

INTERPRETATION

A Journal of Political Philosophy

Volume 8/2, 3

May, 1980

page	In Honor and Memory of Martin Diamond	
1	William Schambra	The Writings of Martin Diamond: A Bibliography
5	Marvin Meyers	The Least Imperfect Government: On Martin Diamond's "Ethics and Politics"
16	Thomas J. Scorza	Comment: The Politics of Martin Diamond's Science
22	Martin Diamond	An Excerpt from "Lincoln's Greatness"
26	William Schambra	Martin Diamond on "Lincoln's Greatness"
<hr/>		
29	Robert Sacks	The Lion and the Ass: A Commentary on the <i>Book of Genesis</i> (Chapters 1-10)
102	Judith Best	What Is Law: <i>The Minos</i> Reconsidered
114	Charles M. Sherover	Rousseau's Civil Religion
123	Edith Hartnett	Sartre and the Decadents
141	Laurence Lampert	Zarathustra's Dancing Song
156	Nathan Rotenstreich	Aspects of Identity and Alienation
174	Glenn N. Schram	Progressivism and Political Science: The Case of Charles E. Merriam
188	Glen E. Thurow	Discussion: The Defense of Liberty, Anastaplo's <i>The Constitutionalist</i>
204	Joseph J. Carpino	Frederick D. Wilhelmsen's <i>Christianity and Political Philosophy</i>
223	Will Morrissey	Thomas J. Scorza's <i>In the Time Before Steamships: Billy Budd, The Limits of Politics and Modernity</i>



QUEENS COLLEGE PRESS

INTERPRETATION

A Journal of Political Philosophy

Volume 8

Issue 2, 3

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Hilail Gildin

EDITORS

Seth G. Benardete - Hilail Gildin - Robert Horwitz - Howard B. White (1912-1974)

CONSULTING EDITORS

John Hallowell Wilhelm Hennis Erich Hula Arnaldo Momigliano Michael Oakeshott - Ellis Sandoz - Leo Strauss (1899-1973) - Kenneth W. Thompson

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Larry Arnhart - Patrick Coby Christopher A. Colmo - Maureen Feder - Joseph E. Goldberg - Pamela Jensen - Will Morrissey - Thomas West

ART EDITOR

Perry Hale

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Marianne C. Grey

EDITOR, QUEENS COLLEGE PRESS

Lee Cogan

ASSISTANT EDITOR, QUEENS COLLEGE PRESS

Dyanne Klein

Authors submitting manuscripts for publication in INTERPRETATION are requested to follow the *MLA Style Sheet* and to send ribbon copies of their work. All manuscripts and editorial correspondence should be addressed to the Editor-in-Chief, INTERPRETATION, Building G 101, Queens College, Flushing, N.Y. 11367, U.S.A.

Copyright © 1980 - Interpretation

QUEENS COLLEGE PRESS, FLUSHING, N.Y. 11367

THE LEAST IMPERFECT GOVERNMENT:
ON MARTIN DIAMOND'S "ETHICS AND POLITICS"

MARVIN MEYERS
Brandeis University

In memory of Martin Diamond—my least imperfect friend through some forty years and always a model of luminous intelligence and saving human grace—I can only try to do two modest things: to grasp a little more securely what he taught all of us about the nature of the Founding; and to clarify some unanswered questions in our own fragmentary dialogues on politics and history, spoken and unspoken, with their perpetual meetings and partings of the minds that drifted toward yet never found a resolution.

If I speak more of the questions we probed and worried than of the more important answers he has settled, it is simply because Martin's lucid writings have left very little need for commentators to discover what he meant to say. Perhaps by continuing our own unfinished conversation on the Founding, even with one voice sadly summoning the echo of the other, better one, I can suggest a distinctive and I hope useful perspective on his work. For brevity and focus, I shall address myself chiefly to one of his later essays—"Ethics and Politics: The American Way"—that at once epitomized much of what he had been writing and teaching about the Founding since Chicago days and pointed toward the next work that we shall never see.

