Alexis de Tocqueville's Theory of Democracy and Revolutions

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Abbreviations

AR – *Ancien Régime and the Revolution*
DA – *Democracy in America*
R – *Recollections*

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Introduction

I please many persons of opposite opinions not because they penetrate my meaning, but because, looking only to one side of my work, they think they find in it arguments in favor of their own convictions.

Alexis de Tocqueville.[1]

There is no dictatorship in Louisiana. There is a perfect democracy there, and when you have a perfect democracy it is pretty hard to tell it from a dictatorship.

Governor Huey Long.[2]

Alexis de Tocqueville seemed to have been fully aware that he would be an author that the students of political thought will desire to quote, but not necessarily interpret. They will find elements that suit them in his thought and treat them like conversation items. Indeed, Harvey Mansfield rightly points out that Tocqueville has not yet received his "full due for the quality of his thought," and although he has been praised by many, his readers seem to assume that "anyone who writes so well on the surface must be superficial, and anyone who predicts so well must be a seer" (Mansfield 2010, p. 6). This is reflected in the fact that one will easily find a myriad of small articles and medium sized works devoted to Tocqueville, few of which, however, attempt to look at his thought as a whole, resolve the apparent inconsistencies, and underline the real ones.[3]

Tocqueville was wary of being called a philosopher; this however does not mean his writings are devoid of a general theory that would explain his "new political science for a world entirely new" (*Democracy in America* 2010 I,

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1 Tocqueville to Charles Stoffels 2 Feb 1835, quoted in Welch (2001, p. 215).

2 Quoted in Schlesinger (2003, p. 66).

3 Three notable exceptions are Pierre Manent's *Tocqueville and the Nature of Democracy* (1996), Boesche's *Strange Liberalism of Alexis de Tocqueville* (1987) as well as Marvin Zetterbaum's *Tocqueville and the Problem of Democracy* (1967).

p. 16).[4] The aim of this book is to give Tocqueville fuller credit for constructing a completely new theoretical scheme that would explain most of the possible political changes of modernity in a more satisfactory way than the theories of most other thinkers. I shall, however, prove that there is nothing particularly Nostradamic about the accuracy of Tocqueville's predictions, which are all based on the same, elegant theoretical model. This model, indeed, constitutes an audacious attempt at embarking on a project of creating a new science of regimes that to modernity would be what Aristotle's *Politics* (1984) was to the ancient world. In short, my aim is to propose a description of theoretical mechanics that de Tocqueville used in his principal writings, especially in *Democracy in America* (2010), *Ancien Régime and the Revolution*[5] (2008) and *Recollections*[6] (2005). I will try to clarify both why the Tocquevillian model has so much explanatory power and at the same time why its origin and shape remains a mystery to many modern political scientists. A large portion of the work will be also devoted to showing how Tocqueville's insights into revolutions and regime changes can be used in modern political science.

It has to be noted that in spite of the audaciousness of the project, Tocqueville is very diffident in its realization. He formulates his thoughts very cautiously, avoiding pseudo-scientific doctrinarism and determinism. He is what Françoise Mélonio (2006, pp. 346-347) calls an "eloquent philosopher," and chooses to be less systematic than the first sociologists (Marx, Durkheim, Weber – see Manent 2006). Moreover, he has concrete goals: he is propaedeutic; he desires to teach his contemporaries to avoid certain outcomes. Still, in order to teach about the undesirable results, he needs a fairly objective model of all possible political changes. Sadly, when death prematurely ended Tocqueville's life, his work was still not finished. He was still developing and gathering notes to the second part of the AR. Tellingly, as Jon Elster (2006) notes, the ultimately unfinished AR is a far more mature and coherently structured work than the DA.

Even in AR, Tocqueville did not present his theoretical model of regime change in one cohesive form. Still, based on the dispersed theoretical elements presented in his works, one can reconstruct the outline of his general model of regime change, a model that is genuinely insightful, perhaps even more insightful than the sociological models that came into use later, and that assume an extremely high level of causal determinism. After all, the role of

[4] Elsewhere referred to as DA, with the Roman numerals indicating the volume of the 2010 edition of the work.

[5] Elsewhere referred to as AR.

[6] Elsewhere referred to as R.

a social scientist, as Tocqueville understood it (Elster 2009), was not so much to predict the actual future, but to understand the alternatives that are open to the society. Tocqueville had the temperament of an active politician, and thus, in his writings he displayed a firm belief in the political elites' ability to make independent and not merely predetermined choices, which in turn enables the pursuit of concrete political goals. He wrote, "For my part I hate all those absolute systems that make all the events of history depend on great first causes linked together by the chain of fate and thus succeed, so to speak, in banishing men from the history of the human race. Their boasted breadth seems to me narrow and their mathematical exactness false" (R, p. 62).

Contemporary political scientists, especially those who rigidly insist on the separation between abstract theories and empirical studies, may have a conceptual problem with the syncretic methodology employed by the Frenchmen. Using present-time notions, for instance, it is difficult to establish whether Tocqueville's works should be classified as political philosophy or as early empirical political science. If one is to interpret it as political theory or philosophy, then a question arises: why does Tocqueville omit to quote key theoretical texts such as the Declaration of Independence in DA and Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen in AR. On the other hand, if one treats Tocqueville as a modern, empirical political scientist, it becomes disturbingly easy to criticize him on methodological grounds. Michal R. Hill (2003), for instance, points out, among other alleged flaws of Tocqueville's *Democracy* – the short time of the trip, the arbitrary choice of informants and a superficial interpretation of the results that substitutes the results of political phenomena for the analysis of their cause.

This work will attempt to show that although some of the methodological criticisms of Tocqueville are justified, his true value rests not in the particular studies he conducted but in the general model for understanding change, revolution and history he proposed. In line with Kuhn's methodology, one might think about Tocqueville's writings as one of the best descriptions of the modern paradigm in social sciences. The "normal sciences" Tocqueville conducted will be always more or less problematic for other researchers, but his paradigm indeed still holds. And the most important element of this paradigm is the clear focus on social and political change. As a matter of fact, political change for Tocqueville is all encompassing; unlike Marx or Hegel, he does not exclude his own theory from the general current of the great and small revolutions.

Tocqueville constantly confuses us by using the notion of democracy in many different meanings. Some count over twenty (Schleifer, 2000); this work,

however, assumes that they can be reduced to two basic forms. Nevertheless, irrespective of how many democracies or aristocracies we will find in Tocqueville's work, all classifications miss the point that the true subject of Tocqueville's thoughts is the changing nature of those notions. He is not a philosopher of a particular revolution, an aristocrat, democrat, socialist or reactionary. I argue that Tocqueville is a masterful student of revolution itself. The fundamental question he asks at the philosophical level is what is political change? However, in his writings he also steps down from the philosophical pedestal and asks us what constitutes the particular great change in modern history? Finally at the normative level he asks the question: how should political actors respond to this change? At the same time it is important to note that unlike in the case of Aristotle, revolution for Tocqueville does not seek merely a new regime, it seeks a dynamic change according to a particular scheme and on rare occasions can even change the scheme itself. History according to Tocqueville can surprise us with great revolutions that indeed create new political worlds with new regime typologies, and new dynamics of development.

As for the logic behind the great revolutions, Tocqueville, as all important political thinkers, constructs his own theory of time and being. In this theory he provides a unique connection between history and nature. In short, he is a historicist who does not believe in progress.[7] Human nature and "providence" in Tocqueville's view "traces around each man" a "fatal circle" (DA IV, p. 1285) that prevents humans from becoming simply perfect and rest in that perfection. History thus becomes close to a zero-sum game, by choosing their virtues societies at the same time choose their vices.

It is true that Tocqueville's theory is open-ended. It does not treat even itself as the ultimate point in history, it remains ironic and skeptical.[8] It is also true that Tocqueville's philosophy is dispersed in his writing and does not assume an organized, academic structure (much like Plato's dialogues). However, this work argues that the intricacy and the depth of Tocqueville's thought makes him a self-conscious theorist of politics. In his persuasion, Tocqueville sided with none of the most powerful intellectual camps of his times, he did not choose Guizot's liberal historicism and he likewise rejected socialism and the French ultra-conservative reaction. Moreover, Tocqueville justified his choices philosophically.

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[7] The meaning of the term will be further explained in Chapter 2.

[8] …which helps Tocqueville escape the paradox of the end of history.

Chapter 1

Revolution, Democracy, and the Paradox of Democratic Legitimization

Modern democracy, the democracy of large federal republics and nation-states according to Tocqueville appeared in the Western world in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century and it had no immediate predecessor, although, it culminated a long process of political and social change; the "great democratic revolution" (DA I, p. 6) as Tocqueville puts it. This lack of precedence created for him a phenomenological problem with naming the very object of his study. Acknowledging the difficulty, I will try to explore Tocqueville's understanding of both revolution and democracy.

Firstly, Tocqueville obviously could have created his own new language to describe the new political world; this would be very much in line with the German school of philosophizing. Such a move, however, would have been burdened with a certain risk. Over time an artificial, purely philosophical language would become incomprehensible, since it would not match the natural language the new epoch itself would choose to use. The drawback of natural languages, is, however, the fact that unlike the artificial creations of analytical philosophy, they have a disturbing tendency to change the meaning of old words rather than create new ones. Eventually, Tocqueville decided not to follow the Germans. According to his own record and that of his readers, he was a great admirer of the natural language used in speech and popular literature, and he despised the idea of radically rearranging this vernacular in order to force it to accurately express the new "general ideas." This tendency to create artificial philosophical and scientific languages to describe political phenomena was according to Tocqueville one of the major vices of the democratic philosophy. He was quick to observe that "the love of general ideas

shows itself in democratic languages, in the continual use of generic terms and abstract words, and in the manner in which they are used. That is the great merit and the great weakness of these languages" (DA III, p. 827). The strength lies in containing" the "vacillating thoughts" of democratic men with "very broad expressions," which can give some charm even to "vagueness"[1] (ibid., p. 829). The weakness consists in the fact that the resulting neologisms have a very short life since, as Tocqueville observes, "democratic people constantly change their words" (DA III, p. 817*n*1).

As for Tocqueville himself, he chooses to follow "the natural laws of language" (DA III, p. 827). Tocqueville's choice results in a captivating literary style reminiscent of the great French writers. It is not without a reason that Louis Kergolay in his review of DA compares Tocqueville to Pascal "for the substance of the language" and to Voltaire "for ease and lightness of touch." (quoted in Jaunme 2008, p. 171*n*1). Tocqueville's French style clearly sets him apart from Hegel. And although one sees many similarities between the two (See Welch 2001, pp. 150-157), Tocqueville was indeed a very different kind of thinker. Being well aware of the linguistic tendencies present in modern philosophy (he wrote after Kant), Tocqueville thus declined to even call his thought a philosophy. He preferred to use the more modest name of the science of politics.

The linguistic mastery of that science, however, came at a cost. Tocqueville may have avoided the awkwardness of idiosyncratic terms, but using old, natural words he could not avoid ambiguity. Hence as James T. Schleifer points out "perhaps the most disconcerting feature of Tocqueville's thought has always been his failure to pinpoint the meaning of *democratie*" (2000, p. 325). The main tension according to Schleifer occurred between understanding democracy as *état social* [the social state] synonymous with the notion of *égalite* [equality] and democracy as a form of political rule. Schleifer thus assumes that Tocqueville, in spite of all his efforts, failed to find a "satisfactory" (ibid.) explanation of the relation between the two terms, and remained in a constant state of confusion.

The Roots of the Ambiguity

It seems, however, that in spite of his problems in applying political philosophy to modern political reality, Tocqueville shared a crucial insight with

[1] This is not to say that Tocqueville is not vague himself. He is, however, quite conscious and open about his vagueness.

Plato and Aristotle.[2] He believed that political philosophy is reflected in the way of life or the *état social*, which in turn produces a regime. A regime, in consequence, both for Tocqueville and for the classics of political philosophy, is an institution that perpetuates and conserves the governing philosophical principle. It does so mainly by finding a rule that diminishes the conflicts between the private lives of citizens and the polity, as well as those between one polity and other polities. In other words, a regime is an epiphenomenon, a product of society that enables it to correct its own imperfections. It follows that the very idea of the regime is something of a compromise, and a perfectly organized society is at the same time its own regime, since by virtue of its impeccable design it produces no conflicts between the private and the political, and in time of need it becomes an army as a whole. Plato gave an example of such a society without politics in the *Republic*.

Although Tocqueville, as we will see in the next chapter, is far from approving of the Platonic vision, he at the same time understood that at the deep philosophical level of analysis, the social and the political are molded into a philosophical principle from which they both can be derived. However, since as we have already noticed Tocqueville declines to create a new language to clarify all those nuances, his use of certain terms had to be ambiguous. In other words, Tocqueville could have instead of "democracy" called this new, great philosophical phenomenon something different, but he deliberately chose to use a more familiar term albeit in a new and ambiguous meaning.[3]

Elaborating on this double meaning of the term "democracy" in Tocqueville's works may seem like straying away from the main topic of this work. However, in fact it is crucial for understanding both Tocqueville's notion of democracy and revolution. This is because in modern politics those notions are, according Tocqueville, closely tied. It is also important to examine the relation between Tocqueville's concepts of regimes and the classical notions of political regimes proposed by Plato and Aristotle. The aim of such an examination is to establish to what extent Tocqueville departed from his own ancient masters and proposed a new philosophy of politics along with a new science of regimes and revolutions.

Tocqueville's use of the terms revolution and democracy in specific contexts, however, points to the fact that we are not dealing with accidental ambiguities. Indeed one can argue that Tocqueville anticipated the "common

[2] This will be discussed in the following chapter.

[3] The problem is exacerbated by the fact that Tocqueville often uses both the old and the new notions of democracy in the same paragraph.

use of 'models' or 'types' by modern social scientists" (ibid., pp. 49-50). In his notes Tocqueville remarks:

> In order to make myself well understood I am constantly obliged to portray extreme states, an aristocracy without a mixture of *démocratie*, a *démocratie* without a mixture of aristocracy, a perfect equality, which is an imaginary state. It happens then that I attribute to one or the other of the two principles more complete effects than those that in general they produce, because in general they are not alone. (quoted in ibid., p. 335)

The similarity between this passage and Max Weber's method of idealization and concretization (see Heckman 1983) seems obvious. There is, however, also a marked difference. Tocqueville, especially in the second volume of DA, does not point to clear concretizations. When reading his most famous passages about the democratic pantheism, individualism or the antithetical relation between liberty and equality, one is not sure whether he speaks of a specific place and time or a general tendency.

Rather than immediately jump into the social or political specifics, Tocqueville seems to construct a perfectly democratic city in speech in the same way Plato constructed a perfectly aristocratic one. Tocqueville, to be sure, thinks in terms of what can be described as "models," but when he does so, he illustrates those thoughts with concrete historical events or phenomena that point to the predictive power of the model. In AR he writes for instance about the absolutist centralization in France and the ways in which it paved the way for a particular type of revolution. In DA he writes, among other things, about the importance of stabilizing the democratic restlessness with the rule of law and illustrates this with a detailed description of the American legal system and a characterization of the lawyers. However, when Tocqueville writes about democracy (or aristocracy) in general and the tastes, desires, aspirations it inspires, he does not seem to be constructing a precise model but a vision that inspires the many probabilistic schemes he ultimately derives from that image of democracy. His philosophical description of the democracy is thus not so much a model or a precise vision of the future. It is a description of the ultimate goal towards which history, according to him, moves but which it never reaches. In other words, democracy is Tocqueville's x axis that the asymptotic function of historic time will keep approaching in the foreseeable future. It is only after a considerable time that a new political paradigm will surface.

In a style evocative of Plato's metaphor of the cave Tocqueville writes in the conclusion to DA:

> This new society, which I have sought to portray and which I want to judge, has only just been born. Time has not yet set its form; the great revolution that created it is still going on, and in what is happening today, it is nearly impossible to discern what must pass away with the revolution itself, and what must remain after it.
>
> The world that is rising is still half caught in the ruins of the world that is falling, and amid the immense confusion presented by human affairs, no one can say which old institutions and ancient mores will remain standing and which will finally disappear.
>
> Although the revolution that is taking place in the social state, the laws, the ideas, the sentiments of men, is still very far from being finished, already you cannot compare its works with anything that has been seen previously in the world. I go back century by century to the most distant antiquity; I notice nothing that resembles what is before our eyes. Since the past no longer clarifies the future, the mind moves in shadows. (DA IV, p. 1280)

The above quote is a concise illustration of the main ambiguities that continuously reappear in all of Tocqueville's major works. On one hand, Tocqueville admits that he moves in the darkness[4] [Fr. …*marche dans les ténèbre*s] just like the men imprisoned in the Plato's cave. On the other hand, the whole work is clearly an attempt, even if not a completely successful one, of turning first towards the fire of historical truth and then perhaps simply towards the truth *per se*. At the same time, as far as the light of Plato's philosophical truth is concerned, Tocqueville remains suspicious as to the extent to which it can change the course of particular human lives and directly influence politics.[5] At one point on the margin of the manuscript he wrote:

> Although philosophical systems can in the long run exercise a powerful influence on the destinies of the human species, they seems to have only a very indirect connection with the fate of each man in particular; it follows that they can excite only a secondary interest in the latter. So men, never feel carried toward philosophical studies by an actual and pressing need, they devote themselves to them for pleasure or in order to fill the leisure that the principal affairs of life leave them. (DA III, p. 705*n*r)

At the same time Tocqueville himself becomes a platonic philosopher when he openly admits that in the second part of DA his goal is to construct an ideal picture of democracy in its pure, theoretical form. However, his philosophy has a touch of existentialism. While trying to explore the possibility

[4] The translation above uses the expression "moves in shadows."

[5] For further discussion of this, see Chapter 3.

of ahistorical truth, Tocqueville simply finds Pascalian empty spaces rather than the Marxian earthly paradises.

When judging Tocqueville's ambiguities, one however also needs to keep in mind that logically consistent models can be used only when dealing with specific cases. Such syllogisms based on Tocqueville's thought were for instance proposed by Huntington (see 1977/1968) and Jon Elster (2006). At the same time, the ultimate goal of democracy as such can be described only through philosophical insight. When Tocqueville says that he "does not believe in Plato's republic" (DA IV, 1082) he obviously does not mean that Plato is wrong because he creates "imaginary states." Tocqueville admits elsewhere he is guilty of the same "sin." His accusation has more to do with the one-sidedness of Plato's vision where the ideal republic is the compact form that contains all possible regimes. Indeed, all the existing regimes can result only from the debasement of the platonic ideal. Members of the perfect republican youth become corrupted merely because they have been devoting too much time to gymnastics and not enough to music (*Republic* 547c-548c).[6] In consequence, young republicans become timocratic, later oligarchic, then democratic and finally succumb to a tyrant whose rule is situated only slightly above the lawless anarchy. In this vision, democracy is just a step in the cycle of decline. Tocqueville opposes this old view of democracy by demonstrating that modern democracy also has its own ideal, and even the tyranny it can potentially lead to has the quality of a new civilizational sophistication that clearly sets it apart from unbridled chaos or the simple implementation of the domineering will. Thus Tocqueville differs from Plato in that he points to the duality (aristocracy versus democracy) or perhaps plurality[7] of the ideal political forms, which is a clear rejection of Platonic unity.

