

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-72733-4 - James Madison and the Spirit of Republican Self-Government

Colleen A. Sheehan

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Introduction

Madison's Legacy

The land was ours before we were the land's,
 She was our land more than a hundred years
 Before we were her people. She was ours
 In Massachusetts, in Virginia,
 But we were England's, still colonials,
 Possessing what we still were unpossessed by,
 Possessed by what we now no more possessed.
 Something we were withholding made us weak
 Until we found out that it was ourselves
 We were withholding from our land of living,
 And forthwith found salvation in surrender.
 Such as we were we gave ourselves outright
 (The deed of gift was many deeds of war)
 To the land vaguely realizing westward,
 But still unstoried, artless, unenhanced,
 Such as she was, such as she would become.

Robert Frost, "The Gift Outright"

At President John F. Kennedy's inauguration in 1961, the capital blanketed with freshly fallen snow and capped by a glaring winter's sun, Robert Frost was scheduled to read his newly composed poem "Dedication." The conditions made it impossible for him to see the pages, so instead he delivered from memory an older verse about the birth of America – a poem, he once said, "about what Madison may have thought."¹ "The land was ours before

¹ Robert Frost, "An Extemporaneous Talk for Students," Sarah Lawrence College, June 7, 1956, in K. L. Knickbocker and H. Willard Reninger, eds., *Preliminaries to Literary Judgment: Interpreting Literature*, 5th ed. (New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1974), 808. During this talk Frost remarked: "Now I thought I would say a poem to you – a poem about what Madison may have thought. This is called 'The Gift Outright' and it is my story of the

2 *James Madison and the Spirit of Republican Self-Government*

we were the land's." Later, in discovering within ourselves what had been withheld, we became the possession of the land. Frost's lines remind us of the ultimate sacrifice made by men whose bodies rest in soldiers' graves across the original thirteen states. They also evoke the cause to which our Founding generation gave themselves wholly. The Founders' legacy, like the soldiers' sacrifice, was a gift to future generations of Americans that could never be, and never was intended to be, repaid. It was "the gift outright."

A gift outright is a "deed of gift," which is "a deed executed and delivered without consideration," that is, with no expectation of return.² It is different from a legal contract, which sets terms of strict proportionality between benefits conferred and repayment required. Nonetheless, a deed of gift "confirms a legal relationship between the donor and repository that is based on trust and common understanding."³ Thus, while no material repayment of the gift is required or expected, the legacy does confer on the recipients a moral obligation to respect the intended purpose of the bequest. Moreover, according to Aristotle, there are some gifts for which it is not possible to make equal payment, and that can be only partially, and rightfully, repaid by a debt of gratitude.⁴ Aquinas calls the debt of gratitude a "debt of moral decency" that flows "from charity," which "the more it is paid, the more it is due."⁵

Frost's reminder of the gift we have received from our forefathers is also quietly, implicitly, a reminder to us of our debt. Calling to mind a time when the nation was "unstoried," when the original vision of the American drama was but an idea in Madison's imagination, he speaks to us today, the living beneficiaries of this still unfolding story. All through this poem about an event long past, there is no "they" but only and always "we." In surrendering to the land, we became "her people." Mingling the soil and the soul of America, Frost captures Madison's vision of a land populated by a sovereign and self-governing people. The gift of the American soldiers and Founders made us true proprietors, owned by a land that calls us to own

revolutionary war. My story of the revolutionary war might be about two little battles – one little battle called King's Mountain and another little battle called Bennington – but I'll leave battles out and give you the abstract."

² Bryan A. Garner, ed., *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, Minn: West Group, 1999), 423.

³ http://www.archivists.org/publications/deed_of_gift.asp.

⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Martin Ostwald, trans. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1962), VIII:14, 244.

⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II-II Q. CVI ART. VI in *Aquinas Ethics: Or, the Moral Teaching of St. Thomas*, 2 vols., Joseph Rickaby Thomas, ed. and trans. (New York: Benziger Bros., 1896), 2:201–2.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-72733-4 - James Madison and the Spirit of Republican Self-Government

Colleen A. Sheehan

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

3

ourselves.⁶ This idea was perfectly expressed by Tocqueville a generation later when he said, “I saw in America more than America.”⁷

As much as, perhaps even more than, for their deeds of war and their deed of gift of independence, we are indebted to the Founding generation for the legacy of self-government they left to us. Madison understood his life’s work as dedication to the crafting and constructing of this singular legacy. His contribution to the founding of the American republic was a deed of gift for which no equal payment is possible and for which recognition of his generosity is the fitting return of grateful souls. This gratitude, however, is contingent on understanding the worth of the benefit conveyed.⁸ The debt we owe to the giver of qualitative goods requires more than giving honor to the benefactor; we must recognize and cherish the intrinsic good of the gift itself. For Madison, as well as for Frost, the legacy of the American Founders is best repaid not by statues and monuments to them, but by honoring the principles of republicanism they bequeathed to us. It is best repaid by the citizens’ moral recognition of what we owe each other.

It has been said about Frost that he was “a philosopher, but [that] his ideas are behind his poems, not in them.”⁹ The power of “The Gift Outright” is only partially in the words that give meaning to the events of our past. Behind the words is a power that shapes our spirit and makes us into something more than mere readers. Only two years after Frost spoke at the 1961 inaugural, President Kennedy was called upon to commemorate the poet’s death. “Our national strength matters,” Kennedy said, “but the spirit which informs and controls our strength matters just as much. This was the special significance

⁶ I am not unaware that my interpretation of Frost’s ideas is at odds with a significant portion of the literary scholarship on the poet. While I do not wish to elide over the criticisms of Frost’s own character or the darkness that may have haunted him, I do think the case can and should be made for Frost’s command of his craft and for the deftness with which he captures and teaches the meaning of American democracy and the spirit that permeates it. Critics contend that this is a naive view set forth by those who do not understand poetry or Robert Frost, for Frost was a coward, a tyrant, and a liar through and through. I would suggest in response that poetry is not always about the poet, nor usually, if ever, written for the edification of literary critics. For a contrasting perspective see Lawrance Thompson, *Robert Frost*, 3 vols. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966–76), and Robert Faggen, *Robert Frost and the Challenge of Darwinism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001). See also Jay Parini, *Robert Frost: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1999), who neither ignores Frost’s shortcomings nor uses them to condemn his art or his civic aspirations (429).

⁷ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, J. P. Mayer, ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 1969), 19.

⁸ See Peter Chojnowski, “A Sense of Honor: Justice and Our Moral Debt,” *Angelus* XXII (1999).

⁹ Mark Van Doren, “The American Poet,” *Atlantic Monthly* 187 (June 1951), 32–34.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-72733-4 - James Madison and the Spirit of Republican Self-Government

Colleen A. Sheehan

Excerpt

[More information](#)

of Robert Frost.”¹⁰ This was also, I think, the special significance of James Madison. At the core of Frost’s understanding of America was his insight into Madison’s dream of a land informed and sustained by the spirit of a free people capable of controlling their government and governing themselves.

Frost’s Madison is not the Madison we come to know in most of the scholarly literature. For the most part, the scholars’ Madison is no friend of the common man. In the first part of the twentieth century Charles Beard’s Progressive interpretation of Madison dominated the scholarly landscape, portraying Madison as an opponent of democracy and a destroyer of the principles of the American Revolution.¹¹ In the mid-twentieth century, under the scholarly leadership of Martin Diamond, Madison became the Founder who sought to institute a system of clever mechanistic political arrangements that make it possible to dispense with civic education and the need to form an American character.¹² This Madison is a democratic liberal who established a system of pluralistic, interest-dominated politics. By thwarting the formation and influence of majorities in the extended republic, he created a governmental machine that turned private vice into public good. J. G. A. Pocock and Gordon Wood attacked this thesis with weapons stockpiled in the historians’ arsenal, situating Madison within the classical republican tradition that began in ancient Greece and continued through Machiavelli and into the era of the American Founding.¹³ Aristocratic leadership and deferential politics are the mainstay in this view of Madisonian politics, achieved

¹⁰ President John F. Kennedy, Remarks at Amherst College, October 26, 1963, in Robert G. Torricelli and Andrew Carroll, eds., *In Our Own Words: Extraordinary Speeches of the American Century* (New York: Kodansha International, 1999), 242.