A rough first sketch of our points of departure may help to put our dialogues in focus. Trivia are not always trivial. I cannot omit some odd youthful passions and diversions that we shared: for a wobbly sort of Trotskyism marvelously cleansed of tyranny and terror by shifting the burden of guilt to Stalinist monstrosity; for Nellie Fox and Billy Pierce and all the hitless wonders of Comiskey Park, loved precisely for their motley, makeshift virtues; for early *Partisan Review* and its canon of high modernity, young Danny Kaye and his spontaneous Borscht-Belt foolery, vintage Leadbelly and his rueful prison-humor, unbuttoned Bobby Burns and the eternal comedy of sex.

Even, or especially, our strong contrasts bound us for life. Brash city kid and backward country innocent, we never lacked a spacious common ground for talking, joking, teaching, helping, goofing-off, or saving the world. Time and distance and a multitude of changes in ourselves and in the world never seemed to shake the foundations. Thus in recent years whenever barbarians were on the march, in the universities and in the world, we knew instinctively that the old alliance held. This fragment of personal history has no significance beyond the hint it offers that friendship, and

even intellectual affinity, have causes and consequences our philosophy never dreamed of—a theme that Martin above all could have played out with virtuoso art.

In our conversations on the Founding, quickly epitomized, he defined the large philosophical point and I the small historical counterpoint. I choose the image deliberately. There was no simple clash of philosophical abstraction with historical concreteness. Martin had little more use for studies that locked the Founders in the closet with a library of political philosophy, making of them gifted but clumsy schoolboys, than I had for the histories that reduced extraordinary men and minds to their common baggage and necessary expedients. He gladly drew upon the rich historical sense and sensibility of Douglass Adair as I gleaned what I could—surely not enough—from his master, Leo Strauss. Together we understood that the Founders had created what was permanently best and truly worthy in a nation that commanded our profound loyalty; and equally we understood their ultimate responsibility for America's intrinsic imperfections: the other side of the coin.

Above all, perhaps, we shared a view of politics and ethics that both acknowledged the salutary wisdom of laws suited to the principles and character of the particular regime and yet imposed the obligation to weigh and measure those laws and that regime finally by an enduring standard of the good society, the good citizen, the good life, indeed the best that human nature permits us to imagine. And we discovered in the Founders men who had done exceedingly well at accomplishing and interpreting the former task, yet had never forgotten what was lacking, what was lost, what was permanently vulnerable in their achievement. We found them justly proud and wisely humble. In a word, we found them statesmen and teachers worthy of a lifetime's study, severely critical yet profoundly respectful. With little debt to our dialogues, Martin's own work, unfinished as it is, has almost single-handedly compelled serious men of our American generation to search for the roots of our strength, and of our weakness, in the mind of the Founders.

One further preliminary observation on this point-counterpoint of ours. Martin loved and studied philosophy as his training and conviction demanded. It served him wonderfully well, I hardly need to say, in understanding the American regime. And yet his peculiar temperament, his unique gift—and he would not have thanked me unequivocally for the compliment—was to stay in sympathetic touch with his world, to feel keenly its moods and spirit, to see its quirks and twists with a fresh, clear eye, to find for himself a voice that could delight and instruct friends, students, learned colleagues, politicians, men of affairs, and a mixed company of all degrees and kinds.

Thus if Martin could austere­ly raise the casual and careless discussion of politics to the level of grand principle, he could bring abstract speculation to bear with exhilarating impact upon the knotty detail, the messy confusion, the simple, practical, too easily neglected point of political business. In that sense, he, not I, was the natural historian. He could censor well-intentioned fools with affectionate understanding, tease righteous prigs with playful wit, and see a bit of himself in many human breeds, high and low. The human comedy and—as he insisted when gloomy friends unduly praised his light-heartedness and high spirits—the human tragedy as well were never alien to him. In my imagination I sometimes picture another kind of serious writing that he might have come to when, sure at last of his acquired Greek and Latin, he could have given full play to that uncommon grasp of the common American things. He had a loyal philosopher's quarrel with his country that set him above and apart from it all. But he also had a lover's quarrel that pleaded for its better nature, taken exactly and wholly for what it was—the least imperfect of possible worlds, and unalienably his own.

