THE EVOLUTION OF STATESMANSHP IN THE UNITED STATES
How the Democratization of Civic Education and Presidential Selection
Transformed the American Executive

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Andrew DePasquale

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Jonathan W. Pidluzny, Ph.D.
Director of Thesis

Master’s Committee:

Jonathan W. Pidluzny, Chair

William C. Green

Stephen J. Lange

Murray S. Y. Bessette

Gregory A. McBrayer

6 December, 2013
The evolution of statesmanship in the United States
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Andrew DePasquale, M.P.A., M.A.
School of Public Affairs
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Director of Thesis: Jonathan W. Pidluzny, Ph.D.

Few studies of presidential leadership have focused on the concept of statesmanship although the president is regarded as the nation’s greatest statesman. Statesmanship, its components, has evolved throughout the course of American political history. With the change in the concept of presidential statesmanship, also has come a transformation of the American civic educational philosophy. Examined below is a link between presidential statesmanship and civic education. The characteristics of the Founders’ prudent statesman are vastly different from those found in the progressive statesman. The shift also necessitates a change in the constitutional design used in order to elevate each type of statesman to the office of the president.

The statesman of the early republic was marked by disinterestedness, political prudence, and integrity. These characteristics ensured that the president could lead and guide the national course. The original constitutional design allows for the prudent
statesman hopefully being elevated to the office of the President. The civic education philosophy of the early republic reinforced the need for a liberally educated statesman at the republic’s helm as well as educating the public as to its rights and responsibilities as citizens, as well as enabling a citizenry who would value the traits of the prudent statesman as their guide.

The transformation of both statesmanship and civic educational philosophy is seen most prominently at the turn of the 20th century with the rise of progressivism. Progressives updated the meaning of statesmanship to a form distinct from its original counterpart. The idea was a more directly involved presidential statesman to the people of the United States, necessitating a change in the constitutional design of the early republic. Presidents such as Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin Roosevelt are prime examples of this new form of statesmen. The educational philosophy of John Dewey also served to aid the change in statesmanship by creating a public mindset of self-interestedness and entitlement to bigger government. The growth of government as a means better to serve the people directly was a primary reason for both the change in statesmanship and civic education. The link between statesmanship and civic education are crucially important to study in American politics today where the leadership is so closely tied to people. The transformation led by progressive presidents in the twentieth century have had lasting consequences on the overall state of the American union—consequences that are certainly worth greater study.

Accepted by:

Jonathan W. Pidluzny, Chair
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The Introduction:

Superb political leadership has always been an ideal of the American regime. In *Federalist* # 10, James Madison expresses his hope that a “statesman” will be at the head of the new republic, to guide it and to steer the ship of state along the optimal course.¹ Now more than ever, the position of the president should be reserved for a premier statesman; in the U.S. constitutional system, only he has the power the power and influence to steer and direct the country toward the national interest. This research examines the meaning of statesmanship, both to the founding generation and to the politicians and American public today.

There has no doubt been a shift in the meaning of “statesmanship” during the span of now more than two centuries. The shift of the term’s meaning is a focal point of the present study. The shift in meaning of presidential statesmanship has had effects and consequences on the health of the political regime. The public’s conception of leadership, as well as the politicians’, has changed dramatically. This project seeks to uncover the causes and consequences of these shifts.

Even though the question of statesmanship is essential to the study of American politics, and in presidential studies in particular, the subject has only been taken up in a general way. If the president is to be a statesman, it is important to understand what kind of a person he is to be—his view on leadership, on politics, on the ends and means of government and the like. The way that the American public, its politicians, and its party leaders answer these questions determines the type of statesman, if any at all, is at the helm of the republic.

In attempting to find answers to these questions, it became apparent that there is an undeniable link between the type of statesman or politician in the office of the president and the
type of civic education which this nation espouses. Therefore, not only has there been a dramatic shift in the meaning of statesmanship but there has also been a shift in civic education in this country which has aided the shift in statesmanship. This link, though rarely discussed in previous literature on statesmanship or presidential studies is clear and seemingly obvious. In a democratic regime, the type of leader selected to govern is dependent upon the community responsible for election. With this truth we can see the need to study not only presidential leadership but the political community, especially civic education.

The changes in civic education which have affected statesmanship have come largely as a result of the progressive ideology which took hold in the early 20th century under presidents such as Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt. This insight is not altogether new. On the issue of the progressive legacy, this study relies and builds upon work by presidential and American Political Development scholars such as James W. Ceaser, and Ronald J. Pestritto. These scholars have discussed the shift in statesmanship and the powerful presidents behind the change. Their work has mostly centered upon the effect the change has had upon the political process such as elections. This project adds a further dimension, demonstrating the link between civic education and the shift in statesmanship.

Questions are raised such as what type of leadership helps establish a better civic community: a prudent statesman like the one called for in the writings of the Constitution and Federalist Papers, or the popular leader called for more recently in the progressive ideology of Wilson and Roosevelt? It is clear that largely since the 20th century America has elected leaders resembling the popular leader. Reasons for this may lie in part because the political leanings of the nation throughout the century and possibly, as argued in this study, because of John Dewey’s impact on education. As culture and civic education have changed over the decades, the desire
for a popular leader and the willingness of the public to elect one has become almost irresistible. As a consequence, the thought of electing a statesman resembling Washington, Jefferson, or Lincoln is nearly unfathomable today in an America where elections are dominated by political games and have most recently been reduced to mere popularity contests.

This project argues that the environment which has been created for presidential selection in the country today is a result of the ideology of Progressives who shifted prudent statesmanship to popular leadership with the aid of powerful politicians and educational philosophers. The result has not only been less qualified political leaders—personality is one of the greatest determining factors in a presidential race as scholars such as Fred I. Greenstein has discussed in *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Clinton*\(^2\)—but also an American public which demands of the president tasks and benefits not envisioned at the founding due to a sense of entitlement. Both of these consequences—popular leadership where the president is known primarily for personality and public appeal rather than experience or political prudence, and an American public which has high expectations and feels entitled—have put the nation in a difficult place economically, politically, and morally.

The impact of the progressive ideology which shifted the meaning of statesmanship has had profound effects on the American regime which are discussed in four chapters here. In its conclusion, the paper examines these effects on the regime today and offers a suggestion that a return to a healthier statesmanship may possibly be found in the unelected body of the Supreme Court—a body of renown individuals apparently insulated from politics and public opinion and committed to the rule of law rather than the whims of politicians and votes of the people.
To make these central points, the paper is broken into four chapters and a conclusion. In Chapter One, the definition of statesmanship during the founding is examined and given. My definition is aided by the previous work of historians such as Gordon S. Wood and presidential scholars such as James W. Ceaser who both paint a picture of what statesmanship looked like at the time of the founding. It is argued that the early statesman was marked by three characteristics, 1) prudence, 2) disinterestedness, and 3) integrity. The chapter is also dedicated to examining the various reasons why the prudent statesman as president is essential to good government as found in the early writings of the republic.

Chapter Two discusses the cultivation of the prudent statesman along with the civic education needed to elect him is discussed. Various forms of education are needed to achieve the goals of the Founders in enlightening the public as well as in cultivating the necessary statesman. Thomas Jefferson’s writings on public education and a liberal education for the future statesmen are crucial to identifying and understanding the link between presidential statesmanship and civic education that I argue is undeniable. It is in this chapter, that great evidence from Jefferson himself as well as modern scholars enlightens the reader to this connection. First, a truly liberal education is necessary for a statesman and a general civic education is necessary for the public. The latter entails teaching citizens of their rights, helping them recognize the encroachment of government upon those rights, and then the duty of the statesman himself to educate, shape, and direct the public as to what the greatest good for the nation would be. Both a liberal education for the statesman, and a “general diffusion of knowledge” as Jefferson calls it allows for these to occur.

In Chapter Three the focus shifts to the factors which brought about a change in presidential statesmanship. The progressive political ideology of Wilson and others is discussed
as being a foremost contributing factor. In this chapter, the progressive ideology is shown to have stemmed from a German political philosophy which was radically different from that of the Enlightenment in England at the turn of the 18th century. This major difference in political philosophies upon which each American political ideology was formed is a large factor to the change in statesmanship. These roots of Progressivism helped shape the popular leadership of the 20th century.

In examining popular leadership we find there have been changes to the duties, goals, and expectations for the president. The progressive ideology has made more government the answer to the ills of society and therefore creates a need for a powerful, public leader to direct the expanding bureaucracy. This began with Wilson and was perfected under Roosevelt and his New Deal. The components of popular leadership can be found most directly in the writings of Woodrow Wilson which serve as evidence for my points in the chapter. The research is also greatly aided by the previous work done by Wilson scholars such as Pestritto and Arthur S. Link.

After an examination of the influence of German thought on American Progressivism, we find that the political ideology in America aimed at changing the purpose and roles of government to more closely resemble the ideals of Hegel, Kant, and others. This was achieved in the Progressive Party’s platform for greater social change—social Darwinism—aided by administrative centralization and the growth of government to bring greater access to opportunities for citizens to control government and reach their greatest potential. This change in the purpose and role of government necessitated a change in presidential leadership. A major change from the Progressive era is the much tighter tie between the public and the president. The president became a popular leader of the entire people, meant to facilitate an unspoken, common will interpreted by the president. This created new roles of the president which define
the Progressives’ conception of popular leadership. This chapter discusses four new roles of this popular leadership; they are as follows: 1) the president as the best representation of the will of the people, 2) the president as interpreter of the common public will, 3) the president as educator of the public as to this common will, and 4) the president as rhetorician to guide and lead the nation to adopt the vision for the future. These new roles brought new expectations of the president and government, fueled by the wishes of the people for progress.

In the paper’s final chapter, the focus is upon the change which occurred as a result of the progressive ideology upon public education. This chapter centers on the work of philosopher and Progressive John Dewey and illustrates how his educational philosophy is closely linked with the philosophic roots of progressivism as well as the goals of Progressives in expanding the federal government and using a powerful, willful leader to direct the nation.

First, it is made a question as to whether Wilson and the Founders saw liberal education as having the same benefits and purpose. Wilson’s description of a liberal education suggests his version of a liberal education was necessary to further a progressive ideology. Second, Dewey’s philosophy is broken into four components: 1) diversity, 2) social intelligence, 3) community, and 4) individuality. Two of these components deal with the social aspect of Dewey’s educational philosophy and two deal with the individual aspect. Both of these aspects are also present in the ideology of Progressives politically. Therefore, this chapter is essential because not only does it mirror and contrast the approach to public education of the founders, but it again shows the essential link between civic education and presidential statesmanship. Without the help of Dewey’s progressive educational philosophy, leaders such as Wilson and Roosevelt would have had more difficult time being elected. Dewey used education, paired with the philosophies of Wilson and Roosevelt to convince the public this change was necessary and best.
The progressive political ideology and Dewey’s educational philosophy succeeded in forming an entirely new approach to civic education and created a new type of citizenry which the Founders never envisioned.

In the Conclusion a few main points are revisited along with a continuation of the consequences discussed in Chapter Four. A major consequence of Dewey’s progressive education was how it aided the rise of value relativism in the American culture. In the Conclusion, Allan Bloom’s work, *The Closing of the American Mind* is examined as evidence for the change in society which can be seen as stemming from Dewey’s philosophy. Central to the beginning of the Conclusion is the contradiction between the Progressives’ idea emphasis on individuality and social awareness. Where leaders such as Wilson and Dewey argued these could co-exist, an explanation for a decline in social capital and a growing sense of entitlement by the citizenry, the Conclusion posits that the individualism the Progressives advocated has overpowered the social aspects for which they also argued.

The reason for this is rooted in the difference in how the Progressives viewed human nature. Where the Founders saw humanity as selfish and fickle, the Progressives argued that history was moving by the revelation of pure reason thus eroding any selfish or irrational behavior. The Conclusion argues this view of human nature may be misguided and that selfishness is ever present in the souls of mankind but always evolving into new forms.

With all of this, there has been a need for a different political game based less on integrity and more on popular satisfaction. The emergence of the popular leader has changed politics and studies have shown the evidence of these changes appear to be permanent. If presidential politics and selection has changed so drastically due to a new type of political community and a
new type of leadership, the question posed in this work’s Conclusion is which type of leadership and political community are preferred and does yet another change need to occur? This work aims at examining this monumental shift in ideology and its effects while gleaning what the shift means for the future.
Chapter 1: The Prudent Statesman of the Founding

I. The Road to the Prudent Statesman

James Madison famously notes in Federalist 51 that “if men were angels, no government would be necessary.” The Founders recognized that the seeds of faction are sown in the nature of man; the American regime is surely a government “to be administered by men over men,” implying the necessity of proper leadership. The Founders recognized that demagoguery is a particular danger in popular regimes. As such, the Founders’ view of the executive as a statesman must be understood. Today presidential selection consists of a rigorous, public election campaign where charismatic candidates give promise after promise and tell heartwarming stories of how they relate to the average American voter for the purpose of winning the popular support of the nation at large. This contemporary picture is far from what the founders imagined or as Paul Carrese puts it,

The voters in presidential primaries and the general election, they overlook the tension between their desire for candidates embodying leadership qualities and their demand for an incessant campaign that features constant recourse to polls and popularity; solicitations for money and attention; and demonstrations that the candidate is attuned to the popular mood.

Before examining the transformation in statesmanship and leadership which has taken place over the past 200 years, it is important to understand the development of the national governmental system which necessitates elite guidance.

During the period following the American Revolution, the colonies formed an alliance of independent states ensuring each state’s autonomy and sovereignty. The Articles of Confederation provided only a basic conception of centralized government which had derived its power each colony’s willing contributions. Under the Articles of Confederation the central
government could only act on important issues when unanimity of the states was achieved. It was left without the power to raise revenue or print a national currency but it had the power to form a militia when members were assembled by the states and had very limited policing powers of the thirteen colonies.

The central government consisted of a legislative body known as the Continental Congress which was an assembly of delegates from each state and a president of Congress who presided over congressional proceedings. He held no governing autonomy and his duties consisted primarily of administrative matters while the Congress was assembled. When the body was not in session, the president of Congress served as chairman of the Committee of the States. This arm of the early American government “shall be authorized to execute, in the recess of Congress, such of the powers of Congress as the United States.”6 The Committee of States had power to make decisions on matters which only required 9 votes rather than 13. These powers include the appointment of ambassadors, choosing a president of Congress, establishing rules and regulations of the military as examples. The committee was highly unsuccessful at fulfilling its administrative duties and making any significant impact in terms of governance. Thomas Jefferson who, while serving as a congressman from Virginia, proposed the committee explained the difficulty of forming a quorum. “[The Committee] quarreled very soon, split into two parties [and] abandoned their post.”7

The limited effectiveness of the Committee of States exemplifies the lack of authority vested in the President of the Congress. In effect, the highest authority under the Articles of Confederation held no real executive power. The President of the Congress bears no similarity to the executive officer designed by Alexander Hamilton in The Federalist.
Federalists such as Hamilton, Washington, and Madison advocated a stronger central government to oversee the conduct of the states and the creation of a republic of independent states rather than a loose confederation. Though problems with the Articles were many, according to the federalists, the issue of common defense and the sustaining of an army was a primary concern for military generals such as Washington and Henry Knox who supported a single sovereign.8

Only a few years after the ratification of the Articles of Confederation, James Madison called for a convention to replace the Articles with a federal constitution. The convention resulted in the United States Constitution which set up a central government divided into three distinct branches among which governing powers were split and shared. The executive branch consisted of a single executive officer with independent authority and whose duty it was to carry out the laws made by the Congress. The framers of the Constitution understood that vesting such independent authority in a single executive required the position to be filled by a particular type of man.

The Federalists agreed that good democratic government required educated elite to play an important political role. Gordon Wood, a scholar of the American Founding, emphasizes that the men of the Founding were of almost mythical stature, that they were extraordinary men all living together in a specific time. As he puts it,

They were never embarrassed by talk of elitism, and they never hid their sense of superiority to ordinary folk. But neither were they contemptuous of common people; in fact they always believed that the people in general were the source of their authority.9

However, the Founders understood that good democratic government required that the people’s representatives needed to refine, enlarge, and improve the public’s views, particularly through
education. It was crucial, therefore, for elite guidance in government; these more educated elites would be able to help enlarge the public’s views and ultimately point it to its deeper desires and its own good. It is true that the term elitism presently conjures up skepticism among the general public, but this negative connotation would have been almost foreign in the time of Washington or Adams. As Wood points out, these men, were from the period of the English Enlightenment at which point the cultural citizens who appreciated the finer things of life such as art, food, music, philosophy, religion, and history, were held in high public esteem. A greater backdrop of the times of the Founding will be given later, as it is important in understanding the thoughts, actions, and words of the men who established and who lead the early republic.

Though the point has been made that the late 18th century consisted largely of aristocracies and monarchies, one must also look to the evidence that though the Founders were a part of a time where aristocracy was not a dirty word. Largely because of the enlightenment philosophy of their time, the Founders preferred popular government rather than kingship as in England or in France. The Federalist spoke with remarkable directness to the importance of popular sovereignty and the need for democratic equality in the new American regime. Founder James Wilson is emphatic:

But when we take an extensive and accurate view of the streams of power that appear through this great and comprehensive plan, when we contemplate the variety of their decisions, the force and dignity of their currents, when we behold them intersecting, embracing, and surrounding the vast possessions and interests of the continent and when we see them distributing on all hands of beauty, energy and riches, still however numerous and wide their courses, however diversified and remote the blessings they diffuse, we shall be able to trace them all to one great and noble source, THE PEOPLE.  

Another proponent of democracy was Thomas Jefferson who penned the Declaration of Independence. This document can be seen in many ways a recapitulation of Locke’s Second
Treatise, in which one finds the argument for the legitimacy of popular government in the natural equality of men, and the set of natural rights to which each is entitled. The idea that men are equal in human dignity created for the Founders a sense that all men who live together in society have an equal share in answering the age-old political question, what is the best life?

II. Reasons for the Prudent Statesman

This creation of a new democracy on the North American continent was novel for its time considering the ancients often expressed their concerns, even disgust for democratic government. The ancients ranked democracy as a defective system or a devolution from a higher, more acceptable, form of government. For Plato, it is the only system more tolerable than tyranny which he explains is what democracy will devolve into; for Aristotle, it is a perversion of one of three accepted governments, the polity; Thomas Hobbes, who views human nature as totally depraved, argues an absolute monarchy is the best practical regime.

The ancient thinkers believed the contemplative life, such as that of a philosopher, was the highest good. Plato was most highly concerned with one’s soul and the impact it played on the type of man and type of regime in which the man resided. He shows the democratic man to favor freedom and equality which in turn levels all goods. Plato’s democrat viewed each passion as equal, making it unproblematic to pursue any desire whenever the man was so inclined. For Plato, this eliminates the notion of a highest, noblest good which is to be most desired and pursued. This threatens anarchy and eventually tyranny, as one man will rise winning the favor and popularity of the fickle masses, turning this democracy into tyranny.

Aristotle, though the first to argue for a regime with strong democratic components was in no way egalitarian or democratic. In his Nicomachean Ethics, he explains that some virtues
are attainable by all, and other are not because to gain these, one needs certain resources; one needs ample money to be fully generous. In *The Politics*, however, Aristotle recognizes that a just regime will allow for each citizen to take some part in the rule of his own political community, arguing the collective virtue of the many generally outweighs the virtue of the few or the one. An individual’s participation in government moreover, can increase his personal virtue.

Though Aristotle sees a regime that is ruled in part by the many to be a potentially upright form of government, he also seems to suggest the need for men of great character to act as magistrates or “statesmen” to guide and organize the contributions of the many for the overall public good. It has been further argued, pointing out his distrust of the many, that this statesman is the magnanimous man mentioned in the *Ethics*.\(^1\)

The Founders shared these thinkers’ view of human nature as one that was self-interested and fickle which also led them to be skeptical of populist, egalitarian regimes. Evidence for this distrust is found throughout *Publius* as well as in the structure of the federal constitution itself, with the separation of powers and the use of checks and balances to ensure a deliberate form of government with counter-majoritarian elements.\(^2\) As *Federalist 51* famously explains, good government requires the restraint the selfish human passions.

Having a knowledge of the perils and dangers of democracy was helpful for the Founders who were nearly all influenced by the Enlightenment and this push towards equality and

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1. Carson Holloway makes this argument clearly in *Aristotle’s Magnanimous Man*; Paul Carrese acknowledges the importance of magnanimity and statesmanship in *George Washington’s Greatness and Aristotelian Virtue*, and the argument is also prominently made in Mary P. Nichols’ *Citizenship and Statesmanship: A Study of Aristotle’s Politics*.

2. This is evident particularly in 1, 10, 51, 71, 85 in which the dangers of the short term desires and fickleness of the many, as well as the likelihood of the rise of demagogues from among The People, are addressed and warned against.
democracy. These men understood the issues inherent with common rule. Though what they created was democratic in a major sense, it was to be checked by counter-majoritarian institutions as well. These features of the regime include, as Tocqueville’s brilliant understanding of our political regime explains, a senate not directly elected, a conservative and impartial judiciary, and a monarchial executive which was to be selected via a temporary group of doubly insulated elite “electors” as the Electoral College.¹¹

The Electoral College was an institution designed to increase the likelihood statesman would be elected president. It consisted of prominent citizens who had a great knowledge of politics, as well as a strong understanding of the candidates from which they were to choose the president. These qualities made them capable of selecting the man with the most suitable character to fill the position.