To be sure, one can oppose this new vision of an ideal city of democracy for moral reasons and Tocqueville undoubtedly does so on the grounds that if fully realized, democracy would undermine liberty. It would put an end to the vision of a human being as a moral actor, for no morality is possible without the ability to make free independent decisions. Even a potentially pleasant and benevolent tyranny according to Tocqueville would be tyrannical, since it would prevent humans from carrying the moral weight of their decisions on their own shoulders. It is therefore not a coincidence that the transformation of the old aristocratic pride into individualism disturbed Tocqueville so much.

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[6] See Plato (1991).

[7] As we will later see Tocqueville's model remains open-ended and assumes the possibility of not only new regimes but also new principles of politics in general.

Individualism may reject old authorities, but at the same time it slavishly submits to the will of the majority. As Tocqueville puts it:

> Moralists complain constantly that the favorite vice of our period is pride. That is true in a certain sense: there is no one, in fact, who does not believe himself worth more than his neighbor and who agrees to obey his superior. But that is very false in another sense; for this same man, who cannot bear either subordination or equality, nonetheless despises himself to the point that he believes himself made only for appreciating vulgar pleasures. He stops willingly at mediocre desires without daring to embark upon high undertakings; he scarcely imagines them.
>
> So far from believing that humility must be recommended to our contemporaries, I would like you to try hard to give them a more vast idea of themselves and of their species; humility is not healthy for them; what they lack most, in my opinion, is pride. I would willingly give up several of our small virtues for this vice. (DA IV, p. 1126)

Tocqueville in this point again departs from the classical political science of Plato, who treats pride or the love of honor as the vice that begins the decline towards democracy. Tocqueville disagrees and sees pride as a vestige of a different political world, a principle completely alien to the conformist mind of the democratic society. However, it would be a mistake to say that for Tocqueville the democratic human has no redeeming features. On the contrary, Tocqueville is quick to point out that the perfect democrat is not a beast; like the denizens of Plato's republic the democratic humans also have their own selfless ideal and their own "Phoenician" myth of equality (*Republic* 413d-415d).

The most striking feature of Tocqueville's model[8] is, however, its dynamism. Political writers often tend to view liberal democracy as a state that is either achieved or not. For Tocqueville it is a process, hence in our contemporary terms he should be viewed more as a theorist of revolution than democracy as such. It is not a coincidence that the word "revolution" opens and closes Tocqueville's discussion of democracy in DA. The old ideal of the political is therefore something the modern regimes move away from and democracy is something they approach by means of motions Tocqueville calls "revolutions." A revolution is for him as close as a real life-phenomenon

[8] A feature that a large part of this work will focus on.

can come to pure democracy, which otherwise is only a theoretical extreme. Revolution is democracy in practice.[9]

Overcoming the Ambiguity of Tocqueville's Notion of Democracy and Revolution

In spite of the fact that ambiguity is so deeply rooted in Tocqueville's philosophy, it needs to be overcome in any interpretative approach to his oeuvre. Democracy, as we have established, is for Tocqueville a complex term that every reader of his works must break down into simpler elements. The complexity is a result of the fact that democracy for Tocqueville combines the feature of a regime and those of a social and anthropological principle. We have also established that for Tocqueville, democracy as a theory is the goal of a grand historical movement; a point this movement approaches but never reaches. Therefore, the notion of democracy only makes sense when it is tied with the notion of revolution. Indeed, given that modern descriptions of democracy[10] define it as a stable state rather than a social process; we need to stress the importance of the notion of revolution in Tocqueville. To use a poignant metaphor, revolution would be to Tocqueville what light was to Caravaggio, it brings out the true shapes of things, and in his vision of reality it constitutes a pivotal departure from the static vision of the ancient masters.

Now, however, a time has come to decompose Tocqueville's notions of revolution and democracy and thus to understand the inner mechanism of his political science; examine the particular strokes of his brush, so to say. In that examination, one firstly notices that Tocqueville persistently uses the word revolution in two meanings that are intimately tied to his two notions of democracy. One concept treats a revolution as a relatively slow social process. The "great democratic" (DA I, p. 6) revolution is for Tocqueville a long lasting global drive towards greater equality of conditions. He stresses that "everyone sees it but not everyone judges it in the same way" (ibid.). He also notices

[9] According to Tocqueville even those democracies that have avoided a "small" revolution (USA) as a particular, violent event, still exemplify the second type of the larger and slower revolution that according to Tocqueville was happening in the world that surrounded him. Thus every democracy for him is in some way a child of a certain revolution. As for the ancient democratic regimes like Athens, he goes as far as to deny them the true status of a democracy.

[10] E.g. the Freedom House Index (2012) or Przeworski's (2000) concept of democracy.

that "for seven hundred years there is not a single event among Christians[11] that would not turn to the profit of democracy" (ibid., p. 10).

The other notion of revolution Tocqueville employs is that of a concrete, violent event that brings a political change. In accordance with the nineteenth-century stylistic fashion, he often uses that notion right beside the first one and contrasts them for a supreme literary effect. For instance, he writes that the June days of 1848 "did not quench the fire of revolution in France, but they brought to an end, at least for a time, what one might call the proper work of the February Revolution" (R, p. 165). This last use of the word "revolution" can be defined in accordance with the insights of Charles Tilly, who calls revolution "a forcible transfer of power over a state in the course of which at least two distinct blocs of contenders make incompatible claims to control the state, and some significant proportion of the population subject to the state's jurisdiction acquiesces to the claims of each block" (Tilly 2006, p. 159).

Both notions of revolution that Tocqueville uses later in his various writings first appear in DA. The second notion is, however, more prominent in the second part of the work, which was published five years later and is considered to be a more philosophical piece. Tocqueville also looks at the mechanisms of revolutions in more detail in AR, as well as in the R. The following quotation illustrates Tocqueville's two distinctive uses of the word 'revolution: "The great advantage of Americans is to have arrived at democracy without having to suffer a democratic revolution and to have been born equal instead of becoming so" (DA III, p. 886; see also DA III, p. 708 and DA IV, p. 1210). The above sentence is very startling because before, in the first part of DA, Tocqueville constantly assures the readers that America is a pioneer of a great social revolution. In the second volume published in 1840, however, he suddenly reveals that there was no revolution in America, by which he means that there was no single, pivotal instance of domestic unrest that was comparable in the scope and violence to what happened in France. This is of course a rather controversial approach to the American War of Independence and its aftermath (See Wood 1991). Unlike Rip van Winkle in Irving's short story

[11] The claim that Christianity is a root cause of modern equality may cause some controversy. What Tocqueville means here is that the idea that all humans are created equal in the eyes of God was alien to most of the ancient world and gained ground only with the rise of Christianity. Of course, the equality in the eyes of God is very different from the modern democratic equality; however, according to Tocqueville the first one is the prerequisite of the second. See Chapter 2 for details.

(1921), Tocqueville does not see this war as something that introduced a new social and political quality in comparison to what preceded it.[12]

In this context the reader might be even more surprised by the fact that, although Tocqueville uses the phrase "American Revolution" (e.g. DA I, p. 92), he continually stresses that it was an action in defense of the principles that the "Anglo-Americans" (DA II, p. 632) developed much earlier, moreover, it was something significantly different from the French Revolution. Tocqueville also notes that the Federalists were at least partly aristocratic, i.e. tempering, rather than supporting, the democratic sentiments. According to him the distinctiveness of America rests in the fact that its society was extremely well prepared to embrace the grand democratic revolution, which according to Tocqueville is an irresistible and "providential" (DA I, p. 6) fact. Thanks to that, the USA managed to avoid the "normal," violent revolution that often results from the political actors' misapprehension of the logic of modern politics. Naturally, Americans fought for their independence but only to preserve their rights and laws; thus there was no need for an all-embracing "tutelary regime" (DA IV, p. 1250) to make them equal. In contrast, "Europe has experienced, for half a century, many revolutions … but all these movements are similar on one point: all have shaken and destroyed secondary powers[13]" (DA IV, p. 1222). This was coupled with a strong "instinct of centralization" which has been "the sole immobile point amid the singular mobility" (DA IV, p. 1242).

Tocqueville finds the first type of revolution, the general drive towards democracy, a fact that is impossible to oppose. For him, it is the Machiavellian necessity (1985); something that every responsible, modern politician has to take into consideration. For Tocqueville, the very basic move towards social equalizing is a "providential" necessity, not merely a preferable option. It is, however, the task of the particular societies to negotiate a compromise between this necessity and the exercise of rights[14] pertaining to human liberty and dignity. The singular "passion for equality" (DA III, p. 878) that gives rise to the "great revolution" is thus described in the following way, "… all men, all powers that would like to fight against this *irresistible* power will be overturned and destroyed by it. In our day liberty cannot be established

[12] It is, in general, fairly common for Tocqueville to disregard the superficial perception of things and seemingly contradict himself.

[13] I.e. powers that prevent the establishing of a new "democratic" despotism – families, churches, associations, aristocracies, etc.

[14] Tocqueville never uses the term "natural rights". Rights for him are always exercised by a concrete actor. Even when writing about slavery, Tocqueville notes that "We have seen something unprecedented in history: slavery abolished, not by the desperate effort of the slave, but by the enlightened will of the master…" (Tocqueville 2001, p. 199).

without its support and despotism cannot reign without it" (ibid). Tocqueville bases this judgment on philosophical insights into the history of Europe and makes it an axiom of his new science of politics.

He is, however, not a political determinist akin to the early sociologists. Apart from *necessita* he also makes plenty of room for *occasione*. Tellingly, he concludes DA by writing, "one must not think that men are not masters of themselves" (DA IV, pp. 1284-1285). Tocqueville does not believe in ready formulas, and his science of politics is not a quest for predictive "law like" (Elster 2009, p. 11) theses on social life. He, however, does believe in a political theory of non-deterministic models, one that is based on experience and thus allows for modalities in spite of the necessities. He constructs heuristics that instruct statesmen and whole societies; at the same time, he moves beyond a simple imitation of the American model. In writing DA his intent is precisely to answer a fundamental problem of modern statecraft: how to avoid a violent, centralizing and absolutizing revolution in face of the grand change? In other words, how to preserve liberty in the times of democracy? His examination of American democracy yields a compelling answer to this question. Tocqueville focuses especially on the slow formation of the classically liberal *mores* thanks to free associations and families. He also stresses the importance of religion and political parties construed as civic institutions and not armies bent on conquering the battlefield of the state.

Democratic Revolution as a Shift in Philosophy, Science, and Culture

Tocqueville defines revolution as a "change that profoundly modifies the social state, the political constitution, the mores and the opinions of a people" (DA, p. 1150*n*w[15]). The previous section has introduced the problem of modifying the social and the political spheres of life, which is, indeed, crucial for Tocqueville. The vision of revolution, however, would be incomplete without an analysis of Tocqueville's description of revolutionary mores, tastes and opinions. One also needs to account for the way in which the great democratic revolution changes the way humans practice science.

For Tocqueville, the main characteristic of the democratic cultural revolution consists in becoming increasingly rational in the practical spheres of tech-

[15] The letter „w" refers to Tocqueville's margin note that the editors of DA translated and placed under the main text. All notes that are quotation for Tocqueville's original marginalia use letters as their reference points.

nology, family life, art and piety and increasingly irrational in the theoretical spheres of political principles, theology, philosophy and esthetics. This duality is hardly understandable now, as the comprehensive modern understanding of rationality consists simply in observing that it is the practice of choosing methods that are adequate to the goals that we have set for ourselves. The modern utility maximizing notion of rationality has, however, nothing to say about the choice of particular goals and thus reduces principles to preferences and esthetics to tastes. The old, aristocratic notion of rationality, present in ancient and medieval philosophy differed in that the rational part of what it deemed the human soul was responsible not for realizing the goals that spontaneously appeared in the consciousness, but for formulating them in accordance with the objectively rational, philosophical principles. The praxis naturally also partook in that rationality but at a lower level, remaining merely an individual concretization of the theoretical understating of the whole human life. The democratic notion of rationality reverses the points of emphasis. It is the praxis that is now expected to adhere to uniform, calculative rigors, whereas the general philosophical theories of the true and the good are seen as something that spontaneously arises from the sum of individual opinions, which in turn, eventually create the impersonal will of the majority. It is, nevertheless, crucial to understand that this will can never be rational according to the standards of classical philosophy.

For Tocqueville, this problem constitutes the question about the supreme intellectual authority, and he notes that while the democratic revolution leads to what Weber would later call the "disenchantment" (Weber 1971, p. 270) of every-day life, it does not lead to the rationalization of the theoretical and the theological. On the contrary, it undermines the existence of any rationality that pertains to those spheres of human activity and that is external to the individual mind. Of course, since some form of social authority is necessary, it must rest in what Tocqueville calls *l'infaibillibilité de la masse* [the infallibility of the masses]. The whole passage dealing with this issue reads:

> Individual independence can be greater or lesser; it cannot be limitless. Thus, the question is not to know if an intellectual authority exists in democratic centuries, but only to know where its repository is and what its extent will be.
>
> I showed in the preceding chapter how equality of conditions made men conceive a kind of instinctive unbelief in the supernatural, and a very high and often exaggerated idea of human reason.
>
> So men who live during these times of equality are not easily led to place the intellectual authority to which they submit outside and above humanity.

> It is in themselves or their fellows that they ordinarily look for the sources of truth. That would be enough to prove that a new religion cannot be established during these centuries, and that all attempts to bring it to life would be not only impious, but also ridiculous and unreasonable. You can predict that democratic peoples will not easily believe in divine missions, that they will readily scoff at new prophets and that they will want to find the principal arbiter of their beliefs within the limits of humanity and not beyond.
>
> When conditions are unequal and men dissimilar, there are some individuals very enlightened, very learned, very powerful because of their intelligence, and a multitude very ignorant and very limited. So men who live in times of aristocracy are naturally led to take as guide for their opinions the superior reason of one man or of one class, while they are little disposed to recognize the infallibility of the mass. The contrary happens in centuries of equality.
>
> As citizens become more equal and more similar, the tendency of each blindly to believe a certain man or a certain class decreases. The disposition to believe the mass increases, and more and more it is opinion that leads the world. (DA III, pp. 717-718)

As Allan Bloom observes for all Frenchmen "Descartes and Pascal are national authors, and they tell the French people what their alternatives are, and afford a peculiar and powerful perspective of life's problems."[16] For Bloom, the two represent the "choice between reason and revelation" (1987/2012, p. 52). This sheds some light on Tocqueville's observation that "America is one of the countries of the world where the precepts of Descartes are least studied and best followed" (DA III, p. 699). At the same time he writes with passion about Pascal:

> When I see him, in a way, tear his soul away from the midst of the cares of life, in order to give it entirely to this inquiry, and, prematurely breaking the ties that hold the soul to the body, die of old age before reaching forty years of age, I stop dumbfounded; and I understand that it is not an ordinary cause that can produce such extraordinary efforts.
>
> The future will prove if these passions, so rare and so fruitful, arise and develop as easily amid democratic societies as within aristocratic ones. As for me, I admit that I find it difficult to believe. (DA III, p. 782)

By saying this, Tocqueville simply means that the American society is decidedly rational, however, as we have seen, it is crucial to observe in what

[16] Let us note that the *Closing of American Mind* is in essence an extended commentary on the cultural aspects of the Tocquevillian "great revolution".

aspects the new democratic rationality differs from the original Cartesian model. Not surprisingly, what Tocqueville sees as the main element of the Descartes' method is following deductively the directions of one's individual mind. This for Tocqueville forms the main principle of modernity in philosophy. "Who does not see that Luther, Descartes and Voltaire used the same method?" he asks rhetorically. At the same time, however, he also inquires: "Why did the men of Reformation enclose themselves so narrowly in circle of religious ideas? Why did Descartes want to use it only in certain matters, although, he made his method applicable to everything and declare that only philosophical and not political things must be judged by oneself?" (DA III, p. 704). Therefore, Tocqueville suggests that although the new democratic rationality is Cartesian in nature, it has a noticeably wider scope.

The democratic tendency to promote reliance on one's personal reason in all spheres of life, including morality, philosophy and spirituality creates what Tocqueville calls "individualism" and leads to the weakening of all social bonds. Nations, localities and families are all affected. "Thus, not only does democracy make each man forget his ancestors, but it hides his descendants from him and separates him from his contemporaries; it constantly leads him back toward himself alone and threatens finally to enclose him entirely within the solitude of his own heart" (DA III, p. 884). Bloom is especially sensitive to the idea of crippling family ties. In his Tocquevillian commentary on American intellectual life he writes: "The children can say to their parents 'You are strong, and we are weak. Use your strength to help us. You are rich, and we are poor. Spend your money on us. You are wise, and we are ignorant. Teach us.' But why should any father want to do so much, involving so much sacrifice, without any reward? Perhaps parental care is a duty, or family life has great joys. But neither of these is a conclusive reason when rights and individual autonomy hold sway" (Bloom 1987/2012, p. 115).

Interestingly, however, Tocqueville points to the self-restraint of early modernity. Protestants according to him advocated for an individual study of scripture and Descartes for an individual study of philosophy. They, however, withheld their judgment when it came to propriety, esthetics and social mores. Neither did they advocate political revolutions based on the people's individual judgment. The nineteenth century, according to Tocqueville, went significantly further.[17] However, as Tocqueville observes earlier "individual independence cannot be… limitless" (DA III, p. 717). The limit of this independence is

[17] He, however, writes without making reference to Hegel, so he reads Descartes literally and treats the Cartesian reason as an actual individual reason and not an impersonal theoretical entity.

the political community, and as Sheldon Wolin rightly observes "Tocqueville might be the last influential theorist who can be said to have truly cared about political life" (Wolin 2003, p. 5). Political life in turn has a rationality of its own; and it consists in care for the preservation of the community. Plato, for instance, insisted that his *Republic* is fully rational, precisely because the laws he designed were such that implementing them rigorously (according to his account) would create a polity that would not change (avoid any crises) and thus acquire a collective, eternal life. That is also why democratic, individual rationality for Tocqueville is politically irrational. Indeed, Tocqueville suggests that in democratic times the preservation of political communities requires special devices that would enable the polity to have some sort of collective identity and prevent it from being swayed only by the changing opinions of the majority.

In the past the problem was simply avoided by virtue of a tacit, informal rule that individual rationality can be used only in some spheres of life and not in others. This is the inconsequence that Tocqueville sees in Descartes and Luther. The new democratic society according to Tocqueville is, however, rejecting all the old "gentlemen's agreements"; it eventually fulfills the demand of the great revolution by applying the Cartesian rule indiscriminately. Drawing a comparison between Bloom and Tocqueville, both of whom strove to describe the phenomenon of the democratization of the modern mores, one could argue that in Tocqueville's thought Descartes plays a role similar to Kant in Bloom's. It is Descartes along with the Christian reformers that according to Tocqueville introduce the fact-value distinction, but at the same time remain oblivious to the consequences of this differentiation. Given that science is still expected to be rational, that is: accessible to the mind which uses the Cartesian method, this distinction undermines the very notion of a "political science."

