The Role of Human Nature in the Formation of American Liberal Political Thought:
A Case Study of Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian Principles

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Purpose of Thesis

This thesis examines the impact of views of human nature upon political philosophy by examining the positions of Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. It analyzes each man’s words and actions to discern basic views on the nature of man and attempts to demonstrate the correlation between theories of human nature and political action. The essay first describes the background of the natural rights doctrine and classical liberalism to establish the paradigm from which both of these men begin. It then reviews both men’s writings and practical work in American politics. The essay concludes with a discussion of the political legacy formed by these two men out of their differing views of human nature.
Man and Society

This essay focuses on the importance of the nature of the individuals or the perceived nature of those individuals that make up the society and how that correlates to the shaping of a political system. Specifically, it used Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton to represent two differing views of human nature and the impact that they have on the fashioning a government that best fits those theories. The American political experience was a unique circumstance of a deliberate effort by a burgeoning society to shape a political system that best serves the individual in society. Through these two men of similar social, economic, and educational backgrounds, one can best provide a control for discerning the motivational force of the philosophy of man.

Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson were imperative to the founding and success, concretely and ideologically, of this nation. These men were responsible for originating themes such as freedom and equality that have run continuously throughout our history. This essay was not meant to simply be a historical perusal of their actions for the sake of recounting history. However, it used those actions to delve into the consequences that come from these two men’s political ideals that led to some differing notions of the philosophical desires and goals of the United States, and, subsequently, the government best suited to attain those needs. These philosophical differences thus brought about tensions and compromises that certainly
shaped the reality of the political landscape in America.

Classical Liberal Tradition

In order to trace these men's political views, it was imperative to go to the environment in which they cultivated their views. Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson were men of the Age of Enlightenment. In Europe, during the eighteenth-century, the Enlightenment movement tested the divine rights paradigm of government and societal structure. Though the originators of this philosophical movement were in Europe, the full force was best exerted in America due to the coincidences of time and circumstance. America was fortunate in that it had the ability to trace its definite political heritage. It was a product of the eighteenth century, which included all of the baggage that accompanies that period. It must be recognized that, for the most part, the United States was formed out of a union of the heritage of the British system and Enlightenment philosophy. As emigrants from Britain, early American leaders held a general admiration for the institutions and liberties of their mother country, though they collectively viewed the tyrannical rule of the monarch with disdain. The philosophical ideals that surfaced during the enlightenment only served to confirm the beliefs held by the Founders. Theorists, primarily in Britain, began to espouse the natural rights of men. Philosophers like Hobbes, Locke, and Montesquieu refuted the ancient belief in a "Divine Right" to
rule over men, for a more egalitarian view based on reason and laws that they saw as based in nature. “Thus in the minds of eighteenth-century Americans, the English tradition could be amalgamated with the political idea of the Enlightenment and be absorbed by them” (Nelson 3).

The roots of this Natural Rights Theory can be traced to antiquity. The theory began with the debate of the true definition of justice. Was justice the will of the stronger or was it based on a higher morality that superseded the actions of man? Some, such as Plato and Aristotle, argued that through the gift of reason man can ascertain from nature certain laws that are immutable. These laws were of a higher nature that should either mold or supersede those created by man. This theory later becomes clouded by the rise of Christendom in the West and it took a backseat to “divine intervention” for centuries until a revival of rationalism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe. The appeal of natural laws and rights as a defense of liberty and autonomy was a reaction against the oppressive monarchies of this period. For the enlightenment thinkers, natural laws were discerned not on grounds of institutions, but on our faculties as being human. They were thought to be morally fundamental. (Bowie and Simon 53) Thomas Hobbes was, perhaps, the first notable contributor to the contemporary idea of natural rights, which, collectively, formed a doctrine known as classical liberalism.

Thomas Hobbes based his philosophy on theories of human nature. For him,
human beings were rational agents capable of calculating the consequences of their motives and desires. We are motivated to seek pleasure and avoid pain. This must, however, be tied to another of Hobbes's innovations which was the philosophical construct of a state of nature, which he used to formulate the basic tenets of human nature. Hobbes viewed humans as individualistic and, in a state of nature, they will do anything to secure their needs and wants. The consequence of this state of nature, for Hobbes, was well known, but secondary to this discussion. The important factor was that by employing the state of nature, Hobbes could discover certain laws that existed. Specifically, he discerned certain qualities of man. Primary for Hobbes was the fact that men were created equal, although he defined equality as the ability to destroy one another. Inherent in this perspective was the assertion that man should also possess complete freedom. As a postscript, it must be noted that Hobbes believed that man would tend to use his rationality to secure his passion for existence above all, even if it required voluntarily offering up some basic liberties. This facet becomes important when observing the conflict between Hamilton and Jefferson on the extent that general governmental powers should benefit society as a whole or strive to protect and secure the well-being of individuals at all costs.