These counter-majoritarian elements were built into the government and explained within Publius. As Herbert Storing describes “this government is like a glass-enclosed clock. Its ‘works’ are visible to all and must be understood and accepted by all in order to function properly.”¹² The people willingly delegated duties and authority to individuals who made up these institutions with the belief that America’s constitutional structure would ensure quality leaders to emerge who would thus serve the common good. According to Madison, this is accomplished in a republic because within it, “the delegation of the government to a small number a citizens elected by the rest” and because of the number of citizens as well as the scope of the country can be enlarged. The effect of this extension is a refinement and enlargement of “the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country.”¹³ This is a primary function of a republican representative and statesman, to enlarge the public view and to help it recognize its
truest interests, and then to pursue these interests through effective leadership. The question which arises and is in need of discussion is what kind of individual is to receive the privilege of administering the duty of ensuring the common good?

III. The Character of the Prudent Statesman

The Founders believed that the executive office, in which great powers were vested in a single authority, needed to be filled by a particular kind of man worthy of receiving and wielding the powers bestowed. Though the Founders knew the dangers of the monarchy they understood that in the mixed regime they were designing, the will of one man to act in certain cases, to execute the law and to defend the nation, was favored over the rule of a body of men for a couple of reasons. First as previously noted, the executive was to be a counter-majoritarian element of government and as Federalist #51 explains it was to play a role in creating a check upon the power of the legislative authority body from which Hamilton explains in #1 (and as Ceaser points out in Presidential Selection) a demagogue would most likely rise. Furthermore, the executive was important for national government for the reasons laid out by Hamilton in the papers on the presidency. He writes in #70 “Energy in the Executive is a leading character in the definition of good government. It is essential to the protection of the community against foreign attacks; it is not less essential to the steady administration of the laws.”

Further quotations and explanations for the need for expediency regarding the safety of the nation and the execution of

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III With this I refer to his work, Presidential Selection: Theory and Development, and the section on popular leadership. He discusses the leadership of a “broker” likely found within Congress to mediate “between various interest groups and wielding together from these a coalition majority.” Though he continues that this form of leader “was certainly not to be envisioned as the distinguishing characteristic of either a candidate for the presidency or the president himself” and that Madisonian “pluralism was never intended...to extend beyond the legislature.
laws are found throughout Hamilton’s writings. IV Since broad power was argued for and drafted into the Constitution largely due to nationalists like Hamilton, there was a necessity to ensure the safety of the populace from an abuse of executive power; the Founders thus hoped a statesman would be elevated to such an office.

The question posed above, however, speaks to the nurturing of a leader: what is democratic statesmanship, how can the necessary qualities be obtained by a man, and why is statesmanship essential for political life? To see this, we must first turn to the nature of the Founding in order to understand the Founders’ ideas and mindset on leadership and governance. As was remarked earlier the Founders lived at a time where aristocracy was the normal regime of government; the well born and wealthy were granted power simply by the nature of their heritage. This however, is the opposite of the ideas of democracy and the Enlightenment as seen in the writings of Thomas Paine, John Locke, and Thomas Jefferson. V

The Founders acknowledged their status and even their wealth. Jefferson was known for living quite lavishly, and Benjamin Franklin had worldwide recognition, fame, and wealth from his scientific theories and inventions. VI These were also essentially all self-made men, students and products of the Enlightenment. Franklin, for example was “a self-made man, an artisan of insignificant family who became what today would be a multimillionaire.” 16 Hamilton was another Founder who rose from obscure and foreign origins. Hamilton was born on the island of St. Croix in 1755 and was brought over to America for education as a teenager after having

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IV Hamilton’s notes from the *Pacificus-Helvidius Debates* with Thomas Jefferson over the prerogative power of the President express his opinions for a strong executive power. (Need More Here) Also see *The Federalist* 67-69 on the powers and selection of the President

V See Paine’s *Common Sense* and *The Rights of Man*, John Locke’s *Second Treatise on Government*, and *The Declaration of Independence*.

VI As seen in Gordon S. Wood’s portrait of these founders in *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different*
impressed a local leader. Both he and Franklin were aided by patrons, the most common form of social mobility during this time period.¹⁷ These examples display the possibility of social mobility during the late 18th century in Great Britain. The Founders, some being examples themselves, believed in a self-created social hierarchy which would allow for individuals to rise to prominence; this is what has become known as the *Natural Aristoi*.

The belief in a natural aristocracy, held even by Jefferson, the most enthusiastic democrat of the Founders, sheds a great light on the belief the Founders had about leaders. The most famous evidence on the discussion of natural aristocracy is found in correspondence between Jefferson and Adams nearly 40 years after the Revolution. Jefferson strongly believed in the democratic spirit of the Enlightenment and that government devoted to equality and liberty was superior to an entrenched aristocracy.

It may seem counter-intuitive that an aristocracy of sorts could in some way coincide with democracy, but the natural aristocracy Jefferson champions is ironically democratic at its base. It has been stated that social mobility was possible during the Founding, though it was not commonplace; it required certain young men as well as wealthy and connected patrons as a sponsors; for the most part, the social structure was rigid, and wealth and nobility of birth were major factors in one’s placement.

Jefferson believed that the democratic spirit of the Enlightenment would ultimately disintegrate the aristocratic regime. For example, the abolishment of entail and laws of primogeniture broke down the longstanding standard of wealth which had built up the largest most prominent families, particularly of the Southern states. The abandonment of these unequal laws allowed each man to use and cultivate his inherent faculties and talents in order to rise as
high as naturally conceivable, no longer hindered by having to obtain great wealth or land. Jefferson found it only natural, then, that as certain men would become known for their talents, worth, and genius, the society would take notice and elevate these men to places of power, creating a government of “the wise and noble.” This can all be derived from a passage to Adams:

For I agree with you that there is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents…There is also an artificial aristocracy, founded on wealth and birth, without either virtue or talents; for with these it would belong to the first class. The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature, for the instruction, the trusts, and government of society. And indeed, it would have been inconsistent in creation to have formed man for the social state, and not to have provided virtue and wisdom enough to manage the concerns of the society. May we not even say, that that form of government is the best, which provides the most effectually for a pure selection of these natural aristoi into the offices of government?  

Jefferson believed the best government is one “which provides effectually for a pure selection of these natural aristoi into the offices of government.” But why did he believe this to be the case? Jefferson believed that wealth and birth, though traditionally thought to be the signatures of virtuous good men, were at odds with the views of the Enlightenment which he championed. As the correspondence to Adams suggests, “virtue and talents” are the basis for a good man and reasonably, a good statesman.

Jefferson also saw that the equality of men allowed for the cultivation of virtue and character. Jefferson specifically believed that this cultivation of the natural aristoi would come from a secular, liberal education. Jefferson’s ideas on education can be found in his Notes on the State of Virginia, where he advocated for the creation of wards within counties to allow for the
Jefferson argues that the *natural aristoi* will rise via a liberal education, which Gordon Wood points out was the mark of a “gentleman” and necessary for political greatness. It is evident the importance of the *natural aristoi* brings to good government; those whose virtue, character, and liberal education would separate from the rest of the public would have the necessary skills to be entrusted with representing and pursuing the public’s best interest. Furthermore, a gentleman, whom the natural aristocracy was likely to produce, was a person who was logical and open minded—able to debate and discuss—and simultaneously virtuous. Lord Chesterfield defines him, “a man of good behavior, well bred, amiable, high-minded who knows how to act in any society, in the company of any man.”

Proper behavior and action is a result of the practice of prudence, or understanding the proper action necessary given the circumstances. This trait is essential to statesmanship; a statesman at the Founding, having gained the proper liberal education would have been instilled with this virtue of prudence, thus allowing him to assess circumstances and calibrate his actions properly, ensuring deliberate and wise action. An individual with this quality, whose aim it also was to serve the common good, would be less likely to abuse the powers vested in the office.

Along with prudence, a necessary quality of the Founders’ statesman is what Washington called “disinterestedness.” A gentleman would have gained enough reputation and wealth to live comfortably without labor. His disinterestedness to selfish gain enables him to

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VII Jefferson’s views on the public education of youth and the elevation of geniuses to be statesman will be discussed in the following chapter on Cultivating the Statesman. This specific phrase is a common paraphrase of a line taken from Query 14 of Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia.*
work for the common good. This would allow him to serve in politics without succumbing to the temptation to use his political authority to advantage himself or his closest friends.

It was disinterested gentlemen, embodied by Washington, whom the Founders believed would be best suited for occupying the most distinguished posts. First, these men would have reached a certain “excellence of character” having studied a variety of subjects, having developed an accurate understanding of the current culture, and by having great values and morals. Second, as mentioned before, these men would no longer be motivated by selfish gain, for they had accrued great fortunes largely by their own hands, so they could act without prejudice in administering the affairs of the public writ large.

For the Founders, the term statesmanship was defined as “the exercise of personal judgment in accord with the dictates of political prudence.” 21 Building upon the research of Ceaser, a statesman of the Founding generation is a person of first character, who has exceptionally high virtue, broad knowledge and understanding, and is a man of genius and talents. This definition of statesmanship is marked by three qualities which are indispensable to the virtuous character of those called by duty to serve as president: 1) prudence, 2) disinterestedness, and 3) integrity. These qualities will be examined in turn.

The “talents” to which I refer, first noted by men such as Jefferson and Hamilton, are talents with which a man is endowed that will be essentially helpful in governing well. 22 These may very well be prudence which Aristotle believed necessary for statesmanship and discernment in judgment and decision making—that being the artful consideration and coordination of one’s own actions in conjunction with the present circumstances and actions of others.
Prudence is clearly seen in Aristotle’s magnanimous man and his statesman. As briefly aforementioned, Aristotle was unique among ancient philosophers due to his qualified support for the rule of the many. His argument for the rule of the many hinges upon the people’s collective virtue—the idea that many men individually may not be exceptionally virtuous or as great as the few or the one, but each man has some quality to contribute, perhaps because it is natural for a man to pursue the virtuous life, as he points out in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Collectively then, the virtue of the many is naturally more reliable than the virtue of any one person or any small number.

In *The Politics*, Aristotle uses the collective authority of the many to say that even if wealth were the requisite for ruling, as in an oligarchy, collectively the many have a claim to rule, for together they have more land than a prominent group. However, Aristotle is clear that the collective virtue of the many gives them the claim to rule because their collective virtue contributes to the greatness of the whole. The clearest example, which Aristotle uses throughout his defense of the many and collective virtue, is that of a potluck dinner. He leads with this illustration in the beginning of Chapter 11 of Book III:

> …a feast to which many contribute is better than a dinner provided out of a single purse. For each individual among the many has a share of excellence and practical wisdom, and when they meet together, just as they become in a manner one man.”

The idea behind this example is a dinner party whereby many individuals are responsible for contributing dishes which they are most qualified to prepare will be a much greater occasion overall than if one individual were responsible for inviting guests, purchasing, and preparing several dishes alone.
The example of the potluck dinner shows a need for a person, or perhaps a few persons to serve as coordinators, or statesmen who understand how the parts of the community operate, that is understand how each citizen contributes to the whole good of society and knows what the greatest possible outcome should be. With this knowledge the statesman guides the community toward the common good by utilizing the contributions of each citizen correctly; this task requires prudence above all. There must be a prudent coordinator who structures the differing dishes which are being brought so that there is no overlap; also, perhaps two people make the same dish, the statesman or coordinator may need to judge between which is best for the overall meal, so that the meal is not only the most delicious but the most balanced or even the most attractive as a whole. All of these decisions go into creating a dinner party, or judging a production, or painting a masterpiece, and the parts which contribute are limited in their excellence to know particulars whereas there may be one whose greatest contribution is this understanding the greatest outcome.

This is not an example of representation which Hobbes advocates, whereby the will of the people is transferred upon the statesman to simply do the majority’s bidding, but this illustrates the necessity of good, prudent leadership to decide what is best for the public as a whole while the masses participate in their own government. Madison appears to echo this role of statesmanship as it applies to the American regime when he says that rulers must be “men who possess most wisdom to discern, and most virtue to pursue, the common good of society.” The Founders also believed that a statesman needed to “be at the helm,” even if they simultaneously understood in reality this may not always be the case.

Disinterestedness is required for the prudent statesman or president as a means to check one’s own self-interested nature. The Founders did not think that the statesman was impervious
to the common traits of human nature, so a disinterested gentleman, they asserted, would be less likely to use the office as an avenue to fortune and selfish gain but see it as an opportunity to serve the public and gain that which money cannot buy, honor. The desire for honor and fame, as Hamilton writes is the driving ambition for the president, not individual monetary gain. This was certainly Lincoln’s understanding when he delivered his Lyceum Address thirty years prior to his election as president.

Finally, the mark of a statesman is integrity—the ability to remain disinterested in the face of sycophants and holding firmly to principles in the midst of a fickle majority seduced by flattery and demagoguery. A principled individual stands firmly upon convictions that have been freely developed. Hamilton writes that a “statesman [has been] most celebrated for the soundness of his principles and for the justice of [his] views.” Integrity is an important trait of the statesman of a democratic regime due to the fickle and factious nature of both Congress and the general public. The Founders saw the president as a man who could check the passions of the people and the Congress and ensure reasoned, wise governance. Dignity also keeps the president safe from relying upon public opinion; this is especially enforced by the amount of insulation the president receives from the public, being elected by the Electoral College rather than by popular vote.

Having defined the term statesmanship, it is now crucial to show the evidence which leads us to this type of definition, by showing the qualities necessary and expected of the great statesman, the President of the United States. Hamilton defines the President as a man of “energy” in Federalist # 70; which means more than mere spirit, in fact the Founders worried

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viii The author believes integrity to be a key component of the Founder’s perception and definition of Statesman, and this will be shown in greater detail in subsequent sections.
about political ambition of Presidential candidates, but here it means the executive must display resolve and the will to act with expediency when it is necessary to do so. The president must be given constitutional authority to make certain decisions swiftly for the good of the whole nation, and it is necessary for such a person to be able to act independently of other branches of government or the fleeting whims of the populace. This is evidence that the Founders believed a main quality of the American statesman to be integrity.

Several times in *The Federalist*, the executive is shown the need for independence from the other branches. This independence largely stems from the prerogative power to make certain expedient decisions. In Article II of the Constitution for example, the President is deemed Commander-in-Chief of the military, and decisions by any military officer must be able to be expedient and concise for defense and security’s sake. In Article I, Congress as the lawmaking body is marked by a definite need for deliberation. Likewise, Congress is by nature to be beset by partisanship and factions all trying to enact policies which benefit narrow interests instead of the public interest; one benefit of a single executive is that the office would be able to “consult the public interest as a whole.” Therefore, given these powers, the president must be independent of outside influences, including legislators to some extent, in order to make the correct decisions to provide for the common defense and to ensure that the laws are faithfully executed.

Integrity ensures that the office of the president does not devolve into a dictatorship, where a ruler decides it is to his own advantage to side with a particular part of the populace at the great expense and oppression of others, and practically we will see that this trait is highly regarded when it comes to selecting a man of first character. It should be noted that this fact was obvious to the Founders; as it has been previously alluded to, the Founders were most worried of
a demagogue rising from within the factious Congress, whereby an individual may use popular support to rise to power. We will see in Chapter 3 how a shift has occurred in presidential statesmanship making popular support in many ways inseparable from successfully becoming president.

The definition of integrity is based upon the writings of Federalist 10, where Madison says that elected will be men “whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations.”28 With this, he gives two qualities which are necessary for a good representative, be it in the legislature or the executive, these are patriotism and love of justice.

Patriotism and a love of justice correlate with civic and moral virtue. The president needs to be a patriot who believes in his country and the public good of the people whom he represents, and the inclusion of the qualification of loving justice insures that the leader will do what is morally right and best for his country. Being a lover of justice implies one can discern true justice, this quality in tandem with patriotism enable the statesman to have upright interests centered on justice which will overlap with the true interests of the public thus enabling him to deliberate the effects of a popular suggestion and decide against it in the correct instances. The ability to truly discern justice for the good of one’s political community showcases a love of justice and patriotism.

One who is “least likely to sacrifice [the true interest of the country] to temporary or partial considerations” possesses integrity. This integrity is also necessary to guard the people from those “unworthy candidates [who] practice with success the vicious arts by which elections
are too often carried.”  

This describes the demagogue of which is warned about throughout The Federalist.

Integrity also allows the statesman to view the office served as burdensome like Washington. Accounts of Washington show him to be a very meticulous man, constantly warring with himself trying to keep the gentleman status and behavior, always discerning the best course of action. He is a man of “intense self-conscious seriousness.” Washington certainly, as well as other Founders, held the belief “in a virtuous government…public offices are what they should be, burthens to those appointed to them, which it would be wrong to decline, though foreseen to bring with them intense labor and great private loss.” This quote of Jefferson is used to illustrate the great pains and duty it was for a statesman such as the President to be one of integrity, going against at times, the passions of the majority to ensure the best course for the entire regime. Seeing the burden of the office highlights its importance and its difficulty to be executed properly. These will lead the president to be moderate and deliberate in his deeds, careful to do what is right and not to bring disgrace to the position.

To further explain the necessity of integrity as a key component of the Founders’ perception of statesmanship, it will require an investigation of different versions of leadership which were present then and are present today. An excellent way of defining a statesman is to look at its opposite: what a statesman precisely is not according to the Founders. From this discussion, we will get an even clearer picture of the virtuous statesman at the head of the nation from the perspective of the writers of the Constitution.

According to the Founders, the president needed to be able to guide the nation, using his prudence, disinterestedness, and integrity—the qualities necessary to be a servant of the common
good. Integrity is of an utmost necessity for the Founders in a statesman. This may be clearly shown by examining what a statesman is not, and that is one who practices, “popular arts;” these popular arts are the ways in which a leader can use charisma and his personal qualities to flatter the majority to win it to his side. From this then, he may be able to lead it in the direction he so selfishly desires, therefore no longer being a disinterested public servant. This type of popular leader, as he is referred to by Ceasar, who can flatter and dazzle is warned against by the writers of The Federalist.\textsuperscript{32}

Along with a President who can direct the public with qualities other than virtuous and selfless character, the Founders were skeptical of a President who would win over the public by playing to their emotions, or by use of rhetorical speech. These are leaders who want to win the approval and support of the people by arousing the heart on issues making the leader “close” to the people. Ceaser calls these men ones who have “established themselves as ‘friends’ of the people.”\textsuperscript{33} Hamilton’s term for this kind of leader, which he uses in The Federalist is “demagogue.” These men “offer the bait of popularity at the expense of the common good.”\textsuperscript{34} As will later be made clearer, the Founders did not anticipate a duty of the president to be to flatter the public or to win popularity. In contrast, they believed it essential to gain their respect and favor through his character.\textsuperscript{ix}

Further warning on the dangers of demagoguery and favoritism of a presidential candidate is given by Hamilton in Federalist # 68:

\textsuperscript{ix} In Federalist # 69, Hamilton is discussing the similarities and differences between three sovereigns: the British Crown, the President of the United States, and the governor of New York. Here he states that the President becomes reelected or “re-eligible” for office for as long as the people “shall think him worthy of their full confidence.” This implies that winning the approval of a President based on his performance, virtue or other high merits, is essential to stay in power, but popularity alone because of lower qualities is not the aim of a presidential candidate. More will be said about this in Chapter 2.
The process of election affords a moral certainty, that the office of President will never fall to the lot of any man who is not in an eminent degree endowed with the requisite qualifications. Talents for low intrigue, and the little arts of popularity, may alone suffice to elevate a man to the first honors in a single State; but it will require other talents, and a different kind of merit, to establish him in the esteem and confidence of the whole union.35

These “talents of low intrigue” which are synonymous here of those personal qualities which may pull the heartstrings of the public and make the candidate one who can sway the public with flattery and excellent oratory skill, are the alternative to the “talents” referred to in our definition of statesmanship from earlier.

The Founders clearly state a hesitancy towards the public’s ability to make concrete and purely rational judgments of character by fearing that a man would rise to power “with as complete a sway as if a scepter had been placed in his single hand.”36 Putting this particular passage in context will give a better analysis of the worry over the leadership of a passionate demagogue. The subject of the quote is an ancient Greek or Roman who would speak up during public forums and meetings of the early republics. The worry Madison is conveying is directly regarding the size of Congress and the influence of leaders within that body; he is saying that the larger a body is, “the greater the proportion of members of limited information” will be present, and consequently, the members are elected who are “artful statesman.”37

These men who rise to speak will do so to arouse the passions of the rest of the members. He goes on to explain that “ignorance will be the dupe of cunning, and passion the slave of sophistry and declamation.” Here he seems to be suggesting that in large groups, men will come to be leaders and speak up trying to arouse as large a support as possible using the tools of persuasion rather than logic. He begins this section of # 68 with “the more numerous an assembly may be, of whatever characters composed, the greater is known to be the ascendancy
of passion over reason.” Though this passage describes Congress and a multitude of individuals, it is clear that any time a leader requires the support of a vast group of individuals, there will be a strong temptation to move them by appealing to their passion rather than their reason...

A popular leader who arouses the multitude through emotion and passion is not what is intended of a statesman whether he is a lawmaker or the executor of that law. This is why demagogues were such an issue of concern for the Founders particularly in the office of the president. However, due to the shift of presidential statesmanship, we will discover that Wilson’s popular leadership possessed many of these qualities against which the Founders warned.

IV. Conclusion

Founding Fathers such as Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, and James Madison were essential to the creation of a republican form of government which replaced the loosely bound confederation of states, providing the nation with a stronger central authority than was present under the Articles of Confederation. This federal system was designed to check the unfavorable view of human nature agreed upon by the Founding generation. A separation of powers along with checks and balances of power helped to curb the selfish ambitions of men in government. The greatest need of a statesman was seen to be in the position of the president who was to be a man of energy—a single executive with particular qualities suiting him to govern well.

