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PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION: A DIFFERENCE IN OPINION

by

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Abstract

This examination contrasts the views of the Founding Fathers and Woodrow Wilson on the matter of how the President of the United States of America ought to be selected. While Wilson is commendable for his vision of empowering the rank-and-file to select their president through direct national primaries, his views directly conflict with those of the Founders. This purpose of this essay is to spark an interest in the political thought of United States presidential selection and in political theory in general. This analysis acknowledges the fact that the Founders were deceased long before Wilson wrote on this topic. For the sake of simplicity, the reader is asked to kindly overlook the anachronistic nature of this essay featuring the Founder directly addressing Wilson's ideas. Male pronouns will be used throughout this essay for the sake of simplicity and because both the Founders and Wilson used those pronouns when writing about United States politics. While there are different types of political parties, such as local or state parties, for the purpose of this essay, the term 'party' will be used in reference to a national organization.

PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION: A DIFFERENCE IN OPINION

Highly dissatisfied with the method of presidential selection in his time, Woodrow Wilson called for a reform of the presidential selection system, articulating his own vision for how the United States president should be selected. By Wilson's time, the method of presidential selection had already been changed twice over from that of the Founders. The passage of the 12th amendment brought the first change and Martin Van Buren's deliberate efforts to create a party system brought the second change. Wilson's method for selecting the president differs from the method of the Founders in three significant ways. Firstly, Wilson's proposal for a direct national primary system does not resemble the elector method that the Founders established in the Constitution. Secondly, Wilson argued that there should not be an aristocratic class from which the president would be selected. Instead, Wilson desired that a common man with political experience would be selected as president. Thirdly, Wilson's plan endorses informal political parties, which goes against the intentions of the Founders for United States politics to be nonpartisan.

SECTION 1

The first deviation between the Founding Fathers and Woodrow Wilson on the topic of selecting the president was the method of selection itself. In contrast to Wilson's method of direct national primaries, the Founders' method used electors to vote for presidential candidates. The Founders' plan for selecting the president was written into Article II of the Constitution. Under this plan, each state would select a number of electors equal to the number of senators and house representatives to that which the state held (U.S. Constitution, art. 2, sec. 2). The electors would each have two votes (U.S.

Constitution, art 2, sec. 3). At least one of these two votes had to be for a candidate from outside the elector's own state (U.S. Constitution, art. 2, sec. 3). It was not a majority of the electoral votes cast that would select a candidate but rather a candidate needed to have a majority of the number of electors voting for him in order for him to win the election (U.S. Constitution, art. 2, sec. 3). In the case of a tie between candidates that got more than a majority of the electors voting for them, the House of Representatives would choose from those tied candidates (U.S. Constitution, art. 2, sec. 3). If no candidate received more than a majority of elector votes, then each state in the House would have one vote to vote for a candidate, with a victory requiring the majority of all the states (U.S. Constitution, art. 2, sec. 3).

Moreover, Hamilton (Federalist 68 [1788] 2009, 392) wrote that the electors would not gather together at a national convention but instead each elector would vote in their own state. Paul Eidelberg (1968, 185) points out that the lack of national convention prevents electors from knowing how the electors in other states voted. This would decrease the likelihood of collusion and corruption, making it so that electors would vote for the candidate they sincerely thought was the best candidate. Additionally, all states vote on the same day, preventing news of how one state voted from reaching another before the electors of a particular state vote. The logic behind the argument that electors are prevented from colluding with each other due to the lack of a national convention and the fact that electors vote on the same day is that the electors cannot collude with each other if they are not certain how other electors voted. Additionally, the identities of the electors would be unknown to presidential candidates (Eidelberg 1968, 190). This is significant because once elected, the president would not be indebted to the electors

because he would not know whom was responsible for his victory (Eidelberg 1968, 187). This lack of indebtedness would allow the president to avoid a conflict of interest once he begins serving as president.

As James W. Ceaser ([1979] 1980, 43) points out, just how democratic the elector method would be depends on the discretion of each state. Under the plan written in Article II of the Constitution, it is possible for the states to allow the electors to vote for the president without any deference to the people's choice or for the electors to vote as the people decided that the electors would vote (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 43). An arrangement in between these two extremes is also permissible (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 43). Regardless of how the electors are to vote, the states would nominate the electors (Eidelberg 1968, 184-185). The state would have the option of allowing its people to choose the electors from these nominees (Eidelberg 1968, 184-185). If the state did not allow the people to choose from the nominees, then the state would choose the electors from the nominees.

Wilson could critique the Founders' selection method by pointing to the possibility of the House of Representatives deciding the election. Wilson could argue that the problem with a House selection is twofold. The first problem is that the leaders in the House keep their motives and principles hidden (Wilson 1897, 352). Wilson would not put faith in the House to pick the best president possible because he thought its motives were hidden from outsiders, leading to corruption. Thus if the House decided the election, the House would select a president sympathetic to its selfish interests rather than to the interests of the people. The second problem Wilson (1897, 349) would have with a House selection is that even if the House genuinely did promote the interests of the people rather

than its own interests, different local interests fragment the country. A state's House Representatives represent the interests of their constituents ([1879] 1925, 30) but selecting the best president possible requires House Representatives to look past the unique interests of their state to the good of the nation as a whole. Wilson's critique would question whether it would be possible for a House Representative to do their duty to represent their state's interests while simultaneously having the independence necessary to elect the best possible president.

The Founders would counter that a House election is not a likely possibility and is merely a safeguard in case there was a tie among candidates that got more than a majority of the electors voting for them or if no candidate received more than a majority of elector votes. The Founders would assert that a House decision is unlikely because the electors would be motivated to elect a president due to fear of a House election (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 80). The electors would fear this possibility because it would mean that the electors would lose their own power to elect a president (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 80). Therefore, the electors would make great efforts to avoid a House selection, lessening the likelihood of a House election.