Based on the definition of a political body as a community based on consent, the principles and prejudices that are necessary for the existence of a given political community are not expected to be indiscriminately accepted by all human beings. Thus there can be no fully rational politics, for in order to have politics, some of the scientific rationality needs to be suppressed by traditions and symbols that from the point of view of a Cartesian or Kantian mind will always remain mere superstitions. Tocqueville is very clear about this fact when he warns that treating the American experience as a simple blueprint that the Frenchmen are supposed to follow is a mistake. Tocqueville thus openly admits that he is far from claiming that the Americans have found "the only form of government that democracy may take" (DA I, p. 27).

This need for uniqueness and political separateness is also visible in Tocqueville's calls for preserving the national pride and his acceptance of the necessity of international war that according to him "almost always enlarges the thought of a people and elevates the heart" (DA IV, p. 1159). In short, politics for Tocqueville is a mode of collective life that rejects both the idea of world state that would necessarily become tyrannical and anarchy that would make human lives "nasty, brutish and short." In consequence, as Pierre Manent puts it succinctly in his latest book: "…We are at this point left with a choice between a political science – the theory of democracy – that is not scientific and the political science – a collection of social sciences – that is not political. The desire to escape this alternative is thus natural" [translation mine – M.K.] (2010, p. 37).

In short, the democratic revolution in culture, philosophy and science consists in a desire to:

> …escape from the spirit of system, from the yoke of habits, from the maxims of family, from the opinions of class, and, to a certain point, from the prejudices of nation; to take tradition only as information, and present facts only as useful study for doing otherwise and better, to seek by yourself and in yourself alone the reason for things, to strive towards the result without allowing oneself to be caught up in the means, and to aim for substance beyond form. (DA III, p. 699)

This, however carries a grave danger for the political life that is based on nuances, traditions and "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991) that are nevertheless necessary to forge a sentiment of solidarity.

As Tocqueville explains: "no society is able to prosper without similar beliefs, or rather none can continue to exist in such a way; for, without common ideas, there is no common action, and, without common action, there are still men, but not a social body" (DA III, p. 713). As a result "for society to exist…all the minds of the citizens must always be brought and held together by some principal ideas; and that cannot happen without each one of them coming at times to draw his opinions from the same source and consenting to receive a certain number of ready-made beliefs" (ibid). In this fragment Tocqueville once again clearly describes one of his main political paradoxes: collective rationality does indeed require a certain level of individual irrationality. And let us add that the implications of this rule are far more complex than the contemporary "prisoner's dilemma"[18] scenarios would have us think.

[18] For an overview see (Axelrod 2006).

However, because the democratic revolution undermined all of the old collective myths, modern democracy is always unstable and has some very strong auto-destructive tendencies. Moreover, without the common myths there is no common language. Therefore, for Tocqueville, the democratic revolution in philosophy, culture and science leads to undermining the value of words and persuasion. Politics thus becomes just a game of interest. Democratic humans "are accustomed to relying on their own witness, they love to see the matter that they are dealing with very clearly; so in order to see it more closely and in full light, they rid it as fully as they can of its wrapping; they push aside all that separates them from it" (DA III, p. 701).

In practice, one of the most visible examples of this process of "unwrapping" is the modern correlation between the development of media and the simplification of the message. Tocqueville in his *Recollections* observes, for instance, the rise of the new "newspaper" politicians (Montagnards) whose actions are reactive and buffoonish, and whose ideas are based only on a shallow understanding of the matters at hand. To be sure their minds are quicker than those of the old aristocrats (like Tocqueville's famed relative Malesherbes), but at the same time they lack the political gravitas of their predecessors. As Tocqueville puts it: "They spoke a jargon that was neither quite the language of the people, nor was it that of the literate, but that had the defects of both...; obviously these people belonged neither in a tavern nor in a drawing room; I think they must have polished their mores in cafés and fed their minds on no literature but the newspapers" (R, p. 102). One may argue that now we observe the next step in the same direction, the Twitter-politics where the information is indeed "unwrapped" to the base essentials. It would seem that the more widely used, technologically sophisticated and rationally constructed the medium, the shorter and simpler the massages it carries.

In religion, according to Tocqueville, the same process of simplification and rationalization can ultimately lead the ideal democratic "city" to pantheism. The reason for the taste for this particular brand of spirituality within a democratic society is that that "the democratic mind is obsessed by the idea of unity." It is "looking in all directions, and when it believes unity has been found, it embraces it and rests there" (DA III, p. 758). Ultimately the democratic mind is "bothered" even by the division between the God and the world and even though the concept of pantheism in fact "destroys human individuality…, it will have secret charms for men who live in democracy; all their intellectual habits prepare them for conceiving it and set them on the path to adapt it; it naturally attracts their imagination and fixes it; it feeds the

pride of their mind and flatters its laziness" (ibid.). Here Tocqueville suggests that the democratic mind searches both for unity and simplicity and secretly tries to escape from its own individualism. However, in order to do so, it needs to find a concept of the transcendental that is so general that it can be accepted by anyone and so unifying that it would encompass all without any need for an organized hierarchical structure.

In spite of Tocqueville's somewhat caustic description of modern pantheism, one would be hard pressed to find a political theorist who provided a more insightful introduction to Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1854/2012), Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854/1995) or Ralph Waldo Emerson's *American Scholar* (1837/1990) and who did so before any of the aforementioned works were published. The pantheistic tendency is visible especially in Whitman; the great poet of the generation had no qualms about describing the democratic man-god. With ingenious "laziness" he wrote: "And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,/ And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own(…) And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is" (Whitman 2012, eBook). In total, in Whitman's Leaves *of Grass* the word God appears more than 90 times usually in similar pantheistic or anthropotheic contexts. And as far as politics is concerned, Whitman powerfully proclaims: "Democracy! Near at hand to you a throat is now inflating itself and joyfully singing" (ibid.).[19]

The same spirit also permeates the world of literature where according to Tocqueville "democracy not only makes the taste for letters penetrate the industrial classes, it also introduces the industrial spirit to literature" (DA III, p. 813). The above dictum is probably one of the most profound insights Tocqueville had made into the nature of both literature and the new art of

[19] Naturally pantheism in the modern democratic culture has never become an organized cult. However, one can argue that it did become one of the most powerful cultural undercurrents. It is visible today in such phenomena as the philosophy of New Age, the animal rights movement, various ecological theories and in the growing global popularity of a simplified, occidental version of Buddhism. Naturally one also finds it in contemporary politics. Let us, for instance, quote a poem of Richard Blanco which was publicly read during President Obama's second swearing-in ceremony:
One sun rose on us today, kindled over our shores,
peeking over the Smokies, greeting the faces
of the Great Lakes, spreading a simple truth
across the Great Plains, then charging across the Rockies.
One light, waking up rooftops, under each one, a story
told by our silent gestures moving behind windows.
My face, your face, millions of faces in morning's mirrors,
each one yawning to life, crescending into our day (Blanco 2012).

the democratic era. It predates the now widely used expressions like "film industry," "show business" or "mass culture" and seems to anticipate Walter Benjamin's famous *Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1968). In his short chapter on democratic literature, Tocqueville just like Benjamin described modern art as being divorced from the old, ritualized mode of production. As a result, art becomes more profitable, but at the same time the artist has to relinquish the reverence that previously resulted from his privileged status that was akin to that of a seer or a priest.[20] He becomes a mere producer. Therefore, "among aristocratic people, you can hope to succeed only by immense efforts, and these efforts which can bring a great deal of glory cannot ever gain much money; while among democratic nations, a writer can hope to obtain without much cost a mediocre fame and a great fortune" (DA III, pp. 813-814).

However, as in the case of Benjamin's analysis, Tocqueville makes the prediction that the void created by the waning of the old, artistic ritual will be filled with democratic cultural politics. Therefore, in his discussion of the freedom of speech Tocqueville once again uses the metaphor of the majority as a new collective despot, who can actually gain greater power that any of the previous, historical despotic governments. He writes that "in times of democracy, the public often acts towards authors as kings ordinarily do toward their courtiers" and notes that "for few great democratic authors" one counts "sellers of ideas by the thousands" (DA III, p. 814). The expression "sellers of ideas" here seems to indicate a political or esthetical subservience since as Tocqueville observes elsewhere "in America the majority draws a formidable circle around thought. Within these limits, the writer is free; but woe to him if he dares to go beyond them… Everything is denied to him" (DA II, p. 418).

Tocqueville also notes that once the old ritual cultural politics disappears, it becomes difficult to recover it without losing all intellectual liberty. This is because the industrial modes of production are too effective; once they are used to create political homogeneity, they deliver propaganda that is so ubiquitous that it smothers any freer intellectual creativity. In the past, the art

[20] The semi-priestly status of artists is visible in many traditional cultures around the world. One of the most well-known examples is the intertwining of poetry and religion in Greek culture exemplified by the half-mythical figure of Homer. It is also because of this semi-religious power of artists that Plato saw no place for poets in his city. They would be a challenge to the theology and philosophy Plato himself proposed, the guardians would have no real power over them since they would answer to none but their own talent (*Republic* 379b-381q). One could also point to examples coming from visual arts such as the revered Russian icon painters. It is only in the late western modernity that culture and literature became viewed solely as entertainment or intellectual pastime bereft of metaphysics.

sponsors may have been despotic in their supervision of the arts, but an artist could always find another patron; even the poets banished from Plato's city were free to enter another polis. In the democratic society the artist must be given either complete freedom or become completely enslaved, for s/he can find no alternative to the particular democratic society whose language s/he has mastered. Therefore, trying to forge a common identity that, as we have observed, is one of the demands of collective rationality becomes increasingly difficult. This lack of identity naturally can lead to some anarchy and provoke the philosophers' complaints.[21] At the same time, using a centrally coordinated cultural industry to forge a collective identity produces results similar to an attempt of using a military flamethrower to combat weeds in a flowerbed. Indeed, the already mentioned Walter Benjamin wrote his treaties on modern art during one of the greatest and most frightful experiments in the history of modern cultural politics.[22]

Tocqueville actually foresees this turn of events as one of the most unfortunate probabilities open to the democratic revolution:

> I see very clearly in equality two tendencies: one that leads the mind of each man toward new thoughts and the other that readily reduces him to thinking no more. And I notice how, under the dominion of certain laws, democracy would extinguish the intellectual liberty that the democratic social state favors…
>
> If, in place of all the diverse powers that hindered or slowed beyond measure the rapid development of individual reason, democratic peoples substituted the absolute power of a majority, the evil would only have changed character. Men would not have found the means to live independently; they would only have discovered, a difficult thing, a new face of servitude (DA III, p. 724).

This new intellectual slavery that would be later on developed into the famous concept of the soft despotism is for Tocqueville also visible in the development of science that, just like Machiavellian politics, aims at mastering and subjugating nature. Tocqueville notes that "in America, the purely applied part of the sciences is admirably cultivated, and the portion immediately necessary to application is carefully attended to (DA III, p. 778)." At the same time, the democratic society lacks "the calm necessary for profound intellectual syntheses" (DA III, p. 779). Interestingly, however, the agitation

[21] Such as those that Allan Bloom voices about modern popular music.

[22] The Third Reich created the largest and most complex state-sponsored system of cultural industry in the history of mankind (See Evans 2005, 120-187).

and movement is superficial. Tocqueville notes here for the first time that really great, profound, revolutionary changes "are not more common among democratic peoples than among other peoples." He is "even led to believe that they are less so" (DA III, p. 780).

Importantly, the association of democracy with the progress of science is incidental according to Tocqueville. Young democracies were so creative only because they were born out of revolution that at once "destroyed the remnant of the old feudal society" (DA III, ibid.). Thus the compressed forces of modern science that were still mildly stymied during the enlightenment once again expanded when the last political obstacles were removed. It was, however, the short term result of the revolution itself, not an inherent quality of the more democratic regime. In the long run there is nothing that for Tocqueville would suggest that democratic societies will always remain more enlightened or constantly increase their scientific knowledge.

At this point, Tocqueville's theory of the development of science becomes very similar to the ideas proposed by Mancur Olson (1982), who examining the impact of revolutions on the economy notes that every political establishment over time becomes surrounded by privileged interest groups that block the development of more entrepreneurial, but less connected individuals. And since each revolution shatters the settled establishment and destroys the old affiliation between politicians and interest groups, it is followed by a period of technological and economic development (irrespective of the nature of the regime that emerges out of the revolution). Such a sudden technological jump is also prompted by a need to equip an army during extensive post-revolutionary wars. Contemporarily, one may point to the example of the Soviet Union as a post-revolutionary regime that made a huge leap in the development of exact sciences. This would later enable the USSR to enter into an arms race with the USA, which in turn fueled the technological progress in America and the West. Similar observations can be made with reference to the Nazi revolution in Germany.

Interestingly, all the major technical inventions of the twentieth century (e.g. computers,[23] the internet, jet engines and passenger planes) are the children of one of the world wars or the cold war. As for the period following the fall of the iron curtain in 1989, it is mainly marked by short-term-benefit-oriented invention based on the already existing technologies. The *Econo-*

[23] Personal computers, ideed, developed only towards the end of the period, however, all the technological know-how necessary for private computing came from the cold-war army technologies.

mist's[24] analysts are already reporting on the slowdown of innovativeness in an alarming tone. It is, of course, still unclear whether this is a long-term phenomenon, it, however, exemplifies the type of possible stagnation of science that according to Tocqueville would be characteristic of an old, mature democracy. In such a social state "reigns a small uncomfortable movement, a sort of incessant rotation of men that troubles and distracts the mind without enlivening or elevating it" (DA III, p. 780).

In the period immediately following a particular revolutionary change young democracies are acting in accordance with the Machiavellian paradigm. That is to say that their main aim is to gain the fullest possible mastery of nature. They, however, acquire this mastery in a way that is reminiscent of Tocqueville's "soft despotism" in politics. A democratic civilization seeks to conquer without aristocratic triumphalism just as it seeks to control without ostensive violence. Tocqueville draws the reader's attention to this by constructing a masterful metaphor which compares modern plumbing and railroads to the great Roman aqueducts and roads. As the French thinker observes: "people who would leave no other trace of their passage than a few lead pipes in the earth and a few iron rods on its surface could have been more masters of nature than the Romans" (DA III, p. 799). In spite of those differences in style, the mastery of nature is, however, still enacted with the same Machiavellian goals in mind.

For, although democratic people according to Tocqueville have fewer "warrior passions," they nevertheless still wage war engage in on conquests. In fact, in DA Tocqueville focuses heavily on the democratic way of fighting, which is often overlooked by his readers. Tocqueville notes, for instance, that although democracy is often slow to go to war and in its initial phase it may not achieve many victories, over time it becomes a formidable enemy able to throw all its industrial, scientific and economic weight into the conflict. "When war, by continuing, has finally torn all citizens away from their peaceful labors and made all their small undertakings fail, it happens that the same passions that made them attach so much value to peace turn towards war" (DA IV, p. 1174).[25]

At the same time, in a manner reminiscent of President Eisenhower's "military-industrial complex" speech, Tocqueville warns about the ambitions of a democratic army. "There are two things that a democratic people will

[24] One of the *Economist* issues was almost exclusively devoted to this problem (01.12.2013), see especially "Is the Ideas Machine Broken", "The Great Growth Debate."

[25] As did the democratic north in the clash with the aristocratic south and as did the USA in the clash with the imperial Japan, one could add.

always have a great difficulty doing: beginning a war and ending it" (DA IV, p. 1160). This is because, "within democratic armies the desire to advance is almost universal; it is ardent, tenacious, continual; it increases with all the other desires, and is extinguished only with life" (DA IV, p. 1156). The reason for this tenacity is that an officer who is no longer a noble "has no property except his pay" (DA IV, p. 1155) and can hope for a quick promotion only in times of war. That is why according to Tocqueville "military revolutions" [i.e. coups of the democratic states' army officers] are almost never to be feared in aristocracies", but constitute a great threat to "democratic nations" (DA, p. 1559). Moreover, "when a nation feels itself tortured internally by the restless ambition of its army, the first thought that presents itself is to give war a goal for this troubled ambition" (ibid). In consequence, in spite of his acceptance of some military conflict as a necessary vehicle of history and an incentive to develop civic values, Tocqueville notes that "a great army within a democratic people will always be a great danger" (DA IV, p. 1164). Quoting Machiavelli (DA IV, p. 1182) he also notes that while aristocracies fought for honor, democracies fight for absolute conquest.

As in the case of many Tocquevillian predictions, the democratic army's paradox also finds some corroboration in the modern political history. Thus, attesting to the democratic states' reluctance to go to war, some researchers developed the democratic peace theory,[26] while others focused on answering the questions: why do some democracies go to war? Arriving at an interesting conclusion David Sobek (2003) proposes a Tocquevillian answer to the problem and notes that, although, democracies are generally peaceful, if and when they decide to resolve their internal tensions trough war, they become far more belligerent than the undemocratic regimes. Even more importantly, Sobek, in line with Tocqueville's observations, notes that democracies usually become geared towards constant conflict when many ambitious and talented people cannot move upward in the society in the times of peace. This, in turn, often occurs in those democracies where the *de jure* elected offices remain occupied by members of the same privileged group.[27] Thus while not being able to be elected, the democratic commoners can still choose a war as a vehicle for their development, which is a crucial component of Tocqueville's description of democracy as a political regime. It is also not without a reason that David Bell (2008) equates the concept of a democratic war with a total war of large armies and just as Tocqueville compares this

[26] See Chan (2010) for an overview.

[27] Needless to say that persons with political ambitions will enter the army service only if they cannot enter normal politics.

new, merciless way of fighting with the old aristocratic war that had limited aims and was less likely to create a spiral of military buildup. Democratic armies, to put it simply, have a far greater stake in war than their aristocratic predecessors.

Can a Democratic Republic Tame the Democratic Revolution?

When approaching a work such as DA, it is important to distinguish the main philosophical research question, i.e. "What is the nature of democracy and the democratic revolution?" from the descriptive question, i.e. "What is democracy like in America?" and the normative question, i.e. "How to deal with the undesirable effects of the democratic revolution?". The answer to the last one is for Tocqueville political in nature. In other words, the adverse effects of the great democratic revolution in general is something that necessities a new regime that would tame it.

Although Tocqueville is notoriously mysterious about his methodology, he does leave some interesting clues as to how he arrived at his conclusions. For instance, he writes that one can "divide science into three parts" (DA III, p. 777).

> The first contains the most theoretical principles, the most abstract notions, the ones whose application is unknown or very distant. The second is made up of general truths that, through still pure theory, lead nevertheless by a direct and short path to application. The processes of application and the means of execution fulfill the third. (ibid.)

Tocqueville's "new science of politics" is also divided into three parts. The democratic city in speech, the perfect democracy constitutes the theory, the case study of America as the best example of modern democracy comes second. Scattered pieces of advice given predominantly to French politicians are the third, propaedeutic part of Tocqueville's science. As I have already noted, the uniqueness of Tocqueville's teaching on politics rests in the fact that all three parts are somewhat chaotically mixed. Again this is visible especially in Tocqueville's *opus magnum*, DA. It is almost as if one merged Plato's *Republic* and *Laws* (1980) with Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* in one uniform text. It is little wonder that one commentator wrote that, although, DA is "full of striking insights of lasting value" it is "badly structured and often incoherent." In short, it is "brilliant, exuberant and messy, it is very much a young man's first book" (Elster 2006, p. 64).