Martin's essay on "Ethics and Politics," I venture to suggest, springs from a dilemma, theoretical, historical, and in ways already hinted at, personal. In his systematic view, political philosophy had truly defined in ancient Greek the nature of justice and the corresponding forms of polity, the scale of human excellences and the requisite political modes of cultivating virtue. The rest was commentary, through all the ages of classical and Christian predominance, and, in modern times, declension.

America was created as an independent political society, a nation, in the late eighteenth century, the very model of modernity in its purest form. America's Founders were schooled in the political tradition that passed through diverse yet essentially—i.e., by contrast to the ancients—kindred minds from Machiavelli to Locke and Montesquieu and their brothers, heirs, and inner-family critics. The Founders were bred in an emerging modern world, singularly attuned to the twin spirits of commerce and republican government. Confronting the task of shaping a new republic, they could not and would not project their ends beyond the modern limits of comfortable preservation under the conditions of equal rights and mild, equitable law. The representative citizen of their new republic would be the acquisitive man, constrained by a mixed multitude of watchful competitors for petty gain; tempered by the intrinsic disciplines of commercial and democratic life; and elevated just a little, just enough for political union, by his calculations of the necessary connections between self-interest and the public interest, between the safety and prosperity of self, household, neighborhood, state, nation, and—remotely—all mankind.

To aim for a nobler order of political justice and human excellence, the classical and Christian ends, would be at once vainly utopian, beyond the capacities of human nature, and tragically reckless, provoking fatal quarrels over irreconcilable differences of opinion and objects of passion. Thus the Founders consciously designed a regime—the large commercial republic—for general ease and comfort, safety, peace and order, broad freedom narrowly employed; for the enduring reign of those “low but solid” human excellences known lately, with unwarranted contempt, as “the bourgeois virtues.” Deliberately sacrificing the best of human possibilities to escape the terrible worst, they secured a decent life for ordinary citizens according to their common nature. After the Founding—the short summer of creation—there would be no need, no room for great men, great cities, great thoughts, great faiths, great deeds. All would be busily and endlessly engaged in securing their inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—a joyless, middling grade of happiness. Their pain-pleasure calculus left only a remnant, a vestige, an odd corner of happiness for the fulfillment of the higher needs of mind and soul.

What then is the *dilemma* I have marked as the source of Martin’s essay? Beginning on personal grounds, I have suggested that Martin himself had a measure of love and loyalty for his country that men of his nature simply do not give to petty, paltry, merely respectable and grudgingly tolerable things. Even two cheers would be one too many. A good citizen, and Martin was surely that, might choose to support a second-rate country according to its own best—i.e., second-best or even third-best—standards and traditions, particularly when it was threatened by abominable alternatives. As he remarks in effect, even humble bourgeois virtues can cast a lovely light in the moral darkness.

Yet that does not seem to me enough to explain the depth of political feeling, the enduring concern with the perpetuation of our political institutions that grew stronger in his last years, and even occupied his last hours. It does not explain for me his scholarly devotion to the Founders not merely as curious subjects for the detached study of modernity but as—forgive me—heroic men, exemplary leaders, essential political teachers. There was something more to the Founding and the nation it created—something that moved *his* soul—than a world of jostling competitors, jockeying factions, all fenced and tamed to civic decency within a system of self-regulating institutions, political and economic.