Wilson would respond that this solution is nonsensical. Wilson (1916, 20) would point out that electors meet in different states to elect the president and as a result, there is no gathering together of electors. As mentioned above, since the electors do not all meet together, they would not have any way of knowing how other electors voted (Eidelberg 1968, 185). As a result of this isolation, electors would not be able to strategize on how to broker an arrangement with each other that would avoid a House election of the president. The Founders may respond that the electors are not prohibited from

strategizing with each other prior to the state conventions on how to avoid a House selection. This is so because the Constitution does not say whether or not electors know the identities of other electors. If the states decide to publicize the names of its electors, the electors are not prohibited from corresponding with each other to strategize to avoid a House election.

Wilson could respond by mentioning Edward Stanwood's ([1884] 1928, 14) point that the electors may be corrupt. If the states publicize the names of its electors prior to the state conventions, corrupt electors can collude before the state conventions to elect a specific candidate in order to gain monetary or other illicit benefits. The Founders could respond with Stanwood's ([1884] 1928, 14) solution to this predicament: states can choose morally good people as electors, avoiding the problem of illicit cooperation.

Wilson could counter that the ambition to select only the morally upright as electors is not a failsafe method of avoiding elector corruption because people's motives are not visible. In other words, an elector could appear to be morally upright but secretly have corrupt motives. Once selected as an elector, this secretly corrupt elector could pursue his own selfish motives, undermining the legitimacy of the presidential selection process.

The Founders might counter that corruption is a problem of every political system and the fact that electors in each state vote entirely independently of electors in other states at least lessens the possibility of collusion because the electors cannot collude with each other at a national convention. The Founders recognized that reputation and merit do not always go hand-in-hand but they thought that reputation was the best indicator of merit (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 66). The Founders could argue that it might be difficult for an illicit person to gain a reputation for being a morally sound character because uncouth

actions are difficult to keep secret, perhaps especially in politics where political opponents are consistently searching for something unflattering to publicize about their rivals.

Wilson also objects to the Founders' electoral method because it lacks a national convention. For Wilson (1916, 20), the lack of a national convention is a deficiency of the Founders' method because a national convention provides a forum for final debate on the merits of the candidates. The Founders could respond in two ways. Firstly, they may put forth that the lack of national convention helps address Wilson's concern about corruption in the government. The second is that a national convention is not necessary in order for there to be sufficient debate about which candidate would be the best president.

The Founders may argue that under Wilson's own viewpoint, the fact that the electors do not meet in a national convention ought to be considered a merit of the Founder's method. Even the most haphazard reading of Wilson's *The New Freedom* illuminates Wilson's concern about corruption and undue influence in government. The Founders would perhaps argue that by making it so that electors meet in separate states, it would help avoid the very things that Wilson disdains in politics: corruption, unjust scheming, and illicit deal-making. The Founders could argue that since electors do not meet together at a national convention, it would make it more difficult for electors to collude as part of an unjust machination.

The Founders may further defend their method by arguing there even if there is no national convention, there might still be sufficient debate about which candidate would be the best president. The Founders could argue that while a national convention would provide a venue for debate, there are other venues of debate that would allow for

comprehensive discourse. This would be the case if the states decided to publicize the identities of their electors prior to the state conventions. The Constitution does not deny states the right to do so. With the publication of elector identities, electors would be able to correspond with each other to engage in debate and discourse on the merits of the various candidates. Even if the states did not disclose the identities of the electors, it is possible for there to be extensive discussions among government officials and political figures on the merits of the various candidates. Thus the Founders would argue that a national convention is not necessary for there to be adequate debate and discourse on the topic of which candidate would be the best president.

Another way that Wilson could critique the Founders' selection method is by mentioning Edward Stanwood's ([1884] 1928, 4) point that the best people would not be able to be electors. Stanwood ([1884] 1928, 4) pointed out that a problem with the electoral method devised by the Founders is that the best political personnel from each state would be not able to serve as electors because the Constitution reads: "no Senator or Representative, or Person holding an Office of Trust or Profit under the United States, shall be appointed an Elector" (U.S. Constitution, art. 2, sec. 1). Stanwood's ([1884] 1928, 4) point is that the best people of each state would already be senators, representatives, and state governors. Therefore the electors would not be the best people of each state (Stanwood [1884] 1928, 4) possibly leading to these suboptimal people not having the judgment necessary to select the best possible president. The Founders could respond that even if the electors were not the absolute best of the people of each state, the electors would be able to still elect the best candidate for president. To use an analogy, a

student can still get a perfect score on an exam even if that student has not historically been among the best scoring students in the class.

In contrast to the elector method of the Founders, Wilson wanted the people to directly vote for the president. Wilson ([1913] 1961, 81) thought that it was essential that every interest and the perspective of every person be considered. Directly voting for the president would serve as an unfiltered way for people to communicate their interests. Wilson's ([1913] 1961, 60) method for fulfilling his desire to represent the people's interests was direct national primaries.

Wilson's method of presidential selection is based on the goal of restoring the power of the common people in the government. For Wilson, the government belongs to the people ([1913] 1961, 57) and should represent the interests of all people ([1913] 1961, 131). Wilson ([1913] 1961, 31, 49) argued that Washington is not being ruled by the people but rather is being controlled by special interests. According to Wilson, the fact that there were indirect and private ways to influence legislation allowed party machines to emerge ([1913] 1961, 75). Political power became concentrated in the hands of the party machines (Wilson 1910, 591) and as a result, party machines decide what policies are implemented. Party bosses are the heads of these machines because politicians are dependent on the favor of these bosses in order to be appointed (Wilson 1910, 591). Party machines are an affront to the just workings of government because a party boss promotes his selfish interests instead of the interests of the people (Wilson [1913] 1961, 133-134).

For Wilson, the solution to this state of affairs is to establish accountability through direct primaries. Direct national primaries would establish a direct link between

the people and the president, avoiding the selfish influence of party machines. For Wilson ([1913] 1961, 56), political leaders are not to judge for the nation but are to listen to the people and then to act as the spokespersons of the people. Since direct national primaries cause the president to be directly elected by the people, the president will be accountable to the people. In Wilson's system, party conventions would announce the winners of the primaries and articulate a party platform (Wilson 1913). Even though there would be party conventions in Wilson's system, the candidate elected as president would be based entirely on the results of the direct national primaries.

