

1. One book that would have been useful to your study here would have been Peterson, The Jeffersonian Image on the American Mind.

2. The subject is good; organization less so. Some misspelled words in the text.

3. I would like a copy of this paper for my files.

THE POLITICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL RELATIONSHIP
OF THOMAS JEFFERSON AND JAMES MADISON

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The accepted greatness of Thomas Jefferson and his political philosophy is firmly established in America's heritage. Indeed, "Jeffersonian democracy" played an important role in our country's government-formative period. Jefferson's successor as president, James Madison, has often been portrayed, by historians and the public generally, as a progenitor of that democracy founded by his predecessor. A closer scrutiny of the lives and actions of the two men will produce a number of differences, both great and small, between the philosophies and acts of the two great Virginians. The political philosophy known simply as "Jeffersonian" was an amalgam of ideas, owing much to James Madison.¹

Quotations from Jefferson's writings have been used by various proponents to defend laissez-faire, states' rights, isolationism, agrarianism, rationalism, civil liberty, and constitutional democracy. ~~Other theorists have even used Jefferson to bulwark commercialism and industrialism.~~²

The fact is that Jefferson never wrote a formal comprehensive treatise of political philosophy. His views are expressed in parts--the Declaration of Independence, the Kentucky Resolutions of 1798, his inaugural addresses,

¹Adrienne Koch, Jefferson and Madison: The Great Collaboration (New York, 1950), vii.

²Marshall Smelser, The Democratic Republic, 1801-1915 (New York, 1968), 5.

messages to Congress, and private correspondence. The third president, a reader of Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau, Coke, Blackstone, and the classics, never managed his own written sentiments.³

The same can be said for Madison. His philosophy is found scattered in his messages, correspondence, speeches, and writings. The man from Montpelier, eight years Jefferson's junior, was however, quite as prolific as the man from Monticello.

In general, a political philosophy must first rest upon a concept of human nature as a whole. Jefferson, a product of the Enlightenment, believed man a rational animal, endowed by nature with certain rights, possessing an innate sense of justice. In Jefferson's humanistic optimism all things were possible for enlightened people:

Although I do not, with some enthusiasts, believe that the human condition will advance to such a state of perfection that there shall no longer be pain or vice in the world, yet I believe men susceptible of much improvement...and that the diffusion of knowledge among the people is to be the instrument by which it is to be effected.⁴

Jefferson felt it a rare moment when the public sentiment decided immorally or unwisely, for his confidence in them

³Caleb P. Peterson, The Constitutional Principles of Thomas Jefferson (New York, 1953), 5-8.

⁴Jefferson to duPont de Nemours, April 24, 1816, in Dumas Malone, ed., Linwood Lehman, trans., Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and Pierre Samuel duPont de Nemours, 1798-1817 (Boston, 1930), 186.

was unflinching.⁵

Madison, on the other hand, was well aware of the infirmities and depravities of the human character.⁶ The chief difference in the theory of the two men was this more cynical view of human nature by Madison. Just twelve years before his death, he denounced the masses as the chronic victims of factious tendencies, of violent hatreds and short-sighted impulses. Madison, like Jefferson, hated the personal despot; but Madison to a greater degree than Jefferson, hated even more the despotism of the masses. Indeed, in the Virginia ratifying convention, Madison doubted Patrick Henry's contention that loss of liberty usually resulted from the tyranny of rulers.⁷ ~~Madison, however, differed also in his view of despotism, but to a decidedly less degree than Madison.~~

It is therein that one finds a major difference in the two men's philosophies. What one finds from the beginning to the end of Jefferson's career, is an unterrified and unflinching faith in majority rule.⁸ Madison was forever saying that the maxim so often misapplied was the one that stated that the interest of the majority was the political standard

⁵Dumas Malone, Jefferson the President: First Term, 1801-1805 (Boston, 1970), 100.

⁶Russell B. Nye, The Cultural Life of the New Nation, 1776-1830 (New York, 1960), 18.

⁷Edward M. Burns, James Madison: Philosopher of the Constitution (New York, 1968, 1st pub. 1938), 90-94.