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\(^x\) This is also warned against in The Federalist #10, as discussed earlier.
The Founders’ conception of statesmanship was marked by three characteristics, prudence, disinterestedness, and integrity. These traits, in particular prudence and integrity guard the public from demagogues and sycophants, and enable the president to guide the interest of the people in a just direction by the use of his constitutional powers. The opposite of the prudent statesman is the popular leader who is in large result a conception of the progressive political thought of the 20th century. This individual relies upon public opinion and has a differing view of the nature of mankind than do the Founders. This shift in political thought paves the way for an expanded government not anticipated by the Founding generation, as well as a movement towards a new educational philosophy to help bring about the purposes of a “new freedom” necessitated by a new political climate.

The statesmanship of the Founding generation also required a particular political climate where the prudent statesman would receive a liberal education equipping him with the qualities outlined above. Furthermore, the prudent statesman is elevated to the office of the president largely due to civic education of the political community at the time of the Founding. These will be discussed in Chapter 2.
Chapter 2: Cultivating the Statesman

The Founders' view of statesmanship sets a standard for an occupant of the office of the presidency. The standard to which the Founders hold one another and the rest of their countrymen comes from their understanding of human nature, the dangers of certain regimes, and the new philosophy of the Enlightenment. They had seen the effects of tyranny from afar in France and experienced them at home with England. This led them to form a free government with which ensured freedom while curtailing the vices to which man is naturally inclined.

Despite man’s inclination towards vice, the Founders understood the need for a single executor in government for which Hamilton argued in The Federalist. With the aid of a checks and balances system in place in the new republic, it was crucial that one entrusted with great single power such as the president was a man of first character. He was to be a gentleman by society's standards, learned, refined, with the ability to serve the interests of the country rather than be driven by his own passions. This man could stand for the country as a whole not being swayed by only its highly passionate parts. This description levies a high standard to which was earlier referred, but the Founders believed obtaining this statesman would be possible because of a few things: a liberal education as understood and given by the ancient Greeks, a civic and moral education of the citizenry, and the institution designed in selecting the President. These, as the Founders understood them, though not guaranteeing this statesman would always be at the helm, would be necessary for the right elevation and selection of men of first character thought eligible to serve.
I. The Importance of a Liberal Education

America's Founders were products of the Enlightenment and believed very strongly in the benefits of a liberal education. Unfortunately today, this term is handled carelessly and is misinterpreted and misunderstood, not reflecting its truest meaning or its origins. As Bruce Thornton rightly asserts, truly liberal education, which stems from critical consciousness, does not simply “demand a reading list that validates and flatters the student's ethnic or gender esteem and preconceived notions rather than one that challenges and compels an examination of these...ideas.”

Liberal education is born out of a critical consciousness which began with the ancient Greek thinkers such as Socrates, Aristotle, Euripides, Plutarch and the like. Critical consciousness is “the impulse and willingness to stand back from humanity and nature, to make them objects of thought and criticism, and to search for their meaning and significance.”

It is critical consciousness, seen throughout ancient Greek literature, which leads to philosophy. This is seen most plainly by the Socratic Method where preconceived truths are questioned in order to obtain concrete knowledge by testing traditions and false opinion. Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle all believed that the pursuit of truth and knowledge would lead to knowing and understanding the highest things such as beauty, justice and the good. In turn, this understanding would lead one to the greatest fulfillment possible.

Liberal education is important for the philosophic life and is crucial to political life. The ability of a citizen to question and to think critically allows for a well informed choice about how to be represented, leading to one understanding his true best interest and learning the truth about those which attempt to represent. In Publius the Founders were often vocal of the need for individuals to rise above accepting dogmatic ideals led by fickle passion and to know of their true interests. A liberal education leads to an examination of both the dogmatic as well as the
true interests and leads citizens to choose rightly between them. It is “the inculcation of critical consciousness,” and equips citizens with an exposure to “the best works of history, philosophy and literature” which is sure to display a critical consciousness resulting in a well-rounded and well informed view of various matters. A liberal education teaches one to think critically and question, as well as to study the world in a way that allows one to come to a fuller understanding of the world in which one lives.

Philosophy and liberal education need not only be applied to gaining the knowledge of the highest intangible qualities of life but could also serve to understand public life. For this reason the Founders saw it as a crucial component of both statesmanship and democracy. As stated in the previous chapter it is especially necessary that public officials understand politics, human nature, and the interests of the people whom they serve with both prudence and integrity. Being equipped with the particular type of education as laid out above will not only make certain men qualified merely because of their intelligence but will make men see the world from a different perspective than to which they are naturally inclined thus cultivating the ability to look beyond one’s self to gain greater insight into the complexity of the world around them. One with this insight will act with prudence and integrity because they know the truth of things and will not be blinded by false opinions, traditions, or preconceived notions. Critical consciousness and a liberal education further equip one with the ability to prudentially reason or to recognize with accuracy the situation and to know the proper action that is to be taken.

The effect then of a liberal education is that it cultivates “the curiosity to know the best of what is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics, and everything of the kind.” It allows for its students to get at the truth of a matter while being able to disregard that which distracts from the truth. This is necessary for a statesman, but it is also important for the
ordinary citizens of a democracy so that those who are rightfully fit to lead are elevated to positions of honor.

It is clear the Founders believed in the necessity of a liberal and classical education. Jefferson was perhaps the greatest advocate for the advancement of public education. This is made evident in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, where he discusses in a few places his ideas on education of the ordinary citizen as well as those he believes to have “genius.” It is also in these writings where he describes his university for statesmen—a liberal education academy to groom public servants.

Jefferson’s letters concerning proper education express an emphasis on the study of literature in order to cultivate moral character in the “gentleman” and “statesman.” In his letters we do not find mention of literature as a way to understand a historical trajectory as is the case with his progressive successors. Jefferson asserts that reading particular types of books either non-fiction or fiction is beneficial to the cultivation of statesmen because reading introduces and encourages virtue. He explains to Robert Skipwith in a 1771 letter that both non-fiction and fiction are necessary and helpful; for “everything is useful which contributes to fix in the principles and practices of virtue.” Great, classic works of fiction teach examples of virtue which man is to “copy the fair example.” While at the same time, some writings bring examples of atrocity and vice educate as to which deeds need to be avoided. Several of Jefferson’s letters include lists of books that he finds crucial to the development of a political mind.\textsuperscript{XI}

\textsuperscript{XI} Jefferson notes how dear Greek and Roman authors are and his list of books sent to Madison include many works of history and international affairs
Jefferson further illuminates the value of classical learning and how education and knowledge in particular subject areas benefit different kinds of men. Generally, he points to three benefits and values of classical Greek and Roman literature: the first value being the “pure tastes in writing;” the second being the luxury of reading ancient texts simply for their beauty, and thirdly, that these writings possess the greatest knowledge in important subjects such as “history, ethics, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, natural history, etc.”

He acknowledges that classical learning is not only necessary or beneficial to all men, but to those mostly in professional trades such as medicine, law, agricultural economy, politics and government. Specifically, he sees classical education important to the statesman, for it is “in [Greek and Roman writings where he finds] history, politics, mathematics, ethics eloquence, love of country, to which he must add the sciences of his own day.” Jefferson ends the letter to Mr. Brazier with a summation of the importance of Greek and Latin languages; “the classical languages are a solid basis for most, and an ornament to all the sciences.”

II. An Argument of Public Education

With this view of classical and liberal education, among the Founders, Jefferson was arguably the greatest proponent for public education of both ordinary citizens and those he said “nature has given the minds of the first order.” From his Notes on the State of Virginia as well as his Bill for More General Diffusion of Knowledge, we see a great emphasis in a dichotomous form of education: one track for the general citizenry and another for these pupils of genius, who he believed would go on to serve in the public sphere.

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XII Though these are the central points of discussion, I extrapolate the meaning of Greek and Latin languages to show that Jefferson believes studying writings of the Ancients can be inferred here.
Jefferson’s plan for education consists of two general tracks which were divided into four total grades of public education in order to “diffuse knowledge more generally through the mass of the people.”47 He believed that the greatest prevention of tyranny was the illumination “as far as practicable, the minds of the people at large.”48 This bill also outlined Jefferson’s plan for a system of public schools for the purpose of a more general diffusion of knowledge. The plan was to divide each county of Virginia into smaller districts and allow for schools to be built for the purpose of teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic. Students would enjoy three years of free education and 20 would be chosen to be elevated to the grammar schools which were to be “erected in different parts of the country.”49 From this “general school” as Jefferson refers to them in one some of his letters, students were taught for a further six years in “grammar schools” during which their education consisted of a knowledge of the languages, namely Greek and Latin, and higher mathematics. At the commencement of each class’s sixth year, once again half were chosen “for the superiority of their parts and disposition” to attend the college of William & Mary and later, Jefferson’s own University of Virginia.

This track system allowed for what Jefferson referred to as raking the geniuses from the rubbish, while at the same time “teaching all the children of the state reading, writing and common arithmetic.”50 He believed this grated system allowed for education of children of all ages, intellectual levels, and conditions to participate in education. He saw the need in a democracy to have an educated citizenry as well as the need for a further, proper liberal education for those students who showed a greater capacity for learning and understanding. This separation of the minds of children allowed for the cultivation of a generally educated citizenry and of a smaller number of future statesmen.
The Jeffersonian system is crucial to the health of democratic political community. He writes describing the two tracks of education,

First, some institution where science in all its branches is taught, and in the highest degree to which the human mind has carried it. This would prepare a few subjects in every State, to whom nature has given minds of the first order. Secondly such a degree of learning given to every member of the society as will enable him to read, to judge, and to vote understandingly on what is passing.\textsuperscript{51}

He believes so strongly in fact on education both generally and specifically, that he fears that “our present state of liberty [would be] as a short lived possession unless the mass of the people could be informed to a certain degree.”\textsuperscript{52}

Democratic societies must have an educated citizenry if the government is to be by the people. Jefferson was skeptical of placing great power and faith in institutions but rather supported that the power rest in the people, this is why he was perhaps the greatest proponent for the education of the masses. At the same time, Jefferson recognized that representative government necessarily must contain prudent governance. This is certainly expressed in his two track system which is tailored to both the general educating of the masses and to educate the pupils capable of statesmanship.

Good government is wise government; the dilemma of democracy is obtaining wise government from the rule of many. This system contains a few solutions to that dilemma. First, the general public which is represented by trustees in government will be able to make well-informed choices in voting. Jefferson believes, “the enlightenment of the mass of the citizenry [will instill] in them not only an awareness of their individual rights but also a shrewd vigilance
against tyranny.” This awareness of liberties will produce greater participation. The people need to be able to judge prudently and think for themselves, be informed of current events and the society in which they lived, because a blessing of American freedom is civic participation, especially at the local level. Jefferson and the other Founders believed it to be a duty to engage in the political community.

Tocqueville noticed how the liberty to participate in one’s own government or township gave him a sense of belonging, a connectedness to the affairs of his fellow citizens. As a result he is able to see his own interest as part of a greater civic interest. This only could have occurred if one felt his participation and voice in the affairs of the governing of his community mattered. This “self-interest well understood,” as Tocqueville spoke of it, allows for all of the citizenry to recognize, take interest in, and work for the common good.

The second reason for a general education of the masses allows for each individual to “judge and vote [with understanding]” which not only comes from a greater awareness of individual liberties as Jefferson points out, but also speaks to the vigilance against tyranny. Being able to judge and vote with greater understanding thanks to greater education makes the general public less inclined to be swayed by empty words of demagogues. Though the Founders warn at length of the dangers of demagoguery, particularly in the House, a generally educated public is more likely to see its true interest because individuals who participate in the affairs of their smaller communities are more aware of what is best for them. If this is so, citizens with a general civic knowledge will know the direction in which they believe the country should go and be less inclined to follow those who intend to take a radically different path. It follows that an educated people will recognize and trust the elected officials whose duty it is to show the people the true public interest and to govern in it.
Thirdly, a greater general education of the masses brings forth a sense of patriotism so necessary in a democracy. An education that allows for acceptance and love of country cultivates civic engagement and a desire to serve and participate in the affairs of one’s political community. Patriotism can be seen as a “centrally important piety.” A reasonable patriotism is beneficial because it “cements our gratitude, as individuals, to others for what they have provided us.” Traditions and rituals that promote a love of country will also stir one’s own sentiments leading him to engage in civic life. Anecdotes of history and cultural euphemisms instill in people a love of country and a connection with country, helping to create an identity. Knowing about history via general education allows one to learn about their country with an affection which is crucial to a healthy democracy.

There is a need for a separation between a general education and a liberal education which teaches to question all things. A questioning of everything does not create as great of patriotism, especially if those who are not prepared nor have the capacity to question and learn at a higher level are exposed to a greater liberal education. In fact, as Bradley Watson points out in response to Bruce Thornton’s work, “critical consciousness might…undermine the very…statesmanship essential to the civic life of any regime.” This was precisely the purpose for Wilson’s emphasis on liberal education, hoping to break down the affinity for the past. However, there is a need to be deliberate about the education one receives to ensure what is best for the political community. Thus, the Founders understood the need for such a separation in
order to create a greater civic awareness and also the need for a proper and robust liberal education for those deemed suited to receive it.\textsuperscript{XIII}

Patriotism comes largely from civic education and is connected with civic virtue for the Ancients. As can be seen in his writings, and as Pangle is correct to point out, Jefferson believes strongly in the cultivation of a proper civic mindset. Believing that the people are the sole depositories of freedom, it is crucial for Jefferson that the people are equipped to govern well, though not directly, but indirectly. Since the power vested in the people is entrusted to representatives whose duty it is to govern responsibly, the masses must be able to have knowledge enough to select wise and honest men which will make for the best government. As Pangle explains,

\begin{quote}
The people is then, created by unanimous contractual consent of naturally independent individuals, whose rights as individuals remain the only basic rights and whose consensual combination into a people governed by majority rule never transcends the moral primacy of the distinctive individuality.\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quote}

This is a basic Lockean principle which is that individuals by themselves have no power against government but taken collectively, power is retained by the people via majority rule whereby decisions are made. If then, majority rule and a collective decision is powerful, Jefferson believes it imperative for individuals to have an enlightened mind capable of making sound decisions. This cultivation of a good democratic citizen is not found in self-discovery or on a self-centered development of one’s unique personality, but rather a civically minded character

\textsuperscript{XIII} Though Watson’s warning, and Wilson’s hope of this consequence of a liberal education is a possible outcome, we will see in Chapter IV an alternative result which can occur upon receiving a truly liberal education—one that furthers civic engagement and knowledge of political life and one’s own regime.
which allows for informed decisions to be made. As a result of the progressive shift, however, the concept of educating a democracy is vastly different now from the time of the Founding.

There exists a paradoxical nature of the cultivation of a good democratic citizenry: it demands an enlightened individual who can guide and teach the masses. As Pangle notes, “Only in retrospect, as it were, and under proper guidance, do the people become aware of what they essentially seek and need and hence ought to claim.”59 The people need the guidance of the statesman along with a general education. It was mentioned in the previous chapter that a purpose of the statesmen was to guide and teach the masses of their true interests. This is an underlying theme of Locke’s Second Treatise on Government. Pangle goes onto to explain that Locke’s treatise is meant to enlighten the people as to their natural rights and that he himself is the educator of the masses. This led Jefferson to introduce his two track school system; he understood the need for a prudent statesman who would not only rule honestly and wisely, but would guide the people to make proper decisions and have a full knowledge of their own rights.

Education which informs citizens of their rights and responsibilities is needed for good democratic government according to the Founders. This insight is altered by the influence of progressive thought and progressive education. The Progressives conceived of human nature differently from the Founders which aided the shift. They advocated for greater inclusion of the public in political affairs—not merely in civic participation at a local level but at a national level. Public opinion which illuminates a public will was a main proponent of progressive civic education. The distinction is that the Progressives did not see a reason to educate about the limits of government but rather the newly conceived purpose of government to provide opportunities for citizens to fulfill their potential. This results, as it will be discussed later, in an
individualism which is not only counter to what Locke and the Founders knew, but one that negatively affects the political community.

According to the Founders the statesman must receive a liberal education in order to guide the country not only with education but also in using constitutional powers to ensure proper governance and guidance of the people. This can be achieved by a liberal education. The first way liberal education aids in achieving this end is it instills in individuals a sense of confidence in one’s own abilities to lead and make decisions. With a wide ranging though never set liberal curriculum, potential statesmen are exposed to a wide range of information in the universities and challenged to learn by thinking for themselves. This learned ability as well as a well ranging knowledge gives the statesman confidence in knowing what is necessary, best, and how best to achieve it.

Along with this is liberal education’s ability to enhance one’s prudence. A statesman must be able to judge well the course and the actions necessary to achieve the goals set for the nation. Prudent judgment, as Aristotle believes, is the true mark of the statesman. Critical thinking, which is cultivated by the liberal education, allows the statesman to know the best and most virtuous action in a plethora of situations and circumstances, thus enhancing his prudence and decision making. Furthermore, Aristotle’s treatment of the “Golden Mean” in his Ethics speaks to the need for statesmen to calibrate the necessary action required based upon the particular limitations, available possibilities of outcomes, and the desired purpose. Finding this average takes training—an individual repeatedly seeing similar situations and acting correctly each time, thus calibrating his responses to the situation until it becomes habit.
Crucial to a statesman is having an understanding of the general direction laid out by a generally educated public and to knowing the greatest way to achieve that aim. The very best type of statesman, however, understands not only the actions necessary to achieve the general goals, but understands further what it is the nation should aim towards as well. This can be seen candidly in Lincoln’s preservation of a union in times of great divisiveness. He understood the general public was split on the direction the nation should take, but he understood the moral evil of slavery. His prudence allowed him to decide what it was the nation needed, and then set forth policies and actions to obtain it. It was not simply enough for the president to enact policies without understanding the best direction for the country. Prudent judgment is responsible for this not, as Wilson and the Progressives would attest, his understanding of the historical spirit or the spirit of the people. This prudence comes from a truly liberal education where serious thought is devoted to the ends of a just political community and an ability to calibrate the means to an end given particular circumstances is nurtured.

Jefferson, though championing popular education and the power of the people, still believed in prudent leadership of the most learned. This implies that leaders were superior in some respect to the people, largely as a consequence of their advanced education. Also, the universities, reserved for the greatest minds, made them capable of gaining understanding and knowledge from a proper liberal education rather than deferring to the incomplete understanding of the masses. Thus a vital aim of the cultivation of leaders through education is to instill within them a self-understanding of their dependence on checking and even correcting the “less wise majority of their fellow citizens.” The Progressives argue on the contrary, that there is a general consensus of the whole public which must be discerned and shaped. This, they argue is a
purpose of liberal education, not using constitutional authority to guide and check the passions of the people.

The Founders argue that the liberal education of a statesman is important because a crucial component of statesmanship is education itself. By this, it is meant that the statesman must be an educator. As discussed in the previous chapter, it is necessary for the president to guide and show the people their best interests when they are more adept at settling for lower or short-term interests. Having a greater general knowledge, which creates confidence along with the virtue of prudence in decision making, equips the statesman to be an educator of the masses, much like the philosophers believed they themselves to be educators of the masses to which they wrote. This advanced liberal education creates a sense of elitism or inequality, but it is one that is necessary and good for the people. It provides a sense of deference as well as submission and respect for authority which is critical in a democracy, both for order, and to ensure the leaders can carry out the policies they know necessary for a healthy community.

Finally, a reason for the cultivation of statesmen through liberal education is precisely to enlighten them. A liberal education aids in the instruction of the gentleman. Reading the greatest works spurs one on to seek and cultivate virtue—a staple of the statesman. Being properly trained by such an education helps to diminish natural vices and replace them with manners and virtue. A liberal education cultivates the mind not only intellectually with knowledge of many subjects such as geometry, art, or political theory, but cultivates one’s mind socially and morally because it allows for an individual to learn the best course of action for any situation, allowing him to act truly and rightly; this also helps to develop self-control which is necessary to diminish one’s passions and vices. The encouragement and cultivation of virtues is not a consequence of liberal education for the Progressives. Their liberal education focuses on
the ability to interpret a public will and the historical spirit of the times—which are concepts rooted in modern German philosophy not in any transcending classic virtue. A differing link between statesmanship and liberal education, results in new roles for the progressive president.

The diminishing of vices puts the statesman in a place superior to the general public who is filled with fickle lusts due to a less complete understanding of themselves. It is precisely because of this difference that statesmen are fit for the office of the executive. They have gained a proper knowledge and have attained virtuous attributes which allow them to check and suppress the vices of the masses.

Though Jefferson was the major contributor to the promotion of public education, other Founding Fathers understood the need for education of both the masses and those who had the capacity to lead. Hamilton believed that liberty would be found in adherence to the law. He writes, “A sacred respect for the constitutional law is the vital principle, the sustaining energy of a free government.” 62 He believed it to be so crucial to educate public officials and cultivate statesmen who were responsible for writing or carrying out the laws. He saw the statesman as a check on the majority. This is why the office of the president, as he describes it in *The Federalist* is such a strong unilateral position. Its purpose is to check the House of Representatives the institution closest to the people. However, he still believed governmental power was vested in the people as can be seen in his reasons against the Bill of Rights:

They have no application to constitutions professedly founded upon the power of the people and executed by their immediate representatives and servants…the people surrender nothing; and as they retain everything they have no need of particular reservations. 63
Hamilton clearly believed the government was of the people who entrusted statesmen to govern in their best interest. The president must be wise to discern the prudent action and understand how to execute it properly. Likewise the people have to recognize their need for guidance; this comes from a basic civic education whereby they understand the need for representation by the few.