One reason the Founders would oppose Wilson's direct national primaries is due to their suspicion of popular election, which direct national primaries are a type of. If Wilson were to look back to the Constitutional Convention of 1787, he would find an ally in Gouverneur Morris but he would find that as a group, the Founders were strongly opposed to popular election. For example, Hamilton, Jay, and Madison had a distrust of popular elections (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 46). At the Constitutional Convention on July 17th of 1787, Morris called for the president to be directly elected by the people (Eidelberg 1968, 173). That same day when voted on, this proposal was defeated, with nine states opposing it and only Morris' home state of Pennsylvania supporting it (Eidelberg 1968, 173). On August 24th, the convention voted on two measures (Wilmerding 1958, 12-13). The first was to have an election of the president directly by the people and the second was to have the state electors of the president be directly selected by the people (Wilmerding 1958, 12-13). The first measure was defeated with nine states voting against it and two states voting for it (Wilmerding 1958, 13). The

second measure was defeated with six states voting against it and five states voting for it (Wilmerding 1958, 13).

The results of these votes exemplify Paul Stanwood's ([1884] 1928, 3) assertion that at the Constitutional Convention, there was no time when the concept of a popular election was held in overall favor. The fact that a popular election was never held in overall favor demonstrates that the Founders were opposed to popular election. Since Wilson's direct national primaries are a form of popular election, the Founders would reject his method as a legitimate one to select the president.

One concern the founders had about popular election was that it would give large states an advantage (Stanwood [1884] 1928, 3). Hugh Williamson put forth that it was certain that large states would enjoy an unfair advantage in popular elections because each state would likely favor a candidate of its own and that it would be unlikely for the whole nation to form around a single candidate (Wilmerding 1958, 11). Roger Sherman shared these sentiments (Eidelberg 1968, 173). Charles Pinckney pointed out that larger states have greater amounts of voters so the voters in large states would sway the election in favor of larger states (Eidelberg 1968, 179).

Wilson would counter that is not inconceivable that the nation as a whole could come to support a single candidate. The Founders would counter that Wilson's optimism of voters seeing past their own unique interests to the interests of the nation as a whole is far from certain. For example, Madison (Federalist 10 [1788] 2009, 46) famously wrote that "Liberty is to faction what air is to fire, an aliment without which it instantly expires". With these words, Madison puts forth the point that a free society is a fragmented one, where different people pursue different interests. Sometimes these

interests conflict with the interests of others. Since people have their own interests, the Founders would question Wilson's opinion that people will look past their own interests to look to the good of the nation as a whole.

The Founders would also object to Wilson's method with the argument that the people may not have the education necessary to choose the best candidate for president. They would find Wilson's direct national primaries especially problematic because there would be no moderating influence on the will of the people in the case that the people do not choose to support the best candidate possible. The Founders valued the education of the people and thought that education was a great mechanism for the continuation of liberty and the operation of the nation. Jefferson (1942, 89) put forth that it is by education that the people can preserve their freedom and happiness. For Jefferson, education was to make the people capable of making the best possible selection of public officials (Mansfield [1971] 2011, 65). Another founder, Benjamin Rush said that education had the ability to cultivate within the people, the republican sentiments necessary for the continuation of the republic (Wood 1969, 426-427).

While the Founders had faith in the transformation of people that education brings, they would argue that Wilson's method of direct national primaries presupposes, without prior justification, that the people would be educated enough to continually select the best candidate for president. In order to be more accepting of the people directly electing the president, the Founders would want to see evidence that the people would be educated enough to make the best choice possible. They would object to Wilson's plan because Wilson does not provide sufficient evidence that such is the case.

Another objection that the Founders would have to Wilson's system is that even if the people had the capability to choose the best candidate for the executive office, it does not follow that they would actually do so. They could argue that people have many time commitments and may not have the time to properly analyze all the candidates to the extent necessary to make the best selection possible. Other voters may not be energetic enough to make the effort to vigorously analyze candidates to the extent they should. Wilson ([1913] 1961, 81) admits that people are sometimes too lazy or busy to vote at primary elections but he insists that when they do vote, the people are effective decision makers ([1913] 1961, 137). The Founders would counter that the mere fact that the people are effective at voting wisely when they do choose to vote is an insufficient remedy to the problem of the people not voting.

The Founders would further object to Wilson's direct national primaries by arguing that the result of the election would not necessarily reflect the true choice of the people. If the people do not have the proper amount of time or energy to properly analyze candidates, the consequence would be that some people will vote for candidates that upon further analysis, they would not have chosen to vote for. Thus, when a president is selected, he might be merely the candidate who was able to be victorious based on the time and energy that voters were able to commit to analyzing the various candidates rather than be the true representative of the people's will.

The Founders would also point out that that voters might be apathetic and might not have the attention span required to make the best possible choice for president. The Founders would point out that if only a minority cared enough to vote for presidential candidates, a candidate would need only a minority of votes to become elected. This

would make it so that the victorious candidate is not the choice of the will of the people at large but is rather only the choice of a minority, a far cry from Wilson's ([1913] 1961, 81) desire to have every interest represented in the election. The Founders would charge that Wilson's plan is founded on the assumption that the people will consistently be interested enough in presidential selection to make the best choice possible but the Founders would assert that such an assumption is far from a certainty.

Wilson would counter that ignorance, lack of time or energy to properly study candidates, and apathy on the part of the people are problems for all electoral systems and are not problems idiosyncratic to his method. While the Founders would not disagree, they would point out that their system accounts for these problems because the state electors would strive to wisely select the president even if the people do not. Wilson may counter by arguing that if educated properly, people would have the judgment necessary to vote for the best possible candidate, possess the time-management skills necessary to sufficiently analyze candidates, and would care enough to participate in electing the president. The Founders could respond that given how much responsibility Wilson places in the hands of the people, Wilson ought to have a detailed education plan to prepare the people to adequately carry out such a major duty. Until they studied such a plan and were convinced that it could be implemented, the Founders would continue to object to Wilson's direct national primaries on the grounds that the primaries place too much power in the hands of the people.