⁸Henry Steele Commager, Majority Rule and Minority Rights (New York, 1943), 16, 17.

Note 1. In letter to Jefferson, Oct. 24, 1787:

"Those who contend for a simple democracy, or a pure republic, actuated by the sense of majority and operating with narrow limits, assume or suppose a case which is altogether fictitious."

See Note 1 ~~1~~
 of right and wrong.⁹ This theory was Madison's concept of "minority checks"--the peace and stability of the country being assured by a multiplicity of economic, geographic, social, religious, and sectional interests.¹⁰ Both Jefferson and Madison were probing the root meaning of what they called "Republican theory;" both men agreed that private rights, the so-called natural and civil rights, must be protected to the fullest degree;¹¹ but always Jefferson's main point of reference was the quality of the number of inhabitants, Madison's the quantity.¹²

Both men held agrarianism in high esteem; Jefferson because he believed that pursuit to be the best breeding ground for the quality of men most desired; and Madison because of the independence that farming bred. The worst that could happen, in Jefferson's opinion, was for the United States to rush headlong into the Industrial Revolution, a move comparable to the exodus from Paradise.¹³ But if Jefferson was a philosopher, he was also a consummate politician, and bending perhaps to the influence of Madison, he recognized that he could not always indulge his own partialities, especially with the capitalistic foundations already laid so firmly

Independent Farmers?

⁹Nye, Cultural Life, 102.

¹⁰Alpheus T. Mason, "The Federalist-A Split Personality," American Historical Review, LVII (April, 1952), 635.

¹¹Koch, The Great Collaboration, 43.

¹²John C. Miller, The Federalist Era, 1789-1801 (New York, 1960), 74.

¹³Ibid., 73.

around Alexander Hamilton's system.¹⁴

The outcome of the well-known Jefferson-Hamilton feud, illustrates another aspect in the Jefferson-Madison relationship. In the late Confederation days, Hamilton and Madison (along with Jay) worked together in their Federalist publications to bring about support for the Constitution. In fact, there were areas of agreement between Madison and Hamilton. Both men entertained a pessimistic view of human nature, or at least of the masses in general; both agreed that in a free society, the inequality of property was inevitable.¹⁵ Later, despite the growing intimacy of the Jefferson-Madison relationship, Hamilton, as late as October, 1789, felt that Madison was still on his side. Hamilton was still asking Madison's recommendations on questions concerning the federal revenue and public debt. He, moreover, confidently expected Madison's support in Congress when he learned of the Virginians' election to the House of Representatives.¹⁶

It soon became apparent, however, that Madison was a leading figure in a faction opposing Hamilton and his Federalists. From early 1791, the new faction had Jefferson's sympathy, but he did not create it. The notion that Jefferson

¹⁴Charles A. Beard, Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy (New York, 1927, 1st pub. 1915), 437.

¹⁵Mason, "Federalist-Split Personality," 632, 633. Madison did not divulge his authorship in the Federalist works to Jefferson until more than two months after a two-volume edition of the work was in circulation. See ibid., 629.

¹⁶ibid., 626, 627.

founded the opposition was an invention of the Federalists: a move to suit their own short-range purposes. For as late as 1795, Hamiltonians in Congress were calling their opponents "Madisonians," and with the election of the next year approaching, the Federalists needed a punchbag.¹⁷

It was easy for the Federalists to endow Jefferson with diabolical traits, especially after the six years he had spent in Paris, a "devil's paradise." But Madison, the architect of the new Constitution, the man who had worked so hard to establish American credibility, could not be so easily attacked. How could it be explained to the public that a man of his stature and integrity was on ~~the~~ wrong side? The Federalists found an easy answer: he had been seduced by Satan, ~~a.k.a.~~ Thomas Jefferson. Consequently, the man who most deserved, in terms of direct service rendered, his party's nomination in 1796, was pictured, then and long afterwards, as a timid, submissive, errand-boy of Thomas Jefferson.¹⁸

The Jeffersonians also disagreed sharply with Hamilton's financial schemes. Jefferson felt, consistent with his idea of the general function of government and his state rights ideas (~~which will be done for us~~), that many of Hamilton's internal taxes and excise taxes must be done away with. In keeping with his idea of a limited federal

¹⁷Smelser, Democratic Republic, 9; Irving Brant, "James Madison and His Times," American Historical Review, LVII (July, 1952), 854.

