

**Jefferson's Radical Democratic Regime:
The *Politics Omnium Populorum Principle***

As the St. Paul of American democracy, Thomas Jefferson's canon – spanning nearly six decades of writings – is vast and distinct in topic. The lack of a political *magnum opus* has challenged scholarship to wade through the countless source of Jefferson's letters, speeches, and personal notes to present the intrinsic facets of his program. These endeavors have often set their sights on discovering the “real” Jefferson as a congruent thinker to a particular canonical register of thought. This paper takes up this tradition, albeit in an innovative and critical manner, by presenting a heterodox reading of Jefferson to better illuminate the radical democratic origins of the American Republic instantiated through the potentiality and actualization of political action enacted by the entire citizenry. To do so, this paper identifies, develops, and traces the *politics omnium populorum principle* immanent to Jefferson's thought as the central axiom of his political philosophy: self-government as the enactment of social-historical subjects striving for autonomy against all forms of tyranny, historically demonstrated through exceeding limitations imposed by state power, while orienting the political towards an ethos that finds all asking *what is to come, what is ahead*. In turn, a refutation of the promotion of a new pedantic, “real” illustration of Jefferson is central; instead, the objective is to uncover an unknown Jefferson: one that conceives of democracy, and moreover, democratic action, as an endless series of perpetually ongoing struggles by all against all forms of concentrated, hierarchical, and institutionalized political power.

Dean Caivano
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Political Science
York University

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Perhaps, then, democracy should be about forms rather than a form or constitution; and, instead of an institutionalized process, it should be conceived as a moment of experience, a crystallized response to deeply felt grievances or needs on the part of those whose main preoccupation – demanding of time and energy – is to scratch out a decent existence.¹

– Sheldon Wolin

This paper initiates a philosophical examination of the *politics omnium populorum principle* immanent within Jefferson's radical democratic project by turning to his theorization of ward republics. Examining his writings on the ward system – which developed over four decades – this paper seeks to fashion a coherent, systematic understanding of the role and function of the ward republics. Ostensibly, this paper argues that Jefferson views the ward republics as a safeguard against the excessive reach of tyrannical government power; a crucial training ground for localized education; a vital space for citizens to engage, practice, and learn the art of politics; and, the ultimate scene of political time-space for the momentum of autonomous action to push up against the boundaries of a statist framework. In turn, the ward system not only reignites and contains the revolutionary spirit of 1776 as Hannah Arendt correctly pointed out in *On Revolution*,² but it also, and more importantly, resolves the theoretical and practical deficiencies of democratic-republicanism, namely the problems of political time-space and the unrelenting quest for empire.

Moreover, Jefferson's ward system is not merely a theoretical framework generated along *a priori* or metaphysical lines. Instead Jefferson draws from specific politico-historical events that affirm the creative dimensionality of human activity in the struggle for political freedom through an ephemeral, yet perpetually ongoing political experience mapped upon an antagonistic stage that challenges the logic of the state. It is from Jefferson's adamant rejection of the compression of all forms of power in the hands of the one, the few, the well-born or even the many, contextualized within the framework of the ward system, that the *politics omnium populorum principle* finds its most profound articulation.

By exploring this ignored, underside of Jefferson's thought this paper traces key lines of Jefferson's thought to elucidate the reconfiguration of the classical regime modeling of governmental form by advancing a democratic regime that is only rendered possible through a politics of all. To illuminate the philosophical genesis of Jefferson's *politics omnium populorum principle* particular attention will be paid to the economic dimension that runs throughout his work, notably the pastoral vision of American society that finds all members endowed with the necessary political and economic skills to actively engage in the task of self-government. Additionally, this principle will be juxtaposed against the Madison-Hamilton paradigm of governance that seeks to resolve the inherent flaws of republican regimes through a proliferation of economic and commercial activity for a passive citizenry, a move that will stand in direct opposition to

Jefferson's retracted and localized scene for both economic and political engagement. This principle, therefore, represents Jefferson's uniquely radical political philosophy that conceives of self-government and democracy as synonymous which, in turn, leads to a theorization of democracy that is predicated upon a constant and on-going challenge against the encroachment of codified, institutionalized state power.³ It is important to caution that viewing Jefferson's theory of democracy in this way does not facilitate purely anarchist inclinations, in the sense of the total destruction and abolishment of the idea and erection of the state. Instead, it is generated through a perpetual questioning that seeks to reconstitute the power relationship between the state and a citizen *and* the state and a political community.

A. Whitney Griswold's seminal text *Farming and Democracy* is central to this understanding of Jefferson's democratic vision. Although the account is important in detailing the essential aspects of Jefferson's agrarian commitment, it is short sided in ignoring the crucial tenets of the pastoral landscape contained within his thought. However, Griswold is judiciously correct in his discussion on the significance of the independent farmer and the implications of engaging in such an endeavor that affords both time and space for political engagement. Griswold asserts that for Jefferson, "Democracy meant self-government."⁴ This short and biting premise is not only astute, but is illuminative of the radically democratic Jefferson cosmos that this work seeks to uncover.

The Dilemma of the Republican Regime: Political Time-Space and Empire

For Jefferson, the ward system is nothing short of a reconstitution of public space for the engagement of all members. Primarily, it sought to resolve the two main problems that had plagued republics throughout history: the promise of accessible space for the actualization of effective freedom for a *new type of being* that reflectively gives to itself the laws of its being while remaining, at least temporarily, freed from the material constraints of a life always shared with others; and, the infectious tendency to redraw the boundaries of a body politic through expansion, typically driven by the dictates of self-imposed, artificial economic necessities.

The dynamics of republican bodies throughout history – a lineage spanning from the ancient Greek *polis* to the Roman Republic to the Italian city-states of the Renaissance – carefully accentuates the inherent and often contradictory tension between this promise of political time-space and the haunting energy and movement towards empire. Looking at these two strenuous poles, a crucial dimension comes to light that captures the main thrust of republican theory. By this, a republican body politic is defined as: a democratic regime of self-reflectiveness and perpetual questioning constantly in pursuit and faced with the struggle for the articulation of self-government oriented to the problem of *what is to come, what is ahead*. It is more appropriate, then, to interrogate the historical and theoretical deficiencies of republican theory as the problems of a *democratic-republican* body politic that takes the *political* to signify the lucid activities of the collective aimed directly at the institutions of society *in relation with* an understanding of *politics* as an inherently democratic experience enacted through an explicit questioning of the established institutions of society.

Jefferson's theorization of the ward system – a network of civic republics – instantiated through the *politics omnium populorum principle* confronts the issue of political time-space and empire through a political framework by inverting the pitfalls that had afflicted the republics of antiquity and the Renaissance through the creation of a common stage for politics *while at the same time* localizing and redirecting the energetic drive for empire away from imperialistic and capitalistic motives. Before turning attention to just how actually Jefferson accomplishes such a demanding task, let's first more fully examine the ailments of the doomed historical republic.

First, a commitment to direct and active political engagement was advanced as the ideal and only legitimate form of political participation. However, the feasibility of such a time/energy-consuming endeavor became untenable due the stringent requirements of labor for the fulfillment of material necessities and the potential expansion of population growth. Rousseau's political community can be seen here as the archetype for this particular form of self-government given that it was always confronted with the issue of political time-space. Any territorial or population growth would undermine the availability (and necessity) for all members to participate in the on-going process of law-creation. The enlargement of the body politic in terms of both territory and population ultimately results in a diminution of *available time* for all citizens to engage politically due to the material necessities of life. The duality of the Rousseauian political actor conceived as both subject and citizen becomes untenable and decisively degenerates away from citizenship and towards mere obedience with the inevitable growth of the body politic; a growth that is always impregnated with a finality of decay and destruction. In turn, the health of the Rousseauian community impinged upon a fixed boundary and homogenous citizenry linked with a surplus of free time available outside of the confines of the labor process.