Another enlightenment philosopher that added to these individualistic notions was John Locke. Though his logic and theories may not have been as sound as Hobbes', he must be mentioned because so much of his work had been cited by those
men intent on hammering out a new form of government in America. Locke borrowed the construct of a state of nature from Hobbes. However, he used it to draw a slightly different picture of human nature. Again, all men were created equal. However, this was an equality of life, liberty, and, importantly, of property. Already, by the words that Locke used, it becomes obvious that the founding fathers saw Locke as a valuable sage of political wisdom. With the inclusion of property, Locke became a major contributor to the political philosophy of liberalism. He specifically described property as those things gained by the labor that an individual expends in obtaining something. John Locke argued that these rights, which can be said to be inalienable, provide a sphere of autonomy to each and every individual within a society. Locke would view any government for such a people as having to be minimalistic, mainly constructed for the protection of the basic rights of man. The importance of both Locke and Hobbes, for this essay, lies in the correlation between human nature and governmental design.

The social world that the enlightenment thinkers were rebelling against was not present in the colonies. The colonies had been settled free of any existing political structure, with only the wilderness to contend. This afforded them a great opportunity to “experiment” and establish a government aimed at the ideals professed in the words of such men as Locke. The men concerned with revolution in America thus take the example of the English parliamentary system and the words of
the Enlightenment thinkers as ingredients in an "experimental" recipe for fashioning a more perfect union.

Though the above only represented a cursory view of the origins of liberal thought in the Enlightenment period, it is sufficient to demonstrate the central tenets used by the Founders as a baseline from which to begin their "experiment." Liberalism provided a common ground for Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, as two predominate leaders of early American thought, from which to build their subsequent divergent philosophies. It should be noted that from however far one or both these men seem to stray from the liberal principles that the nation was founded upon, it was not the intent of this essay to debate either man's patriotism. It was only for the purpose of extracting the derivatives of differing views of human nature. As Jefferson wrote: "But every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We are all republicans—we are federalists" (Jefferson in Koch and Peden 323). The divergences between Hamilton and Jefferson occurred in the primacy of goals and paths to which the ends of equality, liberty, and government were to best be achieved.

Jefferson: Champion of the Individual

Thomas Jefferson was a man of remarkable talents and interests. Jefferson involved himself in agriculture, literature and language, music, architecture, religion,
and many sectors of science. His days were most fulfilled, perhaps, when he was at Monticello spending time with his family, farming, and observing the intricacies of the natural world. However, his interests included a strong sense of obligation to the pursuits of man in society. These obligations and his intellectual talents led him to be an accomplished statesman and political theorist. To study his political theories through his political writings, it became necessary to discern a manner for proceeding through the immense body of literature he produced. Perhaps, it was most expedient to move through it roughly in the chronological order in which Jefferson produced it. This was also helpful because it allowed the context of events in which he wrote to be known, thus shedding some light on the motivations underlying certain works.

Most political philosophers or, even politicians, can be considered static, perhaps, in only one respect. When a philosopher proposes certain hypotheses on society and government, those plans can be whittled down to one common derivative: human nature. A thorough understanding of the philosopher’s thoughts on human nature must be discerned before any meaningful discussion on political arrangement can occur because the proposed construction and actions of any government will be tailored to the nature of the individual that comprises society. Thomas Jefferson was not an exception in that his discussions and actions concerning government all deal fundamentally with how he viewed the human being. "Man, it now came to be felt, was not after all fatally involved in Adam’s fall; he was not naturally depraved, but
naturally good" (Prescott xi). Jefferson believed man to be naturally good and perfectible. Here, Jefferson's theoretical thought must be indebted mainly to John Locke. From him, Thomas Jefferson adopted the doctrines of natural rights, popular will, and the justice of rebellion. The Declaration of Independence, which Thomas Jefferson was largely responsible for drafting, reads like a summation of some of Locke's work. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Though this paragraph, undoubtedly, was agreeable to all of the Founders, it, perhaps, best served as a motto or foundation for all of Jefferson's thought. He always logically followed from these premises whenever he discussed the formation or maintenance of any type of government built to protect those governed. In those few lines, Jefferson created what can be considered to be the American religion. A creed for every citizen to hold dearly, though, perhaps, realistically unattainable.