There was, however, a method in Tocqueville's exuberance in DA, and the models Elster writes about are visible not merely in AR. In the theoretical description of democracy, which as we have noted is permeated by a singular spirit of moral disdain, Tocqueville describes the great democratic revolution and explains what particular "small" revolutions it causes.[28] In the case-study layer, he, however describes how often Americans achieve success at taming the aspects of the democratic revolutions he finds so morally adverse. The AR, conversely, shows the French shortcomings in accomplishing the same task. Many of those statecraft techniques will be further discussed in the following chapters. It is, however, useful to give a general overview of them at this point and stress that Tocqueville had never seen America as an example of the democratic terror that does away with all liberty, although, as Aurelian Craiutu and Jeremy Jennings note (2009), over time he did become increasingly critical of American politics (in the period following the publication of the second part of DA and preceding his death in 1859). As Tocqueville puts it: "I discovered without difficulty that the Americans had made great and happy efforts to combat… and to correct these natural defects of democracy" (DA II, p. 503).

The conflict between the rationality of the individual and the rationality of the community is, according to Tocqueville, overcome by finding a middle ground between the two. Tocqueville calls this middle ground "the doctrine of interest well understood" (DA III, p. 920). The doctrine consists in knowing "how to combine" one's "own well-being with that of one's "fellow citizens." (DA III, p. 919). Thus the concept creates a rather unstable *modus vivendi*. It does not abolish the tension between democratic individualism and the democratic collectivism that ultimately creates atomization. The doctrine merely masks the problem by managing to somewhat deceptively cloak old virtue in the new democratic garments.

"In the United States, you almost never say virtue is beautiful" (DA III, p. 920) – warns Tocqueville. And although the doctrine is "not very lofty" and does not produce "great devotion" it is the "most appropriate to the needs of men of our time" (DA III, p. 922). At the same time Tocqueville quite openly admits that the concept is not "evident in all its parts" (DA III, p. 923) and it is precisely because of this that it does not seem to constitute something that naturally arises from the general drive towards equality. He described "the doctrine of self-interest well understood" as a product of culture; in short,

[28] The general picture of that great revolution was adumbrated in the previous section. The mechanics of revolutions will be dealt with in the following chapter.

something "American moralists will claim" (DA III, p. 920). Some readers of Tocqueville, therefore, conclude that the doctrine of "self-interest well understood" is just an idea Tocqueville plays with, but eventually abandons (See Craiutu and Jennings 2009, Schleifer 2000, Lawler 1992). But in fact Tocqueville is quite consistent. Just like the traditional, non-pantheistic religions, the doctrine of "self-interest well understood" according to Tocqueville is not something that is completely natural for the democratic people, but that nevertheless moderates their natural shortcomings. Moreover, the central government will never promote such a doctrine since according to Tocqueville the government "goes to find man in particular in the middle of the crowd in order to bend him separately to the common laws" (DA IV, p. 1035). Therefore, like many other civic virtues, in a democratic society the doctrine can be taught only in small, local communities.

A separate chapter will be also devoted to Tocqueville's ideas about religion. Now let us merely note that the fact that Americans are religious does not imply that religion is a part of the ideal type of democracy. For Tocqueville, pure religion is always antithetical to ideal democracy. Nevertheless, religion is important for real democratic societies because it "singularly facilitates" (DA II, p. 475) the exercise of liberty. However, just like the inculcation of the doctrine of "self-interest properly understood", the teaching of piety is something that takes place at the level of "municipal laws" (DA II, p. 503). In fact, in volume two of DA Tocqueville goes as far as to construct a whole list of moderating modifications that "American lawmakers" make to the "natural" tendencies of democracy affecting it primarily at the local level. The list of the American moderations of democracy is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. American Moderations of Democracy

Natural democratic tendency	Modified in America with
Sentiments of envy	Idea of rights
Continual movement of the political world	Immobility of religious morality
Theoretical ignorance	Experience of the people [being involved in the local government]
Hotheadedness of desires	Habit of affairs [or self-interest properly understood]

As for the democratic family, Tocqueville is not as gloomy as Bloom and predicts that eventually it will not only prevail but become strengthened. This bears a certain resemblance to the doctrine of "self-interest well understood." For where else, if not in the family, would humans find "the milk of human

kindness," (*Macbeth* I. v.) given that they live in an increasingly competitive environment. It seems, however, that Tocqueville was slightly myopic in not perceiving the possibility of a deep crisis of the institution of family in some modern democratic societies.

As for the negative effects the democratic revolution may have regarding the literature and the contemplative activities of the democratic people, Tocqueville mentions two remedies accessible to the Americans. Firstly, he stresses the importance of the English legacy that thanks to the unity of the language enriches the American culture. "The literary genius of Great Britain still shines its light into the depths of the forests of the New World. There is scarcely a pioneer's cabin where you do not find a few volumes of Shakespeare. I recall having read for the first time the feudal drama of Henry V in a log house" (DA III, p. 803), writes Tocqueville with a dash of that charming conceit and ignorance the French still sometimes display towards the Anglo-Saxon culture. Secondly, he notes that democratic societies can and should engage in a selective study of the Greek and Roman classics even if they cease to do so in an average classroom. He, however, also stresses the need for selectiveness and exclusiveness of the establishments that would deal with the liberal arts. "A few excellent universities would be worth more to achieve this goal than a multitude of bad colleges where superfluous studies done badly prevent necessary studies from being done well" (DA III, p. 817).

In fact, making such studies too popular and thus devaluating their quality may, according to Tocqueville, have some very negative social implications:

> If you persisted stubbornly in teaching only literature in a society where each man was led by habit to make violent efforts to increase his fortune or to maintain it, you would have very polished and dangerous citizens; for the social and political state gives them needs every day that education would never teach them to satisfy, they would disturb the State in the name of Greeks and Romans, instead of making it fruitful by their industry. (DA III, p. 817)

In the above passage Tocqueville stumbles upon one of the great, modern social conflicts – the feud between the intellectuals and the modern market society. Tocqueville knows well that the "democratic heart's" restless passion for equality (DA II, p. 503) will blindly combat any form of elitism and thus it will try to give elite education to too many, which in turn will swiftly lead to undermining the very rule of equality. Testifying to the pertinence of Tocqueville's socio-economic remarks over a century later Joseph Schumpeter makes almost the exact same observation when he writes about the "sociology of the intellectual" (1947/2008, pp. 145-156). In his famous book, Schum-

peter notes that "one of the most important features of the later stages of capitalist civilization is the vigorous expansion of the educational apparatus" which in turn increases the supply of quasi professionals "beyond the point of cost return" and creates a singularly pernicious "sectional unemployment" (1947/2008, p. 152). Schumpeter then goes on to describe how the unemployed, overproduced humanities majors become hostile to the state. They, for instance, refuse to accept substandard work, have little vocational expertise and in favorable circumstances rebel against both the state and the capitalist society.[29]

Schumpeter also notes that democracies are inherently unable to control the intellectuals and only the fascist and communist regimes that some of those intellectuals chose to build can forcefully curb the freedom of the rest. Tocqueville, however, notes that both the general individualism of the democratic society and the potential anti-democratic rebellion of *des clercs*[30] can be tamed by a moderate form of ideology that would provide a democratic republic with a cultural form and at the same time prevent the dangerous drift towards the more pernicious democratic forms of government. Tocqueville calls this sentiment "national pride", "patriotism" or simply the love of the country. He also distinguishes two separate forms of this social phenomenon. One is described as an instinctive sentiment that is typical of all relatively young political communities where "peoples are still simple in their mores and firm in their beliefs" and "rest gently upon the old order of things, whose legitimacy is uncontested" (DA III, p. 385). The other is a more rational patriotism that needs to be swiftly introduced by the elites once the society shows the first signs of aging. This kind of patriotism, just like "self-interest properly understood," results from a conscious attempt to unite "individual interests of the people and the interests of the country" (DA III, p. 386). One can call it the patriotism of the "State of the Union Address" or find it in Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "fireside chats" that can be credited with preventing the bank run to a far greater extent than all of FDR's curious economic experiments (See Yu 2005). Tocqueville clearly hastens the statesmen to introduce this kind of patriotism as soon as possible and thus give the old instinctive attachment to the society a second life. At the same time, he warns that as modernity unfolds the pure and innocent "disinterested love of country flies away, never to return" (ibid.).

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[29] Schumpeter notes that such processes were typical of both the fascist and the communist rise to power. Let us also add that contemporarily similar processes are exacerbated by the scarcity of manual labor in the modern automatized society.

[30] Julien Benda calls a similar societal process the "betrayal of the intellectuals" [*les trahison des clercs*] (1955).

Of course, using terms like youth or old age with reference to whole political communities is just a metaphor. Are the Tibetans whose instinctive patriotism pushes them towards defiant acts of courage in defense of their ancient culture young or old in comparison with the Australians? What Tocqueville means by youth is simply remaining unaffected, for whatever reason, by the great democratic revolution. What he means by aging is the severance of the old ties of social camaraderie.[31] Consequently, if a new, more rational patriotism is not introduced in the period in which the polity "comes of age," the political sphere becomes dissolved and hence the government is forced to rely more and more on manipulation and coercion and less and less on persuasion.

But is the military despotism Tocqueville fears so much also not based on rational patriotism? What bulwark can prevent it from rising? To this question Tocqueville answers: the rule of law guarded by a caste of men of law and tied to the society by transparent local institutions.[32] The grandson of the famed Malesherbes clearly displayed a strong reverence for the *noblesse de robe* when he wrote that "you find at the bottom of the soul of jurists a portion of the tastes and habits of the aristocracy. Like the aristocracy, they have an instinctive propensity for order, a natural love of forms; like the aristocracy, they conceive a great distaste for the actions of the multitude…" (DA II, p. 433). It is precisely this natural aristocratic quality of the members of the judiciary that according to Tocqueville makes them an ideal moderating force for the democratic revolution. He does, however, admit that this was clearly not the case in France. He explains this by saying that under the old regime the law became tantamount to a near despotic will of the ruler. Most French lawyers "could not contribute" (ibid.) to making the laws and thus they decided to support the revolution.

When discussing Tocqueville's practical advice on the curbing of the democratic revolution, one must also acknowledge that for all the possible remedies inevitably something has to be lost. According to Tocqueville, a democratic society, for instance, will never produce another Pascal. As he puts it: "If Pascal had envisaged only some great profit, or even if he had been moved only by the sole desire for glory, I cannot believe that he would ever have

[31] For an analytical discussion of the modern ties of group identity see especially Miller (2000), Manent (2005) and Anderson (1991).

[32] In the USA the juries constitute for Tocqueville a prime examples of such an institution. In them ordinary citizens interact with the men of law and thus create strong ties of affinity with the whole judiciary.

been able to summon up, as he did, all the powers of his intelligence to reveal more clearly the most hidden secrets of the Creator" (DA III, pp. 781-782).

Tocqueville and the Paradox of Democratic Legitimization

I have already discussed the democratic revolution in its various guises. It also remains a fact that Tocqueville pays a lot of attention to the negative aspects of this process, although at the same time he also tries to maintain a balanced approach. As Guziot facetiously noted, Tocqueville judges "modern democracy as a vanquished aristocrat convinced that his vanquisher is right" (quoted in Jaume 2008, p. 226). This observation seems light-hearted but in fact it leads to a number of fundamental questions. Why does Tocqueville think his "vanquishers" are ultimately right? Why does he not rebel against "them"? Why does he not become a reactionary? Why did his writings become ultimately equally despised both by the socialists and the reactionaries associated with Action Française? Why did the infamous Maurras write that "Tocqueville's responsibility cannot be passed over in silence" since this "mildest, most ingenious, and most dangerous of philosophical malefactors contributed immensely to the general blindness" (quoted in ibid., p. 39)? And although it was Maurras who, as many would say, blindly supported one of the most morally despicable ideological movements in the history of mankind, we still do not understand why Tocqueville was so foresightful; how did he manage to guard himself against Maurras' blindness long before Maurras was born? How did he avoid the trap that so many other conservatively disposed minds fell into? In short, why did Tocqueville not turn from a moderate lover of democracy into its hater?

The answer this work proposes to all those questions is that Tocqueville had a deep philosophical understanding of something that I call the paradox of democratic legitimization.[33] Moreover, in correctly understanding this issue he far surpassed most of the other nineteenth and twentieth century thinkers. Tocqueville simply could imagine all the possible implications of applying democratic legitimization to various regimes.

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[33] Jaume and Schleifer use the term authority. I however find it too general. Authority does not have to be formal whereas legitimization has to combine the formal and the informal claim to power. Of course, one does observe the informal democratic authority in democratic arts and culture. This section of the work will, however, deal with legitimization as a political phenomenon and it will argue that even purely formal democratic legitimization will completely change how a given regime operates.

As we have already noted, for Tocqueville democracy in the wider, general sense was not a regime type, it was a regime modifier. This section will try to explain what is it exactly that the great democratic revolution modifies and it will call this component of the regime "legitimization." Legitimization is the theoretical argument the government uses when it explains its claim to holding power to the people it governs. It is thus a way to increase the power of the government by reducing its need to rely on coercion. I have already noted that both in culture and in the society, the great democratic revolution creates many phenomena that we can collectively associate with mass culture and modern, mass society. In the same way in politics it creates a new form of legitimization that is then quite explicitly expressed in legal documents. Let us not forget that modern (post 1773) jurisprudence invented a whole new class of written documents it called "constitutions" precisely to underline the fact that the new democratic regimes have changed the way they legitimize their claim to power.

As all the crucial processes described by Tocqueville, the new form of legitimization is a result of the revolution. In fact, attesting to the power of Tocqueville's theories Steven Pincus (2008) proposes to rethink all modern revolutions[34] from the Tocquevillian perspective and think of the post-revolutionary regimes as a singular continuation and, indeed, a radicalization of the old political principles developed within a given society. However, one might still wonder why is it the case that the Jacobins were even more absolutist than the French kings, just as Bolsheviks and ultimately Joseph Stalin were more autocratic than the Czar (see Pipes 1990). Similarly, Pincus does not determine why the current Communist Party of China is more bureaucratic than the former inhabitants of the Forbidden City, or why the Iranian regime remains in many ways similar to occidental despotism, although, it does employ a number of constitutional checks (See Mohseni and Leah 2011). He also does not account for modern, "liberated" Cuba being transformed into a state that resembles a giant, colonial plantation.

Some explanation is provided by Bertand de Jouvenel, who with a clear Tocquevillian inspiration writes the following account of some of the great modern revolutions:

> Thus we see that the true historical function of revolutions is to renovate and strengthen Power. Let us stop greeting them as the reactions of the spirit of liberty to the oppressor. So little do they answer to that not one can be cited in which a true despot was overthrown.

[34] Pincus lists Russia, China, Cuba and Iran.

> Did the people rise against Lousi XIV? No, but against the good natured Louis XVI, who had not even the nerve to let his Swiss Guards open fire. Against Peter the Great? No, but against the weakling Nicholas II, who did not even avenge his beloved Rasputin. Against that old Bluebeard, Henry VIII? No, but against Charles I, who, after a few fitful attempts at governing, had resigned himself to living in a small way and no danger to anyone. And, as Mazarin sagely remarked, had he not abandoned his minister, Strafford, he would not have laid his head on the scaffold. (1993, p. 240)

The logic seems clear, modern revolutions increase raw, political power that sooner or later becomes dangerous in the wrong hands since it threatens liberty. There is, however, a problem with this argument. Although Jouvenel's comment is Tocquevillian in its spirit, it will strike a careful reader as an oversimplification of Tocqueville's original thought. Jouvenel and Pincus both do not conclusively answer why it is not possible to reverse the revolutionary process. Perhaps because of this shallow understanding of the nature of a democratic revolution in his early years in the journal *L'Émancipation nationale* Jouvenel briefly flirted with fascism as a possible form of reversing the process he was so critical of.

Tocqueville is, however, abundantly clear about not being able to return to business as usual after a democratic revolution. He writes about the French De Maistrean conservatives frightened by the democratization of France and waiting for a new absolutism to rise from its ashes using the following words, "I know there are many honest men… who fatigued by liberty, would love finally to rest far from its storms. But the latter know very badly the port toward which they are heading. Preoccupied by their memories, they judge absolute power by what it was formerly, and not by what it could be today" (DA II, p. 506). Still, it is not clear what exactly prevents the return.

Tocqueville suggests that the impossibility of recreating the old regime has a lot to do with a change in the form of legitimization. In the course of this change, the state receives more power due to the removal of the old restraints and is able to claim to have a direct access to the "pure, original fountain of all legitimate authority" (Federalist 22 in Carey 2001, p. 131). Tocqueville does not deny that the sovereignty of the people "is more or less always found at the base of nearly all human institutions" (DA I, p. 91). Nevertheless, there is a marked difference between being found at the base and being the very fiber of things. True, Tocqueville sees the somewhat primitive "Middle Age liberty" (DA I, p. 68) superseded by the equalizing and the democratizing absolutism of the French kings. Nevertheless, it was an imperfect equalization. The

Ancien Régime remained limited not only by the remnants of the previous intermediary bodies, but also by the customary "respect that surrounded heads of state" (DA II, p. 507). The process of democratizing, however, "releases" the rulers "from the weight of public esteem" and thus makes them "drunk with power" (ibid.).

One has to keep in mind at this point that what Tocqueville means by "public esteem" is the polar opposite of the popularity of a modern, democratic politician. His notion of esteem is akin to the notion of majesty, i.e. a collection of traditional expectations regarding the *modus operandi* of the monarch that sets her/him apart from ordinary persons. In contrast, the nature of popularity is to make the rulers seem similar and close to the citizens. The insight Tocqueville makes is a response to the critiques of democracy voiced by the loyalist enemies of the various, French revolutions. They also saw the new form of legitimization as giving too much unchecked power. De Maistre, for instance, in his praise for the *Ancien Régime* (2003) focuses on the checks on civil power provided by the Church. Bonald (2003), on the other hand, sees the majesty of king as a sacrosanct tradition that limits what a physical person that happens to be the king at a particular time can and cannot do. Finally, Chateaubriand (2003), who remains one of the most Janus-faced[35] critics of the French Revolution, describes Napoleon as a despot precisely because he legitimized his power only by naming himself "the emperor of the Frenchmen," who rules directly in the name of the people. In his pamphlet on Napoleon Chateaubriand makes two crucial points. Firstly, he notices that Napoleon understood that "the sovereign should arrange [public opinion] each day" (ibid., p. 14). Secondly, he writes that Napoleon justified "his pretensions to the throne" neither by "tradition" nor by "virtues" which, according to Chateaubriand, he was devoid of "save for his military talent" (ibid., p. 5).

Tocqueville agrees with Chateaubriand but adds: "Napoleon must neither be praised nor blamed for having concentrated in his hands alone all administrative power. After the abrupt disappearance of nobility, and of the upper bourgeoisies, these came to him by themselves" (DA IV, p. 1253). Just like Chateaubriand, Tocqueville sees the change of the form of legitimization. Unlike Chateaubriand, however, he does not think that a return to previous ways of legitimizing power is possible. Tocqueville makes a profound discovery that in modernity, both despots and republicans alike will claim to be govern-

[35] Chateaubriand famously made the decision to embrace the Bourbons and defame his former protector (Napoleon Bonaparte) with a slanting pamphlet only when he was certain that Napoleon lost all his political and military opportunities. Chateaubriand, thus, had his piece published on April 6th 1814.

ing directly in the name of the people rather than ruling by "God's grace," or thanks to their civic virtues, as proposed by Plato (1991). This new form of legitimization, according to Tocqueville, will be what we might call a "political steroid" that will make a semi-despotic absolutism more despotic and give a republic a greater potential for expansion.