It is essential to assert here that I am making a clear delineation between labor and work, largely borrowing from Hannah Arendt's ontological hierarchy detailed in *The Human Condition*. In that important work, Arendt describes labor as the activities that are dedicated and necessary for the continuation and reproduction of life. Within the hierarchical model, labor is the lowest form of activity because it is determined by necessity – the mere necessity for food, water, and shelter.⁵ This activity is not intrinsically human, but a necessity that is confronted by all animals. Labor, therefore, consists of both necessity and futility. The result of labor is the instant consumption and annihilation of the product. The products of labor are produced only for consumption and leave no memorial and nothing permanent behind that reflects the expression of human activity, as Arendt writes, "It is indeed the mark of all laboring that it leaves nothing behind, that the result of its effort is almost as quickly consumed as the effort is spent."⁶ Labor, much like consumption, is transient: constantly produced, consumed, and desired in a cyclical manner through endlessly repetitive processes. For Arendt, labor is undeniably *world-less* in the sense that it produces nothing that stands the test of time or outlives one's life span. It is the activities of the *animal laborans* that serve necessity without directly acting during the process. Man as a laborer behaves as a "conditioned and behaving animal" according to the biological and physiological dictates of the body.⁷ As a *world-less* activity, the laborer does not produce in collaboration or in conjunction with others, but rather, conditionally operates as a private creature. "The *animal laborans* does not flee the world but is ejected from it in so far as he is

imprisoned in the privacy of his own body,” Arendt contends, “caught in the fulfillment of needs in which nobody can share and which nobody can fully communicate.”⁸ Labor, therefore, is not only *world-less*, but also *word-less*. Hence speech is germane to *animal laborans* only to communicate what is pertinent to economic undertakings, as it is strictly instrumental. Therefore, the absence and denial of political speech for a democratic-republican body politic not only undermines the political rights imbued within such a regime, it also actively accelerates the collapse of the political. The availability of political time-space thus impinges upon the sufficient preservation of both time and energy away from the rigidity of labor.

Second, as an avid reader of classical antiquity, Jefferson was astute to the troubling expansionist instincts of republican politics finding its most profound expression in the transformation of the Roman Republic. Citing English historian Edward Gibbon’s *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* in a list of recommended books comprised in October 1809,⁹ Jefferson saw the drive to empire predicated along economic grounds as inhibitive to popular sovereignty and individual as well as societal enlightenment. Writing to Thomas Leiper on 12 June 1815 about the tyrannical and defective qualities of Napoleon Bonaparte, Jefferson likens the current depraved state of the European continent to the Roman Empire, stressing: “the establishment, in our day, of another Roman empire, spreading vassalage and depravity over the face of the globe, is not, I hope, within the purposes of heaven.”¹⁰ Again, in a letter to John Adams dated 10 December 1819, Jefferson suggests that the Roman people were “incapable of exercising a wholesome control” due to the decline of political involvement and the lack of ideas concerning self-government.¹¹

Although Gibbon’s account appears to have been Jefferson’s most important link to the history of Rome, scholarship has crucially missed the influence of Machiavelli to him on the subject. In his private library at Monticello slotted between Xenophon and Voltaire, Jefferson carefully placed volumes four and five of *Opere di Niccolò Macchiavelli, coll aggiunta della inedite*. This important work, printed in 1768, featured Machiavelli’s fundamental texts, *The Prince* and *Discourses on Livy*. In his personal journal dated 26 April 1784, Jefferson briefly summarizes an exchange with the prominent Dutch bookselling firm of Boinod & Gaillard highlighting his acquisition of the Machiavellian text.¹²

This is important not simply as it showcases the depth of Jefferson’s historical interests, but precisely because there are strong parallels between Rome’s downfall and the design of the American Republic envisioned by Madison and Hamilton. According to Machiavelli, an insatiable ambition plagued the Empire postulating: “Whenever men cease fighting through breasts that whatever high rank men climb to, never does ambition abandon them.”¹³ We shall see shortly that the Madison-Hamilton project is fully aware of the great force of ambition; however, their prescription is not inoculation from its energetic movement, but rather a redirection of it into economic endeavors in pursuit of an American Empire. As the “city was never again free,”¹⁴ due to its incessant move towards empire, Machiavelli – and, in a fascinating way, Montesquieu’s *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline* – greatly ascribe the expansionist ethos via economic and military pursuits of the republic-turned-empire as a decisive catalyst for the corrosion and ultimate demise of the Republic. For Jefferson, then, Madison and Hamilton’s embrace and transplantation

of ambition into the orbit of a vast, depoliticized market society will be met with great reluctance and trepidation to avoid the dangers that afflicted the Roman Republic.

The Madison-Hamilton Remedy to the Problems of Republican Self-Government

The complications surrounding the dilemma of time-space and the drive for empire were of central concern to the American Founders. Most notably James Madison and Alexander Hamilton provide an elaborate and complex transformation of these potentially terminal problems prescribed throughout *The Federalist Papers*. Madison's diagnosis of an active citizenry within in a democratic society is unsympathetic, as he views no benefit to the extension of political participation as a means to resolve the basic elements of human nature. In *Federalist No. 10*, Madison rejects the localized setting of a Rousseauian style political community, writing: "a pure democracy, by which I mean a society consisting of a small number of citizens, who assemble and administer the government in person, can admit of no cure for the mischiefs of factions."¹⁵ Echoing similar sentiments, Alexander Hamilton describes the ancient democracies of the Ancient Greek *polis* and the *res publica* of the early Roman Republic as "petty republics" viewing them with "horror and disgust."¹⁶

In similar manners, both Madison and Hamilton call for a total break with the ancient world in favor for the trajectory of progress promised by modernity *qua* the project of Enlightenment. It is imperative to note that Jefferson, too, announces a repudiation of the past much like his fellow American contemporaries. However, the uniquely Jeffersonian solution to the defects of republicanism rests along a rehabilitation of active political and economic grounds, rather than the politically passive vision of self-government subordinate to the dynamic economic prescriptions provided by Madison and Hamilton.

In *Federalist No. 48*, Madison provides his view of power contending that institutional mechanisms are necessary to check both men and government precisely because *power always wants to expand*. This power-checking requirement is further linked up to the argument advanced in *Federalist No. 51*. In this entry, Madison suggests that a "necessary partition of power" must be established between governmental departments. Establishing the American Republic as a constitutional government,¹⁷ Madison believes that a division of power, checks and balances, an independent judiciary, and a representative legislature can crucially check power. This containment of power is vital precisely because Madison takes up a negative, bleak view on the state of human nature and as an offspring, the vital necessity for government, writing, "If men were angels, no government would be necessary."¹⁸ Madison's assertion and his Hobbesian view of mankind demonstrate the difficulty in framing a government that would be administrated by "men over men." In order to achieve this trying task, Madison contends that a double layer of security is needed in which the government must be able to control the governed and the mechanism of government itself too must be checked. Hamilton, too, advances a low view of mankind accentuating the role that passions play on an individual. In a vital speech on 22 June 1787 given during the Constitutional Convention, Hamilton invokes language strongly influenced by the Scottish philosopher David Hume asking, "Take mankind as they are,

and what are they governed by?" His retort is nothing short of pure Humean thought: "passions."¹⁹

Highly influenced by Hobbesian and Lockean thought,²⁰ Madison sees individuals as essentially selfish and in constant pursuit of power. Invoking Machiavellian overtones, Madison suggests that individuals have a deep-seated interest in ambition, and primarily, an insatiable thirst to hold high political office. Constructing his argument from these first principles, Madison, much like Hamilton, embraces the writings of Hume in an attempt to further illuminate his solution to the ills that had plagued republican principalities throughout history, namely the interplay between the boundaries of political space and the impulse for empire. In "That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science": David Hume, James Madison, and the Tenth Federalist," Douglass Adair carefully traces Madison's adaptation of Hume's ideas for Federalist No. 10. Adair also points out that Madison's 6 June 1787 and 26 June speeches at the Federal Convention were strongly presented with Humean inflections.²¹ Following closely to Humean thought, Madison contends that individuals are motivated by passions and private interests, frequently adverse to the "rights of other citizens," or to the common good of the community. According to Madison, the notion of passions refers to individuals who are motivated by religious sentiments, whereas the pursuit of interests indicates economic connotations, chiefly the attainment of private property. As individuals differ in their passions or interests, Madison is fearful that a number of citizens could unite together, comprising a faction.