Departing from the theoretical views of nature, Jefferson spent much time and many pages describing how we should most effectively govern such a people. Thomas Jefferson had little to do with the writing of the Constitution due to duties in France, however, he performed tirelessly in interpreting the meaning of the document. He did not, however, waste the time spent in France. "If anybody thinks that kings, Nobles, or priests are good conservators of the public happiness, send them here. It
is the best school in the universe to cure them of that folly" (Jefferson in Clark 257).

In this letter to George Wythe, Thomas Jefferson saw the lessons learned from the political environment of France to be more evidence of the primacy and importance of succeeding in carefully crafting a government for and of the people. The people, however, must realize how grand an opportunity they did have. "It will make you adore your own country, its soil, its climate, its equality, liberty, laws, people, and manners. My God! how little do my countrymen know what precious blessings they are in possession of, and which no other people on earth enjoy" (Jefferson in Koch and Peden 366-367). Some Federalists of Jefferson's time, along with a few contemporary historians, argued that the time spent in France altered Jefferson's political philosophy and he somehow became an anarchist rebel. True, Jefferson did comment on the rebellious currents in America in a peculiar way. In 1787, he wrote on the need and benefits of rebellion. "It prevents the degeneracy of government, and nourishes a general attention to the public affairs. I hold it, that a little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical" (Jefferson in Padover 270). Important in this debate was a need to look to his earlier works, particularly Notes on Virginia, to see that Jefferson came to France as no friend of kings and returned home, thus, only strengthened in his resolve to strive for a government that attended to the rights of the people, particularly the right of self-rule.
While in France, Jefferson became very familiar with the ideas of Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose work was causing serious discussion during those turbulent times in France. Rousseau’s major problem in dealing with democracy was balancing individual autonomy with political authority. Rousseau proposed giving up all rights for the common good, but paradoxically stated that autonomy would then be protected because the “general will” should also be in line with the wishes of the individual. Jefferson’s resolve was most strengthened, perhaps, by Rousseau’s belief that action by all members of society was the only way to achieve this. Rousseau’s ideal society was one in which every citizen actively participated in the duties of government. He pointed to ancient Sparta and to his hometown of Geneva as examples. Jefferson disagreed with giving up all rights to government, but believed power should be concentrated nearest to the community. Similar to this was the agreement of the two men that the simple and austere lifestyle was the most advantageous and incorruptible. Wedded to this emphasis on environment was the importance of the malleability of the individual. Both philosophers agreed that man could be shaped and perfected by his surroundings. These points were, most likely, the only real legacy of Rousseau that Jefferson found agreeable. As a member of the landed gentry, Jefferson cannot possibly tolerate the notion that property, and the consequent acknowledgment of property by society, is the evil and corrupting force in human relations.
As one can discover, from studying the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson was a strong believer in the basic tenets of the liberal tradition. Equality, inalienable right, consent of the governed, and just rebellion, were all principles that Jefferson valued. He earnestly believed in the virtuousness of each man. He was an individualist. "The true foundation of republican government is the equal right of every citizen, in his person and property, and in their management" (Jefferson in Padover 289). He never departed from his underlying assumption that man was created equal concerning these rights. Men, being both naturally good, equal, and perfectible, could govern themselves. "Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the forms of kings to govern him?" (Jefferson in Koch and Peden 323). Since the land was too expansive and the population too large to allow for a pure democracy, Jefferson proposed that the republican form would work most efficiently. A representative democracy was then a necessity. Though common people could be naturally good, they may not possess the skills needed to represent and work for the interests of all men. The people must be entrusted with the exercise of those offices in which they were most competent, namely, offices such as jury duty or choosing representatives. The republican form of government was best administered when certain individuals, through their capabilities and industriousness, are allowed to represent the people. Jefferson
named this group the "natural aristocracy." This, however, was not an aristocracy derived from wealth and inheritance, but one built on proven merit.

For I agree with you that there is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents. . .

The artificial aristocracy is a mischievous ingredient in government, and provision should be made to prevent its ascendancy. (Jefferson in Padover 283)

This difference must be clearly made between meritocracy and traditional aristocracy because Jefferson believed that entrusting the latter with power will only lead to a despotism of the few, due to their lack of capabilities and virtue. It should be noted, that within this logic was the evidence that Jefferson used to argue against the division of Congress because the Senate would be composed of the wealthy and "pseudo-aristoi." "For if the co-ordinate branches can arrest their action, so may they that of the co-ordinates. Mischiefs may be done negatively as well as positively" (Jefferson in Padover 283). Hence, in a pure government there was no room for the unqualified or corrupt. These groups must be separated from those who have the welfare of all as their principle interest.