Contemporary political science, however, often overlooks the issue of legitimization. For instance, course-books on comparative politics (See Booker 2009, Acemoglu and Robinson 2009, Linz 2000) routinely assume that the democratic legitimization is the normatively default form of legitimization and that it increases along with the somewhat arbitrarily measured quality of democracy. Thus, contemporary political science is very often superficial in describing the difference between contemporary authoritarianism or totalitarianism and the old regimes, some of which existed for hundreds or even thousands of years.

Tocqueville, however, understood the difference and believed that it mattered. Naturally, in line with his insights every regime is in some sense representative – that is to say – based on the sovereignty of the people. Nevertheless, old regimes in their official titles and symbols usually legitimized the concrete person of the ruler using two different, additional sources of legitimacy: 1) the theistic source – visible in titles such as "by God's grace," "the son of Ra" etc.; and 2) the timocratic source – visible in titles such as "the Great," "the Magnificent," "the Brave" etc. Usually, old regimes used both sources, although in different proportions. The first type is in general more prominent among Renaissance kingships (Figgis[36] 1922, pp. 256-263) and the ancient Middle-East.[37] The second can be seen in the politics of ancient Greeks[38] and Romans.

The fact that political actors in old regimes used particular props to legitimize their power is very significant since using such props, just like using arguments in an ongoing dispute, has clear consequences. Accepting that a person rules because of a certain quality immediately provides the ruler's adversaries with an opportunity to undermine his/her title. Religious authorities can

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[36] According to Figgis, a king's divine right was much more than rhetoric. Initially it was used in the clash between Kingships and Papacy in fourteenth century and became an even more prominent political tool in the age of reformation.

[37] For a discussion of various ancient theistic forms of legitimization see Eric Voegelin's (2001) *Order and History*, asp. Vol. 1 and 2.

[38] Tocqueville is also explicit about not being able to return to the "democracies of antiquity" (DA IV, p. 1082), which he calls "so-called democracies," noting that they were so extremely aristocratic and exclusive in their nature that it is impossible to imitate them in modern societies.

undermine the title to God's grace, as did Pope Gregory when he forced the Emperor to kneel at the gate of Canossa. Similarly, powerful figures, especially those who believe that they also have some royal virtue in them, can check a timocratic lord – this was famously the fate of Cleomenes, the Spartan King banished around 490 BC. A completely new problem, however, arises when a ruler or an assembly makes a claim to a title derived directly from the will of the people. Indeed, there are few real limits to power thus legitimized.

Moreover, with respect to limits of democratic power, Tocqueville is skeptical about the idea of checks and balances; according to him, once the government claims to possess the democratic legitimization, it will simply do what it wants, and the role of the conscientious statesmen is reduced only to convincing it to want what is not harmful. Tocqueville in his description of democratic governance writes "clearly the opinions, prejudices, interests, and even the passions of the people cannot encounter any lasting obstacles that can prevent them from appearing in the daily leadership of society" (DA II, p. 278). As for the methods of changing the composition of the government, Tocqueville sees only two possible paths. He notes that the "ruling power of public opinion… in America proceeds by elections and by decisions; in France, by revolutions" (DA I, p. 207).

Two elements of this theory are especially valuable for modern political science. Firstly, Napoleon's example proves that even a normatively dubious claim to hold a democratically legitimate power utterly changes the political playing field. Secondly, only under the assumption that democratization is a form of legitimization does the real magnitude of Tocqueville's grand revolution become apparent. Indeed, there are currently very few states in the world whose governments would not claim that they rule in the name of their people. In this respect, the Vatican and Saudi Arabia remain the only notable examples of old regimes that still exists.[39] In the twentieth century, even the totalitarian regimes staged elections and employed the mock-democratic procedures. Therefore, in modern conditions of social life, even a fraudulent democratic legitimization turns out to be far more robust than either the theistic or

[39] The title by "by God's grace" is still used in Denmark, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom but carries little legitimizing weigh as those countries elect their parliaments, which in turn elect the "real" executives. It seems that the last real old regimes are indeed the Vatican and Saudi Arabia. See full titles of rulers and executives at "World Statesmen" (2012). In the case of those two states there are no general elections and the ruler's titles include formulas such as "Vicar of Jesus Christ" and "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques" (See also Abrams 2012). Iran, in contrast, is already a modern Islamic republic.

the timocratic. Indeed, embracing the Tocquevillian notions of "democratic despotism" and "soft despotism" leads to a conclusion that the modern world is a truly democratic one. The only disturbing issue is that not all *de nomine* "democracies" perform in accordance with political scientists' expectations. To understand the reasons for this, the researcher has to redefine the notion of revolution by merging the two aforementioned concepts of revolutionary change, and this is precisely the route Tocqueville ultimately takes.

Why is it then impossible to return to the pre-modern days of a weak political power? The simple answer is that the nature of the democratic legitimization prevents it. Once such a legitimization comes into existence in a society, it cannot simply disappear. A reactionary force wanting to reverse the great democratic revolution can only do so by means of a counter revolution and thus further increase political power and become just another revolutionary group. This is precisely the observation about De Maistre, the father of French reactionary thought, which Eric Voegelin noted in his *From Enlightenment to Revolution*. Voegelin describes De Maistre as another type of a "gnostic" revolutionary (see also Berlin 1990) and indeed a child of enlightenment. As Voegelin puts it:

> If we assume that de Maistre did not consider his work a vain exercise, we must also assume that he seriously believed he could change the course of Western history by a clear analysis of the problem of the crisis and by suggesting that the only organizational solution that seemed to make sense. That the critical situation of the whole civilization that has been in the making for centuries cannot be transformed into a harmonious order over night by an act of insight and by an agreement between intelligent people, or that something might be profoundly wrong not only outside Catholicism but within the Church itself, was not sufficiently clear to him, just as it was inconceivable to Comte that he could not restore the order of a civilization by his personal renovation or that anything could be wrong with his religion of humanity. In De Maistre as in Comte we sense the touch of enlightened reason that blinds the working of a spirit. (1975, p. 184)

What is then the Tocquevillian, conscientious solution to the adversities of revolutionary legitimization? A revealing insight is provided by an attentive reader of Tocqueville: Samuel Huntington, who in his *Political Order in Changing Societies* proposes a certain scheme to describe the outcomes of modern revolutions and the results the democratic form of legitimization has on different types of old regimes. The details of Huntington's reading of Tocquevillian concepts are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. The Relation between Regimes Power and Centralization (Compare Huntington 1977/1968, p. 144)

	Amount of Power	
Distribution of Power [i.e. administrative centralization]	Small	Large
Concentrated	Bureaucratic empire; absolute monarchy [+ violent revolution] →	Totalitarian dictatorship [new despotism]
Dispersed	Feudalism →	Constitutional democracy

According to the Tocquevillian vocabulary, the distribution of power can be associated with the administrative centralization (DA I, pp. 43-48) and the amount of power with the growth in what Tocqueville calls *pouvoir social* [social power] (DA IV, p. 1275). The totalitarian dictatorship can, in turn, be in broad terms associated with the administrative despotism (DA I, p. 148). There is, however, also a major difference between the Tocquevillian and the Huntingtonian models of regime change; Huntington does not account for the possibility of the soft despotism (DA IV, p. 1252) that for Tocqueville constitutes yet another, final stage of development of power (see the next chapter for details). In other words, one may say that Huntington in comparison to Tocqueville is more of an unabashed modernist with strong statist tendencies. At the same time, Huntington, however, does acknowledge the poignancy of Tocqueville's criticism of certain forms of political modernity, he, however does so selectively.

It follows from the above table that in the wake of the great democratic revolution social power cannot be diminished; it can be only centralized or localized. This is precisely why Tocqueville puts so much emphasis on the local government. Importantly, this is exactly the context in which Tocqueville is quoted by Huntington who sees him as an advocate of dispersion, but not a radical weakening of social power. As Huntington puts it: "In modern countries, in de Tocqueville's words, 'the science of association is the mother of science; the progress of all the rest depends upon the progress it has made"[40] (ibid., p. 31).

[40] In the latest translation (DA III, p. 902) this fragment reads as „In democratic countries, the science of association is the mother science, the progress of all the other sciences depends on the progress of the former."

At the same time, Huntington is a progressive thinker and contrasts his progressivism (i.e. the productive associational dispersion of power) not only with totalitarian power-concentration, but also with the backward and in his view undesirable dispersion of power in the traditional societies. Such societies in Huntington's view are characterized by a closed, exclusive familism or something Fukuyama calls the "tyranny of the cousins" (2011, p. 43). Based on this theory, Huntington famously provided a testable hypothesis for the Southern-Italian study of Putnam (1993). "The Italian village, in contrast [to American], had only one association, and it did not engage in any public spirited activity," wrote Huntington (1977/1968, p. 31). He also used the Latin America and the Arab world as other examples of something Edward C. Banfield (see Marshall 1998) later called "amoral familism" and treated as a hallmark of a backward society. Moreover, Huntington agonized about the fact that because Americans cherish no memories of the feudal past of the English society, they see little difference between civil society and "amoral familism."[41] The American founding aimed to curb and disperse an already advanced modern government, not to build it. As a result, "when an American thinks about the problem of government building, he directs himself not to creation of authority and the accumulation of power, but rather the limitation of authority and division of power" (Huntington, 1977/1968, p. 7). This of course has a limited appeal for the third world countries that at the time when Huntington's book was published explicitly chose the path of totalitarian or authoritarian dictatorship for its promise of an almost instant creation of an undisputable authority that would sever the old colonial, bureaucratic empires, and at the same time avoid a return to the tribal past.

Tocqueville, too, feared that this would be the fate of the societies that would be faced with a desire to modernize early, but would not be socially prepared for the process. Just like Huntington, he saw both the danger of the new despotism and the darker sides of the old way of life. Perhaps he became too idyllic about the medieval past in AR, but even there, he never mentions that a return to this past would be possible. Rather than that, he points out that even the primitive social reality has something worth preserving. As to the adversities of the familism, they seem a distant problem now from the point of view of the advanced societies. Europe, North America, Korea and Japan in their contemporary way of life seem to undermine any need for a family, so much that for them an opposite problem: that of a demographic decline seems to be more impending. At the same time, a large part of the less

[41] At the same time being "born" modern they did not suffer from the defects of familism.

developed world is still struggling with the social problems created by having only a closed clan-like social structure instead of free associations. Tocqueville touches upon this additional reason that explains why a simple return to the idealized social life may not be desirable when he describes the strange similarity between the Native Americans and the old-world aristocrats. Thus in DA, the Native Americans play the same role that the amorally familial society or the traditional polity plays in the analysis of Huntington and that the southern Italians play in the work of Putnam. Tocqueville calls this type of life "the natural link between civilization and barbarism" (DA II, p. 534).

While specific language Tocqueville uses to describe Native Americans may strike modern readers as contaminated by racist undertones,[42] if one moves beyond the vernacular that was very true to its era, one cannot help but notice a stunning perceptiveness and indeed a true affinity Tocqueville sees between his own heritage of a "vanquished aristocrat" and that of a Native American. First he describes the amorality of the traditional Native-American society and, hinting at its aristocratic nature, writes:

> So among them, you found none of those doubtful and incoherent notions of good and evil, none of that profound corruption which is usually combined with ignorance and crudeness of mores among civilized nations who have descended into barbarism again. The Indian owed nothing to anyone except himself. His virtues, his vices, his prejudice were his own; he grew up in the wild independence of his own nature. (DA I, p. 40)

Secondly, Tocqueville places this discussion of Native Americans at the very beginning of the first part of DA and later returns to it when he has already made it aptly clear that for a democratic society "descending towards barbarism" is a constant and very real threat. In this second longer discussion, he is much clearer about the aristocratic traits that bring a somewhat decadent Frenchmen surprisingly close to the last of Cherokee warriors:

> There is no Indian so miserable who, in his bark hut, does not maintain a proud idea of his individual value; he considers the cares of industry as degrading occupations; he compares the farmer to the ox that traces the furrow, and in each of our arts he sees only the work of slaves. It is not that he has not conceived a very high idea of the power of whites and of the grandeur of their intelligence; but, if he admires the result of our efforts, he scorns the means that we have used to obtain them, and, even while under our influence, he still believes himself superior to us. Hunting and war seem to him the only cares

[42] See (Gobineau 1915).

> worthy of a man. So the Indian, deep within the misery of his woods, nurtures the same ideas, the same opinions as the noble of the Middle Ages in his fortress, and to resemble him fully he only needs to become a conqueror. How strange! It is in the forests of the New World, and not among the Europeans who populate its shores, that the ancient prejudices of Europe are found today (DA II, p. 531).

Thus, just like Putnam, Tocqueville acknowledges the difference between the aristocratic vertically organized warrior-communities and the associations that are horizontal in nature and that combine men rather than set them apart based on notions of pride and prowess. Even in his most "aristocratic" work, in AR, Tocqueville is keen to observe how the old polite society despised the idea of working for a living and indeed was hard pressed to see the working men as members of the same species. Tocqueville illustrates this observation with a famous anecdote describing "Madame Duchâteler who, according to Voltaire's secretary, found no difficulty in undressing before her servant since she could not be convinced that her lackeys were real men" (AR, p. 181).

Elsewhere Tocqueville notes that by the "eighteenth century" all the early pre-modern civil associations in France had disappeared and Frenchmen were "almost entirely withdrawn into themselves" (AR, p. 101). It is also not a coincidence that both in AR and in DA Tocqueville very often uses the word "caste" [*caste*] when describing the old aristocratic group and reserved the word "class" for the description of the groups within the democratic society. It is as if he wanted to stress the rigidity of the pre-modern world versus the mutability of the social status in the democracy.

The vertical and exclusive character of European political parties, cliques and castes was something that deeply troubled Tocqueville. He claimed that this characteristic would give a particularly pernicious character to the administrative centralization that to some extent would be an inevitable phenomenon resulting from the great democratic revolution. He thus writes that the political associations of Europe see themselves as small states within a state and want to control all the administrative power without any deliberation. As he writes: "in Europe, associations consider themselves, in a way the legislative and executive council of the nations" (DA II, p. 311). They reject political plurality, while the more horizontal political associations in America are its guarantees. A group of equal citizens naturally views politics as a competition between various groups. American political associations according to Tocqueville know that they "represent only a minority of the nation" (ibid.) and thus they constantly deliberate, "talk and petition" (DA II, p. 311). In contrast

in Europe, political associations are vertically organized and consequently they see the entirety of politics as a vertical power game. In this game, the objective is to place one's own small associational hierarchy at the top of the grand hierarchy of the state.

Indeed, Tocqueville makes a profound discovery concerning the danger of having undemocratic parties within a democratic system, a discovery whose importance would not be fully realized before the breakthrough study of Friedrich and Brzezinski (1965). Tocqueville thus writes about the hierarchical, vertical, political associations in the following way:

> Since the principal end of these associations is to act and not to talk, to fight and not to persuade, they are led naturally to adopt an organization that is not at all civil and to introduce military habits and maxims.
>
> Thus you can see them centralize the control of their forces, as much as possible, and deliver the power of all into the hands of a very small number of men. The members of these associations respond to an order like soldiers at war; they profess the dogma of passive obedience, or rather, by uniting together, they have at one stroke made the complete sacrifice of their judgment and free will. Thus, within these associations, a tyranny often reigns that is more unbearable than the one exercised within the society in the name of the government that is attacked. (ibid.)

This gives Tocqueville another reason not to rebel against democracy. Since the great democratic revolution changes not only all the rules of political game, but also the construction of a society, a successful rebellion against it would have to involve creating an alternative society using the means and material provided precisely by that great democratic revolution. To put it another way, if France is no longer an aristocratic society, there can be no real aristocracy; former aristocrats can only create a club within a democratic France and plot to overthrow the new regime. Such is the force of democratic revolution, that indeed even for aristocrats it is impossible to overthrow it without using some of its own methods. The problem with those aristocratic clubs and intrigues is that even if they succeed in obtaining power, they cannot reverse the changes that had already happened. Indeed, they can only beat the society into submission to their particular club. In the very same way, the Nazi-sponsored Arian romanticism could not turn its followers into Teutonic knights and De Maistre could not cancel the Reformation.

Indeed, however, one can argue that both the Nazism and Fascism were, according to the Tocquevillian terminology, a revolutionary movement, based on a typically European model of political association. Tocqueville's insight

in this respect prefigures that of Barrington Moore (1966) who saw fascism as a revolution from the above, procured by landed elites that coopt some of the capitalists and form an alliance with the executive. According to the same analysis, communism resulted from a mass peasant revolution.[43] In consequence, only a strong middle class could foster what Moore calls an "industrial democracy." It is, however, worth noting that both the communist and fascist varieties of totalitarianism were based on a singular duplication and substitution of the republican state institutions by the party institutions and thus turning the illiberal association into an illiberal state.

Lucien Jaume in his work notes that "Tocqueville's liberalism… was anti-bourgeois," according to Jaume "this was the basis of his persistent rivalry with Guizot" (Jaume 2008, p. 12). Indeed, Tocqueville does criticize the democratic culture which in his description often seems to be an extension of the bourgeois culture. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to assume that Tocqueville favored one class over the other. As I have already noted, he was one of the last thinkers who thought of political life and in consequence of society as a whole. Moreover, even if he offered some biting criticism especially of the tamed, French bourgeoisie that lost the old spirit of self-government, he never turned his dislike into an anti-bourgeois rage that was the one common element of some of the great political movements of the twentieth century: socialism, Leninism and the 1960's counterculture. On the contrary, Tocqueville praised the government of the old French municipalities in AR. At times Tocqueville went as far as to write about the French bourgeoisie as the last stronghold of liberty during the absolutist reign. As he put it: "Municipal freedom in France survived feudalism. When the nobility had already ceased to administer the countryside, the towns still retained the right to self-government" (AR, p. 53). Nevertheless, by the seventeenth century even this bulwark had given in.

* * *

This decomposition of local politics in France, according to Tocqueville, led to a fatal paradox; the democratic revolution without the habit of self-government would create a hybrid government that with Tocqueville's words would be "republican at the head and ultramonarchical in all other parts" (DA, p. 1260). But trying to reverse the overall democratic revolution would have the very same result. Since the great democratic revolution, as we have

[43] Which indeed seems to be the case in relation to East Asian revolutions, but does not explain the Soviet pattern.

already established, changed the mode of legitimizing power, a "return" to the old regime could only happen through some form of elections or mock elections similar to the elections in Weimar Republic or plebiscites of Louis Napoleon. The regime would, however, remain hybrid. Once the old thread of legitimacy is broken and the old forms of legitimization become invalid, no simple return to the previous regimes is possible.