To address the threatening emergence of factions, Madison asserts two methods for "curing the mischiefs of faction: the one, by removing its causes; the other, by controlling its effects."²² Since the latent causes of factions are ontologically engrained into human nature both methods categorically fail to remedy the origin and occurrence of factions. An enactment of the first method necessitates the total destruction of liberty whereas the second approach is equally impractical as it is predicated upon the annihilation of the "diversity in the faculties of men," which is the locus of where private property rights originate.²³ Since the causes of factions cannot be removed, Madison adopts the position that controlling the influence of factions is the only viable relief.

To control the effects of a faction containing a minority of support, Madison relies on the republican principle of majority rule to squash the dissenting objectors. However, at the heart of Madison's concern is the presence of a majority faction that could impose upon a minority. To deal with the occurrence of a majority faction, Madison offers three remedies to counteract the faction. First, Madison relies on the republican tradition of constitutionalism, which leads to a separation of power effectively breaking up concentrations of power, thus making it more difficult for a majority faction to achieve what they seek. Second, the role of representatives is crucial. However, Madison articulates a particularly aristocratic, if not flat out Burkean, image of political representation depicted by a trustee relationship. For Madison, representatives do not emerge from the lower classes, but rather, are exemplar models of civic virtue through their sense of justice, patriotism, and public good. Third, and finally, Madison sought to dilute the potency of factions through his proclamation of "extend the sphere [...]."²⁴

Madison's containment of factions through an enlargement of the republic – a broadening that does not trigger an increase in political time-space – rests upon his desire for a highly commercial state. By "extending the sphere" citizens will be too

consumed with their economic interests effectively leaving political matters to the well-respected, virtuous political elites. His solution, then, is premised along economic conditions with a basic view that citizens will be left with little time and energy to engage in the process of self-government. Madison's plan is nothing short of extraordinary constitutional engineering. On the one hand, Madison is careful to not deny political access through an erasure of the political thus ensuring an important façade of democratic principles. Yet on the other hand, Madison carefully devises an intricate system that not only redirects the energy of the citizenry, but also grinds the movement of the government to a near standstill. What Madison's enlightened, modern, and commercial republic essentially leads to is the retraction of the political through an enclosure of political space by redirecting the flow of decision-making power into institutional departments and elected officials *while at the same time* directing the citizenry into the flourishing, time-consuming market.

Hamilton as well sees the expansion of size as beneficial writing in *Federalist No. 9*, "I mean the enlargement of the orbit within which such systems are to resolve [...]." ²⁵ From this position, then, Hamilton posits that a large, diverse, heterogeneous, and plural society, reminiscent of Montesquieu's notion of intermediary bodies, will ultimately lead to an enlargement of the territorial bounds of the republic resulting in a reduction of the efficacy of factions and a proper channeling of passions. It is here that Hamilton's view of the human psyche returns with its strongest sway shaping both his political and economic vision. Since an inherent division between the few and the many runs throughout society, ²⁶ Hamilton believes that this fundamental chasm must be exposed rather than concealed. To assuage the potential dangers of a naturally divided society, political power should be placed into the hands of the few and the many with each body maintaining a vital check within their respected governmental department. ²⁷ Naturally the House was suitable as the depository for the many while the few, endowed with privilege and virtue, would maintain a voice of opposition through the Senate. Hamilton's remedy here to deal with the unrelenting influence of passions operates within a purely political context. The real genius of his vision rests upon economic prescriptions.

With political power properly stabilized, or more bluntly put, destabilized, an energetic federal government was essential as *the* institutional mechanism to foster the development and proliferation of a capital market. For Hamilton, what the consolidation of political power into a singular body via the federal government effectively created was a redrawing of the legitimate boundaries for economic expansion, bringing with it undoubtedly the full protection and enforcement powers of a unitary government. Just as Madison offered a redirection of factionary interests, Hamilton, too, plunges the passions of the individual and, taking Madison's argument one-step further, resettles the federal governmental into the depths of capitalistic pursuits. Empire is thus the *raison d'être* for Hamilton's American Republic. For both Hamilton and Madison, the *civic republic* of the ancients and the Italian city-states of the Renaissance require an aptly modern transformation into the *commercial republic*.

As an embryo of a fledging empire, ²⁸ Hamilton's vision of the American state – a project that runs congruent with Madison's political thinking – demonstrates a theoretical attempt to rectify the problematic elements of republican self-government. To Hamilton and Madison, important institutional mechanisms were necessary to thwart the wild,

eruptive ethos of popular sovereignty. Understood as modern inventions these self-correcting institutional checks, namely the creation of a federal system defined by political representation and a division of power across departments, offered the promise of surpassing and rectifying the deficiencies that had plagued the politics of republican theory. Ultimately, Hamilton and Madison advocate for an enlargement of the republic; however, this increase is advanced through economic justifications, effectively stifling the private interests and passions of the citizenry in relation to political issues. What we are left with then is a clear retraction of political time-space – a shrinkage of available resources for active political engagement – in favor of an acceleration and proliferation of economic interests propelled by an expansionist energy, at both the individual and state level.

Jefferson's Passageway for the (Re)Creation of Time-Space

For the Madison-Hamilton paradigm, the American Republic needed to orientate its future towards empire and expansion through the intercession of commerce, finance, and self-interest. Central to this vision of a large commercial political community is a particular conception of the political citizen, one that essentially disentangles economic pursuits from political concerns through a prioritization of the former over the latter. The image of the political citizen that emerged at the founding – and has strikingly persisted throughout the history of the republic – is decisively an American iteration of *homo economicus*. However, this vision stands in direct opposition to the Jeffersonian portrait of the political community and citizen. Rather, Jefferson presents a radical and unorthodox worldview that sees beauty, moderation, and the perfectibility of mankind as embedded within the pastoral landscape of rural America.

For Jefferson, both political and economic space, coupled with available time for political engagement, are requisites for the maturation and the actualization of freedom for the citizen envisioned as a modern-day *zoon politikon*. In a compelling way, the development of the Jeffersonian citizen is accompanied by an internationalization of social responsibilities effectively rendering Madison's scheme obsolete.²⁹ To see how Jefferson resolves the problems of time-space and empire through the creation of the ward system, we must turn attention to his understanding of property and agriculture, which actively facilitates the conditions for the enactment of political freedom demarcated by a politics of all.

It is only fitting to begin – where so many political thinkers began their philosophical projects – with Jefferson's conception and understanding of property. For Jefferson, no natural right to property exists for individuals and, as a result, only nature, not man, is the true creator of value.³⁰ Since no man possesses any natural right to property the establishment and enforcement of property rights occurs *via* the application of positive law. In a letter to James Madison, dated 6 September 1789, Jefferson is adamant about the lack of a natural right to property: "Then no man can, by *natural right*, oblige the lands he occupied, or the persons who succeed him in that occupation, to the payment of debts contracted by him."³¹

In the same letter Jefferson proceeds to outline his unorthodox vision of the relationship between mankind and the earth. Repudiating primogeniture and hereditary claims to property, Jefferson offers up his most striking and radical proposition. In

concise and nuanced prose, Jefferson categorically asserts, “I set out on this ground, which I suppose to be self-evident, ‘*that the earth belongs in usufruct to the living*’: that the dead have neither powers nor rights over it.”³² In this sweeping declaration, Jefferson attempts to obliterate the aristocratic hegemony that was so deeply imbued within both Enlightenment philosophic thought *and* the national consciousness of colonial and revolutionary America.