I think the best remedy is exactly that provided by all our constitutions, to leave to the citizens the free election and separation of the aristois from the pseudo-aristoi, of the wheat
from the chaff. In general they will elect the really good and wise. (Jefferson in Padover 284)

There were “two hooks,” Jefferson said, on which a republican form of government must depend: education and local government. Jefferson attempted to incorporate the first in his state of Virginia after the Declaration of Independence.

These laws, drawn by myself, laid the axe to the foot of pseudo-aristocracy. And had another which I prepared been adopted by the legislature, our work would have been complete. It was a bill for the more general diffusion of learning . . . Worth and genius would thus have been sought out from every condition of life, and completely prepared by education for defeating the competition of wealth and birth for public trusts. (Jefferson in Padover 284)

Education was beneficial in two ways. A general education would empower the masses, and, with careful selection for higher education, it would allow the natural aristocracy to rise above the hereditary interests. “Educate and inform the whole mass of the people. Enable them to see that it is their interest to preserve peace and order, and they will preserve them” (Jefferson in Padover 123). This underlined Jefferson’s belief that man was perfectible.

The second “hook” was local government, in which the closest approximation
to pure democracy could occur. Jefferson used the New England village as an example of such a model government. In these systems, every citizen became an actor in an extensive hierarchy. Though the hierarchy extended to the national level, the most important decisions affecting the everyday lives of the individual were made directly by the citizens.

We should thus marshal our government into, I, the general federal republic, for all concerns foreign and federal; 2, that of the State, for what relates to our own citizens exclusively; 3, the county republics, for the duties and concerns of the county; and 4, the ward republics, for the small, and yet numerous and interesting concerns of the neighborhood; and in government, as well as in every other business of life, it is by division and subdivision of duties alone, that All matters, great and small, can be managed to perfection. And the whole is cemented by giving to every citizen, personally, a part in the administration of the public affairs.

(Jefferson in Padover 290)

Again, as always for Jefferson, the importance was in the empowerment of the individual. The government thus relied on the virtue of the citizens.

Jefferson thought that we cultivated virtue through an agrarian lifestyle.
Cities, with their business and industry, were beds of ignorance and corruption. Through their simple, natural lifestyle, farmers were virtuous and beneficial to society. For instance, Jefferson saw his home county of Albemarle as a model for the way society, as a whole, should be run. They made all governmental decisions at the county level and life was pastoral.

Were practical and observing husband men in each county to form themselves into a society, commit to writing themselves, of state in conversations at their meetings to be written down by others, their practices and observation, their experiences and ideas, selections from these might be made from time to time by everyone for his own use, or by the society or a committee of it, for more general purpose.

(Jefferson in Padover 352)

Jefferson thought that individuals within an agrarian society, ruled by education and virtue, were better able to govern themselves effectively or, at least, able to select those best qualified to govern on the national level.

On his return from France, the bulk of Jefferson's political work began. The Constitution, on first glance, was more powerful than Jefferson expected or thought necessary. He was fearful that certain groups with aristocratic leanings could turn it into an object of oppression. He had seen despotism, first hand, in Europe and
became determined not to step backwards into it. In total, however, Jefferson saw the document as a sufficiently necessary evil that he could tolerate, if two objections were resolved. Though he might have had minor squabbles with some provisions of the Constitution, the executive branch and the lack of a bill of rights were two problems that had to be addressed.

As noted earlier, Thomas Jefferson had a phobia about kings. In the continued re-eligibility of the President, Jefferson found the potential for turning the clock back on all that the Revolutionaries fought for in 1776. Monocratic tendencies within certain segments of the new government greatly disturbed him. These fears were satisfactorily put to rest, however, when Washington began the tradition of voluntarily leaving after two terms. If the President could be re-elected indefinitely, it was possible that he would curry favor and money from external powers, thus perverting the control of the government.

The second specific objection dealt with Jefferson's concern for the natural rights of man. For however well we might construct a government, the people must still have written protection against the actions of the rulers. The American Constitution needed a Bill of Rights. Jefferson best summed up both of his disagreements in a letter he wrote to James Madison, December 20, 1787.

Let me add, that a bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or
particular; and what no just government should refuse, or rest on inference . . . Reason and experience tell us, that the first magistrate will always be re-elected if he may be re-elected. He is then an officer for life.