Hamilton believed in educating the masses to a similar degree as Jefferson. Bringing them to an understanding of their role and rights in the government, would lead them to defer to the statesman on the issues concerning specific actions necessary to achieve nation’s proper direction. Furthermore, he saw that this education resulted in a proper degree of adoration for those representatives and this honor would be that which attracted the brightest and wisest minds to pursue public service, particularly the presidency.

George Washington also understood the need for an educated citizenry that was instilled with an understanding of their rights, as well as the need for wise guidance. He addresses these in his First Annual Message to Congress.

[Knowledge] to the security of a free Constitution contributes in various ways: By convincing those who are entrusted with the public administration, that every valuable end of Government is best answered by the enlightened confidence of the people: and by teaching the people themselves to know and to value their own rights; to discern and provide against the invasions of them.64

Here again is echoed the importance of an education of the rulers as well as a crucial knowledge of politics for the masses who rule indirectly. All of these Founders, along with Benjamin Franklin, who Pangle says “led the way in articulating the character and curriculum of the new
American academy” believed in education for both the general public because a greater knowledge was the “surest basis of public happiness” and it created statesmen who were able to guide and check the majority to ensure sound direction and leadership without wavering in the midst of a less educated popular opinion.  

III. Virtue, Christianity, and Statesmen

Aristotle discusses three types of virtue in The Politics: intellectual, civic, and moral. The first two virtues can be found respectively in the two types of education the Founders hoped for in early America. The liberal education for the cultivation of the statesman is analogous to the intellectual virtue, the ability to think freely and critically about situations in order to arrive at a higher truth about the world. Civic virtue is thus cultivated by the other previous topic, civic education. With civic education, an individual receives an education about his own political system and importantly, his place within it. Knowing his rights and responsibilities prepares him to be a good citizen. The Founders, constructing a new republican form of government in America understood the need to create citizens that would be “conducive to self-government.” According to Watson, this required an education which invoked patriotism and a love for the imperfect heroes of a citizen’s history.

This connection between civic education and love of country is relevant to the discussion at hand on the quality of statesmanship in the American regime because these examples and stories of the American’s identity display what is known to be good about the country. Having these examples of national heroes will usher in an awareness to youth of what is right and good; the imperfections referred to by Watson also give a realistic picture of America’s history which steers a youth in the correct direction to emulate some traits and avoid others. Recognizing what is the good from these positive examples lead an individual to also recognize the good in his
fellow man being able to elevate one over the rest. For America, this idea of what is necessary for the citizenry to elevate the statesman to a position of power deals not only with a civic virtue but a moral virtue as well.

Aristotle explains that while civic virtue is necessary for the life of a regime because the sense of belonging and love is crucial for self-sacrifice for the common good, what is preferred is a moral virtue which involves a standard of justice. This standard of justice makes the citizen more willing to sacrifice for the nation to which he belongs not only because he is tied to his country but also because he understands that his country is good and worthy of his sacrifice.

How one recognizes the good or the reason why the country is good relies on a firm moral foundation for the American Founders. Though there has always been debate on whether the Founders were Christians or simply deists, their writings do prove them to be moralists who believed in a standard form of justice. Further, this ability to recognize what is good or right impresses the question of the importance of religion for a good republican citizen the Founders hoped to cultivate.

Jefferson is known as the father of the wall of separation between Church and State. Heavily influenced by the Enlightenment, he was of the mind that religion was a personal conviction between man and the Creator, which could not be coerced by the state without damaging both political life and religion. This idea was held by multiple Founders particularly George Washington and was derived in large part from Locke’s *Letter on Toleration*.

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XIV For examples, one can look to *The Federalist Papers* particularly #2; correspondence between John Adams and Abigail Adams or John Adams and Thomas Jefferson; the speeches of George Washington are littered with references to the Almighty leading America to do what is right.
Another reason for this separation for Jefferson particularly, was his fear of fanaticism within religious sects and the impact these groups may have on politics. The religious freedom of the people was a natural right to the Founders and was articulated expressly in the First Amendment. The wall of separation made religion a personal conviction for Americans. This personal nature led to a privatization of one’s religious beliefs as not to interfere with the public sphere.\textsuperscript{xv}

Though Jefferson may have been fearful of religious fanaticism and zeal, he understood the importance of morality for the political community. As Aristotle noted, there is a need for civic virtue, or patriotism as well as a deeper rooted moral virtue. For Jefferson, Christianity created a great moral standard through the teachings of Jesus which would be useful to cultivating mindful and reverent citizens. However, the Christian religion also brought with it the assertion of the deity of Jesus and a morality which stemmed from divinity and revelation rather than reason. Jefferson hoped to separate the Christian moral codes and the powerful perception of divinity associated with them. This resulted in the “Jefferson Bible” a revised copy of the Holy Bible to show that Christianity and the Enlightenment were compatible.\textsuperscript{67} Thomas Pangle points out that Jefferson expected the Unitarian sect of Christianity to emerge as the greatest form of the religion; for it was the Unitarian sect which most closely resembled this marriage of revelation and reason Jefferson felt would be necessary.\textsuperscript{68}

Jefferson’s understanding was that if one were able to separate the religious aspects of Christianity such as the idea that Jesus taught a virtuous way of living because he was in fact God, from the morals he espoused, the result would be a docile religion of moral codes deprived

\textsuperscript{xv} This is most certainly the ideas of Jefferson and Madison who were more greatly impacted by the Enlightenment. Founders such as Washington and Adams believed that religious and civic life could never fully be separated.
of the passion and fervor that can problems, for the state and for others, in the political community. This would also make Christianity a private religion. However, secularizing Christianity for the sake of moral obedient citizens may have unforeseen consequences for the political community.

Aristotle held the position that both civic and moral virtues were necessary in a thriving political community. Civic virtue for Aristotle could be characterized as obedience merely driven by a love for country, but moral virtue explains to the civic minded the reasons why their sacrifice and obedience are right. With this knowledge, the individual has a greater sense of duty because he believes his duties are justified, even commanded from deeper theological teachings. Individuals must have a deep understanding of why they adhere to the moral teachings, which reaches beyond the knowledge and practice of the teachings themselves. Without a firm foundation, citizens eventually begin to question these morals and risk becoming defiant. Thus, the understanding behind the moral commandments of the Christian religion is necessary if the ethics of the religion are to be sustained.

The secularization of the Christian religion Jefferson anticipated has occurred to a large extent today as religion and politics have become more democratized. In his book on the subject, Alan Wolfe describes the nature of religion today as private to the point of being relativistic due to greater political democratization and with it, the spread of individualism. This in turn relieves adherents of any faith of a great moral fervor in their convictions weakening the dangers of religious fanaticism. This leaves American citizens with a moral influence of Christian principles, which can still lead to the elevation of a suitable statesman to the office of the presidency.
The fruits or lessons which Christianity instills in an individual can be compiled into three major teachings: love for thy neighbor, service, and humility. These tenants of Christianity are all relevant to the cultivation of a good republican citizen. All of these lessons counter selfishness and the desire to withdraw from community and become self-reliant.

A love and respect for a neighbor who is different allows you to be involved in the political community where you must take into account not only your own needs and desires but also those of your neighbor. The service aspect of Christianity, again teaches self-sacrifice, putting others above oneself; this teaching is thus conducive to public service and working for the common good. This teaching should bring people into the public sphere and into public office for the correct reasons.

These two lessons point to humility which is necessary in order to elevate a fellow man to a position of power and prestige rather than depend fully on one’s own understanding or abilities. It has been previously discussed that the Founders believed in an inequality of ability which was displayed in the education of statesmen. For a general public to recognize this inequality as necessary for republican government to work, humility must be taught. The recognition of authority or that one is more capable at a task than one’s self allows for representative government to flourish. The indirectness of the American republic requires the masses to be humble and to recognize the ultimate benefits of elevating those who are best suited for government to their rightful place. Christian principles of love and respect, service and sacrifice, and humility all contribute to this necessity.

It seems there has always been a link between America’s moral virtues and the teachings of Christianity. At its start, America was a nation of Christian people. Likewise, Samuel
Huntington recounts how Christianity, more or less made itself part of the American identity. He states at points in its history America created a “civil religion” in which Americans have brought together the secular and religious spheres “to marry God and country,” and that America adopted the moral code of the Christian religion.

This notion of a Supreme Being guiding the American nation allows for reverence to both God and country without great conflict in America. If and when, however, this recognition of God being the endower of righteous morality erodes, then the fruits needed for good republican citizens will begin to fade as well. When American morality and civic duty are separated from the recognition and blessings of the Almighty, morality falls into the hands of a fickle and selfish people who can redefine morality to fit passions that are constantly changing. For instance, the relativistic culture of America today points to this danger. The dangers of relativism in American culture, particularly its effects on the political community will be a topic of chapter 4. Along with all the reasons put forth in this section as to the importance of teaching moral education, guarding against a relativist view of love, respect, and humility is a necessary reason that an objective moral education continue to be taught.

IV. The Importance of Education to Presidential Selection

When the Founders convened to construct the Constitution and the new form of government, one question to be discussed was the method to be used to select the president. James Wilson at the convention in 1787 stated, “[t]his convention, Sir, was perplexed with no part of this plan so much as with the mode of selecting the president.” Three major options were seriously discussed including popular election, selection by Congress, and selection by state legislatures.
Direct popular election was decided against due to the general public’s lack of sufficient knowledge about presidential candidates. The caliber of the president needed to be extremely high; the president was indeed to be a statesman as has been discussed here, and it has been further shown the Founders believed the masses to be unable to accurately discern and choose the appropriate candidate because of their lack of knowledge ability to control their fickle passions. Selection by Congress was also voted down because of the separation of powers concept; the close involvement of one institution in the creation of another could compromise the independence of the executive which Hamilton argues in Federalist 69 is a crucial aspect of the executive. Finally, election by the state legislatures was also not selected as the best method because of the fear that the President would be obligated to favor the majority of the states who won him the election. This would be unjust and would undermine the voting power of the minorities who voted for the losing candidate whether the minority be a collection of individuals or a collection of states.

What was finally presented and adopted at the convention was the Electoral College system which entailed either the election or appointment of independent electors from each state legislature who would be knowledgeable of the characters of the candidates as well as political policies. These special electors would then independently cast votes for who they saw as the most qualified candidate for the presidency. The features of this system were its insulation from popular opinion as well as from the desires of state politicians. At the same time, it was seen as a fair method because each state had a certain number of electors equal to the number of Senators and Congressmen, the general public’s voice was heard in its electing of its state legislature, and the independence of these electors and its transient nature ensured for no particular sect to influence the election also suppressing the fear of presidential obligation to particular groups.
The greatest feature of this system which Hamilton supports and argues for in *Federalist* 68 is that it allows for the greatest possibility that a statesman, as defined by the Founders, is chosen. Hamilton writes, “A small number of persons selected by their fellow citizens from the general mass will be most likely to possess the information and discernment requisite to such complicated investigations.” The Founders understood the gravity of the executive office and the great power to be vested in one man. They were also skeptical of giving one man great power hence the extensive checks on presidential power afforded by the Constitutional framework. However, many argued the necessity of a single executive and were sure to point out the need for great character. “It was desirable that the sense of the people should operate in the choice of the person to whom so important a trust was to be confided.” This was to be accomplished, according to Hamilton by the temporary committee of electors with a single purpose, instead of an established institution. This section of Federalist #68 spoke to the need for insulation afforded by the Electoral College.

Hamilton’s argument for the Electoral College also asserted that the special electors would “possess the information and discernment requisite” to select the best candidate. The direct popular election of the president was defeated because the general public lacked the necessary knowledge to ensure the type of person defined throughout this work would be chosen. This is why Hamilton says,

> It was equally desirable that the immediate election should be made by men most capable of analyzing the qualities adapted to the station, and acting under circumstances favorable to deliberation, and to a judicious combination of all the reasons and inducements which were proper to govern their choice.

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[xvi] Hamilton lays out the most compelling argument in Federalist # 67, 68,69

[xvii] Popular selection was also defeated because of a practical concern: states with stricter voting requirements would have less say.
This required the electors to be a particular type of person as well. An elector then was a person who likely had a liberal education who knew how to analyze the requirements necessary for a president, a correct understanding of the purpose of the office, and a keen knowledge of the personal character of the candidates themselves to ensure that a statesman was to be chosen instead of a passionate demagogue.

With all of these things being required of an elector, and the method used for selection, it is clear that the best result could not have come from any of the other options. For instance, had the president been decided by a direct popular election, the winner would likely be the candidate who was most attractive to the public, the one who was greatest orator, or the one with whom the people most identified and felt comfortable representing them. The populace may not know the correct and best course for the nation. It is also clear the Founders never intended for a direct popular vote for president. This is, however, precisely for what Progressives such as Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt advocated in describing a statesman who had popular support and oratory skill to gain the trust of the people in order to lead them.

The second option which was denied in the convention was that of the Congress electing the president. Aside from the obvious lack of independence of the executive branch, this option would have bred corruption among the politicians in the House and Senate. The representatives of the House were to be loyal to the citizens of their districts, and would likely vote to appease them, thus giving the people an indirect selection of the president; and the Senators were to be chosen by state legislatures which then would mean that interests of the states largely influenced presidential selection. Although it is conceded that there is a possibility of a rational and weighty deliberation of a candidate’s merit, it is less likely to be so with this method either. A
proposed solution to this scenario can be seen in the Progressives’ push for the direct election of senators. This way both houses are elected by the general public, however that only exacerbates the troubles. Making both houses closer to the people widens the possibility of demagoguery and tyranny, as Madison feared.

The third major option rejected is closely tied to why selection by Congress would not be best suited. The politics which run the state legislatures would greatly influence presidential selection. Furthermore, obligations of the president would be to the interests and desires of the victorious states. This, like a Congressional selection, limits the president’s national autonomy to govern expediently and singularly.

V. Conclusion:

The office of the president is the most unique office in the American regime. It vests in its occupant, the greatest singular power of all of the branches. The man’s character, that is to say his self-control, his patriotism, and his intellect all must be of a particular caliber to serve effectively in this high office. This statesman is cultivated and elevated by the receipt of a liberal education allowing him to develop prudential reasoning and decision making, including ethical and political understanding. At the same time, he is to serve with confidence and educate the public of the proper course for the common good as opposed to the partial good of certain groups.

The masses likewise, must have an understanding of their own civic responsibility and the extent of their powers to ensure the selection of a proper candidate by recognizing tyranny and being vigilant against it. Furthermore, the importance of religion in America teaches love and respect for one another, service, and humility which all help the selfish and fickle public to
elevate a man greater than most to such a high office. Finally, the Founders out of an understanding of the nature of a general public which was not as enlightened and capable to make such a decision as who could serve as president, formulated an insulated impartial system of temporary, intelligent, and knowledgeable people to select the president.

In the next chapter the shift in the definition of presidential statesmanship and the influence of the Progressive movement in the early 20th century is examined. Politicians such as Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson develop a new political philosophy based on German political thought and the expansion of government. These lead to the rise of a new type of statesman, known as a popular leader who is guided by an elitist education and closely tied to public opinion. Further, there is less emphasis on understanding a nation’s history or the teachings of Christianity to inculcate civic and moral virtue, but rather a reliance on the path of history to make way for proper progress of the human race.
Chapter 3: Progressivism and the Popular Leader

At the end of the 19th century, a shift occurred in the political climate and philosophy of the American regime. This shift was due to the political thought of the Progressive movement. Progressive thinking led to a new conception of the ends of government and a dramatic expansion of the means at the disposal of the state to advance the ends. This transformation is in many ways the consequence of a rejection of the political philosophy upon which the country was founded. It also redefined the idea of statesmanship into something the Founding generation feared. The role of the president shifted at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries from prudent statesmanship to popular leadership. This chapter looks to explain the reasons for the transformation as well as its consequences upon the American regime and the role of the president.

I. The Roots of Progressivism

The transformation in political thought and statesmanship is rooted in the Progressive movement and its ideology. The Progressives’ conception of the American regime starkly contrasts with founding principles. The Founders’ notion of human nature consisted of two parts. The first was that man was endowed by his creator to have inalienable rights and freedoms which defined him. These rights were inherent and could not be stripped by other individuals or by institutions such as a governing body. The Founding generation was nonetheless pessimistic in its assessment of man’s political nature which was seen as imperfect and easily swayed by passion and the desire for power. The former belief led the Founders to setup a government that was democratic letting the individuals who were equal with the same inalienable rights participate in the decisions of the governing body.
The American regime was rooted in the social contract theory attributed primarily to John Locke. The belief that all men are created equal, as Jefferson wrote in the *Declaration of Independence*, led to the formation of the democratic regime of America, a nation whereby individuals consented to be governed by the state through representation of the public will for the common good. The latter deficiencies in man’s nature made the Founders skeptical of a government run by imperfect men, to which Madison alludes in *Federalist* 51. This awareness of man’s nature resulted in a system of checks and balances and a separation of powers between three branches of government. Along with these measures, the government’s power was strictly defined and limited by law as a barrier against tyranny.

Though the Founding generation saw humans as having natural liberty and autonomy, they generally agreed upon a standard of happiness to be pursued by individuals. However, as opposed to ancient regimes and because of the belief in natural rights, the Founders saw the pursuit of happiness or the best life as a largely private endeavor not an aim of the state. This idea formed the view of statesmanship discussed previously in chapter one. A statesman was a disinterested individual of stature who was liberally educated and able to display prudence in decision making in order to check and guide the populace towards their true interests. An objective standard of living was the guide for the 18th century American statesman by which he judged his actions and checked and guided the people when necessary.

Progressive thought and those who led the Progressive Movement—Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, Herbert Croly, John Dewey, and Frank Goodnow—rejected much of the philosophy of the American founding, in particular its ideas of human nature and natural rights which transcended one’s own time, and the natural standard which also was transcendent of one’s own time. Progressive thinkers such as Wilson subscribed to a historical view of
philosophy which had its roots in both evolutionary theory and British thinkers, as well as the philosophy of Hegel. 79 These roots of progressive thought were found in the education received from a growing number of universities at the end of the 1800s. Professors of prominent American universities had studied in Germany, where they had learned of German philosophy and the historicist view. One such university was John Hopkins, the alma mater of Woodrow Wilson.

Historical philosophy was formed from the two aforementioned theories of evolution and Hegel’s historicism. Ronald Pestritto, a leading scholar of progressive thought explains how these two schools of thought are similar but contain slight differences and how they both influenced American Progressives, of particular importance for popular leadership, President Woodrow Wilson.

The historical view, in general, rejected the possibility of transcending the historical environment in order to grasp universal principles; instead, politics had to be guided by the spirit of the current age, and political change was to be grounded in the evolution from one historical spirit to the next. 80

This summary of the historical view is accurate and encapsulates both schools of thought which influenced the American Progressives. Evolutionary theory which also led to what is known as social Darwinism is a key component of historical philosophy for the Progressives, who see the state as a living organism which is always changing and adapting to the current environment.

This progressive principle of government being organic leads to another major criticism of the Founding generation’s political structure which will be taken up in greater detail in the subsequent section. Though it is used to indict the separation of powers doctrine of the constitution, it deserves some elaboration here to ensure an understanding of a primary element of historicism and progressivism. Wilson wrote that “governments are living things and operate
as organic wholes,” and that they “have their natural evolution” being “one thing in one age, another in another.” 81  He reiterates this point once again stating that

Government is not a machine but a living thing. It falls, not under the theory of the universe, but under the theory of organic life. It is accountable to Darwin, not to Newton. It is modified by its environment, necessitated by its tasks, shaped to its functions by the sheer pressures of life. 82

Here Wilson conveys what is central to progressive thought and its reliance upon history rather than abstract theory. He explains government as practical and realistic, not idealistic, although it is his faith in historical progress which has earned him the idealist label. This supposed pragmatism is a main component of progressive thought. Its thinkers praised the Founders as “practical statesman” while disagreeing vehemently with their abstract philosophies.

Along with the Darwinian notion that government was organic and biological, Progressives also believed states evolved along the similar lines of animals as was posited in evolutionary theory. This application of Darwinism to the government is seen more fully in Bagehot’s Physics and Politics. It is in this work where Bagehot uses biological terminology to explain the growth and demise of states—that states go through the process of natural selection much the same as do species. 83 “The best nations conquered the worst; by the possession of one advantage or another, the best competitor overcame the inferior competitor.” 84 This natural selection displays how history shapes societies and moves societies and governments forward; in essence, as superior societies conquer inferior ones the more primitive societies are erased and replaced by a more advanced civilization. Like in the theory of evolution, this natural selection is a slow, never ending process.

Although Darwin’s theory party shaped the progressive understanding of the workings of governments and cultures, it has grave moral consequences which cannot be attributed to the
Progressives. Their platform was committed to a government which lent opportunity to those who were oppressed by the privileged. Thus Progressives were more persuaded by Hegel’s historicism, which saw the evolutionary process as a consequence of history and having a specific end. This is a key component of historicism. Where evolution saw progression as a matter of fact—those who are best able to adapt are suited for survival, it does not suggest this change will ever have or reach a final purpose or goal. As mentioned before, the evolutionary process, whether biological or social is a slow, unending progression. This is where social Darwinism and historicism differ. Hegelian dialectic does understand that history drives societies and that greater, more advanced civilizations will conquer those which are more primitive, but Hegel asserts that this is necessary to bring about a particular goal—the eventual great and final political regime.

Hegel’s idea of a final and greatest political state is driven by his theory that through historical progress, freedom is inevitable. The conclusion he reaches is rooted in his belief that reason is the mover of history and that as reason is revealed, replacing old civilizations with newer, more reasoned ones; the newer civilizations will be freer as a result of greater reason. Hegel draws this out in his work *The Philosophy of History* which explains that at certain points in time cultures have been replaced causing a linear progression which is marked by greater amounts of freedom.