This direct attack on the aristocracy is only adumbrated in his letter to Madison; a fuller articulation of his critique resonates in a missive to John Adams nearly twenty-four years later. Writing to Adams on the benefits of science, Jefferson turns his attention to aristocracy drawing a distinction between *natural* and *artificial* manifestations. For Jefferson, virtue and talents – not pedigree or hereditary titles – are the truest reflection of a natural aristocracy that is the “most precious gift of society.”³³ Conversely, Jefferson sees artificial aristocracy predicated upon wealth and birth as a “mischievous ingredient in government and provision should be made to prevent its ascendancy.”³⁴ Read in conjunction with Jefferson’s axiom that “*the earth belongs in usufruct to the living*” and the central thesis of this project that “The spirit of resistance to government is so valuable on certain occasions, that I wish it to be always kept alive,” we are presented with an image of Jefferson that is fundamentally antagonistic to the continuation of aristocratic economic and political dominance.

Jefferson’s condemnation of artificial aristocracy and his instrumentalization of property as a means to achieve happiness, rather than for capital accumulation or the appropriation of surplus labor also has far reaching implications for his overarching vision of society and government. Since the earth is utilized in usufruct – which is clearly antithetical to the tenets of the possessive market society envisioned and perpetuated by Lockean liberalism – and belongs only to the living generation devoid of past generational claims and titles, no perpetual constitution, whether it be land entitlements or a political constitution, can be permitted. Rather, Jefferson advocates for a releasing of debts, civil laws, property rights derived from positive law, and political constitutions for each subsequent generation. In short, prior laws, customs, and traditions do not bind the people of the present with “every constitution then, and every law, naturally expiring at the end of 19 years.”³⁵ Jefferson’s repudiation of the past and his future-oriented philosophy stands out in opposition to the strongly pragmatic and respect for past traditions and institutions by other prominent American thinkers of his time, such as John Adams, John Marshall, and even Alexander Hamilton.³⁶

With individuals, and, in turn, each ensuing society, unencumbered from the stringency of social, economic, and political hierarchies, Jefferson turns to the earth as the appropriate locus for the full development and humanization of individuals. Jefferson is thus unequivocal in his advocacy for the cultivation of the earth *via* agricultural endeavors as the *human activity par excellence*. The striking sub-header for Query VIII of *Notes on the State of Virginia* provides valuable insights into the role of farming in his thought. Opening the query, Jefferson poses the question, “A notice of all that can increase the progress of human knowledge?”³⁷ What follows is not an advocacy for intellectual or philosophical training, but rather a rigorous analysis of the contributing factors, such as suitable temperatures, levels of rainfall, and geographical locations, necessary for the flourishing of agricultural activities. Human knowledge and progress is therefore symbiotically tied to individuals turning their talents, skills, and energy to the

enrichment of the earth. In Query XXII, Jefferson is steadfast in his promotion of agricultural development over foreign commerce efforts postulating, “[...] turn all our citizens to the cultivation of the earth; and, I repeat it again, cultivators of the earth are the most *virtuous* and *independent* citizens.”³⁸ Jefferson once again echoes his sentiments of the virtuous farmer in a 23 August 1785 letter to John Jay. Assaying the prospects of other laborious activities, Jefferson contends:

Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to it’s [sic] liberty and interest by the most lasting bands. As long as therefore as they can find employment [sic] in this line, I would not convert them into mariners, artisans, or anything else.³⁹

Based on our discussion of Jefferson’s conception of aristocracy, it is clear that those whom toil the land are members of a natural aristocracy advancing the human race towards a complete emancipation of mankind. C.B. Macpherson astutely picks up this latter element of Jefferson’s claim, particularly, that cultivators are crucially independent citizens. Briefly turning attention to the role of farming in Jeffersonian thought, Macpherson accentuates in *Democratic Theory*:

With one’s own small property one could not be made subservient. [...] It was to secure individual liberty, and all the *virtues* that can flourish only with sturdy *independence*, that Jefferson wanted America to remain a country of small proprietors. [...] This justification of property rests, in the last analysis, on the right to life at a more than animal level: freedom from coerced labour and arbitrary government are held to be part of what is meant by a fully human life.⁴⁰

What Macpherson is keen to identify is that for Jefferson an individual’s possession of property not only ensures a life freed from oppressive, exploitative wage-labor *but also* the physical, intellectual, and emotional space for nothing short of the full development of an individual’s capacities and potentialities. In a letter to Samuel Kercheval, dated 12 July 1816, Jefferson renounces the repressive, dehumanizing working conditions of the European laborer because it does not afford the worker any time to “think.”⁴¹ Not only is there more “time” for the Jeffersonian farmer to exercise his capacities, but as Jefferson details in his 6 September 1785 letter to Geismar, there is more “freedom, more ease and less misery” in the rural setting of Monticello compared to the dense urban setting of Europe.⁴² In this sense, we should see the Jeffersonian farmer as engaged in a project of self-development endowed with *sufficient time* and *physical space* firmly embedded within a rural, bucolic landscape of early America. Jefferson is able to make these claims about the relationship between the self-development of man and the agricultural aesthetic precisely because the Jeffersonian man is directly contra to the Lockean, or even more decisively, the Madison-Hamilton conception of the market man. As those thinkers posited man as self-interested, rational, and economically minded, Jefferson offers a conceptualization of man that is fundamentally antithetical by arguing, “nature hath implanted in our breasts a love of others, a sense of duty to them, a moral instinct [...]”⁴³ For Jefferson, it is the heart, an

“honest heart” specifically, that is the primary blessing of man not the rational mind.⁴⁴ Daniel J. Boorstin is keen to observe this innate feeling of duty and community, explaining in *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson*, “[...] this sense of creaturehood that finally gave the Jeffersonian their sense of community and prevented an emphasis on ‘rights’ from becoming anarchy [...]”⁴⁵

It is important to highlight the current of ecological concern running throughout his works and its impact on individual development and a “species of happiness.”⁴⁶ Unlike other Enlightenment thinkers, predominately Locke, whose systematic philosophical projects unleashed and anointed excessive ecological destruction and degradation as a byproduct of progress enacted by the industrious of the world, Jefferson goes to great lengths to mitigate the destructive vampire-like system of the possessive market society. In a tone that is reminiscent to Montesquieu’s ecological concern expressed in Book XIV of *The Spirit of Laws*, Jefferson comments on the effects that climate and environmental elements can play on a body politic.⁴⁷ In Query XX of *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson favors the cultivation of wheat over tobacco due to the extreme impact that tobacco farming has on the land, commenting:

Little food of any kind is raised by them; so that the men and animals on these farms are illy fed, and the *earth is rapidly impoverished*. The cultivation of wheat is the reverse in every circumstance. Besides clothing the earth with herbage, and preserving its fertility, it feeds the labourers plentifully, requires from them only a moderate toil, except in the season of harvest, raises great numbers of animals for food and service, and diffuses plenty and happiness among the whole. We find it easier to make an hundred bushels of wheat than a thousand weight of tobacco, and they are worth more when made.⁴⁸

Thus it would not be a stretch to call Jefferson one of the first ecological thinkers of the Enlightenment. In a personal note titled, “Scheme for a System of Agricultural Societies,” dated March 1811, Jefferson provides a litany of recommendations for the proper treatment of farmlands. Notably, Jefferson mentions: a rotation of crops according to soil and climate; a principle of cultivation for wheat; a recognition of effective instruments to “correct the slovenly and unproductive practices too generally prevalent”; the utilization of “manures, plaster, green-dressings, fallows, and other means of ameliorating the soil”; and, the creation of a report outlining useful husbandry techniques and practices.⁴⁹ In a sense, Jefferson views the cultivation and flourishing of the earth as a reflection of the development and progression of mankind. Only by toiling the soil can an individual remain free from the excessive realms of economic and political coercion while at the same time properly engaging and developing their intellectual, physical, and moral faculties. From this perspective, Jefferson is a *radical holistic ecological thinker* as both the earth and individuals are jointly in need of proper cultivation and development.