(Jefferson in Koch and Peden 438)

Unless written down, the supposedly reserved powers could be usurped by the strength and actions of the general government.

With Jefferson now at terms with the Constitution, he turned his attention to problems caused by the practical interpretation of the document. Focus need be leveled on just a few of Thomas Jefferson’s conflicts with the powers to be, both before and during his own Presidency to illustrate the consistency in his political philosophy. The new administration, as he saw it, was perverting the Constitution through the financial system calculated by Alexander Hamilton. Thomas Jefferson’s biggest problems, during Washington’s administration, were with Hamilton’s Bank of the United States and the Alien and Sedition Acts. During his own administration, Jefferson battled with other groups, specifically the Supreme Court. Thomas Jefferson opposed aspects of the government for a good many reasons, including personal conflicts. The most important reason, however, for all conflicts, major or minor, that he had during his political career was when he saw the federal government overstepping the limits granted in the constitution. This was important
because he saw it as a transgression of the rights of the individual. His defense of the individual's rights came from his strict interpretation of the constitution. The Constitution granted the federal government only those powers specifically enumerated. All other powers were to be left to the individual states. Jefferson saw such actions as creating an "energetic government," about which he raised concerns when reviewing the Constitution in 1787. "I own, I am not a friend to very energetic government. It is always oppressive" (Jefferson in Padover 122). A government that performed those actions that were not expressly granted, was a government leading down the road to despotism.

In *Opinion Against the Constitutionality of a National Bank*, Jefferson clearly based all of his arguments on the words of the Constitution. "The incorporation of a bank, and the powers assumed by this bill, have not, in my opinion, been delegated to the United States, by the Constitution" (Jefferson in Padover 342). Taxes must be raised for the welfare of the nation. We cannot raise taxes for whatever whim the national government feels at the moment. He further went on to say that a bank is not "necessary," as the words of the Constitution require. Congress may take only those actions "necessary and proper for carrying into execution the enumerated powers." A bank might be convenient, but not necessary.

The height of Jefferson's attack on federal power came in the form of *The Kentucky Resolutions* and *Virginia Resolutions*. Jefferson wrote these resolutions as a
response to the Alien and Sedition Acts, which threatened basic liberties such as freedom of speech and press. In the Kentucky Resolutions, Jefferson used his strict constructionist views of the Constitution to declare void recent acts of Congress because they, in his opinion, overstepped the powers granted them in the Constitution. The states should have the right to void these acts if they saw that the federal government was working outside of its granted powers.

...And that whenever the general government assumes undelegated Powers, its acts are unauthoritative, void, and of no force: that to this compact each Sate acceded as a Sate, and is an integral party, its co-States forming, as to itself, the other party: that the government created by this compact was not made the exclusive or final judge of the extent of the powers delegated to itself; since that would have made its discretion, and not the Constitution, the measure of its powers; ...” (Jefferson in Padover 129)

By ignoring the Constitution, the federal government broke the compact, thus allowing the states to declare the action of the former void. This was a direct reference to Locke’s notion of a government built on a compact. If certain parties do not live up to their duties, then the other parties had the right to nullify the actions of the former. In the Virginia Resolutions, Jefferson used less secessionist rhetoric, but
his message was still clearly the same. Basically, the Commonwealth of Virginia stood firmly opposed to the notion that the federal government, by using the necessary and proper clause, had the power “to do whatever they may think” and therefore, logically, created a “complete government, without limitation of powers; . . .” (Jefferson in Padover 135).

A final note should be Jefferson’s problems with the Supreme Court. During his administration, Jefferson came in direct conflict with the Court in Marbury V. Madison. The dispute arose out of Jefferson’s views of the Court, again, due to his opinions of the Constitution. The problem for Jefferson with the Supreme Court was twofold. The Court was not accountable to the citizens and it repeatedly overstepped its legal boundaries, particularly in the actions of Chief Justice Marshall. First, Jefferson believed that tenure for life and the process of decision-making removed the Court from the democratic tradition. In terms of the decision-making process, the Justices did not have to come to opinions seriatim. By not mandating that judges come to a decision on their own, it enabled Justices to coerce others’ opinions or be lazy in formulating their own. “That of seriatim argument shews whether every judge has taken the trouble of understanding the case, of investigating it minutely, and of forming an opinion for himself, instead of pinning it on another’s sleeve” (Jefferson in Padover 320). Due to the construction of the Court, Jefferson noted where the final arbitration of power in the United States should rest.
The ultimate arbiter is the people of the Union, assembled by their deputies in convention, at the call of Congress, or of two-thirds of the States. Let them decide to which they mean to give an authority claimed by two of their organs.

