

Interpretation

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Winter 2021

Volume 47 Issue 2

- 223 *Lewis Fallis* The Political Significance of Friendship in Plato's *Lysis*
- 253 *J. A. Colen & Anthony Vecchio* The First Walgreen Lectures by Leo Strauss (1949)
- 355 *Edward J. Erler & Ken Masugi*
An Exchange
Schaefer contra Political Philosophy
- 375 *David Lewis Schaefer* Unretired: A Reply to "Schaefer contra Political Philosophy"
- 385 *Borys M. Kowalsky & Joseph Phelan*
Review Essay
Nietzsche and Modernist Art, Part I: The Value of *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Artists of the New Weimar*
- 401 *Kevin J. Burns*
Book Reviews
"From Reflection and Choice": *The Political Philosophy of the Federalist Papers and the Ratification Debate*, edited by Will R. Jordan
- 407 *Steven Forde* *Thucydides on the Outbreak of War: Character and Contest* by S. N. Jaffe
- 413 *Jerome C. Foss* *Good Things Out of Nazareth: The Uncollected Letters of Flannery O'Connor and Friends*, edited by Benjamin B. Alexander
- 419 *Steven H. Frankel* *Power and Progress: Joseph Ibn Kaspi and the Meaning of History* by Alexander Green
- 425 *Thomas Powers* *Multiculturalism in Canada: Constructing a Model Multi-culture with Multicultural Values* by Hugh Donald Forbes
- 431 *Aaron Zubia* *Taking Comedy Seriously: Stand-Up's Dissident Potential in Mass Culture* by Jennalee Donian

Interpretation

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

- Editor-in-Chief* Timothy W. Burns, Baylor University
- General Editors* Charles E. Butterworth • Timothy W. Burns
- General Editors (Late)* Howard B. White (d. 1974) • Robert Horwitz (d. 1987)
Seth G. Benardete (d. 2001) • Leonard Grey (d. 2009) •
Hilail Gildin (d. 2015)
- Consulting Editors* David Lowenthal • Harvey C. Mansfield • Thomas L.
Pangle • Ellis Sandoz • Kenneth W. Thompson
- Consulting Editors (Late)* Leo Strauss (d. 1973) • Arnaldo Momigliano (d. 1987) •
Michael Oakeshott (d. 1990) • John Hallowell (d. 1992)
• Ernest L. Fortin (d. 2002) • Muhsin Mahdi (d. 2007) •
Joseph Cropsey (d. 2012) • Harry V. Jaffa (d. 2015)
- International Editors* Terence E. Marshall • Heinrich Meier
- Editors* Peter Ahrens Dorf • Wayne Ambler • Marco Andreacchio •
Maurice Auerbach • Robert Bartlett • Fred Baumann • Eric
Buzzetti • Susan Collins • Patrick Coby • Erik Dempsey •
Elizabeth C'de Baca Eastman • Edward J. Erler • Maureen
Feder-Marcus • Robert Goldberg • L. Joseph Hebert •
Pamela K. Jensen • Hannes Kerber • Mark J. Lutz • Daniel
Ian Mark • Ken Masugi • Carol L. McNamara • Will
Morrisey • Amy Nendza • Charles T. Rubin • Leslie G.
Rubin • Thomas Schneider • Susan Meld Shell • Geoffrey
T. Sigalet • Nicholas Starr • Devin Stauffer • Bradford P.
Wilson • Cameron Wybrow • Martin D. Yaffe • Catherine
H. Zuckert • Michael P. Zuckert
- Copy Editor* Les Harris
- Designer* Sarah Teutschel
- Inquiries* ***Interpretation, A Journal of Political Philosophy***
Department of Political Science
Baylor University
1 Bear Place, 97276
Waco, TX 76798
- email* interpretation@baylor.edu

Will R. Jordan, ed., *"From Reflection and Choice": The Political Philosophy of the Federalist Papers and the Ratification Debate*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2020, 200 pp., \$24.00 (paper).