When Martin wrote that we know instinctively of an American nation with a distinctive ethos that formed a distinctive American character—when he wrote that we sense the presence of an authentic political community beneath the bare skin of a mere association for the sake of life—when, in short, he introduced “The American Way” to complete his

thought about the place of ethics in the formal American political order and its universal principles: When Martin said these things he was in a deeply personal sense asking The Philosopher to acknowledge the substantial worth of a country and a people that could command his own love and loyalty and best service.

It was not *the* "Republic," nor could it ever be. It had become something less than the *American Republic* as it was conceived in the beginning and as it might be in the end. Yet I believe that Martin would gladly have joined Madison—author of the quintessential pattern of political modernity—in reflecting at the end on his country and the cause of its liberty:

The advice nearest to my heart and deepest in my convictions [Madison wrote in his political testament] is that the union . . . be cherished and perpetuated. Let the open enemy to it be regarded as a Pandora with her box opened; and the disguised one, as the serpent creeping with his deadly wiles into Paradise.

Thus in the final reckoning do Greek and Judaeo-Christian images return to the land of acquisition, the realm of insatiable appetite and cunning calculation, the low-slung city of modernity.

So much for my modest exercise in psycho-history, a little antiquated, I confess, by contemporary standards. In fact, given the character and mind of my honored subject, I have necessarily suggested theoretical and historical aspects of the dilemma underlying Martin's essay on "Ethics and Politics." I shall complete the thought summarily.

Although Martin leaned surprisingly close to Beard, as refined by Hofstadter, in interpreting the intention and the method of the Founders' politics—reserving his hardest blows for Hofstadter's loose moral criticism, the short case for virtue without tears by grace of modern science—he clearly formulated the decisive differences. First, of course, he long ago proved beyond a reasonable doubt the democratic legitimacy of the Founders. Those who repeat the old story are simply unteachable. Beyond that, Martin refused to permit the Founders to be caught in their own net, confounding fish with fisherman. If interest and passion are the dominant motives in most men, and if property is the most common and durable source of factional interest, it does not follow that Founders who learn this harsh fact of political life and put it to salutary use in defending the permanent and aggregate interests of the community thereby become themselves the creatures of interest and passion, servants of their own partial property-interest, a faction like all others.

At the very least they acted on a rational and systematic view of the ends of political society in the face of human limits evidenced in the sad story of political experience, in the cautionary tales of history. Self-interest

and factional behavior represent inevitable *problems* to be mastered for the sake of liberty and self-government, not norms for Founding, ready-made excuses for making government and law the pliant tools of avarice, ambition, and class-rule. The language of their reasoning and the record of their conduct, tested to the limit by the hard years of Founding and Revolution, establish the distinction between the character and political intention of the Founders, on the one side, and on the other, the qualities of human nature (as they conceived it) that made their revolutionary enterprise so problematic.

And yet the dilemma remains for Martin. Cheap debunking aside, do the ends of the Founders incorporate so much of their understanding of the limitations of human nature, of human reason, that they abandon the quest for an authentic political community, defined by Aristotelian standards? Does their view of justice reduce itself to a bundle of timid negatives, devoid of any significant view of the good life and content to secure the safety and prosperity of individuals against gross injustice: against theft, injury, fraud, unspeakable abomination; against absolute and arbitrary power; against internal chaos and foreign invasion? Does the Republic they founded, in brief, breed citizens distinguished by a certain truly respectable degree and kind of virtue suited to the principles of the regime? Or does it represent an aggregate of stunted creatures, barely literate in the language of genuine civility, of civilization, bound in political association only insofar as their own necessities and conveniences are served? Again, in personal terms, does the Republic of the Founders command love and loyalty and devoted service of its best men, or prudent acquiescence because it is the only Republic we have or can hope for?