(Jefferson in Padover 323)

Thomas Jefferson, from beginning to end, was a man deeply steeped in the liberal tradition. His focus forever remained on the individual. Government and society worked best they revolve around the individual. Through a brief perusal of some his works, one can see that Jefferson fought dearly for the protection of freedom and liberty, even at the expense of national power. As we will now see, Alexander Hamilton represented another strain in American political thought that sought to maximize the power of the union, at, perhaps, the expense of some individual autonomy. It proceeded from a view of human nature that starts at the other end of the political spectrum.

Hamiltonian and a Secure Nation

Since discussion of Jefferson’s philosophical views began with an understanding of his ideas concerning human nature, there, properly, is where discussion of Hamilton should also begin. Alexander Hamilton’s view of man, particularly common man, was inherited from the likes of Hume and Hobbes. For them, the great majority of mankind were ignorant, selfish, and lacked self-control.
"Take mankind in general, they are vicious, their passions may be operated upon... One great error is that we suppose mankind more honest than they are" (Hamilton 31). Also, in contradiction to Jefferson, Hamilton believed this nature to be unchanging or permanent. Acknowledging this makes it easy to see why Hamilton rejected the notion of common education for the masses because it would do little to change their basic nature.

Due to his dismal view of the common man, Alexander Hamilton dabbled little in the abstract thought of liberties and freedoms. He was a realist. The bulk of his writings and speeches dealt with how to control and provide best for the masses that were obviously incapable of governing themselves.

It has been observed that a pure democracy, if it were practicable, would be the most perfect government.

Experience has proved, that no position in politics is more false than this. The ancient democracies, in which the people themselves deliberated, never possessed one feature of good government. (Hamilton 37)

Here, already, we can see divergences from Jefferson that were caused by a lack of trust in the average person. In *The Federalist Papers #15*, Hamilton further enunciated his views on the lack of virtues that a democracy would hold. "Why has government been instituted at all? Because the passions of men will not conform to the dictates
of reason and justice, without constraint. Has it been found that bodies of men act with more rectitude or greater disinterestedness than individuals?” (Hamilton in Fairfield 34) For Hamilton, history had proven unequivocally that a large body of men only produces weakness and havoc. A palpable assumption can be made that Hamilton preferred some type of rule based on meritocracy. In fact, before the Revolution, Hamilton ventured to state that he had “strong prejudices” for the loyalist side. Hamilton's disposition to favor England and to view its civil administration as a model for all perhaps stoked his personal rivalries with some men like Jefferson. However, despite his dismal views and aristocratic leanings, Hamilton saw the expediency for revolution from Britain.

During the revolutionary period Hamilton touted the laws of nature and appeared as an advocate for the rights of all men. In The Farmer Refuted, Hamilton sounded out words and sentiments that found their way into the Declaration of Independence.

First, they are subversive of our natural liberty, because an authority is assumed over us which we by no means assent to. And, secondly, they divest us of that moral security for our lives and properties, which we are entitled to, and which it is the primary end of society to bestow.

(Hamilton in Prescott 6)
However, as revolutionary fervor subsided, Hamilton's writings became more sincere and his real aims more apparent.

Hamilton felt that the pendulum of natural rights and consensual government would swing too far in the new nation and, without check, could destroy it before it passed infancy. This he saw as a weakness caused by the Articles of Confederation. “Folly, caprice, a want of foresight, comprehension, and dignity characterize the general tenor of their action” (Hamilton in Prescott 13). The desertion of fit men to their respective states had weakened the Congress. “The only remedy then is to take them out of these employments and return them to the place where their presence is infinitely important” (Hamilton in Prescott 14-15). The weakness of the Congress was particularly shown in the condition of the army and lack of energy in the general government concerning finances. "The authorities essential to the common defence are these: to raise armies; to build and equip fleets; to prescribe rules for the government of both; to direct their operations; to provide for their support" (Hamilton in Fairfield 59). These were areas of government that Hamilton saw as essential to the welfare of the nation because they provided both internal and external security. Hamilton warned that, like loose confederacies in history, the Union, as it stood, could last only so long because it did not have the tools to provide for security and order. Already, before a call to draft a new Constitution was made, Hamilton had the foresight to see the need for a stronger central power. “The leagues
among the old Grecian republic are a proof of this. They were continually at war with each other, and for want of union fell a prey to their neighbors” (Hamilton in Prescott 21). Being a realist, Hamilton set forth to remedy the situation.

