Reduced to a Science': David Hume, James Madison, and the Tenth *Federalist*," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 20 (1957), 343-60; and Irving Brant, "Madison: On the Separation of Church and State," *William and Mary Quarterly*, NS3 (1951), 3-24.

⁵⁷*The Federalist*, no. 51.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹Hume, "Of Superstition and Enthusiasm," in *Essays*, p. 78.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁶¹See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, pp. 198-202. In "Of Superstition and Enthusiasm" Hume says that along with enthusiasm "sound reason and philosophy" are enemies to priestly religion.

⁶²James Madison, "Memorial and Remonstrance," in *The Mind of the Founder*, p. 9.

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. Thomas Nugent (New York: Hafner Press, 1949), I, xx, iv.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, I, xx, xxiii.

⁶⁶Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, in *Adam Smith's Moral and Political Philosophy*, ed. Herbert W. Schneider (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 380.

⁶⁷Adam Smith, *Lectures on Justice, Police, Revenue and Arms*, *ibid.*, p. 319.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 320.

⁶⁹Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, p. 433.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. 434.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, p. 435.

⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 436.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ James Madison to William T. Barry, August 4, 1822, in *The Mind of the Founder*, p. 441.

⁷⁵ Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, p. 439.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 442.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Tocqueville, pt. II, bk. II, ch. ii.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, ch. xiii.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, bk. III, ch. xvii.

⁸² *Ibid.*, ch. xxi.

⁸³ *Ibid.*