¹⁸Brant, "James Madison and His Times," 856; Dumas Malone, Thomas Jefferson as Political Leader (Berkeley, 1963), 19.

government, Jefferson began to cut the roll of federal officials; he reduced foreign missions to three: in Great Britian, France and Spain; he discontinued the inspectors of internal revenue. Jefferson's, and his Secretary of Treasury, Albert Gallatin's financial policy was strictly one of economy: tax reduction, retirement of the national debt; specific rather than general appropriations; and reduction in military budget.¹⁹ ~~The economies of Jefferson's administration made possible the abolition of excise taxes so hated by the farmers, whose little distilleries were regularly visited by the tax-gatherer. As one historian has said, "no more convincing evidence of the solicitude of the party for agrarian interests could have been devised."~~²⁰

Sound Familiar?

~~It is~~ **The** role played by Madison in the Republican financial programs, points to his influence within the Jeffersonian system. For example, the conventional story about the federal assumption of state war debts, holds that Jefferson agreed to the assumption in exchange for locating the national capital on the Potomac. But applying a chronological test to the story we find that Madison was largely responsible for the exchange:

- March, 1783: Madison, in the Continental Congress, proposed the federal assumption of state debts.
- July, 1783: Madison proposed a national capital on the Potomac.

¹⁹Gilbert Chinard, Thomas Jefferson, The Apostle of Americanism (2nd ed., rev., Ann Arbor, 1957), 393; Malone, Jefferson Political Leader, 101, 102.

²⁰Beard, Economic Origins, 438.

- February, 1790: Madison spoke against unqualified assumption.
- March 2, 1790: Madison proposed a qualified assumption.
- March 20, 1790: Jefferson returned from his diplomatic mission.

The conventional account places the date of the exchange on or about June 20, 1790. In other words, both the basic contentions in the agreement originated with Madison.²¹

Moreover, the notion that the unconstitutionality of the national bank was solely Jeffersonian in origin does not necessarily stand up under closer scrutiny. Jefferson's report to Washington in February, 1791, was merely an enlargement of Madison's attack on the bank made thirteen days earlier, on February 2.²²

Madison's influence on Jefferson is shown in other areas also, not the least of which is in the oft-cited Jeffersonian doctrine of state rights. Jefferson's 1798 Kentucky Resolutions and Madison's Virginia Resolutions are human-rights documents, but essentially set forth the Republican doctrine of state rights. As statements of a constitutional position, they are not in entire accord. Jefferson took a more extreme position than Madison by stating that a federal act could be declared unconstitutional by a single state.²³ In his report

²¹Brant, "Madison and His Times," 857, 858.

²²Ibid., 858.

²³Malone, Jefferson Political Leader, 63; Commager, Majority Rule, 29; In 1798, the Kentuckians omitted Jefferson's "single state veto" idea but put in the resolution.

of 1800 to the Virginia General Assembly Madison, however, was much more tenable. Madison presented the Republican position in its fullest, most closely reasoned, most carefully qualified, and most safe-guarded form. Madison's position briefly stated was that when the Union was established, the states collectively surrendered a portion of their sovereignty to the general government, hence making the latter a true government and not a mere agent of the states. No one of the states could construe the compact in disregard of the others. Only the authority of the states collectively could "interpose" for the original division of sovereignty under the political compact.²⁴

Perhaps if Madison had seen Jefferson's Resolutions before they were dispatched, he would have talked him into leaving out the extreme suggestion, for Jefferson generally yielded to Madison's judgement in constitutional matters. Indeed, Jefferson never again reiterated his "single state" position. The emphasis belonged where Madison put it--on the preservation of the Union by preventing the abuse of federal power and keeping the government in balance. Five years before his death, Madison, the proponent of states rights, was to confirm his belief in the federal government:

A supremacy of the Constitution and laws of the Union, without a supremacy in the exposition and execution of

they adopted in 1799--resolutions which were not written by Jefferson. See Malone, Jefferson Political Leader, 63.