Jefferson’s ecological concerns extend to the very type of *agricultural system* that he is promoting. It is easy, and from a quick *prima facie* glance of his writings, understandable as to why so many scholars have deemed Jefferson as a steadfast advocate of agrarianism. But to classify Jefferson as an agrarian thinker – in the strictest, historical sense of the word – would be to dismiss his ecological concerns as

well as his embrace of appropriate scientific and technological advances. Leo Marx is correct in picking up the *pastoral* vision promulgated by Jefferson, writing, “To call Jefferson an agrarian is to imply that his argument rests, at bottom, upon a commitment to an agricultural economy.”⁵⁰ Marx continues to clarify the distinction: “Although the true agrarians of his day, the physiocrats, had demonstrated the superior efficiency of large-scale agriculture, Jefferson continues to advocate the small, family-sized farm.”⁵¹ Marx is perceptive to highlight Jefferson’s rejection of the salience of economic factors as the determining criterion for societal organization. In Query XIX of *Notes on the State of Virginia* Jefferson argues against the recommendations of European economists for a full-scale transition from agriculture to manufacturing. Strongly dismissing the prospects of manufacturing and the level of dependence that accompanies its implementation, Jefferson ardently argues:

Manufacture must therefore be resorted to, of necessity, not of choice, to support the surplus of their people. But we have an immensity of land courting the industry of the husbandman. Is it best then that all our citizens should be employed in its improvement, or that one half should be called off from that to exercise manufactures and handicraft arts for the other? Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue.⁵²

Rather than viewing Jefferson as firmly an agrarian thinker, it is more fitting to consider him, as Richard Matthews contends in his work *The Radical Politics of Thomas Jefferson*, a proponent of scientific farming. Matthews effectively argues in line with Marx, contending, “[...] Jefferson seeks a pastoral ideal, a form of scientific farming in which the farmer can take advantage of all the arts of agriculture [...]”⁵³ Matthews concludes by succinctly outlining Jefferson’s thinking: “Quite simply, he wants all the benefits of science, technology, and agriculture without any of the costs of industrialization.”⁵⁴ Matthews is spot-on in his brevity regarding Jefferson’s promotion of an integration between science and his pastoral vision. In a letter to John Adams, dated 28 October 1813, Jefferson fashions together his previous ideas on virtue *via* agricultural endeavors and the dissolution of artificial aristocracy in a discussion on the progression of science:

An insurrection has consequently begun, of science, talents, and courage against rank and birth, which have fallen into contempt. [...] Science is progressive, and talents and enterprise on the alert. Resort may be had to the people of the country, a more governable power from their principles and subordination; and rank, and birth, and tinsel-aristocracy will finally shrink into insignificance [...].⁵⁵

Thus, the pastoral image envisioned by Jefferson is not indicative of a *prior* socio-historical epoch, but a *dialectical synthesis* between agrarianism and the brutalizing, sweeping effects of modernization and industrialization. For Jefferson, pastoralism is not a reactionary process; instead, it is the negation of the possessive market society that runs directly to the heart of Hamiltonian economics.

The centrality of property and pastoralism in Jeffersonian thought has far reaching implications for his larger, more robust political philosophy. From our brief analysis of his writings on property, ecological concerns, and pastoralism, it is appropriate to utilize that backdrop to examine *how* and *in what ways* political participation fits into his overall philosophical project. In an analogous manner to his vision of pastoralism, Jefferson's promotion of ward republics exists as the fertile foundational point for political activity and human progression.

Jefferson's Rebellious Ward Republics

*As Cato, then, concluded every speech with the words
'Carthago delenda est,'
so do I every opinion, with the injunction,
'divide the counties into wards.'*⁵⁶

Scholarship's treatment of Jefferson's ward system has been either cursory or flat-out absent.⁵⁷ Recent attempts that have actively attempted to situate Jefferson as a radical thinker, such as Kevin R.C. Gutzman's *Thomas Jefferson – Revolutionary: A Radical's Struggle to Remake America*, only briefly mention and examine the ward system.⁵⁸ Often dismissed and reduced to an idealist thought experiment that *only* emerged in the later years of his life, the importance of direct political action by all members of a ward is strikingly missing. But to cast Jefferson's ward system off as a byproduct that manifested at the end of his long, active political career is to dilute the germ of the idea that permeated within him for nearly four decades. Jefferson's vision of a highly participatory and engaged political community did not suddenly percolate as a response to administrative and policy shortcomings during his presidency as Suzanne W. Morse suggests, but rather it first appeared in his writings anterior to becoming the third president.⁵⁹

As Dumas Malone observes, Jefferson's 1776 constitutional draft for the Commonwealth of Virginia advocates for a transmission of knowledge through localized school districts. Further, Malone notes that Jefferson's horizontal scheme of education embedded within local communities titled "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge" was dismissed by the Assembly in 1776 and then again in 1779.⁶⁰ Malone is correct to emphasize the destabilizing potential that such a policy platform would have enacted on the dominant social hierarchies of colonial Virginia, but he fails to trace Jefferson's desire for the division of public space as a central method for organizing a political community. Jefferson indicates his earlier impulse in a letter to Joseph Priestly dated 27 January 1800, a full year before ascending to the presidency.

about 20. years ago I drew a bill for our legislature which proposed to lay off every county into hundreds or townships of 5 or 6. miles square, in the center of each of which was to be a free English school; the whole state was further laid off into 10. districts in each of which was to be a college for teaching the languages, geography, surveying and other useful things of that grade; and then a single University for the sciences.⁶¹

This letter certainly underscores the importance of education to Jefferson, but it also reveals a reimagining of republican political boundaries both in substance and size. For Jefferson, the ward system enables an enlargement of the overall size of the republic while at the same time ensuring that all citizens have both the time and space to engage in local politics. Jefferson's resolution of the deficiencies of republican politics, therefore, is a rejection of Madison's remedy as it takes on a political dimension that is fundamentally tied to his vision of a democratic society, and, in turn, a theory of democracy that positions the citizenry as a countervailing force against the state. This political component within the development of Jefferson's theorization of ward republics was first noticed in Hannah Arendt's *On Revolution*. In Arendt's groundbreaking text, she marks an important break in scholarship by accentuating the concern on Jefferson's part to maintain a revolutionary spirit *at all times* throughout the United States. Arendt picks up Jefferson's desire for constant revolution, effectively noting: "he expected the wards to permit the citizens to continue to do what they had been able to do during the years of revolution, namely, to act on their own and thus to participate in public business as it was being transacted from day to day."⁶² In so doing, Arendt correctly links Jefferson's axiom of active sharers and participators in political power with his ward system.

In *Nature's Man: Thomas Jefferson's Philosophical Anthropology*, Maurizio Valsania reemphasizes Arendt's casting of Jefferson as "downright Aristotelian."⁶³ Although Valsania is hesitant to stress the communitarian spirit of Jefferson, he does highlight that for Jefferson the state did not maintain a legitimate right to its territory. Conversely, Jefferson's philosophy embraced a dynamic vision of the political community or, rather, a democratic society in which all members were released from the grips of consolidated state power and empowered to self-government in the present.⁶⁴ In a crucial way, Jefferson's theorization of localized democratic politics is an attempt to dislodge the political society from the state as historian Peter S. Onuf has prominently argued.⁶⁵ The means to break the corrosive bond between local citizens and the centralized state, as Jefferson casts the sprawling federal government in a 13 August 1800 letter to Gideon Granger, runs directly to the explicit scene of political action within the ward system.⁶⁶

In short, Jefferson is no fan of a large governmental apparatus. For Jefferson, power isolated in codified departments far removed from the people exacerbates the likelihood of political coercion. Jefferson is curt in his assessment of the American government in his 6 September 1824 letter to William Ludlow, alleging, "we have more machinery of government than is necessary, too many parasites living on the labor of the industrious."⁶⁷ Instead of the proliferation of vast governmental departments erected in state capitols and the District of Columbia, Jefferson envisions an inverted pyramidal scheme of government with power flowing from the bottom-up.⁶⁸ By turning the source and flow of power on its head – thus returning political power back to local communities – Jefferson assuages the political capital of the dominant American elites by directly connecting active political participation to individual and societal progression. From this perspective, it is clear that Jefferson should not be read as a continuation of Lockean liberalism, which vacated political power from local hands in favor of a minimal, isolated containment of politics. Jefferson, therefore, finds his orbit more properly situated within

the trajectory of radical democratic thinkers, such as Rousseau and Paine, than with the Locke, Montesquieu, and Madison paradigm.