KEVIN J. BURNS

CHRISTENDOM COLLEGE

kevin.burns@christendom.edu

This slim volume collects nine essays originally delivered in 2018 during a conference at Mercer University. The essays focus on the ratification debates in 1787–1788 and analyze constitutionalism and modern republicanism, the political thought of James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, and the influence and relevance of the Federalist-Antifederalist debates in American history, from Abraham Lincoln to the present. As editor Will R. Jordan explains in the introduction, the volume takes its name from Hamilton's claim in *Federalist*, No. 1 that free governments can be instituted "from reflection and choice" and need not depend "on accident and force." Bemoaning the low level of much modern political discourse, Jordan adds his own hope that the volume can contribute to reflective, dispassionate political deliberation in modern America and help "to maintain and improve [our] government" (5).

Michael Zuckert opens the volume with an essay on James Madison's republican constitutionalism, as explained in *Federalist*, Nos. 10 and 51. This is well-trod ground, but Zuckert clearly and thoroughly analyzes not only the negative, preventative role of the extended republic and separation of powers, but also the ways these constitutional features encourage prudent, decent behavior. As he shows, the extended sphere does not simply prevent a majority faction from forming, it also encourages the formation of respectable majorities, made up of competing groups that moderate their own preferences in order to form a majority coalition. Similarly, the constitutional system relies on ambition to counter tyrannical ambition while also encouraging the sort

of ambition that leads politicians to serve the community as statesmen, not self-interested representatives of factions.

Several essays touch on the “Madison Problem”: To what extent did Madison alter his political views when he shifted from a Hamilton ally during the convention and ratification debates and became a disciple of Jefferson in the 1790s? How should one explain this shift? Murray Dry argues that the Constitution created “a new federalism and a new republicanism” (45). But rather than settling all disputes about the nature of the regime, the Constitution actually invited further debate, as demonstrated by the disputes between Hamilton and Madison over the nature of republicanism and the extent of national power. According to Dry, Madison remained largely consistent in his understanding of federalism, but updated his understanding of the dangers factions posed to republicanism. Although *Federalist*, No. 10 argued that minority factions were not particularly dangerous, Hamilton’s financial plans and the Neutrality Proclamation (1793) forced Madison to recognize that a small, elite faction of protomonarchists posed a real danger to the republic.

Jeremy Bailey presents Madison’s repeated invocation of *Federalist*, No. 39 to defend his own consistency over time. Madison had implied in *Federalist*, No. 37 that no bright line could be drawn between national and state power, but in *Federalist*, No. 39 he argued that the federal courts should help settle federalism disputes. After all, without the courts determining the extent of national power, each state would be left to determine that issue for itself through nullification. The Constitution would then have a different meaning within each state; this would be intolerable for it would violate “the vital principle of [state] equality,” leaving the states in possession of unequal degrees of residual sovereignty (77). Bailey finds that Madison’s argument “suggests a basic consistency” insofar as he viewed “the Union as a compact among states *and* as a union wherein controversies would have to be settled by a [federal] judiciary” (79, emphasis in original). Bailey’s point about Madison’s consistency *with Madison* is well taken, yet it raises questions about Madison’s logic. Is it logically consistent to argue both that the states are sovereign and that a national tribunal may impose its judgments on those “sovereigns”? Hamilton’s logic was far clearer when he unambiguously denounced “the political monster of an imperium in imperio” in *Federalist*, No. 15.

Lynn Uzzell addresses a more minor inconsistency in Madison’s thought. *Federalist*, No. 10 lists two major advantages of the extended republic: first, the multiplicity of factional interests, and second, larger election districts that will promote the election of wiser, more virtuous representatives. In the

Federalist, Madison claimed these two advantages were equally important, yet elsewhere, Uzzell points out, he emphasized the novel and radical argument about factions at the expense of the argument about virtuous rulers. To explain this inconsistency, Uzzell posits that Madison wrote *Federalist*, No. 10 strategically, since he recognized his first argument—which relied on structural features, rather than virtue—was less attractive to his audience than his more traditional second argument, which could appeal to Antifederalists concerned with civic virtue.

Shifting focus from Madison to Hamilton, Kimberly Hurd Hale writes that Hamilton's understanding of politics as a science, economic plans, and support for a strong navy all "echo" Francis Bacon's ideas and were "decidedly Baconian in scope, and in character" (83). Hale successfully shows parallels between Hamilton and Bacon. However, the reader may be left somewhat disappointed, since although she notes that Hamilton read Bacon, Hale generally goes no further than arguing that Bacon influenced other Enlightenment thinkers, who in turn influenced the Founders (97). We are therefore left wondering about Bacon's own importance for Hamilton's thought.