¹¹ Charles A. Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Free Press, [1913] 1986). For a powerful critique of Beard’s thesis, see Forrest McDonald, *We the People: The Economic Origins of the Constitution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), and Robert E. Brown, *Charles Beard and the Constitution: A Critical Analysis of “An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution”* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1956). See also contemporary Progressive interpretations of Madisonian theory in the work of Richard K. Matthews, *If Men Were Angels: James Madison & the Heartless Empire of Reason* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995); Jennifer Nedelski, *Private Property and the Limits of American Constitutionalism: The Madisonian Framework and Its Legacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Woody Holton, “‘Divide et Impera’: *Federalist* 10 in a Wider Sphere,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 62 (2005), 175–212.

¹² See William A. Schambra, ed., *As Far as Republican Principles Will Admit: Essays by Martin Diamond* (Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, 1992). The interpretation of Madison as a pluralist theorist continues into the present; see, for example, Steven D. Smith, *The Constitution and the Pride of Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 67–68.

¹³ Gordon Wood, “Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution,” in Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, and Edward C. Carter, eds., *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 91–93; Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*,

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-72733-4 - James Madison and the Spirit of Republican Self-Government

Colleen A. Sheehan

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

5

in part by an extended territory composed of large congressional districts conducive to electing the better sorts of men. At present, the synthesis theory, or “multiple traditions approach” theory, to Madison is prevalent, which attempts to blend the liberal democratic and classical republican schools of thought. Michael Zuckert and Alan Gibson, for example, contend that there are classical elements in Madison’s thought, but that the modern liberal ideas of natural rights, limited government, and economic freedom are the predominant strains of his political theory.¹⁴

In each of these interpretive camps there are scholars who rigorously call into question Madison’s democratic credentials. This includes the modern liberal and many of the synthesis interpretations in one significant respect. Like the antidemocratic liberalism of contemporary Progressive scholars (e.g., Jennifer Nedelsky and Woody Holton) or the antidemocratic republicanism of Gordon Wood and others, they claim that Madison’s remedy for the problem of majority faction in the 10th *Federalist* was intended to make it virtually impossible for the people to form a collective judgment. An extensive territory composed of a multiplicity of interests and parties not only deters the formation of a majority faction, but in general makes it difficult for the people to communicate effectively and to discover a common opinion. The doctrine of separation of powers increases the difficulty of forming a majority consensus on any given issue. The antidemocratic thesis takes this further: Madison’s paean to popular sovereignty was in reality a death knell for popular government, these scholars claim. While some of these scholars contend that Madison’s aim was to deadlock democracy,¹⁵ others argue that his object was an end run around democracy. According to Wood, for example, though Madison and his *Federalist* cohorts couched their arguments in

1776–1787 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 510–18. See also Garry Wills, *Explaining America: The Federalist* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1981), 179–294; James Roger Sharp, *American Politics in the Early Republic: The New Nation in Crisis* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 26.

¹⁴ See Michael P. Zuckert, *The Natural Rights Republic: Studies in the Foundation of the American Political Tradition* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), especially ch. 7; Alan Gibson, *Interpreting the American Founding: Guide to the Enduring Debates over the Origins and Foundations of the American Republic* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006), passim, especially ch. 6; Alan Gibson, *Understanding the Founding: The Crucial Questions* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), chs. 4 and 5. These two recent works by Gibson constitute the best literature review of scholarship on the American Founding period. Gibson follows the diverse scholarly interpretations of the Founding through a labyrinth of ideas, allowing the reader to emerge with an understanding that is at once cogent and complex, varied and ongoing. In this volume, I have deliberately not attempted to repeat the work Gibson has so recently and expertly done.