At the base of Jefferson's pyramidal structure of government is the main concentration of political power and activity in the form of ward republics. Drawing from four distinct historical sites – the ancient Greek *polis*, the township configuration of the Saxons, New England town hall meetings, and aboriginal tribal councils – Jefferson sees the ward republics as a safeguard against the excessive reach of tyrannical government power; a crucial training ground for localized education; and, a vital space for citizens to engage, practice, and learn the “art of politics.”⁶⁹ Jefferson believes that by dividing counties into smaller units in the form of ward republics, citizens will be able to “attend, when called on, and act in person”⁷⁰ for the consideration and decision-making process of localized issues. It is fitting, then, that the Jefferson farmer is afforded both *time* to develop his faculties, as we examined in our discussion of the pastoral vision of Jefferson's thought, as well as the material opportunity to engage in politics. The significance of available political-time space cannot be understated. Jefferson sees society separated by a fundamental division between the “laboring and the learned.”⁷¹ The ward system facilitates the transformation of the laborer into the learned political subject, by ensuring access to political time-space through a minimum level of property and an opening of publically constructed political space.

Within these small ward republics “of five or six miles square,”⁷² Jefferson conceptualizes a fully functional unit as each ward republic is responsible for the institution of public education; a commitment to tend to the poor of the ward; maintenance of public roads; creation of protection agencies via local police and militia; and, an operational court system.⁷³ In a letter to Major John Cartwright, shortly before his death, Jefferson provides his most coherent and detailed account of the structure and ethos of ward republics:

Each ward would thus be a small republic within itself, and every man in the State would thus become an acting member of the common government, transacting in person a great portion of its rights and duties, subordinate indeed, yet important, and entirely within his competence. The wit of man cannot devise a more solid basis for free, durable and well-administered republic.⁷⁴

In this well-administered republic, man develops and enriches his faculties through educational engagement and the influence of public opinion. The importance of localized, public, and *accessible* education can be traced back to his 13 August 1786 letter to George Wythe. In this letter, Jefferson lays the framework for the role that education will play in his later theorization of ward republics. Jefferson eloquently contends, “I think by far the most important bill in our whole code is that for the diffusion of knowledge among the people. No other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom, and happiness.”⁷⁵ As a dynamic thinker, Jefferson's understanding of political education and action lead directly to the achievement of happiness. An essential cultivation of an individual's happiness for sure, but also, an enrichment of political life – one that is always shared with others. Assuredly, Jefferson envisions a political society inhabited by conjoiners in this public happiness, “I am convinced our own happiness requires that we should continue to mix with the world.”⁷⁶

What is crucial to Jefferson's promotion of local education within the ward republics – and critically neglected in Jeffersonian scholarship – is the role that it can play in *destroying* prior economic, social, and political hierarchies. In a 28 October 1813 letter to John Adams, Jefferson once again briefly outlines his vision of ward republics and the necessity of a free school within each community. However, in this letter, Jefferson posits an alternative benefit to the advancement of public education beyond self-development and maturation, arguing, "Worth and genius would thus have been sought out from every condition of life, and completely prepared by education for *defeating* the competition of wealth and birth for public trusts."⁷⁷

Supplementing the effects of education, Jefferson exhibits a touch of Kantian anarchism in his discussion on the impact that public opinion can play on the maturation of individuals. Contrasting the governments of Europe to the primitive anarchism of aboriginal societies, Jefferson elevates the Kantian axiom of "lawfulness without a law" over the rigidity of systematic applications of positive law as a method of conformity. Writing from Paris, Jefferson details his thinking in a letter to Edward Carrington, dated 16 January 1787:

I am convinced that those societies (as the Indians) which live without government enjoy in their general mass an infinitely greater degree of happiness than those who live under European governments. Among the former, public opinion is the place of law, and restrains morals as powerfully as laws ever did any where [sic].⁷⁸

For Jefferson, then, the ward system is not simply a method for ensuring continuity and rendering political engagement within a localized space. Rather, it is an explicit scene of questioning by autonomous socio-historical beings for the attainment of political status against the consolidation of institutionalized political power. In a polemical tone, Jefferson asks, "What has destroyed liberty and the rights of man in every government which has ever existed under the sun?"⁷⁹ His response is unequivocal and succinct: the amassment and concentration of all powers and cares into a singular body.⁸⁰

Jefferson adamantly rejects the compression of all forms of power in the hands of the "one, the few, the well-born or the many" "whether it be the historical examples of the excessive power of the autocratic rule of Russia and France or the aristocrats of the Venetian senate."⁸¹ Jefferson's dismissal of consolidated state power is accentuated as he cautions against the dangers of the growing likelihood of an oligarchical rule in early nineteenth century America.⁸² It is from these fears – the proliferation of a liberal oligarchical state – that even a political regime classification of a rule by the many will not suffice to impede the heteronomy of oligarchical influence. Only when a political subject in communion with others shares in the movement and direction of the ward republic everyday does Jefferson believe that state actors will not usurp power. In turn, the many for Jefferson must be broken up to ensure that *all could* and *all would* be counted.⁸³

For Jefferson, the active participator would rather have his heart torn from his body than power placed in the hands of a tyrannical state actor.⁸⁴ In a letter to John Tyler on 26 May 1810, Jefferson's politics of all reaches its pinnacle articulation, advancing, "Could I once see this I should consider it as the dawn of the republic, and

say with old Simeon, 'nunc dimittes Domine.'"⁸⁵ This letter is essential in unlocking Jefferson's radical democratic project as the foundation (and future) of the American Republic depends upon a transition of power away from a centralized state. The invocation of the *nunc dimittes* – also commonly referred to as the Cantic of Simeon found in the Gospel of Luke (2:29) meaning "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word" – was of the utmost importance to Jefferson. In a number of personal correspondences, Jefferson reminds his readers of the pleasure and contemplation derived from reciting such a solemn hymn.⁸⁶ Writing to Andrew Jackson on 18 December 1823, Jefferson exalts the virtues of education, writing, "if I live to see this I shall sing with cheerfulness the song of old Simeon 'Nunc dimittes Domine.'"⁸⁷ Importantly, the *Cantic of Simeon* is a song of preparation and thankfulness for the coming messiah. Crucial to its message, is an appeal to a future filled with joy and peace for *all peoples* of the world. The words spoke by Simeon upon receiving the Christ Child later translated into the Latin Vulgate accentuate the universality of the messianic promise in the words *omnium populorum*, essentially meaning *all peoples*.

This runs directly to the heart of Jefferson's political vision. The salvation and promise of political power is thus endowed in the hands of all *qua* his ward system as an on-going challenge against all forms of centralized power. This marks a crucial rupture in the dominant understanding of the register of early American political thought as well as in the politico-historical development of the republic. For there exists a hidden tendency already contained within the American register of political thought and action that strives for an instantiation of the *politics omnium populorum principle* – a perpetual, yet fleeting antagonistic struggle by all to be seen and heard as political subjects. The politics of all principle is, therefore, the subterranean philosophical movement in the history of emancipatory American political thought and it functions as the central axiom of Jefferson's political philosophy: self-government as the enactment of social-historical subjects striving for autonomy against all forms of tyranny, historically demonstrated through exceeding limitations imposed by state power, while orienting the political towards an ethos that finds all asking: *what is to come, what is ahead*.