Hamilton helped to initiate the move toward a more centralized union that resulted in the convention. To bring together the states under the Articles, Hamilton also proposed a national bank. This was the first time such a program had been proposed. “There is no other than can give to government that extensive and systematic credit which the defect of our revenues makes indispensably necessary to its operations” (Hamilton 165). The bank would do what the Congress under the Articles could not do. “A national debt, if it is not excessive, will be to us a national blessing. It will be a powerful cement of our Union” (Hamilton 147).

Continually sounding the alarm of anarchy, Hamilton urged that a strong central government was the only way to stave off strife among the states and avoid foreign intervention. In the Continentalist, he specifically addressed the need for a central government firmly in control of the power of the country.

In a government framed for durable liberty, not less regard must be paid to giving the magistrate a proper degree of authority to make and execute the laws with vigor, than to guard against encroachments upon the rights of the community.

As too much power leads to despotism, too little leads to
anarchy, and both, eventually, to the ruin of the people.

(Hamilton in Prescott 35)

Obviously, his appeal was no longer to the abstraction of natural rights, but to the most effective and efficient route to achieve order within society. Hamilton was continually opting to hold the nation together with a bureaucratic, centralizing effect. He felt that the United States was a nation in which states were to be clearly subordinate to a strong, but not oppressive, federal government.

By 1787, a number of politicians realized what Hamilton had for many years. The Articles were just too inept to provide for the general welfare of the Union. Like Jefferson, Hamilton had very little to do with the drafting of the Constitution, though he performed a great service in interpreting the document for the purpose of ratification and implementation. Many of his views of the purpose and need for a strong central government became apparent in the *Federalist Papers*, though they were anonymous at the time. Hamilton saw the Constitution and the plans of government as well designed in that, with proper care, it left the power out of the reach of common man and left it safely in the hands of the successful who would ensure stability.

All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well-born, the other the mass of the people. The voice of the people has been said
to be the voice of God; and, however generally this maxim has been quoted and believed, it is not true to fact. The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right. Give, therefore, to the first class a distinct, permanent share in the government. (Hamilton 34)

Government depended on an efficient and competent executive branch. Holding that good administration requires first-rate officers with long tenure, Hamilton refuted Jefferson's ideal that the nation good be governed by relatively inexperienced politicians. Hamilton did not separate the aristocracies as Jefferson did. He attributed success in business to a superior quality in the aristocrats, thus better suiting them to govern the masses.

The Constitution, in Hamilton's eyes, provided an opportunity to build the energetic government that could bring order to the nation. "There are two objects in forming systems of government-safety for the people, and energy in the administration. When these objects are united, the certain tendency of the system will be to the public welfare" (Hamilton 3). Sticking with these principles, he notes: "Justice is the end of government. It is the end of civil society" (Hamilton 6).

Hamilton perhaps employed the ancient Greek definition of justice: a justice that valued security and order in place of equality and freedom of all within society. One cannot stress enough that, due to his fundamentally different view of human nature,
Hamilton had come to pointedly different conclusions on the ends of government in comparison to Jefferson. His works and actions were not steeped in meeting "theoretical ends" such as perfect liberty and equality, but in realistic goals for uniting a nation that would be safe from subversive elements, domestic or foreign.

As Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton took decisive steps to strengthen the power and prestige of the federal government. He established the fiscal infrastructure of the new republic, which he used to further his already cemented aims of government. It should be noticeable, by now, that Hamilton had become very consistent in his views, and only further elaborated them as time passed. Hamilton was as energetic and ambitious as any politician can be. He professed that wise men should produce results. His first step to strengthening the new nation was to revert to his earlier ideas of a public credit and a national bank. He arranged for the federal government to assume the debts accumulated by the states during and after the Revolution and created a tax system to pay off the debt. Part of this scheme was to create a national bank. To do this he relied on the "implied" powers of Congress. Being not the literalist that Jefferson was, Hamilton had no qualms with liberally interpreting the Constitution in ways that would best accomplish his goals.

The circumstance that the powers of sovereignty are in this country divided between the National and State governments, does not afford the distinction required. It does not follow
from this, that each of the portion of powers delegated to the one or to the other, is not sovereign with regard to its proper objects. It will only follow from it, that each has sovereign power as to certain things, and not as to other things. (Hamilton in Prescott 105)

By starting with the premise that the federal government had sovereign power within the field allotted to it, and by concluding that in the exercise of this it may reasonably employ any means not specifically prohibited, Hamilton freed the Constitution from rigid terror. Strict adherence would protect every infringement on the individual, but it would seriously tie the hands of government.