¹⁵ See Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-72733-4 - James Madison and the Spirit of Republican Self-Government

Colleen A. Sheehan

Excerpt

[More information](#)

democratic language, they actually (and disingenuously) used democratic rhetoric to establish and justify an aristocratic system. Separating the social authority of the people and the political authority of the government, the Federalists imagined the Constitution as a “sort of ‘philosopher’s stone’” that could “transmute base materials into gold . . .”¹⁶ According to Joshua Miller, Madison conceived of the sovereignty of the people in abstract terms and undermined the democratic principles of the American Revolution. By dispensing with the need for civic participation and thwarting communicative activity among the citizenry, Madison created a “ghostly body politic.”¹⁷

In addition to the classical republican versus modern liberal theses and the democratic versus antidemocratic strains of interpretation, the issue of Madison’s consistency of thought is a matter of great scholarly contention. The vast majority of historians and political theorists addressing the issue have concluded that in the 1790s Madison switched sides from his nationalist stance in the 1780s to a more Jeffersonian states’ rights position, demonstrating a mind mired in confusion and inconsistency, or perhaps even one suffering from schizophrenia or tainted by dishonesty. Most of these interpretations have focused on Madison’s contributions to *The Federalist* to expound his essential views, with perhaps a skimming of his writings in the 1790s to show that he changed his mind.

In recent years, a handful of scholars have attempted to move beyond an overconcentration on the 10th *Federalist* as the telling account of Madison’s political theory and to present a more accurate and nuanced picture of his ideas.¹⁸ The careful work of Lance Banning stands out particularly in this regard. In *The Sacred Fire of Liberty: James Madison & the Founding of the Federal Republic*,¹⁹ Banning traces the development of Madison’s founding vision throughout the 1780s and 1790s and has successfully shown, I think,

¹⁶ Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787*, 562, 475, 507.

¹⁷ Joshua Miller, “The Ghostly Body Politic: The Federalist Papers and Popular Sovereignty,” *Political Theory* 16 (1988), 99–119.

¹⁸ For a more detailed treatment of the recent scholarly literature on the issue of Madison’s consistency or inconsistency of thought, see Alan Gibson, “The Madisonian Madison and the Question of Consistency: The Consistency and Challenge of Recent Research,” *The Review of Politics* 64:2 (2002), 311–38. Gibson identifies Irving Brant, Martin Diamond, Gordon Wood, and John Zvesper as the leading claimants of the view that Madison was inconsistent and Drew McCoy, Gary Rosen, James Read, Michael Zuckert, Jack Rakove, and Lance Banning as the foremost voices defending Madison’s consistency. In *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006, 141–72), however, Gordon Wood vigorously makes the case for Madison’s consistency and that there is no “‘Madison problem,’ except the one we [historians] have concocted.”

¹⁹ Lance Banning, *The Sacred Fire of Liberty: James Madison & the Founding of the Federal Republic* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995); cf. Banning, *Conceived in Liberty: The Struggle to Define the New Republic, 1789–1993* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-72733-4 - James Madison and the Spirit of Republican Self-Government

Colleen A. Sheehan

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

7

that scholars have generally misunderstood Madison's conception of federal republicanism and thus have erroneously concluded that he changed from a Hamiltonian-type nationalist distrustful of the power of the states and of the people in the 1780s to a states' righter and Jeffersonian democrat in the 1790s. According to Banning, throughout the Founding period, indeed throughout his life, Madison was consistently concerned about both the problem of majority faction and the threat of governmental tyranny. In the 1790s he did not change his principles; rather, he changed his emphasis. In the 1780s he concentrated on the problem of majority faction; in the 1790s, as a result of Hamilton's and the Federalists' attempt to increase the power of the national government at the expense of the authority of the states and the people, he concentrated on the problem of a powerful minority faction within the government. "Madison's lifelong concern," Marvin Meyers asserts, "has sometimes obscured the source of that concern: his prior commitment to popular government."²⁰ In sum, Madison consciously and consistently devoted himself to securing the democratic principles of the Revolution, the liberty of individuals, and the standard of self-government in the new federal republic.

While there is a substantial scholarly literature on Madison's political theory in the Constitutional Convention and *The Federalist*, relatively few studies have been devoted to his political theory and practice at the outset of the new government, and there is no book-length examination of his major theoretical writings during this period, viz., the "Notes on Government" and his essays for the *National Gazette*, or Party Press Essays.²¹ Yet the

²⁰ Marvin Meyers, *The Mind of the Founder: Sources of Political Thought of James Madison* (Hanover, N.H.: Brandeis University Press, 1981), 408.