Martin's answer is tentative and full of doubts. There is of course no Rome or Greek Athens or Holy See in America, nor was there meant to be. (Martin perhaps first learned that as a very young man when, as I recall, he spent a wayward year or so in Athens, Ohio.) The modern principles of natural rights, the soul and spirit of the Founding, aim for about the lowest point where man begins to realize his humanity, his rational and moral nature. To secure that humble but precious step beyond the life of brutes and savages and slaves, beyond the state of nature and the state of war, the Founders designed the large commercial republic with its complex system of checks and balances, of watchmen watching watchmen, incorporated in self-sustaining institutions. Within that constitutional framework, men could satisfy their wants, secure their rights, pursue their happiness in any paths they chose—even paths toward true wisdom and lofty virtue, if any cared to find them for themselves. The laws, however, led men in another common way: toward the life of commerce in the spirit of acquisitiveness.

Engaged in such pursuits, men would discover a kind of virtue in governing their own passions for the sake of gain. Industry, enterprise, foresight, calculating honesty, useful accommodation to the interests of others, even a touch of liberality such as merchant-Scrooge felt at Christmas time to his profit (that is Martin's harsh image): These would become habitual in the ordinary course of life, form a distinctive character, define and sustain a decent American Republic. Anything less would be utterly contemptible. Anything more would be utopian, denying the nature and limits of the regime given to us by the Founders, and thus inviting chaos and ruin.

Aristotle's ghost never quite answers the question Martin put to him: Is this America an authentic political community? Certainly he would find it sadly incomplete and far less than admirable. Probably he would recognize at least the shadow and echo of a political life expressing man's "ethical need" for a partnership that aims above survival. Possibly he would find it, as Martin did in fact, a country that demanded one's best thought and drew one's life steadily and finally toward "Washington." I doubt it. On Aristotle's grounds, Martin gave to America far more than his classical interpretation of "The American Way" requires or, I think, permits. Part of the dilemma of "Ethics and Politics" remains.

Let me turn quickly to some more particular points in our dialogue on the American Founding, aimed at clarifying the dilemma of "Ethics and Politics." (A resolution is beyond my powers.) Here I shall speak more directly for myself. Martin, after all, has spoken his mind convincingly and memorably. Any further efforts of mine at explication and interpretation can only obscure his position.

Viewed from my side, the great antithesis of Ancient and Modern—the controlling context of Martin's argument—grants too much to sweeping philosophical abstraction and so leaves too little room for historical particularity. I do not mean to be perversely literal. Of course Martin recognized and understood the vast range of philosophies, politics, and ways of life that falls within some two millenia of "Classical and Christian" history. Indeed, Martin himself insisted upon the crucial distinctions of ethos and character that identify "authentic political communities."

Similarly, he would have no trouble distinguishing, say, Machiavelli's Florence from John Cotton's Boston, Bacon's New Atlantis, Locke's London, Montesquieu's Paris, Jefferson's Monticello, or Madison's Philadelphia. I understand, or think I do, why he could employ the essential Aristotle to represent all before the Modern and Madison's *Federalist* 10 to represent all after. Simple antitheses grounded on first principles of politics may point the way toward complex historical truths.

And yet finally I must resist Martin's scheme, compelling and enlightening as he makes it. The Founders I know best—the greats and some lesser lights as well—simply did not cast themselves in a universal war between the Moderns and the Ancients. Perverse literalism? Perhaps we know them better than they knew themselves? Perhaps we should be ready to read between the lines, find the secret writing and the double-meanings, draw interpretations from their libraries, reveal the silent messages hidden for us beneath the public rhetoric? I cannot deny the possibility, and from time to time I actually catch a glint of it for myself. Well-earned humility before the masters of philosophy cautions me to speak quietly and slowly. On very good authority, however, I can recommend that we at least begin where the Founders began, try faithfully to look through their eyes and texts, acknowledge provisionally their chosen masters, friends, and adversaries. In short, we might do well to borrow their map to the great political and moral campaign of history before superimposing our own. Recent experience with the imperial designs of class-history and cliometrics and psycho-history and bio-history—political science has its corresponding levellers—is not entirely irrelevant to my point, although I would not for a moment abandon my adversary-friends to such low company.