What modern political science calls a full democracy for Tocqueville is simply a regime that on the spectrum of modern politics combines the self-government of the people with the democratic legitimization of the elites. This state, however, cannot be attained by a violent, short revolution because it requires the existence of local institutions and it requires them to consist of horizontal associations rather than hierarchical familial clans. Such institutions, unfortunately, so far have never been produced in a time that would be shorter than the lifespan of one generation. In other words, according to Tocqueville, a modernizing society needs to prepare for the democratization. If it tries to counter it, the produced results might be directly contradictory to those desired. As a consequence: "The vices of those who govern and the imbecility of the governed would not take long to lead them to ruin…" (ibid.).

Tocqueville is, however, by no means uncritical of America, which I will amply show in the following chapters. He sees a far greater danger in Europe. For him the already "democratic nations of Europe have all the general and permanent tendencies that led the Americans toward centralization of powers, and moreover they are subject to a multitude of secondary and accidental causes that the Americans do not know. You would say that each step that they take towards equality brings them closer to despotism" (DA IV, p. 1221).

Chapter 2

Tocqueville's Theory of History and the Spiral of Revolutions

If revolutions are indeed the locomotives of history (Manlia 2006), then Tocqueville's theory of revolutions is in fact a part of his larger theory of time in politics. Clearly, in order to perceive any change, one needs to understand what exactly is changing. In the case of Tocqueville's new political science "great revolutions" change the very way in which we perceive the past and the hopes we have for the future, which means that they effectively change our general view of history. As for the smaller revolutions, as I have already stated in the previous chapter, they are for Tocqueville the epiphenomena of larger processes; they are the way in which gradual, slowly developing changes are translated into the political present.

Tocqueville in his work is clearly interested in arriving at a theory of history and at the same time avoiding a heavy-handed *Zeitgeist*-type of determinism. He wants to both devise a new predictive method and leave room for the free, the unforeseen and the unknown. To certain modern political theorists, those attempts are decidedly confusing and contradictory since they are so immersed in "democracy" that they see history either as a necessary progress or a foreign land that is hardly accessible from the modern perspective. As a second option, some dissenting modern political theorists in an attempt to defend what they see as natural values choose to neglect the very possibility of any theory of history and thus arrive at a political science that is completely ahistorical. Thus, in the field of contemporary interpretative approach to Tocqueville, the current literature seems to be dominated by two main interpretative camps, which, after making allowances for some generalizations,

can be labeled as the post-Marxists or historicists approach[1], and the natural rights or Straussian[2] approach. In addition to those two philosophical schools, one naturally also finds many descriptive historical works on Tocqueville. In recent years, the descriptive Tocquevillian scholarship has been, for instance, enriched by the works of James T. Schleifer (2000), Françoise Mélonio (1998), Aurelian Craiutu (2009) and Lucien Jaume (2008). Moreover, one also needs to mention a whole tradition of comparative studies inspired by Tocqueville.[3] This work will, however, focus mainly on the contemporary interpretative approaches to Tocqueville's political science of revolutions; it will also adumbrate the criticism of both of the dominant schools of reading Tocqueville.

In response to the antinomies of the Straussian and the historicist approach to Tocqueville's science of revolution, I will further propose a brief sketch of a third approach that tries to address the persistent interpretative problems and propose a stable, middle-ground solution. I do not assume that this new proposition is conclusive and will become widely accepted. However, if my interpretation does as much as start a debate about the possible reconciliation between different interpretative approaches to Tocqueville, it will do far more than I have ever hoped for. My proposition will be presented at the end of the chapter, it will suggest that the extreme insightfulness of Tocqueville's general model resulted from a felicitous combination of his personal talent and the unique theory of revolution that combines the elements of the modern and the ancient understanding of social phenomena. I will also draw a comparison between Tocqueville's theory of great revolutions and the Kuhnian theory of paradigm shifts.

The Historicist Approach

The strong historicist approach to Tocqueville is presented mainly in the works of Roger Boesche (1987) and Sheldon Wolin (2003). In general, both authors are quick to observe Tocqueville's progressivism and liberalism, they, however, interpret the misgivings about socialism and mass democracy as ideological, class-motivated impurities that obscure his main strain of thought. Sheldon Wolin is particularly critical of the ultimate results of Tocqueville's project that to him becomes a "bundle of contradictions, poses, anachronisms, absurdities, and willfulness" (Wolin 2003, p. 561). This psychological

[1] See especially Boesche (1987) and Wolin (2003).
[2] See especially Ceaser (1990), Zetterbaum (1967), Lawler (1993), Manent (1996).
[3] See especially Huntington (1968), Putnam (2003), and Craiutu and Gellar eds. (2009).

history that rejects the idea that Tocqueville is a "sovereign author" (ibid. 2003) of his texts is also clearly present in Cheryl Welch's interpretation of Tocqueville's writings on empire and slavery (2003) and in her more general, descriptive work on Tocqueville's life and work (2001). In comparison to Wolin and Welch, Roger Boesche is less bitter in his criticism of Tocqueville; however, he essentially agrees with Wolin and concludes his study by noting that Tocqueville offers little more than "ambivalence and uncertainty" (Boesche 1987, p. 264). Boesche, however, unlike Wolin, tries to present Tocqueville as a crypto-socialist (see also Boesche 1983) which, naturally, necessitates a highly selective reading of Tocqueville's works.

The main source of the historicists' uneasiness about Tocqueville is the fact that in spite of his masterful description of the apparent inevitability of the great democratic revolution, Tocqueville "instinctively rejects historicization" (Wolin 2003, p. 566). Wolin sees this as a symptom of a sinister careerism of a conservative politician who is "concerned not with truth but with revanchism" and ultimately chooses to "take a stand against both socialism and democratization" (Wolin 2003, p. 470). The argument is repeated by Welch in her discussion of the undemocratic and anti-socialistic elements of Tocqueville's theory of global relations. According to Welch, Tocqueville's ideas on those subjects are a result of "the mechanisms by which he attempts to quell perceptions of moral dissonance" (Welch 2003, p. 236).

Boesche is more cautious and tries not to introduce interpretations based on his moral indignation openly. He is, therefore, compelled to note that, there are things in Tocqueville that either evade him or that are accidental. He writes,

> Tocqueville revealed a personal ambivalence toward the idea that his age was dominated by fate or historical forces that people could not control. On the one hand, he uses this kind of argument when he suggested that the historical tendency toward more equality was irreversible…..On the other hand, when his contemporaries argued in a similar fashion that 'things are in the saddle' – to use Emerson's phrase…, he objected strenuously. (Boesche 1987, p. 68)

Acknowledging this duality of Tocqueville's attitude towards historical trends is a major advantage of Boesche's interpretation in comparison to those analyses that neglect the presence of a general theory of history in Tocqueville's works or see him as a mere reactionary with a split conscience. Boesche, however, declines to try to resolve the inconsistency; like Wolin and Welch he is inclined to think that there is some historical scar on Tocqueville's consciousness that prevents him from forming a consistent theory. He is, however,

less inclined to start a heated polemic with an author who is dead for some 150 years and admits the he may simply not see the pattern that actually exists.

Boesche also tries to defend Tocqueville against accusations of a lack of social sensitivity that are made openly in Wolin's work and stated implicitly in Welch's analysis. However, in the course of this defense Boesche produces some questionable hypotheses that are, at best, factually imprecise. For instance, Boesche treats Tocqueville's famous "Memoir on Pauperism" (1992) and its evaluation of state-sponsored welfare as a temporary aberration and in a separate article assumes that some of the more socialistic passages in *Le Commerce* (a journal Tocqueville coedited) were actually penned by Tocqueville and are far more representative of the French thinker's political views. *Le Commerce* was without a doubt a project of paramount importance to Tocqueville. However, we know that Tocqueville published in *Le Commerce* anonymously (Brogan 2006, p. 380). Moreover, given the set of expressions he customarily used in his other writings, it is highly unlikely that he personally authored passages like this: "the destruction, in 1789, of corporations and associations for arts and trade, gave the worker his liberty" (quoted in Boesche 1983, p. 288). It seems more likely that Tocqueville treated *Le Commerce* as a common platform for reconciliation between the "aristocratic" liberals (see Jaume, 2008) and the centrist socialists. Given his difficult political position at the time[4] and the increasingly statist anti-democratic complacency of the mainstream French liberals, Tocqueville clearly needed allies. At the same time, Tocqueville expressed his misgivings about the state being involved in industry and welfare not merely in the "Memoir on Pauperism;" he did so already in DA, where he wrote that "there is among modern nations of

[4] One event during the work at *Le Commerce* was particularly embittering for Tocqueville. In line with his American fascination, he wanted the French state to cease to control secondary education and believed that private as well as religious schools should be officially recognized and published on this. At the time other members of the so called liberal camp were, however, busy employing the administrative machine of the French state in the war against the legitimists. In the process they were, naturally, increasing state control, blatantly defying any classically liberal principles. In this political situation Tocqueville's admonitions were interpreted as a partisan voice in support of Catholic schools. *Le Siécle* soon accused Tocqueville of being a secret legitimist dreaming of reintroducing the *Ancien Régime*. Even Beaumont, an old friend who travelled with Tocqueville to America, did not support him and claimed that the Napoleonic system of full state control over education should be maintained. This led Alexis to an outright explosion of anger that almost ended his friendship with Beaumont. "My birth and my family's opinions make it easy to believe that I am allied to the legitimist and the clergy, and as I have not married a grand-daughter of General La Fayette, unlike you, this *point de départ* naturally leads my enemies to attack not only my acts but my intentions, not only my conduct but my honor," (quoted in Brogan 2006, p. 380) he wrote to Beaumont.

Europe one great cause that, apart from all those that I have just pointed out, contributes constantly to expand the action of the sovereign...this cause is the development of industry, which the progress of equality favors" (DA, p. 1231).

Both Boesche and Wolin see Tocqueville as a prisoner of his time and a child of his class. Wolin, for instance, criticizes the gullible ahistorical reading of Tocqueville using the interpretative tools he borrows from Barthes and Foucault. In the same vein Boesche in his work on Tocqueville paints a lengthy and detailed historicist picture of the era, as if trying to dwarf Toqueville's individuality and prove that all the inconsistencies of his work are projections of the anxieties and fears that were commonplace among the members of the same intellectual milieu. However, as all historicists, both Boesche and Wolin need at least one immovable reference point that stands above history and enables them to construct all their political descriptions. And like many other modern historicists they more or less openly point to the philosophy of Karl Marx as such an immovable vantage point. Boesche, for instance, insists that Tocqueville is a man whose works reflect the difficult passage from the old philosophy of politics to the new one; while Marx (historically he was only 13 years Tocqueville's junior) is already a new man who finally resolves the Tocquevillian anxiety. As Boesche puts it:

> Tocqueville offers ambivalence and uncertainty because, he thought, that this is what the political world has always offered. In his conception of the world, one can uncover none of the classical harmony of Plato or the modern harmony of Marx, both of who assumed that the good things of this world – happiness, justice, freedom, peace, excellence, creativity – are ultimately compatible (Boesche 1987, p. 264).

Wolin is more self-conscious about this historicist vision and tries to justify it by producing a long chapter that explains why exactly Tocqueville was implicated in ideologies, myths and class interests, while Marx towered above the normal history. The chief argument Wolin uses, however, somewhat disappointingly, boils down to extolling Marx's expertise as an academic philosopher in comparison to Tocqueville's purported dilettantism. This leads Wolin to fill many pages solely with descriptions of Marx's political theory. With a noticeable touch of *resentment* Wolin keeps insisting on the necessity to study Marx in order to understand why Tocqueville ultimately sides with the classical economists in "rejecting the further extension of political rights beyond the middle class" (Wolin 2003, p. 479). At the same time Wolin eagerly points out that "when Karl Marx left continental Europe and took up the life of exile in London…his immediate theoretical task was to choose

among the many partly finished theories he had begun earlier…" while "… when Tocqueville came to America he had no theory, no theoretical vocation" (ibid., p. 113).

According to Wolin another reason for Marx's supremacy is his economic acumen. Wolin writes that "unlike Marx who developed his mature theory of capital by means of a running engagement with classical economics – and he never concealed his intellectual debts to Stuart, Smith and Ricardo – Tocqueville made no effort to associate his sweeping claims with previous theoretical contributions" (ibid., p. 139). This last point of criticism is more justified. Tocqueville's knowledge of the economy was indeed somewhat superficial, which constitutes a certain weakness of his descriptive work. However, all of Wolin's efforts to favorably contrast the genius of Marx with the uneducated, careerist and buffoonish primitivism of Tocqueville are prone to create a certain suspicion on the part of a careful reader. There, indeed, must be something that is extremely intimidating in Tocqueville for an academic Marxian, if one of the largest recently published monographs devoted to the work of Tocqueville (Wolin's work is well over 500 pages long) was written mainly for the purpose of analyzing the "sense in which Tocqueville 'failed'" (ibid, p. 561). Interestingly, the author never explains in a satisfactory way why out of so many other "failed" nineteenth century philosophers it is Tocqueville who earned the honor of being the subject of such a prodigious effort aimed at refuting his philosophy and compromising his sinister anti-democratic motives.

Both Wolin and Boesche in their descriptions of Tocqueville's usual historicism in fact seem to be using clichés of the category of "reactionary socialism" first introduced by Marx and Engels (1992, pp. 36-42). This approach is indeed accurate to the extent that Tocqueville had sided neither with Guizot and the complacent, statist French mainstream liberalism nor with Blanqui and the new radicals. In reading Tocqueville as a "reactionary socialist" Boesche focuses on the socially sensitive fragments from Tocqueville's notes on England (see Tocqueville 1958); the articles that he helped publish in *Le Commerce*, and his commentaries about the dangers of the new industrial aristocracy. At the same time, because of Tocqueville's rejection of historical determinism, Boesche settles for the vision of Tocqueville as a thinker close to the particular subtype of "reactionary socialist" that according to Marx and Engels should be called the "conservative or bourgeois socialist," and who is characterized by a desire to "preserve the existing state of (bourgeoisie) society minus its revolutionary and disintegrating elements" (Marx and Engels 1958, pp. 54-55). Wolin, on the other hand, seems to suggest that Tocqueville was a different subspecies of "reactionary socialist," someone much closer

to what the *Manifesto* labeled as the "feudal socialist." The already quoted Wolinian description of Tocqueville is, indeed, an almost verbatim quote from Marx and Engels who describe feudal socialists' criticism of modern society and their praise of the traditional communities as "half lamentation, half lampoon, half echo of the past, half menace to the future, at times, by its bitter witty and incisive criticism, striking the bourgeoisie to the very heart's core; but always ludicrous in effect" (ibid., p. 44).

Alan S. Kahan (1992) and Lucien Jaume (2008)[5] in their description of Tocqueville's "aristocratic liberalism" also seem to work under the influence of the above Marxian category of "feudal socialism;" they, however, stress different elements of the definition and focus more on the "incisive criticism" of the bourgeois rather than the "ludicrous effects". In general, however, both authors see Tocqueville as a political actor who is implicated in the Marxian class struggle and defends the old liberty both from the money-grabbing new middle-class and the radicalized masses. Kahan, eventually goes as far as to compare Tocqueville's strain of feudal socialism to modern bohemian counter-cultures. Jaume, on the other hand, stresses throughout his work that one of Tocqueville's main motives in his public and literary efforts was to constantly act "against the bourgeois spirit of the July Monarchy" (2008, p. 101).

Naturally, as I have already mentioned, both Boesche and Wolin agree that there is some philosophy of history in Tocqueville. However, since both authors admit quite openly that their own philosophy of history is heavily influenced by Marx, they have no choice but to look at Tocqueville's alternative historicism through Marxian lenses and thus see Tocqueville as an underdeveloped or failed Marx. This of course does not imply a malicious distortion. Theories of history, because of their scope, generality and close connections with everyday human life, tend to be quite imperial – they seem to force political philosophers to take sides and dismiss any doubts. In other words, once a thinker has a theory of history s/he accepts, s/he will reject all other competing theories of history. Indeed, only in certain extraordinary circumstances individuals who possess considerable talent are able to construct a new, original interpretation of political history. The final section of this chapter will deal precisely with such a situation and in doing so it will draw a comparison between Tocqueville's ideas on history and revolutions and Thomas Kuhn's (1996) concept of scientific revolutions.

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[5] Jaume in his otherwise very insightful historical work tends to disregard the American Scholarship on Tocqueville and never quotes Kahan, which is a major academic error on his part. Apparently, not having read the earlier work, Jaume simply repeats many of Kahan's theses without giving him due credit.

At this point it is, however, important to note that the tendency of different visions of history to violently clash is clearly visible in many great historical debates. The pagan concepts of cyclical time, for instance, clashed with the beliefs of Christian authors like Tertullian, Origen and Augustine for whom the nature of universe was defined by the linear time that starts with the creation and ends with the apocalypse. In a similar way, Christianity saw the human earthly life as a period that starts with birth that is burdened by the original sin and ends with death that may be sweetened by the hope of salvation, but is devoid of any possibility of Platonic or Plotynian metempsychosis. Indeed, one may argue that all philosophies, religions and ideologies can be defined as ways of conceptualizing reality that extend a given human being's temporal perspective beyond the natural scope of her/his individual life. In this sense, modern historicists are heirs to the Christian vision[6] of time, whereas their Straussian opponents sensing the affinity between monotheistic religions and historicism are seeking to achieve philosophical consistency, and as a result have no choice but to return to the ancient cycles[7] guided by the unchanging laws of nature and accept the old Christian historicism only as a vague hope that needs to be separated from philosophy.[8]

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[6] Naturally, modern historicism in contrast to the Christian vision will assume that the ultimate course of history is something that the mind of the philosopher can access, whereas, the Christian vision assumes that God alone can have the full knowledge of history.

[7] Plato constructs an open cycle of decline, and hence his philosophy can be more easily reconciled with some elements of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Aristotle and especially Polybius construct closed cycles. Certain eschatological differences between Plato and Christian historicism, however, cannot be reconciled. Plato's world ultimately does not end and does not move towards a concrete goal of salvation, it merely goes through certain patterns of revival and decline.