²¹ See, for example, William B. Allen, "Justice and the General Good: *Federalist* 51," in Charles R. Kesler, ed., *Saving the Revolution: The Federalist Papers and the American Founding* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 133–36; John Zvesper, "The Madisonian Systems," *The Western Political Quarterly* 37:2 (1984), 236–56; Douglas W. Jaenicke, "Madison v. Madison: The Party Press Essays v. The Federalist Papers," in Richard Maidment and John Zvesper, eds., *Reflections on the Constitution: The American Constitution After Two Hundred Years* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1989), 116–47; Matthews, *If Men Were Angels*, 158–64; Banning, *Sacred Fire of Liberty*, 348–61; Gary Rosen, *American Compact: James Madison and the Problem of Founding* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 152–55; Saul Cornell, *The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism & the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788–1828* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 166–68, 247–53; James H. Read, *Power versus Liberty: Madison, Hamilton, Wilson, and Jefferson* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 32, 45; Larry D. Kramer, *The People Themselves: Popular Constitutionalism and Judicial Review* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 112–14; Larry D. Kramer, "The Interest of the Man: James Madison, Popular Constitutionalism, and the Theory of Deliberative Democracy," *Valparaiso University Law Review*, 41:2 (2007), 697–754; Alan Gibson, "Veneration and Vigilance: James Madison and Public Opinion," *Review of Politics* 67:1 (2005), 5–35, 69–76; Todd Estes, "Shaping

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-72733-4 - James Madison and the Spirit of Republican Self-Government

Colleen A. Sheehan

Excerpt

[More information](#)

years 1791–92 were perhaps the most intense period of philosophic activity in Madison’s life. This study focuses on Madison’s political thought and actions during the decade of the 1790s, with particular emphasis on his writings of 1791–92.

By the spring of 1791, after the close of the first Congress in which he served, Madison’s concerns over the future of the new nation had intensified as a result of John Adams’s influential publications and the passage of Alexander Hamilton’s bill to establish a national bank in the United States. During this spring Madison spent a concentrated period of time engrossed in the study of political philosophy and history, taking extensive notes on numerous sources and composing a detailed outline that treats the central political concerns in a remarkably comprehensive manner. Later that year and into the next, he published a series of nineteen articles in the *National Gazette* (many of which were reprinted in other newspapers) that reflected some of these concerns and are every bit as theoretically interesting and provocative as the essays he penned under the pseudonym Publius. These Party Press Essays defined the “republican cause” of the 1790s in America and established Madison as the principal philosophic proponent of the newly emerging Republican Party. To the role of philosophic leader Madison conjoined that of political leader of the Republicans, who set themselves in opposition to the policy agenda emanating from the office of the secretary of the treasury. In defining the republican cause and leading the opposition to Hamilton’s political, economic, and foreign policy program, Madison did more than anyone else – except perhaps Hamilton – to cause the first great political fissure in the American republic. The feud between Republicans and Federalists in the 1790s left a lasting impression on the American political landscape. It marked the formation of the first political parties in the United States, led to the decisive victory of the Republicans over the Federalists in the election of 1800, and established, at least for a time, a tradition of participatory politics in the American republic.

Although it is one of the most noted political battles of American history, the cause of this dispute remains to this day a source of confusion and controversy among scholars. The majority of scholars have concluded that in the 1790s Madison simply changed his mind about the theory of republican

the Politics of Public Opinion: Federalists and the Jay Treaty,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 20:3 (2000), 393–423; Estes, *The Jay Treaty Debate, Public Opinion, and the Evolution of Early American Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 7–8, and passim.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-72733-4 - James Madison and the Spirit of Republican Self-Government

Colleen A. Sheehan

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

9

government that he presented in the pages of *The Federalist*, Banning being the foremost exception to this view. When Madison was confronted with the charge of inconsistency during his own lifetime, he denied that he had undergone any material change of mind.²² I would suggest that Banning's arguments should be more heeded, and that a solid understanding of the motives and views behind Madison's alleged switch of positions between the late 1780s and the early 1790s requires more than a juxtaposition of the much-studied ideas of Publius with a cursory view of Madison's arguments in the first administration. Indeed, I believe that a careful examination of his writings of the 1790s provides a revealing account of Madison's philosophic self-understanding and the reasons he deliberately waged war against the Federalist agenda.