Wilson ([1913] 1961, 52) would counter that even without a formal political education, the people will be responsible in their selection of the president because their self-interest depends on it. Wilson ([1913] 1961, 52) argued that the people would be

responsible in selecting the president because if they are reckless or vengeful, they will hurt themselves. The Founders would agree with James W. Ceaser's ([1979] 1980, 65) point that even if the people have good intentions, it does not follow that the people will be able to choose wisely. The Founders could argue that Wilson's counterargument fails to consider that people have biases, make decisions based on emotions, and possess imperfect reason. The Founders would agree with Harry Jaffa's (1961,72) observation that nature "endows us with passions which, in the pursuit of our peculiar attachments, bias our judgment and corrupt our integrity". Due to the fact that voters' judgment is flawed, the Founders would find unpersuasive the argument that a public without a formal political education would have the ability to choose the best president possible.

Another way that the Founders might respond to Wilson's method of direct national primaries is by arguing that even if the people directly elected the president, it would make only a marginal difference in advancing Wilson's goal of furthering the interests of the people in the government. This is so because the power of the executive office is limited. With the system of checks and balances that are in place in government, the executive and legislative branches restrain each other. Wilson (1897, 341) acknowledges this circumstance, putting forth that the president cannot lead effectively since he does not have enough power compared to how much power Congress has and Congress opposes the president for its own selfish interests. Under Wilson's ([1879] 1925) analysis, the president is merely the executor of the legislative will. In order to change this circumstance, Wilson's method of direct national primaries goes hand-in-hand with strengthening the power of the executive. Wilson would respond to Founders'

critique by arguing that by strengthening the power of the executive office, the president would be empowered to act for the good of the nation.

The Founders would counter this response by arguing that Wilson's method of direct election concomitantly calls for the diminution of checks and balances, violating the fundamental nature of the government. Wilson ([1908], 1947, 56-57) admits to having a Darwinian approach to the structure of the government, saying that it ought to be able to adapt to the times. Wilson ([1908] 1947, 56-57) calls for the erosion of the system of checks and balances, arguing that the government ought to act more in unison so that it can respond to the challenges of the age. The purpose of this erosion would be to enable the president to be more of a director of the nation so that the president would be able to act for the good of the nation (Wilson [1908] 1947, 81).

One reason the Founders established a government with checks and balances was to prevent the president from being too powerful. As Ceaser ([1979] 1980, 189) pointed out, a powerful president who is revered can use his position to influence the people in the way that he wishes. Thus a powerful president could use his influence for his own gain at the expense of the common good. This possibility would horrify the Founders. The Founders would agree with Martin Diamond, Winston Mills Fisk, and Herbert Garfinkel's ([1966] 1970, 215) observation that history is full of examples of tyrannical regimes, such as the tyrants in ancient Greece, the reign of Julius Caesar at the expense of the Roman Republic, and King George III's treatment of the American colonies. The Founders wanted to avoid anything resembling these trespasses on liberty in the United States. This concern motivated them to divide the national government into three distinct branches with checks and balances on each other. Therefore Wilson's empowerment of

the president at the expense of checks and balances goes strongly against the will of the Founders.

The Founders could also critique Wilson's method of direct national primaries by agreeing with Ceaser's ([1979] 1980, 182) point that if the president owes his election entirely to the people, the president would be too weak to act effectively for the good of the nation. One reason why the Founders were concerned about a president being too weak was they wanted the president to restrain the influence of a seditious House of Representatives (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 51). For example, the Founders wanted the president to be able to withstand the influence of the House in case a demagogue assumed control of the House (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 51).

The Founders also wanted for the executive to act in the best interest of the country even in the face of unwarranted opposition from the people (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 50). The Founders would argue that because Wilson's system makes the election of the executive depend solely on the people, the president would be inhibited from acting for the good of the nation. This is so because if the president's actions were in great enough contrast to the people's desires, he would risk his re-election or cause the people to question his legitimacy as a leader. The Founders would argue that if the president is entirely dependent on the will of the people to become elected, it would compromise his ability to act in the best interest of the nation because he would owe his election entirely to the people, creating a conflict of interest.

Wilson could counter that the Founders' critique presupposes a deviation of opinion between the executive and the people. Wilson's argument would be that if the people elected the president, both the people and the president would of one mind

because the people would only elect a candidate that would represent their interests. As a result, the contrast between the president's will and the people's will would not be so distinct as to cause friction between the president and the people. This lack of friction would avoid the situation of a president trying to carry out the will of the people while attempting to act for the good of the nation. This is so because the president would consider the good of the nation to be the same as the will of the people and vice-versa. The Founders could respond by suggesting that even if the president and people were of one mind when the president was elected, either the mind of the president or that of the people would be subject to change at some point after the president has resumed office. In other words, an agreement today does not guarantee an agreement tomorrow. The Founders would then argue that their critique still holds.

One concern the Founders would have about direct national primaries is that it allows a demagogue a straight and clear path into the executive office (Ceaser 1979, 65-66, 71). The Founders would state that, under Wilson's method, there is no mechanism to moderate the people's choice in case the people chose to elect a demagogue. All the demagogue has to accomplish to gain the executive office is to get enough votes. Demagoguery was a major concern to the Founders. For example, John Adams ([2000], 237) wrote: "Self-interest, private avidity, ambition, and avarice, will exist in every state of society, and under every form of government". With these words, Adams pointed to the fact that any system of government, which would include its method of selecting its leaders, ought to be evaluated on how well it responds to private selfish interests. Thus for the Founders, a political system ought to have a clear answer to solving the problem of selfish ambition, a problem which finds itself especially personified by the

demagogue. The Founders would be concerned that Wilson's direct national primaries would provide an opportunity for the silvered tongued or charismatic demagogue to gain the presidency with no mechanism to stop him from doing so.

Wilson would respond to this critique by arguing that the concern of demagoguery is a concern of any election system, and not a concern peculiar to his method. The Founders would respond that Wilson's rebuttal neglects to acknowledge that this weakness is especially poignant in Wilson's method because direct national primaries provide no mechanism or additional voices to moderate the choice of the people. Wilson would argue that while direct national primaries would not stop a demagogue from ascending to the executive office if elected, this concern is unnecessary because the demagogue can be identified before he is elected. Once the demagogue is identified, the people would not vote for the demagogue, preventing him from becoming elected.