In *The Philosophy of History* Hegel explains that each period of history has its own identity or spirit, which is constructed by the historical environment and the peoples alive in that age. Similar to natural selection of the evolutionary theory, Hegel believes that superior spirits and peoples conquer more primitive less adaptable peoples and that this is accomplished through conflict. In his work, he coins this process of history as thesis and antithesis equals progress.\(^{85}\)
This is his way of saying when two opposite forces collide, the end result will always be that the greater of the two forces survives and pushes the world into a new epoch of history. Unlike Darwinism and biological natural selection, which is a never ending process, Hegel’s historicism assert that these conflicts which drive the world into a new phase of history are in fact driving the world towards its final state. This trajectory was fueled by the revealing of reason.

Hegel and Wilson saw that history was “both rational and powerful,” that reason was being revealed through history to one day fully culminate in the form of a political regime. Hegel saw each new state or epoch as a stepping stone towards the final end of history—where reason would be fully revealed on Earth through the state. Hegel believed the final political regime to be the constitutional monarchy of Germany when he wrote in 1837. 70 years of progress later, Wilson and the Progressives saw that the final state to be one of liberal democracy. This is crucial to understanding Wilson’s political thought, motives and actions as president; it also reflects the thoughts of the American Progressive movement altogether—that the liberal democratic state was the most advanced and free political regime possible.

This treatment of Hegelian historicism displays the conflict between Wilson’s progressive thought and the Lockean principles of the Founding. Locke wrote of man in a pre-political state of nature as free whereby Providence had endowed him with certain rights which were derived from his original condition of equality and liberty. These are most famously, the right of life, liberty, and property. By right of nature, he is entitled to a preservation of his own life which has dignity above all simply because he is a human being rather than an animal; he is entitled to a degree of freedom to live his life that nature has granted him. Man is rational and capable of making decisions for his own life. Finally in Locke’s state of nature, man has a right to property which Locke describes as anything an individual mixes his labor with, provided there
is plenty of equal quality left for the acquisition of others. Security of property is necessary both the full development of an individual as well as to ensure public peace.

The individualism of Locke is seen in the political thought of the Founders. The idea that man is an individual apart from all other men allows for Locke’s social contract theory: that to enter into political society, men consent to surrendering some of their freedom in order to be governed according to the group’s consent in pursuit of a common good, especially the preservation of life and liberty. This individualism stems from man’s inalienable, natural rights.

Hegel and American Progressives reject the notion of natural rights because if all men are endowed with freedoms and characteristics by nature, it would mean there is a transcending part of man which is grounded in nature rather than one’s own specific historical period. The basis of historicism is that one cannot transcend one’s own historical environment but acts only in accordance to what history provides, as opposed to acting by what nature affords. Locke’s theory is at odds with Hegel’s historicism because Locke sees mankind as naturally rational making a need for time to reveal reason gradually (thus creating “progress) unnecessary.

Another criticism of Lockean principles is that the state of nature which he creates in his treatise has “has no historical justification.” By this Goodnow means that there is no historical evidence of a state of nature ever existing, and thus was “not only a philosophical explanation of the organization of society; they were at the same time the result of the then existing social conditions.” This criticism of Locke is rooted in historicism; it proves for Goodnow, that Locke’s theory was a product of history and his own environment, that it was not a transcendent truism, but was brought on by the circumstances of the age and thought to be expedient and that
natural rights have never existed. At the same time, he points to using history as proof that this state of nature never occurred, thus showing that history is to be the guide or the measure used.

Wilson has a similar criticism of Locke’s state of nature which he puts forth in *The State*. His understanding of Locke’s state of nature and his critique of it is vital to his emphasis on democratization of the nation. It is necessary to quote him at length on this point:

[The state of nature] simply has no historical foundation. *Status* was the basis of primitive society: the individual counted for nothing; society-the family, the tribe-counted for everything. Government came, so to say, before the individual. There was, consequently, no place for contract, and yet this theory makes contract the first fact of social life. 89

Wilson continues asserting that “the only individuality was the individuality of the community as a whole.” 90 This notion of the community and its rights as opposed to the Lockean principle of individual rights surfaces often in the writings of the progressive thinkers, particularly in Wilson and Goodnow.

Goodnow offers another rejection to Locke’s individualism in that it is not inherently given by God or nature, but rather sees it as an invention of the times. He notes that Western Europe was changing the latter half of the 18th century through industrialization and colonization. Men recognized this change and saw it as an opportunity for financial advancement, but that the current political and economic tide laid restrictions upon “individual initiative.” Locke’s theory of private rights and individualism granted the justification to throw off these restrictions. 91 However, Goodnow concedes that it was this Lockean theory of human nature which most influenced the American Founders.

For Locke the goal of the political community was to secure, so far as possible, of the natural rights of the individual. This idea led the American Founders to create a limited
government in order to ensure individual freedoms and rights of the people. Locke and the
American Founders were devoted to the preservation of individual liberties, and security from
the intrusion of a governing body because of the held belief of natural rights of all men.
Pestritto, in his work on the Progressive Movement explains that progressive thought which
stemmed from historicism deemphasized Locke’s preservation of individual freedoms and
replaced it with the freedom of individuals to participate in the state. The reason for this was
that the Progressives saw the philosophy which drove the American Revolution and founding as
historically appropriate to advance freedom; as time progressed, however, they saw the ideals
erected in Locke’s name had erected a new threat to freedom.

As an age of industrialization moved from Europe to America in the late 19th and into the
20th centuries, the Progressives viewed the individualistic philosophy of Locke and the Founders,
as a danger to freedom. The notion of individual liberties safeguarded by the state led to
economic and social policies which advantaged the privileged and oppressed the many.
Theodore Roosevelt defined the “progressive” as someone who stood against the injustice bred
by a highly individualistic society. Progressives believed that the principles of the Founding
generation opened the door for the captains of industry and titans of finance who, because of
their earned power and prestige, were able to exploit and oppress the rest of society.
Progressives such as Roosevelt and Wilson saw it as their duty to move history forward through
means of progress to stymie this threat to freedom.

In Wilson’s writings, he explains that as time progresses individuals will “become
increasingly conscious of their freedom.” According to Wilson, this freedom of which people
have become increasingly aware is not, as Locke or the Founders thought, individual liberty but
rather a collective “freedom to direct the government.” Wilson saw the government as the
vehicle for historical progress. This makes Wilson and his statesmanship worth study. In seeing the dangers to freedom which had risen from the individualistic principles of the Founding, Wilson saw it fitting to make government responsive to societal ills in the name of progress.

Since the Progressives saw the democratic state as the state of ultimate freedom, they hoped to create greater direct access for the people to the government through the direct election of senators who, before the 20th century had been known as the elite, state-oriented body chosen by state legislatures. The 17th amendment, passed during Wilson’s administration, mandated the direct election of senators. Along with this, the progressive political platform advocated the direct nomination of presidential candidates to alleviate the assumed injustices of political party bosses, namely cronyism and nepotism. These stances on greater direct election gave the people the right and ability to have a greater say in their government, which for the Progressives translated into greater overall freedom.

The direct election of senators and the push for greater direct democracy in presidential selection was the starting point for the progressive mission to reform and fight the social injustices stemming from industrialization. The Progressives advocated changes to the nature of labor and factory work in American cities, calling for legislation for workers’ safety, including workers’ compensation and greater safety regulations of American industries. Further, they pushed for the passage of child labor laws, a minimum working wage, and a shorter work week to protect individuals from fatigue and injury. Progressives also wanted to allow for a more equitable distribution of America’s wealth, which was largely concentrated in the hands of the captains of industry and finance due to the rise of monopolies in American business.

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XVIII This was achieved during the administration of Lyndon Johnson as an initiative of his own progressive movement, The Great Society.
Progressives such as Wilson greatly affected several aspects of American life which would have remained untouched without the Progressive Movement.

These changes were unprecedented and required the expansion of government and its services. Under the Progressives, the executive Department of Labor was created to administer the newly won advancements and regulations of industry. The expansion of government was necessary and unproblematic for Wilson and Progressives because of the held belief that government was in fact the answer to societal problems, not the problem itself. Wilson grew the bureaucracy into what it is seen as today; this was natural given his understanding of public administration. Centralized administration was a practical solution to the new demands upon an expanded government and an efficient way to serve the people.

It has been said that Wilson saw the democratic state as the end of history. It was through the state then, that the spirit of the people and the will of the people would be actualized. For the Progressives, the state was the ultimate embodiment of the will of the people. In Hegel and later in Wilson and the Progressives, the rights of man were to allow for the public to direct the government rather than have an awareness of individual liberties. This was the idea behind an expansion of government in order to serve the general public and increase overall freedom in America.

With the rejection of Locke also came the redefinition of liberty. Liberty was not a static principle that could transcend all time for the Progressives because it was not rooted in nature, but contingent upon history. This meant that the notion of liberty was fluid, changing depending upon the circumstances and spirit of the particular people and historical period. Liberty was greatly defined by the historical context and the people were free to decide what liberty and
freedom was for themselves based upon the circumstances of the times. Progressives saw that the times of which they were apart required social action to bring about necessary change and appropriate liberty.

The new meanings of liberty, the purpose of government, and rights of the people are all a consequence of historicism; a notion that political regimes are organic entities constantly moving, either adapting and thriving or dying out allows for such fluidity of these different principles such as justice or freedom, making them not really principles at all. Thus, the changes in America’s circumstances such as the effects of the industrial revolution necessitated a profound response. This is the largest difference between the classical liberalism of Locke and the Founders and Hegel and the Progressives.

Historicism is the cause of the transformation of prudent statesmanship into popular leadership. Hegel provides a reason in the existence of the world-historical individual. It is this person whom Hegel sees as the instrument for the changing of history. Though he argues that there are certain individuals who begin the process of change, as well as others who promote change, he discusses in The Philosophy of History, an individual who brings the change from one epoch to another to completion, usually through a physical conflict. The world-historical individual encapsulates the spirit of the people and the time, his vision of who the people are and where society needs to go attracts the rest of society to follow him into the next stage of historical development. This portrait of a leader is the model for Woodrow Wilson’s popular leader.

\[xix\] As an example of these three types of individuals, Hegel describes how the Greek world progressed and eventually led to a new age. He cites Achilles as being the beginner of the Greek world, Socrates as being the promoter of reason and development, and finally Alexander the Great who physically conflicted and brought forth a new era and epoch in time. Alexander the Great was the final step for progression and is seen as a World-Historical-Individual for Hegel.
II. The Popular Leader

The transformation from prudent statesmanship to popular leadership begins with understanding the difference of the perception and structure of America’s government. Progressives held that the structure of the constitution restrained progress due to its system of checks and balances, separation of powers, and the enumeration of government powers. As noted, Progressives saw greater connection between the public and public officials to be a requisite of democracy and freedom. The structure of the Founders’ constitution made progress and change difficult and was largely undemocratic according to Progressives. However, the Founders’ view of human nature led to a rigid, deliberate structure of government found in the constitution, not to impede progress, as the Progressives believed, but to ensure responsible and rational representation of the citizenry.

Progressives rejected this rigid structure largely on the basis of a new conception of human nature, one which was more idealistic as well as more scientific. Progressive thought did not espouse the idea that people were too easily swayed by passion but that as history progressed and reason was greater revealed on earth, man would in turn become more enlightened or “conscious of his own freedom.” With this view that man progressed as time passed; the Progressives seemed to have a greater faith in the people than did a majority of the Founders.

The result of this new view of human nature was the desire to create a more direct relationship between the government and its people. Progressives often equated government to the body to display their rejection of checks and balances and the separation of powers. “No living thing can have its organs offset one another as checks, and live.” The Progressives held

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**Footnotes:**

96 This optimistic view of the citizenry may have been espoused in rhetoric, but evidence shows many progressive leaders to think rather lowly of the common people. I say “a majority of the Founders” because the writings of Thomas Jefferson seem to display a great faith in the people.
the purpose of government was to work as one for the public will of the entire citizenry. This purpose, they argued, could not be achieved under a mechanical model of government provided by the Founders because it demands “quick cooperation” among the branches. In fact orchestrating this cooperation was the duty of a good leader. “The whole art of statesmanship is the art of bringing the several parts of government into effective cooperation for the accomplishment of particular common objects.” Wilson displayed this leadership in his reform during his presidency, leading the way for Congress to pass new legislation, granting him the authority to expand the executive branch and create a more centralized administrative state all for the purpose of bringing social justice and more direct governance to the American regime. This was accomplished by breaking down the separation of powers structure of the constitution, allowing for the president to be the leader of the entire nation, a speaker for the people, and having Congress work together with the president to accomplish the public will.

The practical reasons for why the Founders’ view of human nature and the structure of the constitution were so problematic can be seen in the progressive idea of popular leadership. Woodrow Wilson was known for his perception of the presidential role as a popular leader, a party leader, and a singular representative of the common will of the people. Though progressivism is the collective ideology of many American thinkers, this section relies heavily upon Wilson’s views of the American presidency and his most important works on the subject.

Wilson saw the solution to the constitutional impediments of progress being breaking down the barriers between the president and the people by democratizing politics via more direct

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Wilson wrote two academic works on the nature of the president that are fundamental in understanding the progressive presidency. These are “The President of the United States” from *Constitutional Government of the United States* and *Leaders of Men*. 
elections, as well as democratizing the selection process of the president. A closer relationship between the people and the president was crucial for Wilson’s perception of popular leadership because it allowed for the actualization of four major components of progressive statesmanship: 1) best representing the will of the people, 2) interpreting both the times and the future along with the underlying common will of the nation, 3) educating the public of their common interest, and 4) using rhetoric to inform and guide the nation to adopt his vision of the future. These are four roles of the progressive statesman, also referred to here as the popular leader. Given these four components, progressive statesmanship can be defined as the ability to read and interpret the times and the underlying common will of the people whom one governs and to educate the public of their collective best interest, guiding the public towards the necessary vision of the future while using the means of the state to accomplish this vision.

A more direct relationship between the president and the people required a greater sense of unilateral power for the office holder. Unity and unilateral power helped eliminate the rigid constitutional limitations to which Wilson and other Progressives were opposed. Wilson begins by rooting the unitary nature of the president in history, that it has been a natural progression to come to rely on one leader to be the voice of the people. “It is merely the proof that our government is a living, organic thing which must…work out the synthesis of active parts which can only exist when leadership is lodged in some one man or a group of men,” and that “there can be no mistaking the fact that we have grown more and more inclined from generation to generation to look to the President as the unifying force of our complex system, the leader of…the nation.” 99 Again, this reflects a Hegelian influence on progressive thought. Progressivism rejects the constitutionalism of the Founders by asserting that people and governments are meant to evolve making a large transformation possible. This evolution of
America which allows for a unitary, powerful leader is carried out by a unified will of the people.

Progressive thought holds to the premise that there is a sense of national consensus or public will which speaks to a general unity of the people. Despite factious private interests of individuals, Progressives focus on the whole society as having some general and unified will. This is echoed by Pestritto as he understands the writings of Wilson. “In spite of conflicting special interests…there is a more fundamental unified will or spirit that is implicit.” The second role of the popular leader is to rightly interpret and discern this public will, but before this will can be discerned and conveyed to the people, the president must be seen as a single representative of this will. Wilson notes that “no one else represents the people as a whole, exercising a national choice.” The popular leader is also spoken of as the spokesman of the people, having gained their confidence and trust through his election.

The reason the progressive president is the best representative of the public will is in fact his unitary nature. Congress is an assembly of many men elected by several distinct regions and communities all looking to further special interests. The executive office consists of a single member whose duty is to lead a whole society. “He is the representative of no constituency, but of the whole people.” The role of the members of Congress is to represent the special interests of a specific and local constituency. It is a factious assembly by nature then, but the role of the president as unifier is to understand all of these special interests and glean from them a corporate will which is underlying. If, as the Progressives propose, there is a common public will beneath special interests, then a single man must be the representative of it because Congressional members are obliged to represent only portions of the nation.
The importance in the unitary nature of the president, like in most other instances of progressive thought is a shift from the understanding of the Founders. Alexander Hamilton writes of the characteristic of unity for the president but for different reasons than his predecessors. Hamilton acknowledges the factious nature of Congress and as a consequence notices that nothing of expedience can be achieved by it. He argues that in the executive, there must be a single voice in order for necessary actions to be taken quickly. He argues for unity and energy of the executive for several reasons:

Decision, activity, secrecy, and despatch will generally characterize the proceedings of one man in a much more eminent degree than the proceedings of any greater number; and in proportion as the number is increased, these qualities will be diminished.\textsuperscript{104}

We can draw a similarity between the reasons of unity and singularity between Hamilton and Wilson to be only that the disconnectedness of Congress leaves for nothing concrete to follow. Definite action cannot be embodied or carried out through the voices of many; there must be a single voice which is conducive to energy or action. Hamilton, however, is speaking of action as carrying out the powers of the president as granted in Article II of the constitution. Wilson’s progressive view is that unity and energy be used to convey the common spirit and will of the people politically and to use it as a guide to formulating policy. This analysis is supported in \textit{Constitutional Government of the United States}. “[The president] has become the…guide of the nation in political purpose, and therefore in legal action…and that the President is becoming more and more a political and less and less an executive officer.”\textsuperscript{105} Hamilton is speaking of the president as an executive officer, carrying out the duties ascribed to his office by the constitution, not his role in speaking to and for the will of the people.
The reason Hamilton does not discuss a presidential role of interpreting the public will is because this conception of presidential duty is the product of the progressive era and the transformation of statesmanship; Wilson and other Progressives largely invented the notion. Interpretation of the public will assumes that as people progress, becoming more rational, they create a common and coherent will for which direction they want the nation to head. An argument can be made that a possible reason for this is found in the examples of progressive movements in American history. One could argue that the event of the industrial revolution made a way for a people who were more capable of responsive action and social change which was required of them. Other eras of progressivism include the social changes and expansion of government which came as part of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal as a response to another large event, the Great Depression. Finally, a third wave of progressivism can be found in the middle of the 1960s during the Johnson administration which, it could be argued came only after the extended conservatism and economic commercialism of the 1950s.

Along with this, this period was a time of racial inequality resulting in the limitation of rights for a segment of the population. Progress, it seems, comes after a large event or particular period where oppression seems to be prevalent. Progressives understand this trend of the stagnation of freedom leading to the flowering of greater freedom as a historical progression made possible by the unfolding of reason in the world. In sum, it is only after periods of great difficulty that a people are prepared to act reasonably in response to the less developed and reasoned period which preceded them.

In all of these examples, greater waves of democracy resulted. Democracy after all, is the end state of history for the Progressive, so on this assumption the idea of a common will rests. It is in this reality that the popular leader is needed; he is a man out in front of the people
able to read the times and assess the course of history and way of the future. He is to interpret
the public will of the whole nation if he is to represent them. In a speech describing the popular
leader, Wilson puts it bluntly:

Leadership for the statesman, is interpretation. He must read the
common thought: he must test and calculate very circumspectly the
preparation of the nation for the next move for the progress in politics.¹⁰⁶

The skill of interpretation is necessary according to the Progressives because though the
people create a public will it is unbeknownst to them. It cannot be articulated by representatives
of Congress or clearly dictated in public opinion, but it is derived by the president from these
sources. This requires a skill of insight for the progressive statesman that allows for the correct
gleaning of the public will from a variety of seemingly incoherent and inchoate sources. Wilson
speaks of it in this way, “[insight] need only know what it is that lies waiting to be stirred in the
minds and purposes of groups and masses of men.”¹⁰⁷

There are, in fact, two parts to interpretation, the first already being explained as the
ability to read the course of history and find a common will from various sources of public
opinion and special interests. The second was what made the art of interpretation essential to
leadership. For Wilson, interpreting a public will allowed the popular leader to envision a path
for the future that no one else could see. It was then his duty to motivate his countrymen to
move along this path because it was the path he discerned that they desired but were incapable of
seeing it themselves first. A section of Leaders of Men displays both of the parts of the role of
interpretation for the popular leader:

[The] general sense of the community may wait to be aroused, and the
statesman must arouse it; it may be inchoate and vague, and the statesman
must formulate and make it explicit. But he cannot and should not, do
more. The forces of the public thought may be blind: he must lend them
sight; they may blunder, he must set them right. He can do something to
create such forces of opinion; but it is a creation of forms, not of substance…

From this it is clear that a quality of progressive statesmanship or leadership is to discern the underlying will and desire of an entire population and motivate the masses to follow the path it creates.

The role of the statesman as interpreter of a public will is distinguished from the classical view of statesmanship. Classical statesmanship was rooted in practical wisdom which led to prudent decision making. The statesman of the founding generation understood what the circumstances required of him and given the circumstances, he further understood the precise actions necessary to accomplish that which was required. The classical statesman acted because of a set of fixed principles but applied such actions according to what was universally right and best for the people given the circumstances.

The Progressives saw this notion of the best possible good as outdated and unworkable. The only indicator of the best good had to come from the people’s “evolving spirit.” In theory, the view of classical statesmanship was unworkable because historicism does not allow for transcendent truths or notions of natural right to exist because these are not rooted in history but in nature. Practically, it was incorrect and unworkable because the universal right or best possible good is not discernible. The answer to this criticism is that for the Founders there was a sense of morality which bound men together. It seems that American traditions, established by the Founding generation, pair fairly well with the idea of a natural rights republic.

A sense of morality was also found in religion for some of the Founding generation. For John Adams the idea of God as righteous created a standard of justice to which men aspired and
looked to for guidance. In summary, answers of justice or righteousness were rooted in the nature of being, namely in God or Providence as the ultimate source of good.