By now it becomes plain to see that all of Alexander Hamilton's actions were aimed at providing a strong central power to provide stable government for the masses because they were incapable of effective self-government. Like Hobbes, Hamilton believed the people needed a more paternalistic government that would provide stability and security for all. He believed in an undivided and indefeasible sovereignty, and in the citizen's duty to be orderly and obedient because, in the end, it promoted the common good. Hamilton's work and visions have led to a nation that has a relatively strong central government, a powerful executive branch, and a capitalist economy based on business and industry.
The Jefferson and Hamilton Legacy

Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton were two men that were essential to the founding of this nation. We can question neither man's patriotism. However, the essential aspect of these two great men was that they differed in basic views on the qualities of man. This is not only important in the abstract, but essential for understanding their visions of political society. "Hamilton's one idea was to build a strong Ship of State and see to it that it was well defended with the most powerful guns he could place aboard. Jefferson was thinking in terms of the welfare of the crew" (Prescott xvii). Both men diverged farther than practically necessary, perhaps, due to their personal conflicts that inevitably arose from their respective demeanor.

Thomas Jefferson, in his zeal for freedom and individual rights, appeared to be slightly utopian and paranoid. Though Alexander Hamilton's lack of compassion for the individual seemed cold and undemocratic, he was, however, quite prophetic. He wanted as much as possible to be done at the centers of formal power. This allowed for more coordinated policy. Also, we should note, that the conflicts of these men marked a struggle between the agrarian and city lifestyles. As history now shows, the agrarians won the battle for the moment, but the realistic and cosmopolitan views characterized in Hamilton eventually took primacy. Hamilton saw the global community as America's proper place. Though his plans may have been grandiose at the moment, hindsight recognizes Hamilton as more the realist in terms of the
direction in which the nation should have turned its energies. However, the truth is that though basic Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian philosophical debates continue to this day on the nature of government, the mainstream of American society recognizes the need to strive for both civil liberty and stability.

If we look back through our history, one can note times at which each one of these philosophies took precedence in leading the actions of the nation. It would be naive to say that these were the two philosophical forces that forge the Conservative-Liberal pendulum that exists in America. However, at any one time, it is possible to see aspects of both of these men's philosophies at work throughout our history, especially if the focus is on the relationship between the individual and the state.

The end of the nineteenth century was a time of pitched conflict between the actions of the government and the individual. This period witnessed a rise in national wealth attributable to big business and growing international trade. The government favored this sort of action, often at the expense of the individual. Concern for protecting the rights of the individual took a backseat to GNP. Hamiltonian ideals of a strong union left much to be desired for the exploited individual worker. Not coincidentally, this period marked a shift from the agrarian lifestyle with a migration to the metropolis.

Eventually, the pendulum shifted back to a Jeffersonian concern for the protection of the individual. The end of World War I also noted a national
retrenchment to ideas of isolationism and self-subsistence. Jeffersonian principles could easily be read into this national sentiment.

However, the Great Depression led American thought away from individualism to a need for governmental action that would best solve society's ills. The states recognized their inability to deal with the depth of problems, while the federal government was free to take a much more active and direct role in the lives of the citizens. FDR's New Deal used progressive national domestic policy to change the direction of the nation. The idea of the federal government as promoter of the national interest was accepted. The size of government mushroomed during this era.

Since World War II, society, as a whole, has paradoxically recognized the need for a larger, more active government that was global in its concerns, yet acknowledged Jeffersonian complaints of a large, energetic government. Post World War II America has finally reached the state Hamilton had envisioned. It was a global power led by business and industry. Hamilton's largest influence was in the use of economic nationalism in terms of foreign policy. Yet, Jeffersonian views have not been quashed. Ronald Reagan's profession that "government is not part of the solution; it is part of the problem" typified the current of Jeffersonian restraint in America. His ideas constantly remind society to be weary and watchful of government. Jeffersonian philosophy can be seen in both of today's political parties with great stress being placed on individualism and protection from intrusion by government in
our private and business lives.

The near future might well see a greater resurgence and relevance Hamiltonian ideas. Interest group gridlock characterizes the system. Perhaps, a return to central authority can find a way to lead the government away from the claws interest group liberalism, yet still hold on to a responsive and accountable government. Just as views of human nature have constantly varied within our culture, so too does the perceived mission of government.
Works Cited