For Jefferson, then, all governments, especially self-government, are an exercise in experimentation. An on-going process in pursuit of the creation of a free and equal political society for the living unencumbered from past generations, traditions, institutions. Daniel J. Boorstin is skeptical of Jefferson's notion of perpetual renewal claiming that taken to its logical conclusion all institutions would be in a constant state of flux. Boorstin believes that Jefferson assuages this outcome by simply wedding the present generation to a temporary permanency to its current institutions.⁸⁸ But here lies the crucial point. Boorstin misreads Jefferson's capturing of the revolutionary spirit within the wards as a cyclical endeavor that can (and should) only commence roughly every nineteen years. To reduce Jefferson's ward system to an embryonic site for future challenges against the state (or traditional and societal hierarchies, for that matter) is to miss the omnipresent spirit of resistance of the wards that unsettle and disrupt all structures of power at all times.⁸⁹ To cast the ward system off as a systematic producer of permanent flux is not a pejorative depiction; rather, it hones in on the ontological *and* epistemological ethos of Jefferson's rebellious ward republics procured through a regime classification of the *politics omnium populorum principle*.

Jefferson's theorization of ward republics, therefore, represents a discontinuity in state power shaking the very foundations of governmental rule with the potential to "overrule the Union."⁹⁰ It is this break with state power – this reconfiguration of the transformative capacities of "power with and between human beings"⁹¹ – that an interrogation of Jefferson's canon brings to light.⁹² Moreover, the creation of the wards exists as a synthesis of the fundamental problems plaguing a republican body politic. By expanding the overall size of the republic – an ideal brought to fruition by Jefferson's authorization of the Louisiana Purchase – in order to provide all with economic security in the form of property ownership, coupled with a localization of political space for direct participation, the two tensions become resolved. As an anti-metaphysician, Jefferson's ward system is not instantiated *a priori*, but rather from specific politico-historical events that illustrate the political struggle for the institution of the *politics omnium populorum principle* contra absorption into state form. For Jefferson, the historical continuum of this spirit of resistance enacted within the ward republics, finds its origins in the political regimes of the ancient Greek *polis*, the townships of Saxon Britain, the New England town hall meetings, and, finally, in the tribal councils of Native Americans. A survey of these sites of resistance is necessary for a further elucidation of the radical democratic nature of Thomas Jefferson's political philosophy.

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¹ Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 603.

² Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin Press, 1965).

³ As a tool to help rehabilitate democratic-republican thought, I borrow from Hannah Arendt's utilization of the *vita activa*. Both Arendt and Miguel Abensour are keen to observe civic humanism's break with the *vita contemplativa* by reintroducing a conceptualization of man as a political animal back into the realm of public affairs. See page 316 of Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* and pages 6-7 of Miguel Abensour's *Democracy Against the State* for a fuller discussion of the degeneration of the *vita activa* in the early Christian register and its crucial return with civic humanism.

⁴ A. Whitney Griswold, *Farming and Democracy* (Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1948), 18-46.

⁵ Hanna Pitkin, *The Attack of the Blob: Hannah Arendt's Concept of the Social* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 190.

⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 87.

⁷ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 45.

⁸ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 118.

⁹ *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Retirement Series, vol. 1, 4 March 1809 to 15 November 1809, ed. J. Jefferson Looney. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 580–582.

¹⁰ Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Leiper, 12 June 1815. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Retirement Series, vol. 8, 1 October 1814 to 31 August 1815, ed. J. Jefferson Looney. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 531–534.

¹¹ From Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 10 December 1819. "From Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 10 December 1819," *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified December 28, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-0953>.

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¹³ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), Bk. I, Ch. XXXVII.

¹⁴ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Bk. III, Ch. XXIV.

¹⁵ *Federalist No. 10*, James Madison in Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay. *The Federalist Papers*. ed. Clinton Rossiter. (New York: Signet Classic, 1999).

¹⁶ Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist No 9*, 66.

¹⁷ Hamilton, *Federalist No. 9*, 70.

¹⁸ Madison, *Federalist No. 51*, 319.

¹⁹ Alexander Hamilton, "Constitutional Convention. Remarks on the Ineligibility of Members of the House of Representatives for Other Offices," 22 June 1787, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 4, *January 1787–May 1788*, ed. Harold C. Syrett. New York: Columbia University Press, 1962, 216–217.

²⁰ As a child it is believed that Madison was familiar with at least one of Hobbes' works. However in 1782 it is documented that he purchased a copy of *Leviathan* originally owned by William Byrd II of Westover. See From James Madison to James Madison, Sr., [ca. 12] February 1782. *The Papers of James Madison*, vol. 4, *1 January 1782–31 July 1782*, ed. William T. Hutchinson and William M. E. Rachal. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 64–65. Madison was quite acquainted with the writings of John Locke particularly *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, first published at London in 1690. For Madison, both Locke and Montesquieu are helpful for looking at issues of political liberty although their writing predates a further revelation of Enlightenment thought. This once again demonstrates the future-looking ethos that the American Founders believed that they uniquely maintained. In "Helvidius" Number 1, 24 August 1793, Madison writes, "Writers, such as Locke and Montesquieu, who have discussed more particularly the principles of liberty and the structure of government, lie under the same disadvantage, of having written before these subjects were illuminated by the events and discussions which distinguish a very recent period." *The Papers of James Madison*, vol. 15, *24 March 1793–20 April 1795*, ed. Thomas A. Mason, Robert A. Rutland, and Jeanne K. Sisson. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1985), 66–74. In 12 August 1793 letter to TJ, Madison admits that he quite frequently cites Montesquieu albeit only from memory and typically inaccurately. See *The Papers of James Madison*, vol. 15, *24 March 1793–20 April 1795*, ed. Thomas A. Mason, Robert A. Rutland, and Jeanne K. Sisson. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1985), 59–60.

²¹ Douglass Adair, "'That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science': David Hume, James Madison, and the Tenth Federalist," *Huntington Library Quarterly* Vol. 20, No. 4, Early American History Number (Aug., 1957), 343-360. See also: Letter to Thomas Jefferson, 24 October 1787. *The Papers of James Madison*, vol. 10, *27 May 1787–3 March 1788*, ed. Robert A. Rutland, Charles F. Hobson, William M. E. Rachal, and Frederika J. Teute. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), 205–220.

²² Madison, *Federalist No.10*, 72.

²³ Madison, *Federalist No. 10*, 73.

²⁴ Madison, *Federalist No. 10*, 78.

²⁵ Hamilton, *Federalist No. 9*, 67.

²⁶ Alexander Hamilton, "Alexander Hamilton's Notes," 18 June 1787, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 4, *January 1787–May 1788*, ed. Harold C. Syrett. New York: Columbia University Press, 1962, 178–187.

²⁷ Darren Staloff, *Hamilton, Adams, Jefferson: The Politics of Enlightenment and the American Founding*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 84.

²⁸ Alexander Hamilton, "The Defence No. II," 25 July 1795, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. 18, *January 1795–July 1795*, ed. Harold C. Syrett. New York: Columbia University Press, 1973, 493–501.

²⁹ Joseph J. Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 101.

³⁰ Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Benjamin Austin, 9 January 1816, *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 11, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1904), 502-503.

³¹ Jefferson, Letter to James Madison, 6 September 1789, Jefferson's emphasis. *The Papers of James Madison*, vol. 12, *2 March 1789–20 January 1790 and supplement 24 October 1775–24 January 1789*, ed. Charles F. Hobson and Robert A. Rutland. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979), 382–388.

³² Jefferson, Letter to James Madison, 6 September 1789.

³³ Jefferson, Letter to John Adams, 28 October 1813, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series*, vol. 6, 11 March to 27 November 1813, ed. J. Jefferson Looney. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 562–568.

³⁴ Jefferson, Letter to John Adams, 28 October 1813.

³⁵ Jefferson, Letter to James Madison, 6 September 1789.

³⁶ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 241.

³⁷ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* in *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, 112.

³⁸ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* in *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, 227. Emphasis added.

³⁹ Jefferson, Letter to John Jay, 23 August 1785, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 8, 427.

⁴⁰ C.B. Macpherson, *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 135. Emphasis added.