[8] Straussianism is by no means anti-Christian. It, however, introduces a clear division between faith and philosophy and without going too deep into theological discussions; it views Christian historicism only as an expression of one's personal hopes. At the same time, the secularized post-Christian forms of historicism are rejected altogether. Shadia B. Drury's (2013) opinion that Strauss like Marx saw religion as "opium for the masses" is grossly exaggerated. He was, however, not religious, even if he regretted this fact. At the same time Leo Strauss was also always amicably disposed towards the men and women endowed with a strong religious sensitivity. He himself beautifully expressed the mixture of those feelings when in a eulogy of a recently deceased friend, a Jewish professor known for his religiosity, he said: „He did not rebuff; nay he attracted these who were not as blessed as he was; who did not find a way of reconciling the old piety and the new science" (Strauss 1963/2013). It is not inconceivable that Strauss was speaking of himself as one of those "were not blessed," this might be true especially given that he never directly addressed the issue of his personal religiosity and the above passage is as close to a declaration as he ever came. It was the more moderate younger Straussians (who will be mentioned later in the text) who started pushing the boundaries between religion and philosophy that are still quite visible and firm in the writing of Strauss and his immediate student, Marvin Zetterbaum. In the same speech,

The "immanentization of the Christian eschaton" (Voegelin 1952/1987, p. 166) in Marxism, naturally creates many ethical problems. One needs to acknowledge, however, that the Marxian historicism is extremely effective in the task of replacing the divine historical *telos* with the *telos* of the modern intellectual. It is also apparent that since Marx's Hegel already stands on his feet, Marx is able to abolish the problem of the inconsistency of the pessimistic vision of worldly apocalypse with the spiritual optimism of the vision New Jerusalem. Marx, therefore, indeed, introduces what Boesche calls the "modern harmony" and as a result in his own way returns to the millenarian vision of a glorious end of history without the apocalyptic end of the world as such. The big difference between Marx and Tocqueville is that while Marx's description of reality at hand is extremely grim and vitriolic, his ultimate vision of the history's goal is indeed one of Pollyannic harmony. In the case of Tocqueville, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the situation is reversed. His descriptions of contemporary reality are cautiously optimistic and assume that some political bodies win with history and thrive in the very conditions that utterly destroy others. At the same time, Tocqueville's general theory of history explicitly assumes that no particular type of politics is capable of winning the game humanity plays against reality all the time. Ultimately, all politics has to offer must, at one time, fail and become rebuilt in a semi-cyclical fashion. Tocqueville is, thus, in full agreement with Pascal (compare Lawler 1993, pp. 89-108), who did not understand how one can expect everlasting progress of our social condition given all the stochastic elements of reality that affect history. Tocqueville also agrees with saint Augustine who believed that the city of men, as all things human, must eventually suffer a decline. Let us also add that including a possibility of a complete failure in a formal model of political development is a routine practice for any student of the probability theory (see Hadari 1989, p. 48).

The modern historicist's mind will, however, balk at the obvious conclusion that the both mathematically and theologically trained mind of Pascal embraced with ease. This difficult conclusion suggests that if reality, and especially political reality, is indeed best described as a set of complex probabilities, then there is no room for eternal progress and the only hopes for the future that are available to human beings have to be metaphysical in nature. It is far more likely that a modern mind will return to Marx's millenarism than accept such an iron-clad, but ultimately pessimistic logic of the proper political

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Strauss declares that as far as classical political philosophy is concerned: "No religion is true but some religion, any religion is politically necessary" (ibid.).

science. This is because the logic of chaos and probability would require the mind that has already rejected the consolation of traditional religion to cope with its own despair in some other way. Some escape from this Pascalian (see Pascal 1901/2012, loc. 419) problem can be found only in the assumption that the disorganized, probabilistic history ultimately will end or that it has already ended. Indeed, according to some, only under such an assumption the teleological postulates of modern politics become acceptable. As Allan Bloom Puts it his preface to Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* "for anyone who thinks that thought is relative to time – that is to most modern men…there can only be knowledge if history at some point stops" (in Kojève 1969, p. x).

Since in most situations humans prefer knowledge to uncertainty, thinking about history in terms of a line rather that a cycle inevitably means that the thinkers will also assume a movement towards the point of absolute knowledge, towards the end of history. As we shall see, Tocqueville was well aware of this paradox and avoided it in his own philosophy of history simply by stating that although history never stops completely there are moments when following what he calls a "great" revolution it significantly slows down. Incidentally, both for Tocqueville and Kojève's Hegel the French revolution plays a crucial role, they however interpret its importance in very different ways.

The Straussian Approach

The historicist's problem with Tocqueville results from his purported anachronism, classicism and providentialism. The Straussian problem is an almost direct opposite of the historicist's accusations and results from Tocqueville's interest in history and his bitter criticism of the classical, ahistorical way of philosophizing about politics. Naturally, Tocqueville himself objected to being read as a determinist, and explicitly rejected historicism, but he did so in a way that would never satisfy a "true" Straussian. The rejection is, nevertheless, quite conspicuous given that Tocqueville places it in the final, concluding paragraphs of *Democracy in America*:

> I am not unaware that several of my contemporaries have thought that here below people are never masters of themselves, and that they obey necessarily I do not know what insurmountable and unintelligent force that arises from previous events, from race, from soil or from climate.
>
> Those are false and cowardly doctrines that can produce only weak men and pusillanimous nations. Providence has created humanity neither entirely

> independent nor completely slave. It traces around each man, it is true, a fatal circle out of which he cannot go; but within its vast limits, man is powerful and free, so are peoples.
>
> The nations of today cannot make conditions among them not be equal; but it depends on them whether equality leads them to servitude or liberty, to enlightenment or barbarism, to prosperity or misery. (DA IV, p. 1285)

The above fragment contains the essence of the Straussian/Tocquevillian problem. Many thinkers educated by a great pedagogue, Leo Strauss, rejected what one author aptly calls the "terror of history" (Dorosz 2010) in favor of the freedom of philosophizing; that is discovering what is simply true and free of the historicist approaches to political thought. Moreover, some Straussians became peculiarly sensitive to the importance of religion for political life[9] (see Welch 2001, p. 245). All this, naturally, makes the Straussians particularly receptive to some of Tocqueville's thoughts. At the same time, the fact that Tocqueville does have a general theory of history and insist that in the foreseeable future political actors are faced with a historical necessity of democratization, creates a considerable problem for the Straussian school.

As we shall see in this chapter, the problem, however, arises not from the Straussian's rejection of Tocqueville's "democracy", but from their refusal to accept history rather than nature as a device that guides politics. Democracy from a Straussian perspective (derived from Aristotle) can be accepted only on the ground of it being just in particular circumstances and not historically inevitable. Moreover, for Strauss and his students this is not a normative judgment since they explicitly undermine the fact-norm distinction (see Strauss 1953 and Bloom 1987). Naturally, in response, historicists who oppose Strauss's school are tempted to follow the lines of Pocock's argumentation and conclude that the Straussian problem results from the school being "immoderately contemptuous of all historical exegesis" and its belief that "all historians are historicists, and all historicists are moral relativists; all historical information is therefore irrelevant to the intention of the morally serious philosopher" (Pocock 1975, p. 391). Applying this simplistic Pocockian accusation to the Strassian reading of Tocqueville is, however, misleadingly easy, because it fails to acknowledge the problem of the autonomy of political philosophy, a concern that Tocqueville and Strauss held in common.

Strauss himself notably never published a single word about Tocqueville. However, the Internet Archive, a member of the U.S. Association of Libraries, has recently released a transcript of a lecture on Tocqueville that is said to be

[9] Which did not mean they uncritically accepted Christian historicism as a vision of history.

a part of Strauss's 1962 seminar on Natural Rights.[10] The author of the notes, even if it was not Leo Strauss himself, clearly displays a Straussian frame of mind. He is at the same time fascinated by Tocqueville and puzzled by his historicist inclinations. He calls DA the "remarkable two volumes" and claims that "no book comparable in breadth and depth has ever been produced afterwards" (2012/1962). He, however, also describes Tocquville's vision of history as essentially Burkean (*ergo* historicist) and writes that Tocqueville

> …dogmatically accepts the democratic notion of justice is simply identical with equality, so that the kind of reasonable inequality corresponding to merit is not considered. The fundamental reason is the serious will of Providence. But then of course, since he can't help thinking about it, he gives an analysis and the analysis leads to criticism inevitably. (ibid.)

Therefore, the author concludes: "One can perhaps put it this way, and it is not perhaps the worst thing that one can say about this kind of political thought; it is an approach which is perfectly sound for most practical purposes, but it is never sufficient from the point of view of theory" (ibid.). The above quote is tantamount to rejecting Tocqueville's authority as a philosopher.

The claim that this is indeed a genuine Leo Strauss lecture is corroborated by the fact that the same topic, i.e. the criticism of Tocqueville's historicist discussion of the inevitability of democracy, was taken up by Strauss' graduate student – the late Marvin Zetterbaum, who worked with Strauss in Chicago in 1962. In his research, Zetterbaum solves this problem by rejecting the hypothesis that Tocqueville treated the claim concerning democracy's inevitability seriously. Zetterbaum arrives at this conclusion based on his assumption that Tocqueville must have been deceptive either about his commitment to liberty and freethinking or about his commitment to the "inevitability hypothesis." Ultimately, Zetterbaum concludes that similarly to Tocqueville's teaching on religion his "inevitability hypothesis" is a "salutary myth" (1967, p. 19) that enables him to present to his audience something that he thinks is right based on the natural law alone, but that would be rejected if presented in a genuinely philosophical non-historicist form. According to Zetterbaum, Tocqueville is an intelligent thinker, who is well aware of the surface unseemliness of the democratic *mores*, but at the same time realizes that, in its deepest nature, democracy is "the only just social condition" (ibid., p. 41). Therefore, knowing that the surface of democracy is not nearly as lustrous and becoming as

[10] The authorship of the notes is still not certain. I have only obtained a partial confirmation from Leo Strauss's former student (David North).

that of aristocracy and doubting in the power of philosophical persuasion, he simply presents democracy as inevitable.

Nevertheless, based on Zetterbaum's own view of politics, one can doubt whether a conclusive philosophical argument in favor of Tocqueville's democracy truly exists. This is because Zetterbaum describes a perennial conflict between justice and human nature that in the conditions of just equality will never embrace the Aristotelian political virtue. To this dilemma, according to Zetterbaum, Tocqueville proposes only "temporary palliatives" (ibid., p. 159) such as associations, religion, education and Lockean common sense. In spite of the inability to solve this dilemma, Zetterbaum claims that Tocqueville ultimately sides with the Straussian philosopher, precisely because he understands that the democratic order as every actual political order can be upheld only by "art" or "myth" (ibid.). Zetterbaum thus seems to answer Strauss's purported doubts by revealing that only a true philosopher can be so apt at using "noble lies" to cover his deep philosophical inclinations.

Zetterbaum's thesis that "the core of [Tocqueville's] teaching is hardly hopeful" (ibid.) is extremely insightful and will be elaborated later on in this work. However, Marvin Zetterbaum seems to read too much into Tocqueville. He claims that in his unpublished writings, Tocqueville is much less sure of the inevitably of democracy, but he quotes little evidence to prove this claim apart from Tocqueville's famous rejection of philosophical fatalism in a letter to Gobineau (ibid., 17 and Tocqueville 1959, p. 227). This passage is, however, no different from the identical declaration found in the officially published edition of DA (IV, p. 1285 – quoted above). In contrast, in the case of Tocqueville's opinions on religion where Zetterbaum also sees some inconsistencies between the published and unpublished writings, we can now confirm his insight by showing that there truly is a marked discrepancy between Tocqueville's private notes on Catholicism and democracy and the idyllic view of the peaceful coexistence of the two that he presented in his published writings.[11] Nonetheless, the "inevitability hypothesis" is clearly not a "noble lie" or a myth, since it consistently appears both in Tocqueville's private writings and in his official work, in both cases coexisting with the rejection of determinism. Tocqueville clearly wanted those seemingly contradictory ideas to stand side by side, and thus rather than assume the existence of a "noble lie", one should first look for an explanatory model that would reconcile the inconsistency that is far too obvious to be a mistake and far too forcefully and consistently stated to be a deception.

[11] See Chapter 3 for details.

In contrast to Zetterbaum, some other Straussians are more cautious in reconciling Strauss with Tocqueville. Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop, for instance, follow Zetterbaum in their focus on Tocqueville's attempt at restoring some elements of Aristotelian virtues in the democratic societies (2006), but both are conspicuously silent about Tocqueville's philosophy of history. James Ceaser in line with the Straussian school does his best to deprecate the importance of Tocqueville's theory of history that according to him originally sprang from Burke's philosophy. He, nevertheless, does acknowledge its existence and writes: "Although Tocqueville glimpsed the possibility of a universalistic historicism and advanced one such mild variant of his own, he identified the historicism of his day mainly with those who sought to explain the fate of *particular* nations or people" (in Masugi 1991, p. 299).

In his book (1991), Ceaser further tries to save Tocqueville from accusation of being a mere historicist by compartmentalizing Tocqueville's teaching into three subfields. Ceaser distinguishes the discussion of political science as the historical knowledge of place; the general, philosophical political science and the practical political science focused on devising heuristics for particular statespersons. The method Ceaser uses to prove that Tocqueville is not a historicist at the deep philosophical level is to stress that Tocqueville's general political theory is based on nature and not history, and that Tocqueville only introduces historical thinking to examine particular cases. This leads Ceaser to a conclusion that "when considering a historical era, political analysis focuses not literary on a time period as such" (Ceaser 1990, p. 43). The era for Ceaser is thus nothing more than a particular stage in the life of a particular civilization. In the case of Tocqueville, Ceaser claims, for instance, that modernity for the French thinker does not have a global scope, but is limited to Christian civilization, and as a result, the sharp edge of the inevitability hypothesis needs to be considerably blunted.

James Ceaser's interpretation seems to be correct in acknowledging that Tocqueville's political science is only seemingly chaotic and that one finds in it a clear division into theory, case studies and normative prescriptions. However, Ceaser's dehistoricization of Tocqueville is problematic. Although Tocqueville does focus on the nations of Christian heritage in DA, in his writings on Islam and colonialism he also speaks of revolutions spreading beyond Christendom. Moreover, already in DA Tocqueville writes about the Asiatic democratization, anticipating insights that are strikingly similar to Edward Friedman's historical exegesis of the Chinese revolution (1974). Therefore, although, James Ceaser is right in describing Tocqueville's philosophy as

a form of "mild historicism", the particular explanations of the reasons for this "mildness" are not satisfactory.

Mindful of the ambiguity of Tocqueville's theory of history, three other prominent Straussians who are known for producing outstanding Tocquevillain scholarship (Manent 1996, Lawler 1993, Rahe[12] 2009) decided not to focus heavily on disproving Tocqueville's historicism and with even fewer misgivings than Ceaser or Mansfield[13] accepted that Tocqueville recognizes at least two great historical formations[14] which in the foreseeable time will continue to produce political contingencies. In acknowledging this Manent, Lawler and Rahe present themselves as moderate Straussians. All three abandon Zetterbaum's "noble-lie" interpretation and instead try to approximate Tocqueville's inevitability hypothesis to Leo Strauss's teaching on the distinction between the ancients and the moderns. They also reject the ultra-orthodox Straussian reading of Tocqueville provided by Thomas West[15] (1991), who boldly classifies Tocqueville as a modern historicist, who „misunderstood the American founding" (ibid., p. 155) and concludes that Tocqueville's teaching should not be considered a viable part of the modern American political theory. Lawler, Manent and Rahe clearly focus more on what Tocqueville may have had to say about the most recently emerging social phenomena and try to steer clear of the whole inevitability discussion.

Pierre Manent, in his distinctively synthetic philosophical style, associates the general social form that precedes democracy with aristocracy and remarks that in their extreme form both the aristocratic and the democratic social orders seek to impose certain conventions on the society, however, they do so for opposite reasons. Indeed, Tocqueville acknowledges the existence of both those tendencies and notes that "aristocratic nations are naturally led to compress the limits of human perfectibility too much, and democratic nations to extend them sometimes beyond measure" (DA III, p. 762). Based on this observations, Manent notes that

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[12] Paul Rahe's contributions to the Tocquevillian scholarship will be further discussed in Chapter 3. A summary of Lawler's and Manent's interpretations of Tocqueville will be provided in this chapter.

[13] Ceaser and Mansfield are more of Straussian traditionalists. They tend to exclude or minimalize the importance of history in the political science of Tocqueville, while Lawler, Manent and Rahe try to amicably reconcile history and political theory.

[14] One can list the ancient world, the rise of Christianity and the rise of modern democracy. Tocqueville, however, at times describes Christianity merely as and intermedium between the ancient aristocracy and the modern democracy, so the typology is problematic.

[15] Because of the extreme nature of West's dissenting voice and his rather ideological attack on Tocqueville, his argument will not be discussed here at length.

> …aristocratic convention is more visibly distant from nature, more manifestly conventional. The dullest of minds can easily see that going through the trouble of being born is not a very great exploit. But sanctioning the legitimacy of power of one over another confirms the reality of nature. (Manent 1996, p. 79)

Manent juxtaposes thus defined aristocracy with the Tocquevillian all-encompassing drive towards democracy and concludes that the democratic principle creates a curious paradox.

> Because the democratic convention is less conventional than the aristocratic convention, its recognition requires endlessly working upon nature itself. Looking to what is equal, the same or similar in men, it penetrates nature and acts upon nature itself. (ibid., p. 80)

In Manent's view, every aristocratic social convention in its assertion that men are not made equal tries to mirror what aristocrats perceive as "natural" inequalities in the possession of various laudable qualities like intelligence, beauty, wisdom etc. Any aristocracy of convention is thus making a vociferous claim to being the aristocracy of "nature." However, the claim is always highly disputable since the social mirroring of natural inequality is always imperfect. Aristocrats, for instance, typically assume that the most important political virtues are inherited by members of certain families, which, as history[16] instructs us, is a gross exaggeration.

One must also note that in his exegesis Manent moves away from the philosophical, Platonic vision of aristocracy of merit construed as simply the best men and women that can be found in the polity. He uses a more doxological notion of a historical aristocracy that for all intents and purposes is indistinguishable from a hereditary oligarchy, which defends its particular interests with the help of (a vacuous) social convention. As a result, in accordance with Plato's predictions, Manent concludes that if the aristocratic principle is used only as a form of legitimization and not as a criterion of selection, it soon becomes perceived as an inadmissible deformation of "nature" rather than its fulfillment and thus provokes a democratic retaliation.

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[16] Since the ancient times there have been many examples of prominent political leaders of very modest background. Of course there are evidence that genes do have an influence on the strength of group identification, which in turn correlates with the likelihood of political involvement (Weber, Johnson and Arceneaux, 2011). Genetics, however, is not destiny and other factors also influence the political acumen of various politicians. The very existence of revolutions seems to attest to this fact.

This retaliation, however, leads democracy to enter into a conflict with the conventional understanding of "nature" on the opposite flank. Once democracy dismisses the aristocratic conventional insistence on the importance of trivial differences it is immediately apt to undermine the existence of even those differences that seemed obvious and "natural" to many previous generations. Contemporary Western, democratic convention, for instance, forbids one to speak simply of masculine and feminine qualities and substitutes those terms with the concepts of gendered ideas that one freely assumes or rejects.[17] As for differences between particular individuals manifested in qualities such as intelligence, beauty, strength etc., the democratic convention makes it a *faux pas* to overtly state the arguments that favor nature over nurture even when dealing with apparently inborn features or deficiencies.

The problem with this new convention is that no matter how tolerant and open minded the democratic *mores* become, many are still compelled to observe that there is a point at which the general political equality inevitably loses its sway and the concrete "natural" inequalities between individuals become too visible to be ignored. This extremely embarrassing fact leaves a society that has already deeply internalized the democratic ideals with two difficult alternatives. Firstly it, can strive to construct a dystopian reality, similar to that depicted in Kurt Vonnegut's *Harrison Bergeron* (Vonnegut 1961/2011), and thus make a conscious attempt to mask the unfairly distributed beauty, dumb down those who are unfairly intelligent and weaken the unfair strength. Secondly, and more realistically, a democratic society can construct a transcendental promise of infinite perfectibility accessible to all and consciously direct the development of biological and technical sciences towards the attainment of this elusive goal.