Whether it was nature or God being the source of true morality and justice makes the good transcendent and immutable rather than historically contingent and defined by imperfect men. For the Founders, who saw men as imperfect in their nature, a historically contingent morality which is based on man’s imperfections would be no comparison for an eternal sense of justice found in Providence.

Progressivism’s notion of interpretation is perhaps more unworkable than a universal standard of righteousness. It raises two important questions which are left poorly answered by the Progressives themselves. Wilson lays out his vision for the roles of the popular leader in fanciful language but with very few practical instructions on how to interpret a common will, discern an underlying desire from various parts of public opinion and special interest. This in itself is a criticism of a movement which found the impracticality of the Founders to be a major fault

Wilson says that a leader must have a keen sense of insight into the motives of masses of men which enable him to discern an underlying commonality but fails to explain how this quality is obtained. The popular leader is one who is capable of understanding groups of people rather than only individuals, so perhaps possessing the mind of a sociologist rather than psychologist makes a statesman. Wilson puts it this way, “the leader displays a sagacity and an insight in the handling of men in mass” for “men in the mass differ from men as individuals.”110 This ability allows the popular leader to move an entire group of people rather than a few individuals thus making his effect on the entire populace greater, allowing for the progress of the many. The
popular leader understands the common will which is the sentiment of the group rather than the individual so being able to handle “men in mass” allows this leader to interpret, state the public will and relay to the people what is necessary to achieve it.

There is a distinct difference here between what makes a classical statesman as compared to a popular leader. In the opening chapter, it was said that a prudent statesman was marked by characteristics which could be learned and attained by some and not others, but the qualities necessary were known to the whole society, even if only a few were able to attain these. For example, a requisite of a president or statesman in Washington’s time was being a “gentleman,” which was to be cultivated by a particular form of education, as well as a keen understanding of societal expectations and circumstances. This term was well understood in the times of Washington although he captured its essence greater than most. Wilson’s popular leader has qualities which only the leader understands. This may be due to the education of American Progressives.

The Progressive Era was born in the universities which became inundated with German philosophy. Universities such as Johns Hopkins, at which Wilson was both a student and later president, educated most all of the prominent progressive minds of the early 20th century. John Dewey also received an education from Johns Hopkins, an early hub of progressive thought. Frank Goodnow, another prominent progressive thinker was educated at Columbia University as well as Humboldt University of Berlin in the 1880s and served as President of John Hopkins University from 1914 to 1929. Progressive presidents Theodore

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\[\text{Wilson’s professors included Richard T. Ely and Herbert Baxter Adams both of whom attended the same prestigious university in Germany and studied under Hegelian theorists.}\]
Roosevelt and Franklin Roosevelt both attended Harvard. In short, progressive thought which developed this elite popular leader originated from a very select, narrow group of individuals.

The education of these prominent Progressives is important because the writings of Wilson in particular seem to suggest that it is only an educated few who are capable of the qualities necessary to be leaders of men. The elitism which carries with it such a foul connotation in minds of Americans today has its roots in a select few educators and leaders all similarly educated from universities which espoused progressive philosophy.

The final two aspects of the progressive statesman are the leader’s role as an educator of the public and his use of rhetoric. Both of these aspects differ from the attributes or roles of the prudent statesman of the Founding. The role of the statesman as educator is a common role of both eras however; the education which occurs is vastly different.

The Progressives were distinguished in a crucial way from the men of the Founding due to the notion of a public spirit or will. As it has already been explained, the president was elected because he understood the underlying and common public will. Progressives argue he did this by being an exceptional man of foresight and discernment, being able to see the direction in which history was moving the nation and how best to steer the nation along the proper course of history.

The popular leader’s role as educator of the public is crucial because the progressive statesman is distinguished from the rest of the public because he alone has the proper skills of foresight, knowledge, and discernment to interpret the public will; so it is he alone who must educate the people as to what the common will is, as well as the direction in which the nation is headed.
The statesman of the Founding generation also had to educate the public of their true interests but never conceived of a common public will which ultimately unified the entire populace. In fact, their notions of human nature defined man as self-interested and fickle. Instead of relaying a common unified will to the people, statesmen such as George Washington enlightened and educated the masses as to their rights and responsibilities as citizens, making them aware of their own role in government, while at the same time encouraging that people to achieve civic and moral virtue. Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson, all writers on public and moral education, never saw it a duty of government to find a common will among all people and convince or educate the populace of it. The role as educator for a statesman was thus far more practical in application—this is seen heavily in Jefferson’s educational plan which was laid out in detail in chapter two.

The progressive statesman’s role as an educator of the public as to their common will was largely achieved by the fourth aspect of the progressive statesman—the use of rhetoric. It was often times presidential rhetoric that was used to convey as well as to persuade the public that the interpretation of a public will by the president was in fact a common public will for all to follow. It was only upon this agreement between the public and the statesman which could accomplish what it hoped to accomplish.

It is common knowledge that the ability of public speaking and politics go hand in hand. There is a common notion that politics and the art of oratory are synonymous in some respect—statesmen and politicians must be able to argue positions and make these arguments convincing. Progressives were known for their use of popular rhetoric in their speeches. It was a tool they employed to convey their plans for the nation and to persuade the public to follow them.
Rhetoric is used by the popular leader in order to convince the public of their common will. As previously stated, this is necessary because of faction at the surface where no individual can see a common ground or will except for the popular leader; further, since this will is not evident to the masses, it is the role of the president to persuade the public of their own common will. This fact has been commented on in the literature concerning presidential rhetoric.\textsuperscript{113} However, the greatest evidence for the importance of this aspect of the progressive leader can be found in the work of Wilson, who describes persuasion as “creeping into the confidence of those you would lead.”\textsuperscript{114} He is saying this is how persuasion is accomplished, by gaining the confidence of others by what you say. He says people can be swayed because words and information find easy “entrance into their minds.” He believes that a great rhetorician will be able to “possess the hearts” of his listeners, a trait he attributes to Burke.\textsuperscript{115}

Wilson seems to attribute the success of conveying messages to the people to great oratory skill, in particular how the message is presented. “Style has of course had a great deal to do with such effects in popular oratory.” He goes on to say that battles are won by specific and deliberate action and equates this to “oratorical battles” as well. Messages must be loud and clear and “the popular orator must be satisfying to the eye and the ear.”\textsuperscript{116} This last quote speaks heavily to the importance of presentation of rhetoric not only its content. Upon reading Wilson’s leadership doctrine and his use and explanation of the necessity of rhetoric, he can be seen as a demagogue—the type of flamboyant popular leader whom Hamilton and the Founders feared, and who they hoped to keep away from positions of power.

The popular rhetoric of the Progressives served to persuade and sway the minds and sentiments of the entire populace in order to secure their support and votes, as well as persuade them of their own common will. By Hamilton’s definition of demagogues as seen in the
Federalist Papers, the argument is made here that Wilson in particular fits into his definition. Wilson himself was aware of this possibility, as has been pointed out by scholars such as Ceaser and Pestritto. Perhaps the reason this claim is made is because Wilson in Leaders of Men defends his view of popular leadership against that of a traditional demagogue, attempting to clarify his position and distance himself from this harmful term.

For Wilson, the progressive statesman differs from a demagogue because although they both employ rhetoric, a demagogue, according to Wilson is one who uses rhetoric to forward his own agenda and further his power and control. His words are hollow and invoked for pure show so the people will blindly follow him and his own wishes. Wilson contends the progressive leader does no such thing; he reads the public mood and the common will of the people and uses it to guide policy. For Wilson these are different because the policies put forth in the rhetoric of a popular leader are derived by this public mood or will. Wilson also contends that the demagogue does not listen to public opinion as the guide, therefore not deriving his power from the will of the people but the popular leader does. From this, we can understand that for Progressives, rhetoric is a tool to persuade and show the people what their public will is. It is the duty of the leader to lead by convincing the masses of their underlying will so they will allow the state to accomplish this agenda through policy.

Though these differences put forth by Wilson are noted, his argument is not convincing. In describing the Founders’ demagogue, Ceaser points to some of the same traits that Wilson believes are necessary for a popular leader: he is close to the people, a “man of the people.” Also, the fact that Wilson himself acknowledges the great need for oratory arts seems to align with the use of the “popular arts” as described by Hamilton when describing the skill of a

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See Chapter Two: Cultivating the Statesman and see Federalist # 1, 68, 69, 85
demagogue. The only difference according to Wilson is in the reason for the popular arts. Wilson believes rhetorical speech and oratory skill are useful and necessary when in the service of persuading the public of their own good but dangerous when trying to further one’s selfish ambition or gain. However, the qualities of both the demagogue and the popular leader are eerily similar. What is more, Wilson’s clarification as to the reasons for the rhetorical speech is difficult to prove: there is no way to know if the vision the popular leader persuades the people to adopt is truly derived from their underlying will, or simply his own will and course.

I have already shown a problem of progressive leadership to be the progressive leader’s ability to discern and find the underlying public will, and there is a similar problem in getting the public to adopt the president’s vision for the common will. Simply put, it seems the progressive leader is the only person able to interpret the times and the collective will of the people making him alone who must persuade them of their best interest. The problem and question lies in how it is proven he is correct in his assessment of this will. It is possible that his vision and the public will he discerns are incorrect, or worse, simply his own intentions and desires for the nation. Although he supposedly can discern and see the course for the nation, it is too difficult to say this public will and national course are realistic or if this tenant of progressive leadership is but a way to promote one’s own political agenda.

III. Conclusion:

The shift in statesmanship which occurred on account of the progressive political philosophy induced profound changes to the nature of the federal government and its public officials. With Wilson calling for less separation between the branches of government, an
expanded executive office, as well as a larger centralized administrative state, the need for the emergence of a new type of statesman is evident.

Furthermore, anytime there is a large shift in the political structure of a regime, the nature of the citizenry must shift to accommodate and support the broad changes. Wilson’s new statesmanship required a president who was closer to the people than ever before. Also, his changes to fight social injustice and give more of the general public back their sovereignty required a new type of citizenry—one who rejected the authoritative and rigid structure from the Founding. Wilson’s popular leadership required a citizenry who gravitated towards an emotive, powerful speaker, who saw it as their right to direct government and demand of their government what they desired. Like the Founders, the Progressives understood the importance of an education for the democratic citizen in order to usher in any changes, or simply to gain the results necessary for proper government.

For the Founders, education was aimed at teaching citizens their rights, the limitations of government—which bred awareness of government intrusion upon those rights, as well as their responsibilities to their community—loving their neighbors, service, and humility. These were necessary in order to have a robust local government which was required without an expansive federal government to which to look.

The Progressives used an educational philosophy which helped to serve Wilson’s vision of government and statesmanship. As the next chapter will discuss, John Dewey’s progressive educational philosophy borrows much from German and British utilitarian thought and emphasizes the individual pursuing the life he deemed as best. At the same time, Dewey’s
philosophy contains an aspect of social awareness and community which he attempts to marry with the development of the individual.
Chapter 4: The Link Between Wilson and Dewey: the Impact of Progressive Education

The educational philosophy of the Progressives is linked to their political philosophy and view of statesmanship, and it helps to serve the progressive vision for the nation. In examining this link and the role of education for the Progressives, it is necessary to discuss two facets of progressive education: 1) the proper curriculum for a popular leader and 2) the components and consequences of Dewey’s philosophy of progressive education. We find that the cultivation of a popular leader requires a similar form of education as the one used at the time of the Founding but with different intentions and end goal. The public education philosophy put forth by Progressives was necessary to achieve the ends of government sought by progressive leaders. It served the progressive purpose of breaking down the moral authority order of the past education system which instilled civic virtue. Further it worked in tandem with the idea that the government’s role was to provide its citizens the tools to self-actualize. The result of this new pedagogic approach is a citizenry with a much different expectation of government than the one envisioned by the Founding generation—an expectation that the government is to assist in providing citizens with the tools necessary to reach their highest individual potentials.

I. Wilson’s Liberal Education

Woodrow Wilson was very well educated prior to winning the bid for president in the election of 1912. In fact, he is the only president previously to have been a political scientist one who contributed to the academic literature in political science as well as the field of as well as public administration, which he helped to establish. Aside from this he was educated at Johns Hopkins University where he was introduced to the very influential German philosophy. He also served in higher education administration as president of Princeton University for a short period.
It was Wilson’s education that led him to shape his progressive political philosophy and to create the model of popular leadership as president. His education acquainted him with historicism and the public spirit. He believed it cultivated in him the ability to discern the times, discover the underlying common will of the American people and prepared him to move government in the proper direction as president. These qualities were essential for popular leadership and could be attained by a liberal education.\textsuperscript{119} This liberal education, according to Wilson was to teach students the historical spirit which thus enables them to be able to adjust government according to it.\textsuperscript{120}

Wilson was a major proponent of teaching history and literature—the two subjects which best helped one understand the historical spirit, or the movement of history, and the common will of a people. Of the importance of history to this end he says, “[history] is the record of the public spirit” and historical facts are the keys to discovering the “impulses that underlie government, all achievement, all art and all literature, as well as statesmanship.”\textsuperscript{121} This passage implies that learning the history of a particular time shows one its impact—its relevance and movement through time in order to bring about current situations. Simultaneously, learning of a particular time can illuminate the deficiencies of one’s own time, which then allows the progressive leader to know what ills need be addressed to enable progress. Therefore, when confronted with particular current situations, an education in history prepares the popular leader for knowing what is required of him and the government he directs. As a part of a broad liberal education, history gives the popular leader a “progressive prudence” in which his knowledge of history allows him to understand how to govern in his own time, and how to push the people forward.
This understanding of history is coupled with a liberal study of literature. In his work, “University Education and Citizenship” Wilson shows how literature achieves the goal of identifying the public spirit. Scholars such as Ronald Pestritto explain that for Wilson, the study of English literature “captures the full historical spirit and development of the English race.”\textsuperscript{122} The study of literature allows for a historical interpretation of a people’s culture, economics and politics. According to Edmund Wilson:

\begin{quote}
The experience of mankind on the earth is always changing as man develops and has to deal with new combinations of elements; and the writer who is to be anything more than an echo of his predecessors must always find expression for something which has never yet been expressed, must master a new set of phenomena which has never yet been mastered.\textsuperscript{123}
\end{quote}

The historical importance of literature explains that it is the writer who is responsible for displaying the feelings of the times and recording it. In short literature traces the national development of a people by portraying where they have been, where they are, and where they are going. Just as in historical fact Wilson saw a record of the public spirit it seems that in many ways; he understood literature to be a record of the development of a people. The knowledge of a people contained in their literature, gives students of history access to the spirit of the people as well as their common will.

Bruce Thornton explains, as we have already seen in chapter two, that a liberal education creates a “critical consciousness” which allows one to think for himself in order to truly investigate and ultimately discover the truth. This is after all, a primary aim of a liberal education. A reason a liberal education made for the correct cultivation of a popular leader, Wilson hoped, was that this critical consciousness would lead an individual to investigate history, understand its evolutionary nature and come to reject the political thought and structure of the Founders. At the dawn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, progressives believed the study of history and
literature would show the primitive, unnecessary, aims and institutions of the original American regime.

Wilson openly criticized the American constitution for being an impediment to true progress; he also criticized the amount of reverence given to the document itself and the deification of its framers. He did not see national holidays and patriotism as an excuse to live in the past but as an opportunity to understand the beauty of the present and the future of the American regime. A liberal education such as the one Wilson received would free a student from a reverence for the past and would enlighten one’s thought as to the necessity of progress and how the regimented moral order at the Founding was an impediment to such progress. In summary, a liberal education such as the learning Wilson had received would lead a student to adopt the philosophy of historicism and critically evaluate the past in its light so that the student could rightly direct government to serve the public will. This was certainly the impact for Woodrow Wilson. This chapter raises the question of whether the education he received can truly be defined as a liberal education.

It is evident that Wilson’s particular liberal education, received while at Johns Hopkins, led him to adopt what is known as the Progressive philosophy. It is clear that upon introduction of Wilson to new German thought, he was convinced of a higher truth which led him to reject the previous understanding of human nature, political regimes, and the greatest political life. As evidenced by his experience, this is certainly a possible consequence of liberal education. Wilson’s view that liberal education would lead one to come to a greater realization of truth and to change the established order, similar to the charge brought against Socrates. The charge of corrupting the youth was a result of the reception of a Socratic education fueled by constant
inquiry into the established traditions and beliefs of Athenian culture leading citizens to question the established lessons and in some cases resist and rebel against them in light of a greater truth.

In receiving a broad liberal education, which Wilson believed to be a prerequisite for a popular leader, one is exposed to a variety of facts and knowledge. One is also led to rightly examine one’s own political regime, investigating the reasons for its creation, structure, practices, etc. With this also comes a discovery of its faults. A liberal education, however, also enlightens students to other political regimes leading to comparisons. By making these comparisons between one’s own political regime as well as others, it is possible for a student to conclude that his own political community is preferred while realizing its imperfection. A liberal education should teach one about his political community so he comes to understand the reasons intentions of its creators and the reasons for its structure. By this I mean that studying the design of the American constitution, how and why it is set up and written as it is, can lead to appreciation of the regime rather than a rejection of its principles. Thus it is possible that upon study of political regimes and political philosophies one comes to recognize that its own regime, though imperfect, is the best alternative. It follows from this that appreciating the regime while admitting its imperfection leads to a careful and gradual reformation of the political community, not a complete rejection and revision of government.

Wilson’s idea of the purpose of liberal education in cultivating the popular leadership differs from that of the Founding era. The use of liberal education for the Founders was to produce prudence which consists of understanding a particular situation as well as the proper action required to produce the greatest possible outcome. In order for a statesman to be prudent one had to have a certain perception of right and wrong actions, as well as a clear understanding of particular situations, and a knowledge of what particular action was required in order to
achieve the best result. The Founders saw importance in both theory and experience. The argument as discussed in the second chapter was that a liberal education introduced a statesman to a variety of situations and circumstances while also teaching the proper actions to use.

For Wilson, liberal education’s goal was to change one’s thinking, adopting a particular view of human nature, history, and society and in so doing allowing one to discern the proper actions required to adjust government to result in progress. This is progressive prudence; like classical prudence, it requires an understanding of the circumstances and the knowledge of what is the correct action to take, but its aim is to move government in a particular direction is influenced by public opinion; the goal is to lead the nation to a greater state of advancement discussed in chapter three.

The notion that Wilson received a truly liberal education is challenged here. It seems that Wilson and other educated Progressives received a particular type of education influenced heavily by German philosophy which is the driving force behind Wilson’s own educational philosophy. It was mentioned in the previous chapter that the progressive leaders were all similarly educated, indoctrinated with a particular brand of education which led them to begin the progressive movement in America. The education Wilson thus received created a dogmatic adherence to particular beliefs held by German and English thinkers such as Hegel, Kant, Bentham, and others. This is not truly a liberal education; it is liberal in the sense that its curriculum is extensive and broad, however with the heavy reliance and teaching of a particular set of beliefs, it is not truly liberating or free, but hopes to steer students towards a particular destination and use this pathway to direct their actions and thoughts.
II. Progressive Education

Wilson and Progressives believed it to be imperative to move society from having an individualistic, profit seeking, mentality to one which sought after gaining a sense of community or social awareness. They believed this to be necessary to combat the societal ills presented as a result of the industrial era of the late 19th and early 20th century. A major component of this agenda was the breakdown of the prevalent classical liberal ideology and laissez-faire economic policies as have been previously discussed. The progressive movement saw public education as a tool to be used in achieving this component. Progressive education positions itself against what is often referred to as “traditional” education.\textsuperscript{124}

Like Wilson’s hope that a liberal education would free students from the constraints of the established moral order; John Dewey, in many respects the father of progressive education, saw the traditionally liberal theory and the rigid traditional as a hindrance to social awareness and social intelligence. These, he argued were necessary for democracy. It was his understanding that the classical liberal and laissez-faire position of the Founders relied on the belief that freedom was inalienable and transcendent, or as Dewey phrases it, “a ready-made possession” meaning that man was inherently free by nature, predisposed to self-rule. He saw the progressive movement and progressive education specifically as a way to alter this idea about inherent freedom and to show that it is “something to be achieved.”\textsuperscript{125}

Dewey further saw it as the state’s duty, for the sake of democracy, to provide a public education which allowed individuals to develop their own unique identities by fostering a learning environment in which students could take inherent “powers” or “potentialities” and see them fully develop, thus making the child into a person who would be more fully aware of his
community, his self, and how the two were meant to interact. This led to an educational philosophy consisting largely of four components: 1) diversity, 2) social intelligence, 3) community, and 4) individuality. These components consist of two foundational elements of progressive education—the psychological and the communal—both of which align with Wilson’s political progressivism. These four components will be discussed in turn, followed by an overview of the link between progressive education and the democratization of the presidential selection process.

The promotion and respect of diversity is a theme of Dewey’s educational writings. This importance of diversity shows itself in two specific ways, the first being humanistic—the importance of every individual’s uniqueness and the second, the communal, meaning that diversity promotion among students leads them to be more aware of their social environment which is made up of other special and unique individuals just as themselves.

The humanistic aspect of diversity is pervasive in Dewey’s work. He saw it as the mission of progressive education to enhance and help students develop into who they were to become. The importance for Dewey that an individual develop his own personality based on his inherent powers is derived from Kant who explains this as the individual creating authentic character—character created by one’s own investigation, discovery and understanding. Utilitarian thinkers such as Mill also believed it crucial for the student to produce a “genuine personality.” Only if it is genuine—created by one’s own investigation and discovery of his powers—could the individual be able to self-actualize.

