

17.037/17.038. American Political Thought
Spring 2004

Reading Questions for Week 6. Jeffersonian Republicans v. Hamiltonian Federalists, with Madison in the Pivot

Jefferson

1. *Notes on the State of Virginia* is in part a work on natural history. One of its aims is to refute current European theories, such as those advanced by Monsieur Georges de Buffon, about the biological impotence and decay in the New World. Jefferson disagrees with Buffon's description of Indian "savages" as feeble and lacking in mental capacities. How does Jefferson characterize the Indians?
2. In his chapter on the constitution of Virginia (query XIII, pp. 166-171), how does Jefferson answer the question of whether the ordinary legislature should be allowed to alter the constitution? What do you think of his view?
3. In his chapter on laws, Jefferson suggests a plan of emancipation and colonization for slaves "to such a place as the circumstances of the time should render most proper" (186). Why does he oppose retaining and incorporating blacks into the state? In what respects does he think blacks are inferior to whites? (see pp. 186-199)
4. In his chapter on religion (pp. 208-213), Jefferson sets forth his views about the relationship between religion and state. What are the reasons he gives for opposing state establishment of churches?
5. In various passages in his writing, Jefferson suggests a preference for a way of life based on agriculture and commerce over a way of life based on manufacturing (see pp. 216-217, 227, 547-550). What do you think? Does he favor the industry of agriculture over the industry of manufactures?
6. In his first inaugural address, Jefferson declares, "We are all republicans—we are all federalists" (292). How sincere was his claim in your view?

Hamilton

1. Jefferson and Hamilton clashed over the issues of establishing a national bank and government subsidy of manufactures, among other things. As Secretary of State in Washington's administration, Jefferson argued that the U.S. government lacked the authority to create a national bank since "all powers not delegated to the U.S. by the Constitution nor prohibited to it by the States are reserved to the States or to the people." Hamilton, then Secretary of Treasury, disagreed, arguing that a national bank was indeed constitutional, that the federal government's power to create it was an "implied power." How does he make this argument?
2. Hamilton's "Report on Manufactures" was submitted to the House of Representatives on January 15, 1790. In it, he argues that the general welfare requires government support of manufactures. But he goes further than this and praises a spirit of acquisitiveness in America. What is the relationship between the general welfare of society, this spirit of acquisitiveness, and manufactures?

Madison

1. How does Madison define property?
2. Madison argues that in general restrictions on commerce/trade are "unjust, oppressive, and impolitic." Why does he think this? He does make an exception—for government support of fledgling domestic manufactures. How does he justify this exception?