Wilson's first method to identify a demagogue is that the demagogue utilizes evanescent public passions while the legitimate candidate appeals to a longstanding thought (Wilson [1890] 1952, 42). The Founders could argue that a problem with this technique is that the demagogue may appeal to some long-standing prejudice in addition to or rather than momentary compulsions of the people. In fact, a long-standing issue or prejudice would perhaps be the perfect thing for a demagogue to exploit in order to gain popular appeal. The Founders would argue that issue arousal, regardless of how recent the issue happens to be, is problematic for Wilson's method because a demagogue can take advantage of the public's stance on an issue.

Wilson's second method for identifying the demagogue is that the demagogue is someone that commits any act that permanently divides economic or sociological groups within society (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 194). The Founders could challenge this technique by arguing that it precludes the possibility that there may be a legitimate permanent grievance against an economic or sociological group within society. For example, the Founders would likely argue for the legitimacy of United States society being permanently poised against the influence of those connected to the purse of King George III from interfering in the formation of United States legislation or government processes. Thus the Founders would question the validity of Wilson's technique for identifying the demagogue because a non-demagogue could legitimately commit an act that permanently divides economic or sociological groups within society. The Founders would argue that since both a demagogue and a non-demagogue could carry out a divisive act, the mere occurrence of an act that permanently divides society does not help identify the demagogue.

A third technique devised by Wilson in order to identify a demagogue is to examine what a candidate can gain from ascending to the executive office (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 194-195). According to Wilson, a candidate is likely to be a demagogue if the candidate's only goal is to gain or add to his own power (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 194-195). The Founders would critique this technique by putting forth that what a candidate seeks to gain from the executive office is not always clear because people's private thoughts are not public knowledge. The allure of power for its own sake, for instance, is privately known to a candidate but is not public knowledge. Therefore Founders could argue that

Wilson's technique to identify the demagogue is not useful because it is unknown to voters just what the candidates seek to gain by winning the executive office.

Wilson would likely respond to the Founder's critiques of his methods of identifying the demagogue by arguing that the Founders' elector method is not a satisfactory solution to the problem of a demagogue gaining the executive office. While the election method of the Founders has electors voting for the president, Wilson could point out Ceaser's ([1979] 1980, 43) observation that a state may decide to have its electors vote as directed by the people. This would have the same practical effect as a direct national primary because the electors would not influence the election in any way. Therefore if a demagogue ran for president and the people directed the electors to vote for the demagogue, the electors would be helpless to resist the will of the people and would be forced to vote for the demagogue.

The Founders could respond that as long as some states had its electors be unfettered by the will of the people, those electors could vote against the demagogue, lessening the chance of the demagogue being victorious. The only way that the Founders' elector method could have the same practical effect of a direct national primary system is if every state made it so that its electors could only vote as the people directed them to vote. Since this scenario is so unlikely, the Founders would put forth that their system is still a better guard against a demagogue gaining the executive office than Wilson's system is.

To support his argument that the Founders' electoral method does not fully resolve the problem of a demagogue gaining the executive office, Wilson could also point to Eidelberg's (1968, 184-185) observation that the state may allow the people to chose

the electors from those that the state nominates. This would allow the people to select as nominees those most sympathetic to the people's interests, making it so the distinction between the will of the people and the will of the elector is lessened. If the people favor a demagogue and chose as an elector someone that wants to vote according to the will of the people or if that elector himself favors the demagogue, then the elector will vote for the demagogue. This situation would undermine the Founders' intention for the electors to moderate the choice of the people.

The Founders could respond to this argument in two ways. The first is that even if electors in one state vote for a demagogue, the electors in other states may choose to support other candidates, lessening the chance of the demagogue being victorious. The second is that even if the people choose the electors from those that the state nominates, the state is still the organization that selects the nominees. As a result, a state can choose wise, upright people as its nominees. Thus regardless of which nominees the people chose to select as electors, those chosen electors will be wise in their judgment. This wisdom in judgment will allow the electors to choose to vote for other candidates that are not demagogues.

SECTION 2

The next major point of disagreement between the Founding Fathers and Woodrow Wilson is on whether there ought to be aristocracy from which the president would be selected. For the Founders, a statesman from an educated class with an established reputation of service to the state would be the best suited to be president (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 47). This person would be a refined gentleman of high education and attitudes (Wood 1969, 480), qualifying him to be a member of the aristocracy. The

aristocracy would be based on talent and merit, not heredity (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 47). For the Founders, the president and other political leaders ought to be selected from this aristocracy (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 47). For Wilson (1985, 170), the person best suited to be president would be a common man with political experience. Wilson ([1913] 1961, 59, 62) was against the aristocratic theory because he thought that no aristocracy would have as accurate a vision of true reality as the common man. For Wilson, the candidate best qualified to be the president would be the one who best represents the will of the people (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 187).

For the Founders, the common man was not the best qualified to serve the country as its president. Hamilton (Federalist 35 [1788] 2009, 186-187) wrote that the landholder will seek to promote the interest of property and the merchant will be inclined to promote the interests of the manufacturing arts to which mercantilism is closely aligned. However, the learned man will be impartial to different commercial concerns, instead looking to the interests of society as a whole (Hamilton Federalist 35 [1788] 2009, 187). This learned man would be a member of the aristocracy.

The Founders were in favor of an aristocracy that the president would be selected from (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 47). This individual that was selected as president would be someone with a great reputation that had been earned from prior state service (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 58). The Founders were against hierarchies based on royalism and hereditary ties (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 47). For example, John Adams (2000, 130) wrote that while there are different orders of offices, there are not different orders of men. Instead, all men are of the same species (Adams 2000, 130). For the Founders, the distinguishing factor between those in the aristocracy and those that were not would be

talent and merit (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 47). By gaining a distinguished record of state service, persons would earn their right to be a part of the aristocracy (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 58). The logic of the Founders for their support of selecting a president from the aristocracy is that in the same way that an experienced surgeon ought to be the one selected to perform a complicated surgery, so too should someone with distinguished experience to the state hold such a significant office as the presidency. On the matter of presidential selection, the purpose of the aristocracy was to provide a supply of men from which a suitable president could be drawn.