The final four essays emphasize the impact of the ratification debates on later American politics. Jon Schaff sees an example of the continuing relevance of Founding Era debates in Abraham Lincoln, who espoused a synthesis of Federalist and Antifederalist ideas while improving on both. Where Federalists relied on institutional constraints and Antifederalists on virtue to maintain political limits, Lincoln acknowledged the importance of both while also showing the value of statesmanship in maintaining respect for law and promoting civic virtue. Schaff concludes by warning that Lincolnian statesmanship cannot develop in a political and educational environment that rewards demagoguery and offers "educational fast food" rather than serious study of the classics and pursuit of true wisdom (118).

Roger Barrus presents a fascinating argument which traces America's factionalized and "hollow" national life back to a missed opportunity during the Ratification Debates (137). In what I consider the finest contribution to the volume, he shows how Antifederalists and Federalists looked to different parts of Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*—the Antifederalists to his praise of small democracies, the Federalists to his explanation of a larger, modern, liberal regime based on separation of powers. The *Federalist* showed the Constitution would both ensure national security and also protect against internal divisions through separation of powers and the multiplicity of factions. The Antifederalists critiqued these specific arguments, pointing out

that the Federalists were attempting to secure internal security by relying on vice: counteracting ambitions and mutually defeating factional desires. What the Antifederalists failed to do, Barrus explains, was make a comprehensive case for the need for republican virtue, the type of virtue that could come from maintaining democratic self-rule at the local level. Had the Antifederalists made a better argument, Barrus believes we might now have a better understanding of the importance of federalism. We should preserve the principle of federalism not only because it checks national power, but because it may perform a *moral* function by cultivating civic virtue.

The *Federalist* is famous for its defense of separation of powers, but Elizabeth Kaufer Busch makes the ostensibly dry issue of institutional checks and balances relevant to modern problems by discussing Title IX. As she points out, the American conception of the rule of law mandates stable and legitimate procedures for implementing the law. The most obvious of these procedural safeguards is separation of powers, whereby different branches of government legislate, enforce, and judge. This basic safeguard is undermined when a single branch not only interprets, but reinterprets Title IX, judges infractions, and enforces the law based on its own reinterpretations. If the Framers were correct when they endorsed Montesquieu's admonition that uniting the three powers of government would result in tyranny, then—Busch clearly but cautiously hints—we must conclude that Title IX has been implemented tyrannically. In light of prevailing sentiment in the academy, writing this essay must have required moral courage, for which I salute its author. Tyranny is never easy to condemn (or even to unmask), even in an age that congratulates itself for its progressive and enlightened outlook.

Finally, Karl Walling examines key Founding documents and debates to describe American grand strategy. The critical issue of the Founding, he contends, was to combine republican liberty with the safety that comes from a federation, balancing Antifederalist desires for small republics with Federalist plans for American strength. Walling walks the reader through the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, Constitution, *Federalist Papers*, Washington's Farewell Address, and the Monroe Doctrine, clearly outlining the (often overlooked) foreign policy implications of the first four while synthesizing the last two. He concludes by offering a limited critique of both interventionism and isolationism. On one hand, Walling worries that the Monroe Doctrine's preference for free regimes, alongside its promise of American protection against European intervention, may become a slippery slope: When does defense slip into preemption? When do repeated

interventions turn into a "democratic *jihad*" (179)? On the other hand, is not a certain sort of intervention, through the UN and NATO, simply an expansion of a Hamiltonian drive to unite free regimes for collective security? If this is so, Walling concludes, then an "America First" policy may undermine the post-World War II "republican security system" (184).

Those who specialize in American political thought or the American Founding will likely find little that is new in this volume. As mentioned above, the essays were presented at a conference at Mercer University and are pitched at a level suitable for a student audience. But because the contributors present helpful analyses of important Founding Era debates in an accessible format, and in a single volume, this book would be a solid addition to any course on the American Founding. In an undergraduate setting, it may achieve its goal of promoting thoughtful, rational debate about the Founding. At a time when many on the left disparage America, claiming it was indelibly marked by the year 1619, and some on the right insist that the United States is a failed liberal project, this volume provides a refreshing alternative. By working on the assumption that America's Constitution is basically decent and worth maintaining, the contributors have set themselves to a worthwhile task. At the risk of sounding old-fashioned, one might even call it patriotic.