XXIV The first two components I have gathered largely from the work of the John Dewey Project on Progressive Education at the University of Vermont. Its article on Progressive Education quotes the first two components here as the components of progressive education, I have thus added two more based on my own understanding of Dewey’s work and the work of others.
For Dewey, the moral authority model of education hindered this creation of authenticity and genuine personality because students were not freed for self-discovery. Therefore, his progressive education saw it as the goal of the state to allow this self-actualization of an individual’s capacities to become fully recognized. To see the link between the state and progressive education, it is fitting to quote Dewey at some length.

But it is the business of the state to protect all forms and to promote all modes of human association in which the moral claims of the members of society are embodied and which serve as the means of voluntary self-realization. Its business is negatively to remove the obstacles that stand in the way of individuals coming to consciousness of themselves for what they are and to positively promote the cause of public education.126

Individuals have certain “powers” or abilities which need to be developed largely through education and social interaction in order to allow for an individual to blossom and to actualize inherent potential. When this occurs, it results in a freed intelligence resulting in one’s ability to create his genuine personality. Dewey further maintains, as does Wilson and other Progressives, that it is the duty of the state to foster this development process in order to enlighten students so they may become fully free.

Just as Wilson believed that freedom was largely positive in that one was free to participate fully in the political community, Dewey’s progressive educational model seems to help make that possible. The communal aspect of diversity is that in espousing the idea of individual uniqueness, Dewey also makes students aware of the uniqueness of others. This breeds toleration of the differences of individuals by making one aware that everyone is valued and that there is a community of individuals who are all to be respected for their abilities.

The second component of Dewey’s progressive education is social intelligence. Psychologist Nicholas Humphrey stated that social intelligence is what separates the human race
from other species. In short, it is the ability of man to respond well in complex social situations. It differs from the more dominantly known form of intelligence which regards problem-solving, or memorization of facts and the like. The comparison is made clearer with the example of an autistic child who lacks great social intelligence while still possibly displaying great ability to memorize information and solve problems. It is not the purpose of this work to delve into the psychology of education or social intelligence; for our purposes, it is necessary, however, to see that social intelligence deals with the knowledge gained through group learning and through social interaction. It is in this regard that progressive education emphasizes social intelligence.

The main reason why progressive education emphasizes social intelligence is so individuals can become more fully aware of their surroundings. Progressive thought pushes for greater social action and a sense of the communal: the common good, a public will or spirit, a social gospel, social justice, etc. It follows that education under Progressives is also to be social. This element of education allows children to be able to understand and to engage their community and the affairs found within it. It can be said that progressive education, through developing social intelligence hopes to serve the purpose of increasing involvement in one’s political community.

This has become actualized in the classroom through a variety of means. Progressive education promotes open classrooms in which debate and deliberation are largely encouraged as a way for a student to discover truth. It also serves to shift from a “teacher-centered classroom” to a “student-centered classroom” in which students are active learners. Collaboration is also a trait of the progressive classroom further serving the breakdown of rigid teacher-student
authoritative relationships. Alfie Kohn who advocates progressive education along with the removal of homework, testing and competition in the curriculum for public schools, says that

Progressive schools are characterized by what I like to call a “working with” rather than a “doing to” model. In place of rewards for complying with the adults’ expectations, or punitive consequences for failing to do so, there’s more of an emphasis on collaborative problem solving—and, for that matter, less focus on behaviors than on underlying motives, values, and reasons.128

This leads to collaboration among students as well as among students and teachers. This follows along with the idea of more “student-centered” learning in that curriculum becomes less standardized and more particular to individual classrooms. On the creation of curriculum, Kohn advocates one which is designed by students and teachers jointly, the idea being that students determine what they wish to learn in order for them to reach their greatest potential, and the teacher facilitates this need. This further serves to diminish the authority of adults or superiors and emphasizes the importance of the needs and desires of the child. This serves to further the goal of self-actualization because students are able to investigate and discover who they are becoming by this hands-on approach rather than merely memorization of content.

Two more ways in which social intelligence helps to serve Wilson’s progressive vision is through teaching a long-term commitment to social justice by making students aware of the ills of society and the importance of individuals. As diversity is promoted and children are made aware of both self and other, progressive education hopes to teach them about the interactions between individuals and the issues which arise in one’s society. With the emphasis on social intelligence, community, and diversity, there is a promotion of social justice. The final task of social intelligence is grounded, Dewey says, in social cooperation. He states “intelligence is a social asset and is clothed with a function as public as is its origin, in the concrete, social
cooperation.” This supports the emphasis placed on the importance of community, in particular the concept of a common will.

The next feature of progressive education is community. A sense of community is a recurring theme in progressivism so it stands to reason that education need also have a communal aspect. Education is to serve the purposes of the state, namely the fulfillment of the public will and the greater realization of democratization. Hence public education now aims to be communal as opposed to isolated. Education is no longer meant merely for personal merit and success but is tied to an awareness of the whole community. Learning occurs between individuals through the creation of groups. Kohn advocates for communal learning and says that educational practices which encourage competition are to be avoided. This stance, for which Kohn has written a book, is debated by other modern scholars as to whether Dewey would advocate an elimination of personal rivalry between students. It does seem from Dewey’s writings that he sees a need to combat the rivaling nature of laissez faire economics of his time by advocating for greater social justice as is the case with most 20th century Progressives.

Finally individuality is a tenant of progressive education. Like diversity, individuality is displayed in progressive education under the notion that individuals matter— their personalities, traits, and potential. Learning about one’s self and who one may become is a crucial aspect of Dewey’s educational philosophy. Students must be free for self-discovery and the educational system must encourage ways in which one’s individuality may be fostered and actualized. This is stated clearly and often in many of Dewey’s works including Liberalism and Social Action in which he writes, “these new liberals fostered the idea that the state has the responsibility for creating institutions under which individuals can effectively realize the potentialities that are theirs.” In his pedagogic creed, Dewey explains that the child has certain powers and
tendencies given at birth, and part of education is to interpret these powers and find out what they will become. This is done through first allowing for the curriculum to be full of “the child’s own social activities” which would precede specialized study of academics. Dewey sees education not as preparation for a future life but an understanding and process of living. Since democracy tends to rapidly advance civilization, Dewey says, it is of no use to educate a child in preparation for “any precise set of conditions.” A clear example from his pedagogic statement on the importance of the fostering of one’s individual capacities is seen in the following statement: “To prepare him for a future life means to give him command of himself; it means so to train him that he will have the full and ready use of all his capacities.” For Dewey this statement highlights the problems he sees with the reliance on content learning not being authentic enough. Dewey believes that genuine and personal experiential learning are central to self-actualization, so his creed calls for a shift in the educational approach.

On the surface there appears to be a contradiction between the individuality described and the sense of community. On the one hand, Dewey emphasizes the importance of an individual’s powers and tendencies; that education is to form and shape these powers, allowing the individual to blossom into his truest self. On the other hand, there is an urgent call for community and social development within progressive development. Dewey resolves these tensions in his creed. Progressive education has a psychological or individual aspect and a sociological or communal aspect, as mentioned at the beginning of this section. These two sides of the educational process must work in tandem. The social environment is used he says to “interpret the child’s powers.” So this apparent tension is not contradictory; progressive education for Dewey simply incorporates the importance of the individual’s self-actualization with the conditions of the society. In sum, one’s faculties are to be fostered to reach one’s
highest potential by creating social interaction, and social awareness. For Dewey, it is through social processes that one can self-actualize. This leads individuals to look to their society or more precisely their government to help them reach their fullest potential. It is this incessant feeling of entitlement which leads to a less healthy political community.

III. The Democratization of Presidential Selection

Democratization of the presidential selection process has aided the rise in emphasis on popular or progressive statesmanship. As there has been a shift in the type of statesmanship exhibited by presidents since the days of the Founders, there have also been changes made to the presidential selection process. As discussed in chapter two, the Founders’ model of candidate selection sought to elevate the proper candidate which embodied their definition of statesmanship by isolating the selection process through the means known as the Electoral College. Furthermore, the candidate selection process was also party-focused in order for those who were most knowledgeable of candidates in consideration could deliberate and make sound judgments as to which candidate was the best statesman.

In his seminal work on presidential selection, James Ceaser identifies the impact of Martin Van Buren on the model of presidential selection which, though not identical to that of the Founders, still provided for sound judgments by party elites to be made as to the proper selection of the various candidates. This model is referred to as the “party-dominance model.”\(^{137}\) This model began first to erode during the Progressive Movement where the party’s platform called for the democratization of the selection process, favoring popular primaries and elections. This model is known as the candidate-supremacy model. Though Progressives aspired to obtaining this goal, it did not become a full reality until the 1960s, as Ceaser, when discussing
the development of presidential selection of the twentieth century, identifies a period of a mixed system from the 1920s-1960s where “a resurgence of party organizations began to take place.” It was not until the 1970s that the primary system of today was fully realized.

The candidate-supremacy model was fueled by the open primary selection process and was influenced by Wilson and Progressives who advocated a direct relationship between the president and the people. This model also solidified the power of the president who no longer needed to adapt a personal agenda to the wishes of his party but quite the contrary his personal agenda formed the party’s political aspirations. Democratizing the selection process allowed the candidates to make popular appeals to the less informed public, shifting the emphasis from policy-knowledge and personal character of a candidate to his rhetorical and persuasive skill.

Another consequence of the democratization of selection not discussed by Ceaser is the change in the meaning of “electability.” Both the original selection model of the Founding, as well as the party-dominant model marked by Van Buren’s presidency emphasized political skill, prudence, knowledge, and character as what made candidates electable. The rise of the candidate-supremacy model changed these criteria to personal likability of the candidate or the public perception of candidates, rather than simply the knowledge of issues or political prowess. With the power to choose America’s leader in the hands of “interested amateurs” rather than experienced and politically savvy party elites, an important question in the primary system is whether the candidates who run are publically electable. For example, 1960 saw the election of a young, handsome, articulate yet inexperienced Kennedy over a much older, introverted yet politically savvy Nixon; public perception, and what is important to the people began to matter in the selection of the president—though what matters is not always what is most important.
It is easy to see how democratization of presidential selection, which provides the general public the opportunity to make decisions such as the leader of the nation, is linked to both Progressivism generally, as well as the progressive education model of John Dewey. First, democratization of the selection process was born from the goals of Wilson and other Progressives in the early twentieth century, as has already been mentioned. The democratization of the process provides a more open and direct relationship between the president and the people—a president whose statesmanship had changed to popular leadership, thriving from public support. As mentioned early, the democratization of presidential selection brought politicians to employ rhetoric and persuasion, feeding as much (if not more so) on public sentiment as on reason and prudent political ideas. Progressives hoped to transform the office of the president into a national leadership role of the entire populace. It necessarily follows that this national leader need be chosen by the people.

The progressive education model of Dewey informed the people of the progressive shift in the means and ends of government and political leaders. Progressive education implicitly teaches that the state has a duty to, above all, help individuals actualize their potential. The idea of expansive and proactive government necessitated a popular national leader to whom the people could collectively look. As a consequence, the public see presidential candidates as the operators of the government, placing new demands on presidential leaders. The sense of entitlement which has been instilled within the public due to Dewey’s educational model provokes voters to elect a president who promises the greatest individual benefits. This in turn modifies candidate behavior to one in which candidates make public appeals and grand promises in order to ensure the public they are heard and that their will can be carried out through the president and the government.
Given this new public perception of the government—according to which it must fulfill often fickle demands of the people—ambitious men, who are best at appealing to sentiment are more attracted to the office of the president, and more likely to be elected than those with reasoned political expertise. Thus, the quality of the statesman elected to fill America’s highest office has declined. Where the old selection process drawn in the constitution encouraged the best, most qualified statesmen to be sought to fill the office, the democratization of the presidential selection process has positively encouraged rhetoricians and demagogues who are skilled at appealing to the increased fickle desires of the public.

IV. Conclusion:

Progressivism has transformed the requirements and purpose of education both for the future politician and president as well as for the general public. Wilson’s form of a liberal education, which he deems necessary for a popular leader, is built around a critique of the traditional republican order and constitutional framework of American politics. It advocates the adoption of a model which replaces limited government devoted to the protection of individual liberty with a more open and direct model which leads to expansive centralization via a more proactive, positive state.

The Progressive vision for popular leadership is aided by the progressive education of the general public as espoused by John Dewey. Dewey’s combination of individualism and community help change the perceptions of government held by the people to a more “responsive” government. This new philosophy emphasizing the cultivation of one’s own authentic personality led to greater individualism than had been present in previous generations.
It leaves the public with a sense of entitlement and encourages selfishness rather than humility. This change in the people’s perception of government has impacted presidential selection.

Furthermore, progressive ideology has led to the democratization of presidential selection, giving public opinion and public sentiment a greater role in selecting the country’s chief executive. This has changed what traits make an individual electable to the office, thus changing the type of person who is attracted to the office. Likewise, progressive education and the new perception of the means and ends of government led the public to desire candidates who promise to fulfill their fancies rather than those who offer reasoned, prudent, political guidance. This has a reciprocal effect: presidential candidates tailor campaigns to the rising demands of the voters resulting in an emphasis on promise making and elegant rhetoric rather than political knowledge and exceptional personal character.
The Conclusion:

The American political landscape has undergone a major shift which has affected presidential statesmanship. In examining this shift, we find there is a link between political philosophy, the type of statesman or national leader that exists, and the character of the political community. It has been argued that America has been influenced largely by two different political philosophies during its history, the first being the liberal and social contract theory of thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, the second being progressivism which heavily consists of 19\textsuperscript{th} century German political thought. Liberal philosophy of the Enlightenment dominated the thought of the Founding generation in developing the republic, in crafting an office of the president as well as formulating a practice of statesmanship which was prevalent in American politics until the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.

The Founders saw both the promises and the dangers of democracy and drafted a constitution for a nation which could allow for the promises and benefits of democratic rule while also enacting guards against its deficiencies. The dangers they perceived stemmed largely from their view of human nature: man is selfish and fickle. Though some Founders such as Jefferson and Madison championed democratic ideals more than others, the idea that institutions could curb and even harness man’s nature to restrain its negatives influenced the building of their federal republic. The constitution established a federal system as well as distributed national power between political institutions in order to allow the branches to check and balance one another’s powers. This system was largely influenced by the work of Montesquieu and the ideals of federalism. This separation of powers between institutions provided bulwarks for democracy as de Tocqueville refers to them. These bulwarks invited deliberation, prudence, and wisdom to be attributes of political decision making.
What is described above led to the prudent statesman the Founders preferred to occupy the office of the president. The office itself was a quasi-monarchial element of the democratic republic which required then not only institutional checks on power by other branches, but also that particular individuals would be drawn to and be selected for the position. As explained in previously in this work, the marks of prudent statesmanship are disinterestedness—being able to look beyond one’s personal monetary gain and enter public service—prudence—understanding the proper action necessary given the circumstances—and personal integrity—the ability to remain disinterested in the face of sycophants and holding firmly to principles in the midst of a fickle majority seduced by flattery and demagoguery.

The duties of the prudent statesman demonstrated the benefits the Founders argued resulted in this view of statesmanship. The president according to the Founders had a few essential political roles: 1) acting with energy—making decisions which were in the best interest of the nation in a swift and at times unilateral manner, using constitutional powers to restrain and check branches of government and the fickle desires of the populace, and 2) educating the public on what is truly best for the nation, and 3) commanding the armed forces and providing for the national defense. These duties required the prudent statesman to have a notion of an objective standard or measure which guided his decisions. Prudence itself requires some standard by which one’s various actions can be judged.

The statesmanship of the Founders could be cultivated in large part by a truly liberal education which teaches prudence, builds one’s knowledge of several areas instilling a certain confidence in a statesman to perform his duties well, and exposes one to examples of virtue to be emulated and vice to be avoided. A liberal education allows one also to arrive at knowledge and truth which is essential to public officials such as a president. The reception of a liberal
education for the Founders’ statesman allowed them to take a place in the political community where they could guide policy through prudent implementation as well as by checking fickle, dangerous decisions made by the legislature all in an attempt to guide as well as educate the public as to the nation’s true interest.

The need to educate the public as to the true best interest of its nation displays the link between statesmanship and the political community—the type of education received by the masses influences the type of people which make up the polity, which in turn influences the selection of statesmen. This is the argument put forth in this work’s second chapter. The need for public education and greater diffusion of knowledge allowed the masses to be informed as to their rights and responsibilities within the democratic state. A second reason for the Founders’ civic education was to instill a love of country in the citizens, cultivating a passion for one’s polity. A democratic state which sees the people as sovereign requires a certain cultivation of the citizenry. During the Founding era, this cultivation was comprised largely of civic and moral education at the public and private level.

The argument of Chapter Two was found in the reasoning of Thomas Jefferson who was the greatest advocate of a two track public education system in order to cultivate statesmen through the reception of a liberal education with professional training and to cultivate better democratic citizens through a general civic education. A good democratic citizen knows the rights and responsibilities he holds within his society and its government. For Jefferson, an understanding of one’s rights and responsibilities makes a citizen better able to recognize and guard against tyranny.
The Founders certainly saw the need for civic education in the polity, instilling civic virtue which is crucial for the health of the regime because it breeds patriotism—a willingness to protect that which belongs to the individual and to subordinate personal interests for the common good. They also believed that morality played an important role in the development of the democratic citizen. It is essentially this moral education as well as the Judeo-Christian influence which motivates the citizenry to elevate the prudent statesman to a position such as the presidency. It is posited that this is in line with Aristotle’s discussion of moral virtue as being better for the political community than only civic virtue. What is better for the political community, according to Aristotle is for a citizen to believe that what belongs to him is also good or just or best. Coming to this conclusion or realization necessitates a moral education.

The Founders, it is explained, found this largely in the Christian religion and moral teachings of Jesus. Jefferson believed the moral teachings of Jesus to be sufficient in many ways to creating both civically minded individuals and morally upright citizens. They not only curb one’s appetite for lower, selfish, desires, but they open a person up to understanding that what is best for the community as a whole is in their truest self-interest, and the Judeo-Christian ethic teaches moral principles such as love for one’s neighbor, service, and humility.

This paper shows the importance of humility as what allowed American citizens to elevate a prudent statesman who was not even popularly elected to the office of president. Humility—understanding and accepting that others may be better suited, more informed and more capable of accomplishing or teaching something than oneself—allows the populace to put faith and trust in a body such as the Electoral College who selects the president based upon personal knowledge of the candidates’ merits and personalities. Humility also plays a role, not
only on selection of the president by the Electoral College but also in the nominating of candidates for office in the first place.

The shift in the American political landscape from the view of the Founders is due to the introduction of a new political philosophy rooted in different teachings regarding the purposes of a political regime and a different view of human nature. This new political philosophy, known as Progressivism, began to permeate the American political system in the late 19th century as a response to American industrialization and urbanization and the social and economic problems which stemmed from them. This shift from a liberal natural rights philosophy to a German-influenced, historicist philosophy brought a new conception of statesmanship to American politics, which ultimately transformed the character, role, and selection of the president.

The Progressive Movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries challenged classically liberal principles and notions of limited a non-intrusive government which the Founders relied upon in drafting the constitution. Progressives such as Woodrow Wilson developed a new conception of human nature which they adopted largely from German historicism, a view that human nature evolves through time whereby reason is revealed until a time when ultimate freedom is obtained. Progressives saw the political order of their time, which was still largely connected to the Founding principles to be an impediment to true progress. This included the structure of the constitution with its separation of powers and its checks and balances system. Where the Founders saw this structure as a way to promote wisdom through deliberation, the Progressives argued it made government too inefficient and slow to accommodate the new social problems faced by an industrialized America. They centralized administrative authority, enlarged the purview of government, and increased regulations of the economy in order to curb industrial abuses and corruption, which they attributed to rapid urbanization.
This new wave of political thought brought practical changes to the ends and means of government and required a new type of president to help guide and ensure that the desires of the entire population were translated into policy. The Progressives fought to democratize American politics, namely in the selection of senators and the president. They realized that Congress often represented the fragmented wishes of interested parties and narrow geographic constitutions, and that unhindered progress required a single person who could speak for the interest of the whole nation and work with the other branches of government to bring about greater equality. This called, the Progressives argued, for a new type of statesman—a popular leader as opposed to the Founders’ prudent statesman.

Thus the Progressives envisioned a new personal character of the president not promoted at the Founding. The popular leader or progressive statesman was charismatic, energetic, and an exceptional orator able to speak more directly to the population at large and lead them in the way best for whole nation. These new qualities of the progressive statesman allowed him to persuade and convince the public of its own will so the people would support the president. The common will, according to Wilson and other Progressives is found in public opinion from which the president is not to be isolated but by which he is to be greatly informed. In this way, the president is a delegate for the entire people completely in service of their desires. This description of the roles and character of the president constitute a new definition of statesmanship, here called progressive statesmanship. This work defines progressive statesmanship as the ability to read and interpret the times and the underlying common will of the people whom one governs and to educate the public of their collective best interest, guiding the public towards the necessary vision of the future while using the means of the state to accomplish this vision.
This progressive statesmanship is not only different from the prudent statesman preferred by the Founders, but it is the type which Hamilton and others feared. Though Wilson’s writings defend against his leadership style as being demagogic, this work does not find his argument convincing and that his leadership style can very easily lead to demagoguery.

Wilson’s popular leadership is a form it of because of the emphasis on rhetoric and oratory skill required of the popular leader. He is charismatic, likeable, a “man of the people.” Wilson in his writings admits that the popular leader is required to speak for and to the people to motivate them to adopt their true destiny or will—the will the popular leader is persuading them to adopt. Rhetoric was used consistently by Progressives such as Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt in order to convince, motivate, and persuade the people to follow the vision laid out by the politicians. This use of rhetoric and “popular arts” as Hamilton refers to them was a mark of demagoguery; the office of the president itself was charged to check and protect against this danger. This argument along with what has been presented on the progressive statesman displays the profound changes in statesmanship and their effects on the political community. To fully appreciate the transformation of the American statesman and the effects of progressivism it is necessary to examine the link between progressive statesmanship and progressive education which took hold in the 20th century.