An observation that the Founders could make in support of their argument of the desirability of an aristocracy is that it would assuage the problem of needing to finance a campaign. With an aristocracy established, candidates would already be well-known and enjoy a reputation, lessening their need to spend money on name recognition and self-promotion. An aristocracy based on talent and merit would level the playing field between wealthy candidates and candidates of modest means because candidates would be praised and valued to the extent of their political contributions rather than for the size of their personal coffers.

Wilson would critique the idea of an aristocracy by arguing that it will create an elite class of persons who pursue their own selfish interests at the expense of the interests of the people. Wilson ([1913] 1961, 53, 75) would make this criticism because the problem of a political group that looked out only for its own selfish interests is precisely what Wilson believed was happening in his own time with party machines. Wilson could charge that the members of the aristocracy would justify each other's actions and prevent others from outside the group from gaining significant governmental roles. All the while,

the group would pretend to be seeking the interests of the people while actually promoting their own selfish interests. Wilson could charge that members of the aristocracy would perpetuate this injustice by defaming any critics by accusing these critics of having an insufficient education or impure motives.

The Founders could defend their conception of the aristocracy by arguing that the aristocracy is unlikely to become corrupted because it continually accepts new members. As Gordon Wood (1969, 479-480) pointed out, social movement into the aristocracy was possible. Jefferson (1942, 89) declared that genius youths may be among the poor because nature sows talents among both poor and rich. With this declaration, Jefferson exemplified the Founders' sentiments that talent and merit are the measures of the political man and so the aristocracy should be open to new members. The Founders could argue that with the aristocracy's openness to new members joining, the inflow of new talent would put a check on the likelihood of the aristocracy of becoming isolated and focused on its own insular interests.

Another criticism that Wilson could levy against the Founders' aristocracy is that its reliance on reputation is problematic because there may be a discrepancy between a person's merit and a person's reputation. The aristocracy is to be composed of highly educated men with an established record of state service but Wilson might charge that the aristocracy would decline in quality because those joining it may do so by having a reputation that they do not legitimately deserve. Wilson could also argue that a member of the aristocracy might be someone that once deserved their reputation for greatness but had lost it through time and a lack of practice, leading to a decline in the aristocracy's quality. The Founders would not deny the possibility of these occurrences but due to the

fact that merit itself is invisible, the Founders relied on reputation as the best indicator of merit (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 66). The Founders could respond to this critique by arguing that it could be difficult for a person to gain a reputation that exceeds their merit. The Founders could also respond that a person would, over time, lose their reputation for greatness if this person ceased to be politically active in a rigorous capacity.

Wilson could argue that an additional deficiency of the Founders' desire for an aristocracy class is that even if an aristocracy was instituted, there is no guarantee that it would have a steady enough enrollment of members to sustain itself. In articulating this argument Wilson could make use of Ceaser's ([1979] 1980, 84) observation that the Founding itself and the Revolutionary War gave men an excellent opportunity to distinguish themselves upon the national stage but these events are not repeatable. Wilson could charge that because the Founders' planned for the existence of an aristocracy, they ought to have provided a satisfactory amount of opportunities for people to distinguish themselves enough to join the aristocracy.

The Founders could defend themselves from this charge by arguing that even in uneventful political times, men can still distinguish themselves enough to join the aristocracy by doing an excellent job at their duties in political roles. Wilson could further argue that for any variety of reasons, such as apathy towards politics, there may be a lack of people willing to join the aristocracy. The Founders might respond that there would be a steady supply of men to rise to be great statesmen because universities would inculcate in the youth a proper political education along with a desire to carry out their civic duties as political officials. For example, one reason Thomas Jefferson founded the University of Virginia was to educate future statesmen (Jaffa 1961, 80).

Wilson could argue that an additional problem of the Founders' plan is the ambiguity on the precise qualifications one must meet to join the aristocracy. What is distinguished service? Is there a number of years that a candidate must serve in some capacity to be properly considered a great enough statesman to join the aristocracy? How will disagreements be resolved on the matter of which records of political persons are sufficient enough for these persons to be qualified to join the aristocracy? By asking these and other questions, Wilson could argue that it is unclear exactly what qualifications must be met for people to join the aristocracy. Wilson would argue that given these ambiguities, the Founders' conception of an aristocracy should not be implemented.

In great contrast to the Founder's vision of an aristocracy, for Wilson ([1885] 1965, 170), the common man is the most suitable to be president. In Wilson's ([1913] 1961, 59, 62) opinion, the common person is the one who possesses real wisdom because it is the common person who is acquainted with the actual realities of life. According to Wilson ([1909] 1925, 95-96), a man of the people is preferable as a president because political figures are too limited in their worldview. Wilson's ([1909] 1925, 95-96) reasoning behind this claim is that because political figures have too long and too deeply been focused on political matters, a man of the people is preferable because he has not been overly steeped in one field of study.

On the other hand, Wilson did not desire just any ordinary person to be president. For Wilson ([1885] 1965, 170), the common man ought to gain preparatory experience prior to becoming the president. Wilson ([1885] 1965, 170) put forth that in the same way that the commercial trades require effort and preparation, so too does administration and legislation. Thus for Wilson ([1885] 1965, 170), it is commendable that the nation has

training grounds for future presidents that are in the form of less major offices, such as state governorships.

For Wilson, the common man must first gain political experience to be president because of the difficulty of the office. Wilson's (1916, 66) example of the difficulty of the presidency is the constant need for the president to be making appointments to other governmental offices. Wilson (1916, 66) also points out that the executive office is difficult because of the sheer number of people wishing to correspond with the president.

Wilson differs from the Founders in that he did not desire any distinction of class or social status (Wilson [1913] 1961, 25). Wilson wrote that the common people know their own interests better than do a small group of people ([1913] 1961, 49-50). Wilson ([1913] 1961, 51-52) asserts that no special class can understand the interests of the people at large and no amount of wisdom or patriotism on the part of the small group of people could change this fact.