²⁴ Malone, Jefferson Political Leader, 63; Burns, Madison Philosopher, 150.

them, would be as much a mockery as a scabbard put into the hands of a soldier without a sword in it.

If Jefferson could be construed as a states rightest on the home front, no such classification could be applied to his foreign encounters. Perhaps his experience in attempting, as minister to France during the Confederation period, to make political and commercial treaties with European powers convinced him that the Union must be a unit in the field of foreign affairs and commerce.²⁶ Madison's influence during Jefferson's administrations is seen in the foreign policies adopted during those years.

Jefferson, in an effort to keep both peace and dignity, doubted that force was the best way to preserve neutral rights during these anxious years. Preferring instead a course of peaceable coercion, Jefferson demonstrated this attitude by his indifference to French plan for a league of armed neutrality. Discussing the Rule of 1756, he told the Congress of "reason, the only umpire between just nations." As a result of Jefferson's rhetoric the United States found itself operating under the anti-British, Non-Importation Act of 1806.²⁷

In his Congressional speech, Jefferson was probably

²⁵Malone, Jefferson Political Leader, 63-65; Madison to Nicholas Trist, December, (n.d.), 1831, in Irving Brant, "Madison and 'Nullification'," Nation, 182 (Jan. 21, 1956), 46.

²⁶Patterson, Constitutional Principles, 33.

²⁷Smelser, Democratic Republic, 152.

influenced by Madison, who had advanced all of Jefferson's arguments in Congress as early as 1794. Jefferson, in his effort to implement a peaceable coercion, had remained true to Madison's philosophy, that is, an embargo was a positive instrument of policy, not a backing down.²⁸

The purchase of Louisiana in 1803 was consistent with Jeffersonian-Madisonian principles in both foreign affairs philosophy and domestic ideology, with the possible exception of a strict constructionist approach to the Constitution. But even that hindrance has been disavowed by the Supreme Court in various rulings confirming the sovereign right of the nation to acquire territory by treaty. Jefferson justified the purchase by saying that just as a guardian has the right to invest for his ward, for his own good, so does a public official acting as a faithful servant.²⁹

The purchase of the territory also suited the interests of the Republican party. For it meant theoretically that many years would lapse before the vacant lands would be taken up and the people of the United States turned from democracy-evoking agriculture to the demoralizing and destructive pursuits of finance, manufacturing, and commerce. Moreover, it meant a vast area of land that would yield yet more divergent groups and interests, and hence propagate Madison's minorities, insuring the system of checks on mass

²⁸Ibid., 153.

²⁹Malone, Jefferson the President, 314; Chinard, Jefferson the Apostle, 417, 418.

rule.³⁰

If there was one institution that Madison and Jefferson did not wish to see checked, it was the freedom of religion. In the matter of religious organs and opinions, Jefferson's philosophy was pluralistic: he regarded, in a Madisonian vein, a multiplicity of sects as desirable, seeing safety against tyranny in numbers. Indeed, what seemed to England and Europe to be American theological chaos was, as Madison explained, a strength and not a weakness of our society: the multiplicity of sects provided a freedom that was the best security for religious liberty in any society.³¹

One of Jefferson's most personally rewarding accomplishments of his long and eventful public career, his success in legislatively separating church and state, owes a great deal to Madison, or more precisely ^{to} his skill as a political rhetoric. It was the man from Montpelier who was most instrumental in managing to kill a bill in the Virginia legislature that proposed a tax for the support of "Teachers of the Christian Religion." The memorial he composed against it was so well accepted that Jefferson's Bill for Religious Freedom was able to pass the legislature and become law. The skill of Madison's petition was in the variety of arguments used against the proposed tax bill. Each new argument appealed to and trapped a different segment of the

³⁰Beard, Economic Origins, 439.

³¹Malone, Jefferson the President, 191; Nye, Cultural Life, 231.