Like the Founders, the Progressives saw education of the statesman as well as the population as important to a democratic society. However, due to the changes in the political order and the changes therefore to the democratic state, the Progressives advocated a form of education which would help cultivate citizens to be more enlightened and support the changes in statesmanship and presidential leadership.
On the surface, the Progressives agreed with the Founders that the American statesman required a specific form of education—a liberal education—though the exact reasoning for the two groups differed. Given the differences in the means and ends of a liberal education for the statesman, it is posited that the form of liberal education advocated by Wilson and others was not truly liberal but was a particular type of education which would direct a student to adopt a viewpoint similar to other Progressives; this was the only way, after all that progressive leaders could fulfill their new roles.

The importance for the Progressives in cultivating particular citizens which were better suited for a progressive America has been on display since the early 20th century. Progressive education in America has cultivated a citizen who is aware of his individuality, his right to pursue authentic self-development, and his personal autonomy. He is also aware of his social environment in which he interacts with other autonomous individuals. Thus, there is a humanistic as well as a communal aspect of progressive education. John Dewey divides progressive education into four main components: 1) diversity, 2) social intelligence, 3) community, and 4) individuality. The two aforementioned aspects are represented in these components. The purpose was to cultivate a citizenry that was able to seize opportunities and afforded by the state to pursue their own happiness how they saw fit. Progressive education teaches citizens they have a right to individual self-actualization and the support they need to achieve it comes from the state.

This new right to personal autonomy and authentic personality help to breakdown the rigid authoritative educational philosophy of civic and moral education as well as content-based learning. The shift in education has been towards more open learning environments where
students are encouraged to interact more socially as well as encouraged to self-discover, leads to
the free unfolding their personalities.

Along with this emphasis on individuality the Progressives also saw the importance of
advocating for social awareness and communal learning. This was to open the eyes of citizens to
the issues of the political community, thus bolstering the need for greater social justice among
other things. The goal of both of these aspects—individuality and community, of progressive
education aimed at cultivating citizens who were free to pursue the life they desired while also
engaging with the political community. The implications of individuality mixing with
community have created some problems for the political community today.

Finally, since the Progressive era of the 20th century, there have been points in which
progressive leaders have advocated and succeeded in furthering their political philosophy.
Theodore Roosevelt and Wilson were the first to advocate for a direct nomination of the
president by the people rather than by party elites, but this was not realized at all until the 1960s
with the open primary system. It was in this system where the corruption seen by earlier
Progressives such as Roosevelt and Wilson was mitigated because the presidential nomination
process became more public as well as more democratic. The Progressives had succeeded in
cultivating a citizen who saw it as one’s right to have a greater say in public affairs. This comes
in part from the new education which advocated for individuality and social awareness.
Individuals felt it was their right to direct government more directly precisely because of their
autonomy and the idea that the social issues of their time could be mitigated and changed
because of their collective voice.
This ultimately led to a selection process which weakened the institution of the Electoral College, originally meant to ensure prudent statesmen and men of first character as the president. Ever since the direct election of senators granted in the 17th amendment there has been a push in society to open up presidential selection to allow the progressive statesman to be even more directly connected with the people whose will he interprets and represents. Similar to the connection between the Founders’ public education and the selection of the president, there is a connection between progressive education and presidential selection also only its effects are radically different.

This work examines not only the shift from the prudent statesmanship of the Founders to the popular leadership of the Progressive era but also argues the link between the form of statesmanship and the citizenry of the political community. Since both the Founders and the Progressives saw education as an important tool to cultivating the citizenry, the type of education and more importantly the type of citizen which is cultivated as a result is dependent upon the political climate and the type of leadership dominant in the country. The final chapters of this work were dedicated to explaining the political and practical shift in American presidential statesmanship and the formation of a new educational philosophy which helped to continue the progressive vision and formulate a society in which the popular leader would be accepted and flourish.

It has been demonstrated that Dewey’s progressive education, vastly different from the Founders’ original views, served to break down the moral authoritative model which had been in place. This helped to accomplish the goals of the Progressive movement, teaching citizens that government was not the problem but that it was the solution to the issues they faced. This was coupled with the belief that every citizen had new rights. FDR introduced a “Second Bill of
Rights” to demand services from the government to help individuals self-actualize. Though the idea that we have a right to demand that our government help us self-actualize has been widely accepted since the 20th century, a serious question is whether this is in fact best for the political community.

A major consequence of progressive education which has had negative effects on the political community is value relativism. The prevailing culture of value relativism is a consequence of Dewey’s philosophy even if not a deliberate outcome. The teaching that each person is unique, with a character which has a right to unfold—that all citizens should self-actualize and reach their fullest potentials—precipitates the idea that each person’s pursuit is equally valued and worthy. If this were not the case, then some individuals who desired to pursue a certain path to self-fulfillment which was less worthy, healthy or honorable would not be granted the license and given opportunities to pursue what the community agreed was unbeneficial. In society today, this does not occur as we hold that each man is entitled to pursue happiness as he chooses to define it. Each manner of pursing happiness is therefore is considered equally valuable; we presume that no one’s choices or pursuits are any better than another citizen’s.

The absence of argument erodes an objective standard of measurement and creates an openness which Allan Bloom discusses in his work, The Closing of the American Mind. Bloom calls this the “openness of indifference” which he says promotes relativism in one’s educational pursuits and ultimately one’s lifestyle. Further he says this openness promotes amour-propre or self-esteem based in public opinion, while also creating a loss of interest in original texts of the past such as the Constitution. This openness of indifference is promoted in many ways by
the progressive ideology and the educational philosophy and creates a large contradiction between what the Progressives believed would happen and what in fact has happened.

This contradiction is that where Progressivism meant to promote selflessness and community, it in fact bred selfishness and close-minded pride. Although the Progressive platform has been used to cure the ills of social injustice, its ideology espoused that the focus should first be on the individual so that he can live however he thinks best. This is the antithesis of what Madison described as noble patriotism in *Federalist 10*. Progressive education magnifies the various vices common to the democratic man rather than helping to refine or contain them. Bloom captures Dewey’s doctrine and its effects: “there in the rest of the world is a drab diversity that teaches only that values are relative, whereas here we can create all the lifestyles we want.” This openness of indifference promotes a selfish attitude in one respect because it makes an individual his only judge since no one else’s opinion truly matters.

Along with this is the fact that this type of individuality breeds a closed mindedness to others’ opinions since they are subjective. If the message of progressive education is that you are special, endowed with great potential—and thus you have every right to choose your own path—then there is no need to heed advice from others concerning your own life. You have everything within yourself to make the best choices or changes. Bloom puts it this way speaking about the openness of indifferences; “Our openness means we don’t need others…No longer is there a hope of wise men in other places and times who can reveal the truth about life.” This openness of indifference does not lead one to humility but often to stubbornness, pride, and a presumption of entitlement
This selfishness and pride also result in a lack of respect for elders and the traditions commonly held in the regime’s history, as well as easy dismissals of the original intent of the Founding Fathers. Generations who have been born under the umbrella of Progressivism have been taught to seek their own ways and that the ways of the past are greatly outdated or even “primitive”; thus, individuals today dismiss past traditions and a concern for the past mostly for a concern for the present and for themselves.

It is worth speculating why the combination of social awareness—a community aspect, and an emphasis on the individual—has not led to a society who truly works as one to accomplish societal change. Why does it appear that the individualism cultivated by the Progressives has conquered the sense of community for which Wilson and others hoped? An answer lies in the progressive view of human nature—according to which progress over time to finally overcome man’s selfish and fickle disposition. The Founders and the Progressives had different conceptions of human nature. Where the Progressives believed man could overcome the individual self-concern they saw attributed to laissez-faire principles run-amok at the turn of the 20th century, it seems the education they proposed ironically replaced this economic individualism with an entirely new, more hazardous form—a relativistic individualism—that presumed everyone’s ideas are equal and which installed a confidence that each person has a right to his individuality.

The sense of community which the Progressives hoped would occur along side with this individualism has seemed to erode over the last 50 years. In his work, *Bowling Alone*, Robert D. Putnam explains that social capital has been decreasing due to a lack of community. He discusses this trend in various arenas: political, civic, religious, and others. In each area he empirically documents the declining trends of communal engagement. Voter turnout has been
decreasing, active participation in local associations such as the PTA or Kiwanis Clubs are on the decline, volunteerism, religious and secular giving is also down. These examples point to a reality that a sense of community is eroding in today’s society; though we are taught to be socially aware and involved, Putnam’s research seems to suggest that were are becoming less involved with our fellow man. The individualism described by Bloom, and cultivated by Dewey’s progressive education, is one reason for this; it has overridden the Progressives’ plea to be socially involved.

Wilson saw the government as a living organism which was meant to work for and with the people to accomplish its common will. During Wilson’s presidency and especially during Franklin Roosevelt’s administration, this new demand actualized itself in an expansion of government and social programs to help individuals reach their potentials and spread equality. By calling his New Deal policies a “Second Bill of Rights”, FDR instilled a belief that the people have a right to demand of their government what they wish or what they say they need. This is why in the last presidential campaign unemployed youth were asking each candidate what he was going to do to find them jobs. The people today have a sense of entitlement—an expectation that the government has a duty in many ways to provide for them and give them what they desire. It seems to be quite the opposite of Kennedy’s famous words, “ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country?”

Today the public is consistently asking what my country can do for me.

This public mindset is hazardous to the political community because it negates duties and responsibilities of the citizens which the Founders made sure were known. I posit here that even the Progressives did not fully envision or hope for the political climate of today. Wilson hoped that individualism and social responsibility could coincide primarily due to a utopian view of
human nature. Wilson’s belief that the government as a solution rather than a problem could only work if the people were actively involved in the community and socially aware. I do not find evidence in Wilson’s writings particularly that emphasize a people who knowingly have a sense of entitlement without responsibility. In short, Wilson saw the government working for and with the people, not simply negating any need for personal responsibility.

My criticism of Wilson lies in the fact that while promoting his new political philosophy he took no steps towards mitigating any of its possibly hazardous effects. The Founders provided in their national framework, bulwarks against the deficiencies of democracy, as well as bulwarks that helped mitigate the negative effects of this philosophy. These precautions are not present in the work of Wilson. The reason for this is because Wilson truly believed in the progressive spirit of human nature, a description which would render any mitigation unnecessary.

However incorrect or misguided Wilson’s view may be, I cannot say he sought this end intentionally, but the components of progressive education discussed in the final chapter as well as Wilson’s roles of the popular leader discussed in Chapter Three seem to go inexorably in this direction. This is because the Founders’ view of human nature appears to be more correct than does the view of Wilson and Progressives. People are selfish and fickle; individualism is inevitable regardless of the form it takes.

A value-relativist culture contains no objective principles, allowing each individual to pursue his own definition of happiness however he sees fit without judgment or correction. Individuals having a sense of entitlement to their desires from the government will more than likely elect Wilson’s popular leader rather than the Founders’ prudent statesman. The people
want someone who can move their emotions, tell them what they want to hear, and listen to their public opinions. The popular leader and the modern president were cultivated for this political community, just as the prudent statesman of the founding fit in with the socially responsible, limited government and authoritatively structured community of the Founding. It is hard to conceive of a George Washington, a Thomas Jefferson, or even an Abraham Lincoln to be popularly elected today. These men fit embodied the traditional view of statesmanship which is not known today. As the process of presidential selection becomes more democratized, and the selfish and fickle-natured public has more control over who sits as president, the character of the leader will continue to resemble Wilson’s *Leader of Men* rather than the Founders’ prudent statesman.

This change in statesmanship and the rise of the popular leader is unfortunately here to stay. The popular leader, it can be argued began with Woodrow Wilson in 1912. Since his administration America has seen a string of Progressive presidents. Notably, Franklin Roosevelt with his New Deal policies has embodied the popular leader to perhaps a greater extent than Wilson. Also, Lyndon B. Johnson can be termed a Progressive president during whose administration there was a greater equalization of the races in America as well as a campaign to fight societal injustices such as poverty. A third president who has embodied Wilson’s progressive agenda has been President Obama. His dedication to an unprecedented healthcare reform campaign which for the moment seems to have been finalized by Supreme Court decision, makes him a popular leader who advocates much of the same general principles as Wilson.

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**XXV** By progressive, I mean presidents who have pushed for greater democratization in politics, as well as advocated for a larger, centralized federal power in which the state through bureaucratic means and larger executive departments provides the citizenry with greater opportunity, or posing greater regulation on businesses much like was seen in the times of Wilson.
All of these presidents enacted large campaigns to fix societal ills which were specific to their time in history. This required a close relationship with the legislature, aided by a loosening of the separation of powers, an adherence to popular opinion, and a growth of the federal government and bureaucratic centralization.

All of these presidents fit the model of progressive statesmanship or popular leadership described above. Their administrations have been marked by great rhetoric, general public support, and the belief that progress comes through greater forms of democracy. The rise of the popular leader has changed the face of presidential politics for the past few generations. It is doubtful that citizens today can even imagine what America was like without a charismatic leader who spoke directly to and for the nation and worked in tandem with Congress to get much accomplished. It has been taken for granted that the president is often a powerful speaker who moves citizens, and is a leader who has new demands from the populace, ones at times he’s neither capable of performing or responsible for doing.

Not many remember the days before the direct election of senators or even the open selection of the presidential candidates. There are now arguments to abolish the Electoral College and allow the victor in the presidential race to be decided by total popular vote. This was the argument in the 2000 election where Bush lost the popular vote to Gore but won the votes from the Electoral College. This argument is simple; the people help select the nominee they want to represent them; they directly elect members of Congress, they need to be able to

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XXVI Though Obama found it difficult to effectively accomplish his healthcare reform, public support for healthcare declined before its passage. However, it is still largely accepted that the people were originally on board with healthcare reform being that Obama made it the lynchpin of his 2008 presidential campaign where he was monumentally elected.
directly select the leader of the country. No one may remember a time when the president was not seen as national leader.

The presidential political game has changed since the progressive era. Presidents whether Republican or Democrat, are publically seen as popular leaders who now gravitate towards fulfilling the roles described in chapter three of this work. Richard Neustadt wrote in a famous work that presidential leadership is marked by the power of persuasion—persuading others that it is in their interest to follow the vision or the policy suggestions of the president. Like how Wilson believed that the president needed to convince the people to follow his vision of the public will, Neustadt seems to back this up in similar words.

The essence of a President’s persuasive task, with congressmen and everybody else is to induce them to believe that what he wants of them is what their own appraisal of their own responsibilities requires them to do in their interest, not his.

The modern popular leader is also closely tied to public opinion from which the Founders required their statesman purposely isolated. Today presidents are constantly aware of their approval ratings and the latest opinion polls. Where the Founders saw adherence to public opinion as dangerous and often leading to unwise policy, adherence to public opinion has been a trademark of presidential administrations in the last half of the 20th century according to Canes-Wrone. In her book, she discusses what she calls the conditional pandering theory in which a president follows public opinion in making a decision even when he would personally advise against it.

This work describes precisely what was discussed earlier in regards to Wilson’s popular leader. Wilson’s leadership style turned the president into a delegate of the people rather than a guiding trustee, thus making policy decisions based on the fickle demands of the people. Canes-
Wrone describes three cases of her pandering theory, two of which involve Republican presidents. She explains that though President Carter was a proponent of foreign humanitarian aid he proposed to scale back this program in his last year of his first term, how Reagan supported standby taxes in 1983 when he had traditionally been against raising taxes, and how “George H.W. Bush vetoed bills that extended unemployment benefits only to sign similar ones…eight months later.” The conditional pandering theory is one example of how the actions of presidents have changed due to the democratization of their selection and their necessary adherence to public opinion.

A final trend of presidential action seen in the 20th century has been their paid attention to the public directly. The amount of public appearances both in the capital and around the United States has been consistently increasing since the Hoover administration. Kernell explains that ever since the rhetoric of Roosevelt’s “bully pulpit” there has been an increasing need or desire for the president to address the public directly rather than through the news. This is in line with the purposes and roles of the popular leader which came to reign in American politics during the progressive era. What is interesting to note about Kernell’s findings, which lends support to the idea put forth here that the presidential political game has changed regardless of one’s party, is that from the Carter presidency up to 2003, national public appearances have been steadily increasing. During this period, America has elected three Republican presidents and two Democratic presidents. This shows that it is not only progressive-minded presidents who tend to fulfill the progressive statesmanship roles of the president.

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By this, I do not mean to say that because Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton are Democratic presidents they are by my definition “Progressive” and that because Reagan, Bush, and Bush are Republicans they are not “Progressive.” Progressive presidents like Wilson have tended to be Democrats since the 20th century, but my point here is to show that Wilson’s change in statesmanship has altered the behavior of presidents generally, saying that all presidents are now seen as popular leaders and adhere in part to his progressive statesmanship model.
The dynamic discussed here—the popular leader as president and a relativistic culture which elects him—is not likely to change in the near future. The civic mindset of the public has been made up for far too long and any memories of a time in which the political community was different are fleeting or even conceived of as mere myth. One cannot expect that the people will suddenly begin electing men who fit the prudent statesmanship model as opposed to the popular leader. This is because they cannot gain from the government everything they now expect. Likewise, it cannot be assumed that the prudent statesman types will begin running for office because politics is about winning, and it is hard to conceive of one able to win public support.

So where can we turn in hopes to restore the Founding principles of prudence in government, a separation of powers, and an adherence to the rule of law—aspects of the constitution which the prudent statesman took an oath to uphold? It does not seem likely we can turn to the executive branch or the legislative branch both of which are now essentially popularly elected. A remaining hope may rest in the judiciary.

While an unelected Supreme Court may possibly a level of prudent statesmanship to government, it is not impervious to democratization. Throughout the Court’s history, it has had to establish and to assert its independence, sovereignty and supremacy, cementing its role in American government. Its task to achieve this has been met with periods of great success and periods of hardship. To establish its place firmly, it has relied on its legitimacy which has meant being held in a particular esteem by the other branches of government and even the public.

The Court traditionally has been envisioned as the guardian of the supreme law and the integrity of the American regime. The justices’ power to settle constitutional disputes between governments and individuals, as well as to resolve questions regarding the powers vested in the
different branches, enable the court to defend fundamental constitutional principles such as the separation of powers, a commitment to the rule of law and with it, a respect for the traditions of the framers of the nation, and a reiteration of the rights and responsibilities of citizens. The Court has often made a general ruling in a single case, only to clarify and establish the rulings meaning in subsequent cases. These traditional traits of the Court along with the fact that the bench has traditionally been filled by an exceptionally educated class of public servants also makes the Supreme Court resemble the prudent statesman which the Founders envisioned.
Notes:

1. The Federalist, #10
4. The Federalist, #51
6. Articles of Confederation, Article 10
13. The Federalist, #10
15. The Federalist, #70
16. Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different, p. 68
17. Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different, p. 75
18. Thomas Jefferson, Letter to John Adams; October 28, 1813
19. Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different, p. 15
25. The Federalist, #57; #10
26. The Federalist, #70
27. Presidential Selection: Theory and Development, p. 51
28. The Federalist #10 (Emphasis added)
29. The Federalist #10
30. Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different, p. 25
32. The Federalist # 10; #64
33. Presidential Selection: Theory and Development, p. 56
34. The Federalist # 1
35. The Federalist # 68 (Emphasis added)
36. The Federalist # 58
37. The Federalist # 58
39 “Critical Consciousness and Liberal Education,” p.3
40 “Critical Consciousness and Liberal Education,” p.10
41 “Critical Consciousness and Liberal Education,” p.11
43 *Thomas Jefferson Writings*, p. 1423
44 *Thomas Jefferson Writings*, p. 1423
45 *Thomas Jefferson Writings*, p. 1423
46 *Thomas Jefferson Writings*, p. 1150
47 *Thomas Jefferson Writings*, p. 272
49, *Thomas Jefferson Writings*, p. 273
50, *Thomas Jefferson Writings*, p. 273
51 *Thomas Jefferson Writings*, p. 1150
52 *Thomas Jefferson Writings*, p. 1149
53 *The Learning of Liberty: The Educational Ideas of the American Founders*, p. 108
54 *The Learning of Liberty: The Educational Ideas of the American Founders*, p. 108
56 “Just as the Twig is Bent: Civic Education in an Age of Doubt,” p. xxvii
57 “Just as the Twig is Bent: Civic Education in an Age of Doubt,” p. xxvi
58 *The Learning of Liberty: The Educational Ideas of the American Founders*, p. 108
59 *The Learning of Liberty: The Educational Ideas of the American Founders*, p. 109
61 *The Learning of Liberty: The Educational Ideas of the American Founders*, p. 111
63 Federalist # 84
64 George Washington, “First Annual Message to Congress,” Jan. 8 1790
66 “Just as the Twig is Bent: Civic Education in an Age of Doubt,” p. xxxii.
67 *The Learning of Liberty: The Educational Ideas of the American Founders*
68 *The Learning of Liberty: The Educational Ideas of the American Founders*
70 Federalist #2.
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75 Federalist # 68
76 Federalist # 68
77 Federalist # 68
78 Federalist # 68
80 *Woodrow Wilson and the Roots of Modern Liberalism*, p. 8
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134 “My Pedagogic Creed,” 77-80.
135 “My Pedagogic Creed,” 77-80.
136 “My Pedagogic Creed,” 77-80.
138 Presidential Selection, p. 215
139 Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind, 34
140 Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind, 34
141 Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind, 34
144 Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan, 201