I agree, and I insist, that it *was* a great campaign the Founders planned and led: a campaign against the Old Regime. Not Aristotle's Athens. Not the Rome of the noble Romans. Only remotely and symbolically the Rome of despotic popery and gorgeous pomp, mystery and superstition, Jesuitical plots and Franciscan begging. And that was an ancestral hatred bequeathed to them by those most pious first founders of the brave new American world. Their evil Old Regime was rather a model of Early Modern polity that blended remnants of the canon and the feudal law, loosely conceived (by John Adams, for example) as general forms of clerical and aristocratic oppression, with a new kind of enlightened despotism, concentrating and rationalizing and enlarging the power of the state through its monarchical head. A catch-all notion, to be sure, but it was one that served their purpose of drawing many enemies into one decisive battle.

More broadly still, it was a campaign against all kinds of absolute and arbitrary, cruel and deceitful, corrupt and corrupting power, past and present: against Alexander and Caesar, Turk and Norman, Borgia and Bourbon, Stuarts first and second, and not least against their own King George. This was the many-headed monster that had reduced most of mankind through the ages to a life of misery, ignorance, perpetual war, and abject dependence: a life poor, nasty, brutish, and short under the mighty Leviathan or some other mortal god. (Hobbes, I should note in

passing, was not for the Founders Locke's hard-fisted brother in modernity but the apologist for naked power. Their philosophy might have been weak, but their political instincts were sound.)

More immediately and concretely—I must insist upon the obvious—they fought a Revolutionary War against the British Empire: a regime and a people that had betrayed not only the trust of government but the common heritage of liberty and law. Driven by ambition and avarice, the British at home had abandoned their Old Cause, perverted their balanced constitution, corrupted politics and morals. And they had sent troops and fleets and swarms of royal vultures to enslave America and pick its bones. Again, the Founders' history might have been weak and tendentious, but their political instincts were sound.

With all due apologies for rough brevity, then, I propose that this familiar, old-fashioned view casts a very different light on the Founding project than does Martin's war between Ancients and Moderns. The first question of the Founders' "Ethics and Politics" was not: How can we scale down the great ends of classical justice, the great models of ancient character, or the Table of Divine Commandments to a safe and rather sorry level of respectability? It was rather: How can we elevate America and Americans—and, teaching by example, all mankind—to the full dignity of human nature (they did use that expression) such as a few glorious societies have known for tragically brief moments through all of history?

Their *second* question was: If broad freedom under wise and salutary law, if self-government is the way, both right and necessary, to achieve a large measure of human dignity, what particular laws and institutions shall we choose to sustain such ordered liberty for ourselves and our posterity? Precisely because we seek high ends by daring means, we must most prudently attend to the limits of human nature and thus of politics. Passion and interest, fallible reason and neglectful conscience, will not disappear in the best of republics. They destroyed the shining cities of antiquity, the noble liberty of England, and they can get us, too. America has been given great advantages, material and moral, and holds the great political truths to be self-evident. It is a country well worth the pledge of lives, fortunes, and sacred honor. But it is not exempt from man's fate, the fate of all republics. Therefore let us build on secure political foundations, as far as republican principles admit.

Here my thought almost joins Martin's. The link can be stated in his terms. The high ends of the ancients presupposed and perpetuated human inequality in the most important things. Giving every man his due, I need hardly tell this audience, meant giving radically different things to radically different men for the best of reasons: reasons of justice. There would be slaves in large numbers because large numbers of men were naturally

slavish. There would be philosophers and kings in single numbers because a rare few could achieve wisdom and virtue in the highest degree. In between, there would be graded ranks of citizens meriting different shares of offices and honors according to their nature, education, and condition. I defer to the learned in these matters, if only I am granted the simple point of inequality, Martin's point. And its direct consequence: that the highest ends, the noblest patterns of character, the most demanding modes of educating citizens are designed for the few. No dirt farmers, sweaty artisans, let alone grunt-laborers need apply. They will be called when needed, and take their orders. In the meantime, let them do the humble work befitting humble men.