The Founders could argue that Wilson's preference for the common man to be president does not solve the problem of the executive office requiring the ability of the president to represent all social brackets. The Founders would make this argument because if the president is to be the representative of all people like Wilson ([1913] 1961, 81) sees him, the president must be able to sufficiently represent the interests of people from all social brackets. As mentioned above, Wilson's view was that the common man has the most accurate perceptions of the country ([1913] 1961, 59, 62). The Founders would likely grant that the common man is not insulated from some harsh conditions like wealthier, upper-class people might be. On the other hand, the Founders would point out that the common man may also be insulated from problems that are unique to wealthier,

upper-class people. It appears that regardless of what social bracket the president is from, this individual will have incomplete knowledge of the conditions facing other social brackets due to not having lived in those precise social conditions themselves. Since it is difficult to represent that which someone does not intimately know, this lack of knowledge may interfere with the president's ability to be the true representative of all people as Wilson sees him.

Moreover, the Founders would argue that an aristocracy would be the sole group with the education and experience necessary to properly govern the nation. The Founders would question Wilson's assertion that the common man is the best suited to be president because Wilson makes it without sufficient evidence. The Founders would not want the presidential selection system to be based on an asserted statement that is not furnished with evidence to support it.

SECTION 3

On the matter of presidential selection, the third major difference between the Founding Fathers and Woodrow Wilson is on the desirability of political parties. James MacGregor Burns (1963, 27) points out that Madison, Hamilton, and Jefferson were opposed to political parties. The overwhelming majority of the Founders were against political parties and saw them as a danger to the regime (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 77). The Founders saw the nation as a united whole, with the only 'party' being the group supporting the new Constitution (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 77). Thus the Founders wanted the nation's politics to be nonpartisan. Woodrow Wilson ([1913] 1961, 75) was also against parties as formal institutions. Instead, Wilson was a proponent of informal parties (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 198-199). These informal parties would be temporary organizations that

would form to support a single specific candidate, carrying out tasks in support of that specific candidate (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 198-199).

The first reason the Founders preferred nonpartisanship was because they believed that partisanship would cause the people to come to be loyal to their party rather than to the nation as a whole (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 92). The Founders would argue that partisanship is inherently divisive, threatening the spirit of unity throughout the nation. Madison (Federalist 9 [1788] 2009, 39) points out that it was party rage that disrupted the petty republics of Greece and Italy. The Founders would agree with Ceaser's ([1979] 1980, 92) point that the very act of parties aggressively competing with each other creates conflict that would not exist without the existence of parties. The Founders would likely argue that party fighting would hinder constructively distributing information and clarifying complicated issues.

The second reason that the Founders preferred nonpartisanship is they saw partisanship as binding its members to certain positions, creating a conflict of interest once party members began serving as government officials (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 92-93). In the case of the president, his partisan ties would restrict him from fully making decisions based off of unbiased deliberation (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 93). This is so because, for every decision that the president makes, he would need to consider if it would strengthen or weaken his ties with his party. The president's relationship with his party is significant because it will affect his re-election, the election of his successor from the same party, and his ability to cooperate with Congress. This conflict of interest interferes with the president being able to fully carry out his duties for the best interests of the nation.

Like the Founders, Wilson was also against permanent political parties but instead of supporting nonpartisanship, he desired informal political parties. By the time Woodrow Wilson was elected, political parties had already been well established in United States politics. Wilson believed that in his time, political power had become concentrated in the hands of parties, organizations beholden to neither the government nor the people (Wilson 1910, 591-592). For Wilson ([1913] 1961, 133-134) this state of affairs was problematic because he believed that the parties promoted their own interests at the expense of the interests of the people. Wilson (1897, 352) argued that the president is not a proper leader because he is inhibited by his party platform from being an effective leader (Wilson 1897, 352). Wilson thought simply reforming the parties was inadequate (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 201) and he ([1913] 1961, 75) wanted to do away with the existing parties altogether. An additional reason Wilson ([1884] 1925, 109) wanted to rid the nation of the formal political parties was because he believed that they were steeped in outdated issues and principles.

Wilson was not a proponent of nonpartisanship. In Wilson's ([1913] 1961, 133) view, organizations are legitimate and necessary to advance a great cause. Wilson saw the emergence of parties as a natural evolution of the political regime established by the Founders (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 171). For Wilson ([1879] 1925, 36), leadership requires followers. Therefore, in order for the president to be a proper leader, he must have a party ([1879] 1925, 36). For Wilson ([1879] 1925, 36), the health of free political institutions relies on party rivalry. This is so because representative government is government by the majority and to be a government by majority, there must be party government ([1884] 1925, 108).

In place of permanent formal parties or nonpartisanship, Wilson supported parties as temporary informal organizations (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 198-199). In the sense that Wilson wanted a party, a party would be defined as an informal organization that forms around a candidate and is dedicated to helping that candidate carry out his governing plan should that candidate be victorious in the election (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 170, 198). The objective of these party members is to advance the principles of their party leader (Wilson [1884] 1925, 122). This informal party would perform duties that would help the candidate, acting as a supporting body for the candidate's activities (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 198-199). Wilson would agree with Herbert Croly's (1914, 342) definition of a party as a voluntary association for the advancement of particular political and economic objectives.

As a way to respond to the Founders' concern that people would become loyal to their party rather than to the nation, Wilson would argue that his conception of parties as temporary organizations resolves this concern. Wilson could argue that since the parties in his conception would be only transient, the parties may not exist long enough for people to become loyal to their party rather than to the nation. The Founders would likely respond that despite the shorter duration of party existence, the people could still be loyal to their party rather than to their nation.

Wilson could argue that his conception of parties as informal organizations resolves the Founders' concern that there will be a conflict of interest between the president serving the interests of his party and serving the interests of the nation as a whole because the president's party exists to serve him. Wilson would argue that in this

relationship, the president is not tied to the will of the party but instead the party is tied to president's will.

The Founders would likely respond that because the party helped the president be victorious in the election, the party would expect that the president would promote the interests of the party. Thus the president would still have a conflict of interest because he cannot alienate his party members too much as he pursues the good of the nation as a whole.

Wilson would charge that the Founders should have foreseen that if they did not endorse political parties as informal groups then permanent parties with their concomitant evils would emerge. For Wilson, parties were a natural progression of the political system of the nation (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 199, 171). The Founders could defend themselves by saying that parties were not an inevitable development but rather were the result of Jefferson's actions in the so-called Revolution of 1800 and the deliberate attempts of Martin Van Buren to create a permanent party system (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 84). While Jefferson became the founder of an enduring political party, this was accidental (Mansfield [1971] 2011, 75). For Jefferson, a party was only to be a temporary organization of persons to react to an emergency governmental situation (Mansfield [1971] 2011, 75).