⁴¹ Jefferson, Proposals to Revise the Virginia Constitution: I. Thomas Jefferson to "Henry Tompkinson" (Samuel Kercheval), 12 July 1816. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series*, vol. 10, *May 1816 to 18 January 1817*, ed. J. Jefferson Looney. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 222–228.

⁴² Jefferson, Letter to Geismar, 6 September 1785, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 8, 500.

⁴³ Jefferson, Letter to Thomas Law, 13 June 1814, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series*, vol. 7, 28 November 1813 to 30 September 1814, ed. J. Jefferson Looney. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 412–416.

⁴⁴ Jefferson, Letter to Peter Carr, 19 August 1785, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 8, 406.

⁴⁵ Boorstin, *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson*, 245.

⁴⁶ Thomas Jefferson to Charles Willson Peale, 5 May 1809. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series*, vol. 1, 4 March 1809 to 15 November 1809, ed. J. Jefferson Looney. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 187.

⁴⁷ Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, translated by Thomas Nugent (New York, Hafner Publishing Co., 1949). See Book XIV: “Of laws as relative to the nature of the climate” particularly chapters I, II, XI, XIV, & XV.

⁴⁸ Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* in *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, 219-220.

⁴⁹ Thomas Jefferson, “Scheme for a System of Agricultural Societies,” March 1811, *The Complete Jefferson* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 353.

⁵⁰ Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 125.

⁵¹ Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 126.

⁵² Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* in *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*, 216-217.

⁵³ Matthews, *The Radical Politics of Thomas Jefferson*, 47.

⁵⁴ Matthews, *The Radical Politics of Thomas Jefferson*, 47.

⁵⁵ Jefferson, Letter to John Adams, 28 October 1813.

⁵⁶ Jefferson, Letter to Joseph C. Cabell, 2 February 1816, *Thomas Jefferson Writings*, 1381.

⁵⁷ A wonderful example of this can be found in Adrian Kuzminski’s engaging book, *Fixing the System: A History of Populism, Ancient and Modern* (New York: Continuum, 2008). In this insightful work, Kuzminski traces the political and historical development of populism to mean a “direct right to property is a necessary condition of genuine democracy” (3). Citing both European and American examples of political movements that would be representative of a populist appeal the study provides an in-depth examination of localized politics. Importantly, Kuzminski does include analysis on Jefferson’s ward system; however, this coverage does not appear until the appendix.

⁵⁸ In only two places Gutzman mentions Jefferson’s ward system. In both cases the ward republics are portrayed as idealist endeavors tied only to hypothetical reforms to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Gutzman fundamentally fails to accentuate the importance of the ward system to Jefferson’s democratic project. See Kevin R.C. Gutzman, *Thomas Jefferson – Revolutionary: A Radical’s Struggle to Remake America* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2017), 11 & 65.

⁵⁹ Suzanne W. Morse, “Ward Republics: The Wisest Invention for Self-Government” in *Thomas Jefferson and the Education of a Citizen*, ed. James Gilreath (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress), 265.

⁶⁰ Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time: Jefferson the Virginian* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1948), 283. It is important to note that primary schools were eventually created in Virginia. Passed in 1796, the construction and operational costs of these schools relied on local funding

⁶¹ From Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Priestley, 27 January 1800. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 31, 1 February 1799–31 May 1800, ed. Barbara B. Oberg. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 339–341.

⁶² Arendt, *On Revolution*, 251.

⁶³ Maurizio Valsania, *Nature's Man: Thomas Jefferson's Philosophical Anthropology* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 48.

⁶⁴ Valsania, *Nature's Man*, 66.

⁶⁵ See Peter S. Onuf, *The Mind of Thomas Jefferson*, (Charlottesville, VA: University of Press, 2007).

⁶⁶ Jefferson, Letter to Gideon Granger, 13 August 1800. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 32, 1 June 1800–16 February 1801, ed. Barbara B. Oberg. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 95–97.

⁶⁷ Jefferson, Letter to William Ludlow, 6 September 1824. From Thomas Jefferson to William Ludlow, 6 September 1824," Founders Online, National Archives, last modified December 28, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-4523>

⁶⁸ In describing the flow and directionality of localized political participation, Jefferson contends that the New England town hall meetings exhibit a certain type of momentum of action against the parameters of codified contours of institutional power.

⁶⁹ Adrienne Koch, *The Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964), 165.

⁷⁰ Jefferson, Letter to Samuel Kercheval, 12 July 1816.

⁷¹ Jefferson, Letter to Peter Carr, 7 September 1814, *Thomas Jefferson Writings*, 1348.

⁷² Jefferson, Letter to John Adams, 28 October 1813.

⁷³ Jefferson, Letter to Major John Cartwright, 5 June 1824, *The Complete Jefferson*, 295.

⁷⁴ Jefferson, Letter to Major John Cartwright, 5 June 1824, *The Complete Jefferson*, 295.

⁷⁵ Jefferson, Letter to George Wythe, 13 August 1786, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 10, 244.

⁷⁶ Jefferson, Letter to Mary Jefferson Eppes, 3 March 1802. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 36, 1 December 1801–3 March 1802, ed. Barbara B. Oberg. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, 676–677.

⁷⁷ Jefferson, Letter to John Adams, 28 October 1813. Emphasis added.

⁷⁸ Jefferson, Letter to Edward Carrington, 16 January 1787. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 11, 1 January–6 August 1787, ed. Julian P. Boyd. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 48–50.

⁷⁹ Jefferson, Letter to Joseph C. Cabell, 2 February 1816, *Thomas Jefferson Writings*, 1380.

⁸⁰ Jefferson, Letter to Joseph C. Cabell, 1380.

⁸¹ Jefferson, Letter to Joseph C. Cabell ,1381.

⁸² Jefferson, Letter to Joseph C. Cabell ,1380.

⁸³ Arendt, *On Revolution*, 254.

⁸⁴ Jefferson, Letter to Joseph C. Cabell, 1380.

⁸⁵ Letter to John Tyler, 26 May 1810, *Thomas Jefferson Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 1227.

⁸⁶ See 1) Letter to Lafayette, 17 May 1816. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Retirement Series, vol. 10, May 1816 to 18 January 1817, ed. J. Jefferson Looney. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 62–64. 2) Letter to Spencer Roane, 6 September 1819. From Thomas Jefferson to Spencer Roane, 6 September 1819,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified December 28, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-0734>. 3) Letter to Joseph Carrington Cabell, 31 January 1821. From Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Carrington Cabell, 31 January 1821,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified December 28, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-1814>. 4) Letter to James Monroe, 14 June 1823. From Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 14 June 1823,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified December 28, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-3571>.

⁸⁷ Letter to Andrew Jackson, 18 December 1823. From Thomas Jefferson to Andrew Jackson, 18 December 1823,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified December 28, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/98-01-02-3920>.

⁸⁸ Boorstin, *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson*, 212-213.

⁸⁹ Two texts directly contributed to seeing Jefferson as a political thinker against the state. Firstly, Pierre Clastres’s *Society Against the State* demonstrates the active refusal of specific social-historical subjects to resist the incorporation of their modes of existence into a statist framework. Secondly, Miguel Abensour’s *Democracy Against the State* illustrates the reciprocal struggle between state power and democracy. Moreover, Abensour’s account serves as a centrifugal force of this analysis in emphasizing the possibility of reinventing politics beyond the state in patterns of non-domination.

⁹⁰ Jefferson, Letter to Joseph C. Cabell, 2 February 1816, *Thomas Jefferson Writings*, 1381.

⁹¹ Miguel Abensour, *Democracy Against the State: Marx and the Machiavellian Moment*, trans. Max Blechman and Martin Breugh (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 94-97.

⁹² Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 2007), 48 & 94. I use the term emancipation here to signify – borrowing from Jacques Rancière’s concept of it in *On the Shores of Politics* – the escapement from a status of minority by the thrusting of political subjectivity onto a common stage. This is analogous to Jefferson’s line of thought that stresses the potentiality of an unrecognized minority to interrupt the flow of state power as exhibited by the New England town hall meetings.