Virginia public and consequently served its purpose.³²

Like Jefferson before him, Madison's official acts pertaining to religion conformed to his theoretical views. After all, the man largely responsible for the final form of the First Amendment, would most certainly insist upon the absolute exemption of religion from control, assistance, or restriction by the state.³³

The matter of public education ~~created~~ ^{formed} an entirely different situation for the philosophic minds of the two great Virginians. A republican state demanded an educated populace. Consequently both men advocated the need for public instruction. Combining their state's rights theory with these beliefs, they thought that education should be both locally supported and controlled; it was to be gratuitous at the primary level; open for a fee, at the upper levels to the "naturally" talented. Education was not to be so much an instrument of nationalism as a means by which the people should come to know their rights, control their government, and so maintain their liberties. As associates of, or acquaintances with, the persons or writings of such men as Pestalozzi, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Joseph Priestly, Issac Newton, and the various Greek and Roman authors, Jefferson and Madison, or for that matter, any of their contemporaries, would find it difficult to speak harshly

³²Koch, Great Collaboration, 27, 28.

³³Burns, Madison Philosopher, 115, 116.

against the virtues of education.³⁴ The greatness of Jefferson and Madison was in their desire to provide it freely.

Both Jefferson and Madison abhorred absolutism, though perhaps in somewhat varying forms. The real absolute threat to Jefferson came from individuals, kings, priests, hereditary nobles. Madison, more than Jefferson, feared the possible absolutism of the masses. After the Revolution, Jefferson saw the chance to lay the foundation that would assure the demise of individual absolutism: he would, and did, introduce measures to achieve democratic reforms in both social and political systems.³⁵ Madison provided his best example of absolutist-fighting by formulating the basic problem that confronted the framers of the Constitution: how to supercede a system that had been founded on the principle of a confederation of sovereign states. To Madison the great problem was to modify the sovereignty so that it would be sufficiently neutral between different parts of the society to ~~keep~~ ^{Keep} one part from invading the rights of another. At the same time it must be sufficiently controlled itself from setting up an interest adverse to that of the society as a whole. Madison concluded that in the general government,

³⁴Charles F. Arrowood, ed., Thomas Jefferson and Education in a Republic (New York, 1930), 49-57.

³⁵Claude G. Bowers, "Jefferson and Civil Liberties," Atlantic, 191 (Jan, 1953), 53. While in the Virginia legislature, he introduced the then drastic bill providing that tenants in tail should hold their lands in fee simple, a blow aimed at the oligarchy of the rich; he also introduced bills providing for popular education through public schools, and the separation of church and state. See ibid.

broad jurisdiction is needed to offset the possible self-oriented legislation by popular majorities from the states.³⁶ Instead of apparently, at first glance, contradicting his states' rights theory, this solution in fact compliments it, for it follows naturally from such a theory that the states are burdened with the responsibility, for their own well-being, to maintain constant checking on the possible encroachment of the general government.

Both Jefferson and Madison regarded the preservation of natural rights as the great object of political society, though here again, Madison differed in degree, for he was more inclined to think of natural rights in terms of property, owing perhaps to his most often-quoted mentors, James Harrington and John Locke.³⁷ The Federalists' attacks on various democratic societies was, to Jefferson a blow at the heart of liberty, the Bill of Rights.³⁸

Both the "Sage of Monticello" and the "Man from Montpelier" distrusted the proletarian masses of America's large cities. To Madison they formed a too closely-knit group of individuals; individuals who were afforded a much too convenient form of assimilation to suit his fear of "mass majority." To Jefferson they were the antithesis of his idealized farmer, his true republican, the man with a hoe

³⁶Koch, Great Collaboration, 37-39.

³⁷Burns, Madison Philosopher, 89, 90, 201.