The Founders would argue against Wilson's informal parties by asserting that the existence of parties of any sort would be divisive, placing people in opposing groups, which would threaten the sense of unity in the nation. The Founders could argue that voters whom would not have been against the president despite disagreeing with him,

may end up opposing even the best of the president's ideas merely because of partisan ties (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 92-93).

Wilson could counter that even in a system without political parties of any sort, there will still be those who oppose the president because they were against the president before he got elected. The Founders may grant Wilson this point but would respond that the existence of parties would make this opposition all the more powerful because the use of party labels makes more tangible the natural segmentation of different people into different groups, engendering tribalism.

The Founders could then proceed to point out that a nonpartisan president augments the sense of legitimacy the executive office must hold for the nation to be a stable regime. In a party system, there are independents that invariably see the president as merely a partisan actor, causing them to never fully accept him as their leader (Ceaser [1979] 1980, 99-100). The Founders would point out that a nonpartisan president avoids this problem and that Wilson's informal parties still make it so the president would be perceived as a partisan actor by those not in the same party as the president, weakening some people's perception of the president's legitimacy. A lack of legitimacy is problematic because it leads to unrest and enough unrest eventually topples governments. The Founders would argue that nonpartisanship has an advantage over Wilson's plan because, under a nonpartisan system, the president can more easily be seen as the legitimate leader of the whole nation, rather than just a leader of a party.

CONCLUSION

The Founders and Wilson differed on the topic of presidential selection in three significant ways. The first is that the Founders had a preference for separate state

conventions where electors would vote for a president while Wilson had a preference for direct national primaries. The second is that the Founders thought that the president should be selected from a political aristocracy whereas Wilson wanted the president to be a common man that had sufficient political experience. The third difference is that the Founders did not desire the presence of political parties in the nation whereas Wilson believed there ought to be informal political parties that would be candidate-centered.

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Appendix on Faith and Learning

Since I am blessed enough to know about and have access to God's Word, Christian beliefs influence all that I do. I have committed to being a Christian and therefore strive to study things that are useful to the advancement of God's Kingdom. Through this Honors Project, I seek to honor God. I believe that academia can glorify God because studying leads to a deeper understanding of the things that make up God's creation.

The 2008 Presidential Election was the beginning of my interest in Political Science. In the years since then, I have paid attention to many and various debates about United States politics. Needless to say, the debates I've heard over the years have been intellectually stimulating and have sparked my interest in Political Science, so much so that I am minoring in it.

What drew me to the topic was the allure of an intellectual exercise. Researching both the Founding Fathers' and Woodrow Wilson's views and amalgamating information was an exercise in careful note taking and juggling information. This process has made me greatly mature as a researcher and as a scholar. Both the Founders and Wilson are commendable for their attempt at creating a just selection method that would furnish the people with the best president possible. My belief is that God wants us all to be the best that we can be. The Founders and Wilson both suggested what they thought was best for the nation. I think this idea of trying to find an optimal method for presidential selection is in line with God's desire for humans to live in the best society possible. I think God would commend the attempt to create the optimal presidential election system.

The present system for electing the president in the United States may not be the optimal one but I hope that this essay has illuminated the strengths and weaknesses of Founder's method and Wilson's method. I hope that the reader will be able to make a more informed choice about what could be the optimal presidential selection system. I also hope that this essay has caused the reader to become interested in American political theory regardless of whether or not they have had previous exposure to the field. The reader can decide for himself or herself just how right or wrong it is for a presidential selection system to differ from the Founders.

The "Defining Scholarship" article by Douglas and Rhonda Jacobsen teaches that scholars do things for "the betterment of others". Jesus taught compassion and love for the poor, which requires selfless acts. In my opinion, it is my duty as a Christian scholar to have an Honors Project that makes the circumstances of other people's lives even better. Helping the journey to find the optimal presidential selection system promotes justice for all. Additionally, the article states that the "primary task of scholarship is to "pay attention" to the world-or, at least, to some part of the world-with a sense of focus, care, and intensity that non-scholars lack" (Doug and Rhonda Jacobsen). As someone who is always seeking intellectual stimulation, this most certainly applies to me because I am very dedicated to being focused and passionately caring for others. Through this project, I hope to also spark interest in the presidential selection system and help allow the people to become more interested in politics and voting. The people of this country are fortunate enough to have opportunities to vote and I hope this project has helped create increased political participation in general.

The “Application” portion of *Scholarship Reconsidered* by Ernest Boyer and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of teaching also has greatly related to my life. I agree wholeheartedly with its sentiment of asking how knowledge can be “responsibly applied to problems”. As an avid reader, the books I enjoy much more than the rest are the ones that are the most applicable to my life and the advancement of achieving my goals. While a book I read may intellectually stimulating, the reading’s impact on me will be shallow if there is not some way that I can apply this material. This project was written to help the search for the best possible presidential system that can be used as well as spark interest in political theory

Another faith model that I found was of particular relevance to me was Chapter 6: “Two Ideals of Knowledge” of *The Sacred & the Secular University*. The chapter ends with a quote attributed to William Torrey Harris that rejoices “in the fact of the increased popularity of the university in both of its functions-that of culture and that of specialization” (Roberts and Turner 106). This quote celebrates the fact that different academic disciplines have become specialized and that there is also a common curriculum. My concern about academic disciplines being specialized is that they become inaccessible to laymen. This quote caused me to realize that the problem with our political processes is not that no one can understand them but rather few make the attempt. I think this is because people are unaware of the intellectual pleasure that can be experienced by studying politics and political theory.

Through this project, I hope to make the presidential selection system of the Founders and Wilson easy to understand and by doing so, prove that politics is capable of being understood by many people rather than just pundits. I think that by making these

two methods easy to understand, it will raise awareness of how U.S. political systems theory works which in turn may be thought provoking to voters. I picture the ideal scholar as someone who is willing to explain his or her field to someone ignorant of it. In my own case, I strive to make my intellectual accomplishments accessible to both scholars as well as nonscholars. I believe this inclusiveness is exactly what Jesus preached.