Madison's criticisms of John Adams's brand of republicanism and Hamilton's political and economic policies were not ad hoc, nor was Madison's intent simply to oppose Federalist measures. The battles he waged against Federalist policies were grounded in a positive republican vision and a constructive agenda as well. In Madison's mind, the arguments he laid out and the policies he pursued at the outset of the new government were tied together by a central philosophical idea – the fundamental authority of the people and the sovereignty of public opinion in free government. In his conception of republicanism, adherence to the form and spirit of popular government in the new nation meant the recognition of the supremacy of the Constitution, understood and administered in a manner consistent with the sense of the people who ratified and adopted it. It also meant the *ongoing* sovereignty of public opinion, which requires the active participation of the citizenry in the affairs of the political community.

In Madison's perception, the Federalists of the 1790s were attempting to craft a highly energetic and independent status for the executive, create a narrow governmental dependence on the wealthy few, and limit the citizenry to a submissive role based merely on their "confidence in government." Rejecting this schema, Madison advocated the politics of public opinion, through which he sought to foster and form an enlightened and broadly based public voice that would control and direct the measures of government.²³ While he

²² See Madison to N. P. Trist, September 27, 1834, *WJM* 9:471–77.

²³ William B. Allen argues that contrary to the Federalist view that the Constitution was grounded in a "political system founded on public opinion and the institutions of which, once established, constituted the very expression of public opinion," Madison and Jefferson believed that the Constitution had "erected a political system founded on but therefore subject to popular opinion. Accordingly, the offices and officers of the United States owed special deference and respect to popular opinion, and it would be appropriate to provide a

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-72733-4 - James Madison and the Spirit of Republican Self-Government

Colleen A. Sheehan

Excerpt

[More information](#)

did not deny to political leaders and enlightened men a critical place in the formation of public opinion, he fought vehemently against the Federalists' thin version of the politics of public opinion. In opposition to the Hamiltonian view of an economically absorbed and politically subservient people, he advanced the image of a responsible citizenry (composed primarily of sturdy, independent yeoman farmers) with an active and substantial role in republican government. He believed as well that ascertaining the real opinion of the public would unmask those Federalists who sought to counterfeit public opinion and use their version of it to separate Washington from the vast republican majority in America.

Although Madison's particular conception of participatory politics was intended to avert the problem of the tyranny of the majority, it nonetheless encouraged the communication of the citizens' views and the formation of a united public voice, thereby widening the path of opportunity for the power of public opinion. In the view of many Federalists, this threatened the checks on majoritarian politics contrived by the Framers; it asked more of the people than they could responsibly contribute to political life. Madison too was well aware of the potential dangers associated with majority opinion; in fact, none of the Founders was more mindful of such dangers. Nevertheless, he consciously took upon himself the role of chief philosophic architect and political leader of the republican effort to institute the politics of public opinion in America.

The communication of ideas and the refinement of views throughout the land, he claimed, can result in the attainment of "the reason of the public" and is the republican way to achieve impartiality in government. Federalists reacted with contempt and ultimately alarm to this brand of politics and the worship of the "Goddess of Reason." It sounded to them like the naive democratic optimism and "vain reveries of a false and new fangled philosophy" coming out of the French Enlightenment. Madison did not dispute the claim of French Enlightenment influence. Since the latter part of the 1780s Jefferson had been sending Madison crates of books by French authors on public opinion, and Madison had indeed been avidly reading their thoughts on the subject.

special conveyance outside of government for the expression of that opinion. The struggle over the question, whether the opinion of the people prevailed *in* or *over* the government gave rise to that party debate which to this date provides the pure form of all political disputes in the United States" ("The Constitution to End All Constitutions: The Descent of the American Founding into the Twentieth Century, or The Perfect State Is Not Ideal," 8–9, http://www.msu.edu/~allenwi/presentations/Constitution_to_End_all_Constitutions).