³⁸Bowers, "Jefferson and Civil Liberties," 54.

and a hundred acres he could call his own.³⁹

~~We have also seen the belief that each Virginian placed in the importance of popular education, local government, and religious freedom. These similarities arose from their common beliefs and similar philosophies. But perhaps a closer look at the two men's differences, arising from the same similar philosophies, will better illustrate the part played by each in influencing the other.~~

From the surface, and at closer range, it would seem that Jefferson was usually more bold and imaginative in the projection of ideas and hypotheses than Madison. His Declaration of Independence is an excellent example of his ability to cloth his ideas in flowing rhythms and moving rhetoric. In the ideal sense, Jefferson's temper of thinking was both experimental and pragmatic--obedient to observation and ascertainable fact, but exploratory, suggestive of fresh starting points and new implications.⁴⁰

On the other hand, Madison's consistent quality was different. His mind was strongly logical. And, as is illustrated by his copious notes at the Constitutional Convention, when he allowed his logic to operate on concrete issues in politics and the theory of society, he developed an amazing control over points of information and masses of detail.⁴¹

³⁹Burns, Madison Philosopher, 90; Miller, Federalist Era, 73.

⁴⁰Koch, Great Collaboration, 291.

⁴¹Ibid., 292.

Jefferson was decidedly more optimistic about the perfectability of the American democratic republic, owing perhaps to his shorter experience than Madison's, in fiercely contested deliberative assemblise.⁴² It is perhaps due to this lack of optimism on Madison's part that the greatest break in the Jefferson-Madison coalition is found. Indeed, it is on this point that Madison and Jefferson's arch-rival, Hamilton, came closest to agreement.⁴³

The fourth president believed in coercive government; he hated anarchy; he thought that the essence of government is force. Madison was decidedly more rigorous than Jefferson in the concrete application of general principles. The third president, on the other hand, condemned energetic government; he even suggested that the ideal condition of society would be a state of affairs approaching pure anarchy.⁴⁴

As stated above, the political system and philosophic doctrines commonly referred to as Jeffersonian, owe much, perhaps more than is usually given, to James Madison. His influence upon his contemporaries, as well as Jefferson, is well-documented in fact. As to what degree Madison's

⁴²Smelser, Democratic Republic, 187.

⁴³Though it may be said, and perhaps rightly so, that Madison eventually conformed to Hamilton's views on the constitutionality of the U.S. Bank, it must be pointed out that Madison's reason for eventually supporting the bank, his so-called "prescriptive process," had no connection with Hamilton's reasoning whatever.

⁴⁴Burns, Madison Philosopher, 213; Smelser, Democratic Republic, 187, 188.

influence was felt by these men is perhaps a rhetorical question. For influence, though not always, is often reciprocal in nature. And obviously, from our research and findings herein, this was the case between Madison and Jefferson. The latter, had his human rights, agrarianism, and states' rights; the former had his minority checks, federalism, and to a lesser degree, in terms of influential importance, his prescriptive process. While Jefferson believed, Madison hoped.

Perhaps the greatest test of political systems and political philosophies is the test of time. Political philosophies, per se, never die, they just amalgamate. Plato's republic is as much a part of us today as Nietzsche's utopia. The only difference now is that time has swallowed them whole, and regurgitated them partially. The same is true with Jeffersonian-Madisonian philosophy. Parts of it are still with us, we only have to search for them. An excellent example can be seen in the revival of the fundamental human rights doctrine during the 1940's and 1960's.⁴⁵

Tests of political systems are another matter altogether. Americans, it seems, take a tremendous interest in the workability of things, whether they be machines or political systems. The Jeffersonian system worked, seemingly, for it was, following the administration of Madison, the last of its two great proponents, that America emerged on the world

⁴⁵Ralph H. Gambriel, "Thomas Jefferson and Twentieth Century Rationalism," Virginia Quarterly Review, 26 (Summer 1950), 331.

stage with an equal status among the free nations of the world.⁴⁶

Jefferson and Madison gave us probably our two most cherished statements of purpose—the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. In a vein analogous to them both, what more could we ask—a faith and a hope.

Conclusions:

1. There are no idyllic settings, *Marie Haggard was wrong*
2. You can't go back - but you must look back *(see below)*
3. Vote as conservatively as possible, live as liberally as possible
4. The rights of the majority may be good for the whole, but not me,
5. If a politician comes up with a great idea - its probably someone else's. ~~the~~

Henry Adams: "The Puritans abandoned the New Testament and the Virgin in order to go back and renew the quarrel with Eve."

⁴⁶Irving Brant, "Timid President? Futile War?" American Heritage, X (Oct. 1959), 89.