I am not preaching slave revolt in Rome or Athens. I will gladly take them in all their glory and their inequality. But I cannot readily assent to the comparison between the character and education designed for the noble few of antiquity and that designed by the Founders for the great mass of Americans, black slaves excluded at least for the moment. Martin, I fear, having marked this distinction very carefully, proceeds to use it rather loosely. As the argument flows, as the great antithesis acquires a life of its own, the American Everyman is brought to trial before the court of political justice under the law suited to philosopher-kings and guardians: the rare few capable of achieving wisdom and virtue in the highest degree, worthy of defining and directing and commanding the conduct of the polis, meriting in the ultimate test an invitation to Akadémiá. It is not surprising, then, that this ordinary fellow raised by democracy to the rank of citizen and endowed with an equal share of sovereignty is found wanting in everything but the humble "bourgeois virtues." Nor is it unexpected that Martin should accordingly attribute to the Founders a deliberate design to unseat the ancient judges and the ancient law, reduce the ends of politics and ethics to a scant six feet above ground level.

I would, as you know by now, put the case quite differently. The judges that the Founders saw on the bench of history were not the ancient sages dispensing classical justice nor the holy priests dispensing pure religion. The judges were predominantly and typically and therefore, for practical purposes, predictably men of great ambition, consuming appetite, extraordinary gifts perhaps, but gifts likely to be employed to serve interested and passionate ends—lacking due restraint by laws and institutions—and so, extraordinarily dangerous gifts. Their law was typically, therefore predictably, the law of domination, the law of exploitation, the law of holding the great body of society in subjection and darkness, the law of denying to ordinary human nature its rightful share of liberty, dignity, and happiness.

Seen in this light—my light and, I propose, the Founders' light—the ends of the Revolution and the Constitution were not minimal, negative,

apologetic: not the last least hope for mankind after the Fall from Ancient Justice and Divine Grace. Shortly following *Federalist* 10, Madison spoke in a different key to and of the people of America:

Happily for America, happily, we trust, for the whole human race, they pursued a new and more noble course. They accomplished a revolution which has no parallel in the annals of human society. They reared the fabrics of governments which have no model on the face of the globe. They formed the design of a great confederacy, which it is incumbent on their successors to improve and perpetuate.

Counsels of despair, of timorous prudence in the face of great risks and opportunities, deserved nothing more than Madison's contempt:

Hearken not to the unnatural voice which tells you that the people of America, knit together as they are by so many cords of affection, can no longer live together as members of the same family; can no longer continue the mutual guardians of their mutual happiness; can no longer be fellow-citizens of one great, respectable, and flourishing empire.

A commercial republic animated by the acquisitive spirit? Yes, but: the business of America was to be far more than business. It was an enterprise worth forty years of a wise and good man's life—and twenty years more of searching, prayerful reflection.

As Madison, nearing the end of life, wrote in defense of his Old Cause, the democratic principle and its finely-wrought embodiment in the American regime: "the problem to be solved is, not what form of government is perfect, but which of the forms is least imperfect. . . ." May it be so that long, devoted, painfully exacting service, enlightened and enlightening, to the "least imperfect" government represents statesmanship and virtue in a very high degree? May it be so that such qualities drew Martin to his life-long study of Madison and the work of his mind and hand? May it be so that we are led to study Martin, and to honor him, because he not only defined uncompromisingly the dilemma of "Ethics and Politics" in America, but lent his gifts of wisdom and virtue to that "least imperfect" government, his own, beyond the demands of his argument?

I hope this recollection of a broken dialogue is not unworthy of our memory of Martin Diamond. I shall not forget.

This paper was prepared while I was a Humanities Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. It was originally presented at the session of the APSA honoring the memory of Martin Diamond, Sept. 1, 1978.