Tocqueville, in spite of writing long before the advent of modern biotechnology, plastic or gender-change surgery and "life-enhancing" pharmacology clearly predicted that the belief in infinite perfectibility will become the cornerstone of the unique *mores* produced by democracy. Indeed, according to

[17] The rise of the notion of gender that effectively substitutes the biological notion of sex is a development that is clearly possible within Tocqueville's general framework, but that he himself never openly anticipated. Indeed, by contemporary standards Tocqueville's understanding of those matters was deeply sexist (see Welch 2006, pp. 190-207). On the other hand, his irrational fear of the more "masculine" women intimates that he saw the new phenomenon, but chose not to embrace it because of his own prejudice. This problem is visible, for instance, in the remark Tocqueville makes about George Sand by writing: "I detest women who write, especially those who systematically disguise the weakness of her sex, instead of interesting us by displaying them in their true colors" (R, p. 134).

Peter Augustine Lawler, one of the most pertinent observations of Tocqueville is to be found in the following passage:

> As castes disappear, as classes come closer together, as common practices, customs, and laws vary because men are mixed tumultuously together, as new facts arise, as new truths come to light, as old opinions disappear and as other take their place, the image of an ideal and fleeing perfection presents itself to the human mind. (DA III, p. 761)

Based on the fragment, Lawler concludes that Tocqueville was one of the first to see the predicaments of "our biotechnological future" (2005, p. 133) and the development of the "science of happiness".

The idea of the particular social anxiety inspired by the will to become perfect is, of course, not completely new. Tocqueville remained indebted to Pascal.[18] He borrowed from him especially the crucial teaching on the singular restlessness that results from the "struggle against accidents" (ibid., p. 120). In his exegesis of this category, Lawler is quick to point out that as medicine develops we perceive death more and more as an avoidable accident in our march towards the ideal outlined already by Condorcet (2012, pp. 145-147) and less as an inherent part of human life. Paradoxically, however, stripping death of its inevitability increases our fear of passing away.

Lawler also interprets Tocqueville's teaching on democratic individualism as an important contribution to our understanding of socio-biological and demographical problems. As Tocqueville predicted, the democratic individual is overpowered by the opinion of the majority in the public sphere and takes his power back only through radically separating his private life from any other considerations even those that, like raising children, quite recently were still viewed as simple biological necessity. Thus "our sophisticated classes" (Lawler 2011, p. 31) and little by little the rest of the developed societies at the same time refuse to acknowledge the fact of their aging and decide to abandon the necessity of procreating displaying in consequence something of a "birth dearth" (ibid.). As Lawler facetiously puts it: "Nature may intend me to be replaced by my children, but we Lockeans are more concerned with living for ourselves – and so, among other things with thwarting nature's intention by staying around as long as possible, however great the health-care costs" (ibid.).

[18] The similarities and differences between Tocqueville's and Pascal's approach to religion will be further elaborated on in Chapter 3.

One solution to Lawler's paradox would be to speed up the process of perfection of human biological "hardware." Achieving the natural replacement of generations already seems impossible in some of the developed societies. Moreover, migrations seem to be only a short-lived strategy since it seems that with the spreading of modern *mores* and education global demographic growth is already slowing down and by the end of this century we may well see a decline in population and mass aging not just in Europe but on the global scale (see United Nations 2004). Therefore, with a looming collapse of the aging societies, creating post-human beings that would be able to infinitely perfect their bodies (and die only by sheer accident) seems to be a logical solution. However, biotechnology as any other technology does not selectively change only one sphere of life. It bundles many new possibilities with new threats, many of which are consistent with Tocqueville's warning about the future tyrannies. For instance, it is still difficult to determine how to prevent humans from losing their liberty in the course of being engineered and bred according to specific, socially constructed concepts of beauty, wisdom and happiness? How to prevent *homo sapiens*, which developed as unique natural species from becoming just another domesticated animal (compare DA IV, p. 1252) raised to fulfill specific needs that are external to its normal, organic development? The indications that the new bio-engineering will not be as heavy handed as the earlier totalitarian eugenics is hardly uplifting. Democratic beliefs, after all, do not need to be shaped by a central planning authority in order to be coercive and dogmatic. As Tocqueville puts it: "in centuries of equality faith in common opinion will become a sort of religion whose prophet is the majority" (DA III, p. 724).

Pierre Manent voices a similar concern by noting that in its rebellion against the inept aristocratic imitation of natural inequalities "democracy wishes to fulfill" what it sees as the true nature of human beings, the nature of equality of humans hopes and desires, however, paradoxically to achieve this democracy "takes upon itself to domesticate and subject nature" (Manent 1996, p. 81). The problem is that…

> …the moment this domestication was complete, man would be dehumanized. On the one hand, democracy's project is unrealizable, because it is contrary to nature. On the other, it is impossible to stop short of this democracy and go back to aristocracy….It follows that we can only moderate democracy; we cannot stop short of democracy, because it fulfills nature. We cannot attain the end of this movement, for it would mean subjecting nature completely and dehumanizing man. We cannot escape democracy. We can never make democracy completely 'real,' and we must not try. (ibid.)

In the above quote, Manent, who is a rare example of a European Straussian, clearly makes his peace with Tocqueville's "inevitability hypothesis" that troubled Zetterbaum so much. At the same time, however, he does not abandon Zetterbaum's fundamental thought on the opposition between the democratic ideal and classical, aristocratic virtue. Lawler seems to follow the same path. Ceaser is reluctant, but, he too sees some "mild historicism" in Tocqueville.

Some Weaknesses of the Straussian Reading

While extremely insightful, all the Straussian readings of Tocqueville, fall short of explaining one pivotal element of Tocqueville's thought. They do not inform the readers how Tocqueville manages to construct such insightful general theories of time and development without accepting the Kojevian vision of the end of history. To put it simply, how can one describe history in motion without claiming that it stops in the moment of description? To provide an explanation one needs to synthetically describe the Tocquevillian model of political and social change and compare it to other general models of political and social change that have been used before. And since as we have established in the previous chapter Tocqueville gives the name revolution to both the great social and political changes, the explanation will take on a form of a description of Tocquville's theory of revolutions. As for the comparison, as I have already stated, both the insightfulness of Tocquville's theories and his rejection of determinism can be explained by acknowledging that apart from history in motion and the fulfilled, completed history, there exists a third historical category that Tocqueville embraces. The nature of this category consists in the assumption that although history never stops it seems to "slow down" following revolutionary changes. The theoretical image of an era created at those rare, "slow" moments is not a deterministic model; it is, however, far less distorted than theories that appear during history's normal course and that necessarily carry the weight of numerous prejudices and superfluous assumptions. The authors of such images are far more conscious of the finite nature of every paradigm of human understanding. They also strike the future generations as more philosophically developed than the "normal" inhabitants of respective paradigms. As the last section of this chapter will show, this theory of revolutions in the perceptions of political history bears a striking similarity to Thomas Kuhn's theory of paradigmatic revolutions in science.

As for the Straussian approach to Tocqueville, its proponents clearly fear substituting the philosophical truth with the musings of the historical mind, even if that mind is as sophisticated as Tocqueville's. Interestingly, Tocqueville, himself, displays similar fears in his discussion of the mistakes committed by the democratic and the aristocratic historians He, however, differs from the Straussian school in that he doubts, whether political thought without context can still be meaningful to any human being. As a result Tocqueville becomes very weary of the ancients and their political philosophy.[19] Following Benjamin Constant's (2002) teaching on the ancient and the modern republicanism Tocqueville writes somewhat condescendingly about the political ideas inspired directly by the classical examples:

> You[20] speak about the small democracies of antiquity, whose citizens came to the public square with crowns of roses, and who spent nearly all their time in dances and in spectacles. I do not believe in such republics any more than [in] that of Plato; or, if things happened there as we are told, I am not afraid to assert that these so-called democracies were formed out of elements very different from ours, and that they had with the latter only the name in common. (DA IV, p. 1082)

The above quote strikes at the very heart of the Straussian approach to Tocqueville and makes the Neo-Aristotelian interpretation of Tocqueville far more problematic than some authors would have us think. This is of course not to say that Tocqueville is not inspired by Aristotle, but as the remainder of this chapter will suggest, he significantly modifies the Aristotelian science of politics by blending it with modern historicist elements which the Straussian school has to reject focusing on the ancients as the only original fountain of true political ideas.

Ironically, this uncompromisingly classicist approach to the study of politics in revolutionary France (1789-1848) was the domain of republican radicals, while in contemporary USA and Europe it is often seen as a hallmark of being conservative. Whatever labels we use, it is, however, clear that the political thought of Tocqueville demonstrably fails both tests: it is neither radically republican in the French Rousseauian sense, nor is it philosophically

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[19] I am of the opinion that in the case of Tocqueville himself, this rejection is clearer and more uncompromising than the philosophical position represented by the more moderate Straussians.

[20] Schleifer translates the French unspecified pronoun "*on*" not as the English "one" that seems to him a bit archaic but as "you." Hence "*On parle des petites démocraties de l'Antiquité,…"* is translates as: "You [unspecified reader] speak about the small democracies of antiquity,…;" rather than "One speaks about the small…."

conservative in Straussian sense. At the same time, however, Tocqueville also rejected progressive historicism, famously comparing it to Gobineau's racism owing to its deterministic and dehumanizing nature. Finally, Tocqueville unlike Kojeve's Hegel did not believe that history has "ended" in his times. In R he writes for instance that "in matters of social constitutions the field of possibilities is much wider than people living within each society imagine" (R, p. 76).

As far as the modern approaches to history are concerned, Tocqueville had already witnessed the first clashes between historicism and its aristocratic or classicistic opponents. Of course, the historicism he was acquainted with was predominantly based on Guizot's liberal historiography and Burkean historicistic conservatism. When working on AR, Tocquville noted, for instance, that one of his goals was to "turn G[uizot] against himself" (Gannet 2003, p. 2). Tocqueville could not have known Marx, and he never mentioned Hegel, although, this did not prevent him from anticipating the predicaments of their historicist arguments. As for Tocqueville's ideas on the classicist rejection of historicism, they were with all probability based on Rousseau and his call to reverse political progress by reviving the classical ideal of the small republic. The second set of Tocqueville's anti-historicist readings must have consisted of royalists such as Bonnald or De Maistre both of whom were known for their juxtaposition of the Christian historicism with the idea of progress. All those early strains of anti-historicism are naturally far removed from the nuanced teaching on the ancient and the moderns presented by Leo Strauss. Nevertheless, Tocqueville was already able to anticipate that one of the great debates in political theory will take place between the proponents of the great vision of progressing history and the last remaining champions of the particular histories of individuals, law makers and philosophers. He calls the two sides of this debate the "democratic" and the "aristocratic historians" and quite openly reveals that he himself reject both approaches. He writes that:

> Historians who write in aristocratic centuries ordinarily make all events depend on the particular will and the mood of certain men, and they readily link the most important revolutions to the slightest accidents. They wisely make the smallest causes stand out, and often do not see the greatest ones.
>
> Historians who live in democratic centuries show completely opposite tendencies. Most of them attribute to the individual almost no influence on the destiny of the species, or to the citizen on the fate of the people. But, in return, they give general causes to all small particular facts [In their eyes, all events are linked together by a tight and necessary chain, and therefore they

> sometimes end up by denying nations control over themselves and by contesting the liberty of having been able to do what they did]. (DA, p. 854)

Tocqueville's description of the two types of historians is an insight that is true especially in the field of the history of political thought. The modern democratic historians learn their iron-clad dialectic from Hegel or Marx and conclude that the history is driven either by class struggle or by the master-slave dialectic. In the opposing camp, we find the modern aristocratic historians; that is mainly the Christian and the Straussian academics, who see the history[21] of political thought as an affair of great individuals and whose research hypotheses are often easily summarized by uttering the phrase "if it wasn't for….." and inserting various names like Luther, Calvin, Machiavelli, Hobbes or Abraham Lincoln in the blank spot. Having established the key name in line with Tocqueville's insight, the aristocratic historians proceed to meticulously analyze the persona in question. Strauss himself did not shy away even from the analysis of such "smallest causes" like the particular numerical arrangements of chapters and their length in the works of Machiavelli (see Strauss 1953). To pick a more recent example, James Hankins (Hankins 2012) in his newly published book, paints the picture of modern political thought and economy as a miserable child of Luther and Calvin in which he repeats in an almost verbatim fashion the arguments made two centuries earlier by Joseph de Maistre.

Tocqueville witnessed the beginning of this strife following the attempts to establish the root-causes of the French revolutions. He heard both de Maistre's (2004) unapologetic slogan that reads "it's all the Protestants' fault" and he heard the famous French protestant – Francois Guizot, who with equal

[21] There is an insoluble problem associated with using the term "aristocratic historian" with reference to Leo Strauss and the Straussians. Of course, anyone who tries to methodically make sense of the past can be called a historian. Orthodox Straussians, however, may insist that a political thinker like Strauss taps into the non-temporal knowledge, the very nature of political things. This creates a problem. If Leo Strauss writes about the works Aristotle or Maimonides does, he merely use them as disposable exemplifications of pure philosophy, or does he actually engage in an inquiry into the history of political thought? I am not able to conclusively solve this paradox, since engaging in the true philosophy seems to come close to a metaphysical experience that cannot be proven or disproven. Let us merely note that if we assume that by writing about the past of political thought the Straussians do engage in history, then the type of history they pursue is close to the "aristocratic history" that tends to view historical events and momentous changes as results of the conscious efforts of concrete great men and women (in the history of political thought those would include Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli etc.) rather than an inevitable result of some impersonal social forces.

zeal argued that it was all a historical necessity (see 2002). As in many other things, he has made it his ambition to remain objective and thus steer clear of both extremes. This, however, meant that he had to construct his own, independent theory of history and revolutions.

Tocqueville's Spiral of Revolutions

As I have already stated in the previous chapter, Tocqueville equates political change with revolution and uses the word "revolution" in two meanings. Both those meanings are tied to Tocqueville's dual usage of the word "democracy." This section will argue that Tocqueville takes one of his meanings from the ancient aristocratic historians and the other from the modern historicists.

The word revolution comes from a Late Latin term *revolutio* – "to turn around," which is a literal translation of the Greek term *anakuklesis*[22] and a derivative of the classical Latin word *revolvo* – "roll back, revolve."[23] Therefore, the original term contains a postulate of bringing order to political chaos. This is hardly surprising, as for the ancient classics writing on politics and revolutions (Plato, Polybius, Cicero, etc.) the aim of any science worthy of the name was to establish an ordered explanation of a seemingly dynamic reality.

Mutability, dynamism, and change were seen as base traits of the *doxa* [opinion] that the true science had to overcome. Visible changes for the ancients were not guided by a slowly disclosing divine plan or the universal progress, but by immutable nature of the cosmos that even the deities had to obey. In order to reconcile apparent changes with the assumption of immutable causes and the ordered cosmic reason, one had to classify all possible metamorphoses and order them into closed cycles. In the case of politics, the most important doxological changes were naturally those of regimes. They were assumed to be guided by human nature and thus contingent on the limited set of characteristics of the people and their rulers. As Tocqueville observes:

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[22] Hannah Arendt (2006, p. 12) claims that the Greek term *anakuklesis* later translated into Latin as *revolutio* was first used by Polybius and originally came from astronomy. However, a simple research with the use of the Perseus database proves that she was wrong, and the term was used already by Plato in his *Statesman* (269e).

[23] See *Online Etymological Dictionary* at http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=revolution. This original meaning is, for instance, preserved in the title of the groundbreaking astronomical treaty by Nicolaus Copernicus (1543/2012) in his *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* [*On the Revolutions, i.e. "turns" or "orbits," of Heavenly Spheres*].

> It seems, while reading the historians of the aristocratic ages and particularly those of antiquity, that, in order to become master of his fate and to govern his fellows, man has only to know how to control himself. (DA III, p. 853)

The above quote is de Tocqueville's version of the anthropological principle according to which the political community is an analogue of an individual human. Thus, the structure of polis reflects the structure of the human soul and the condition of a particular polis reflects the virtues and vices of its citizen. From the point of view of the analysis of the notion of revolution it is, also, important to note that based on the ancient assumption of the immutability of human nature, the anthropological principle states that there is a limited range of regimes the lawmakers and communities can choose from just as there is only a limited range of virtues and vices the human nature is capable of. Interestingly, according to Tocqueville, democracy in its own way preserves this anthropological principle since assuming the existence of infinite political progress it also assumes the perspective of the infinite perfectibility of man.

For Tocqueville, this old notion of revolution understood as a cyclical or semi-cyclical change within a limited number of possibilities is akin to the notion of revolution as a concrete, violent events e.g. a regime switch from the July Monarchy to the Second Republic and then to the Second Empire. Nevertheless, he significantly modifies the insights of the ancients by combining them with a distinctively modern perspective.[24] The modern notion of revolution, whose mature theoretical rendition can be found in the writings of Karl Marx,[25] does not denote a cycle. A revolution for moderns is a step towards a concrete *telos*. According to Tocqueville, an example of a revolution with a clear aim (the equality of conditions) is "the great democratic revolution." On the other hand, however, when one carefully examines Tocqueville's writings, it becomes apparent that his vision of political changes also contains cyclical elements – the shifts from autocratic to republican forms of governments.

When one combines the two models, it becomes apparent that according to Tocqueville, in modernity a certain vectorial development occurs with each regime change and moves politics in a new, but not necessarily fortunate,

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[24] Tocqueville read both Plato and Aristotle while working on AR. He attests to this in his 1852 "Speech Given to the French Academy of Political and Moral Sciences on April 3, 1852" (Tocqueville 2011). The English text of the speech can be found in (Danoff and Herbert 2011, pp. 17-31).

[25] See especially (Marx 1970).

direction. Thus, one may figuratively call the entire, large model of political change presented in Tocqueville's main writings a "Tocquevillian spiral." I use the metaphor of a spiral rather than a spring, since with each turn the modern wheel of regimes approaches the "soft despotism," thus the scope of the regime change in each cycle becomes smaller and the administrative power increases. At the "soft despotism" point the turns of the wheel of regimes stops and only a complete change of the political paradigm can reestablish the movement of history.

The basis of this spiral consists of a model of a revolution as a continuation of the former government. However, the twist of the old wheel of regimes has a new democratic spin to it. According to Tocqueville, in France, for instance, the population over time becomes more affluent but not politically independent. All significant problems are assumed to be the responsibility of the central government. If, for some reason, the reaction of the authorities is tardy, violence breaks out. If the revolution is successful, the revolutionaries replace the old regime with a republic or some form of autocracy (depending on the period) and initiate reforms through increasing the overall power of the state without significantly changing the methods of exerting it. For instance, in 1793 the Committee on Public Safety effectively substituted the rule of absolutist *intendants* but retained the old, centralized structure of administrative control and immensely expanded the prerogatives of the bureaucrats. This surge in power, however, became possible because the new regime could claim to possess democratic legitimacy and reinforce this claim with the ideological assertion of the rationality and universality of the new concepts of social life.

Those new concepts are decidedly illiberal for Tocqueville, since he firmly believes that European political liberties are rooted in pre-modern, medieval law that he calls the "Old European Constitution" (AR, p. 31). Importantly, in this respect Tocqueville stresses the uniqueness of the Anglo-American heritage that is capable of connecting the pre-modern relative liberty with robust economic growth and political efficiency. Tocqueville writes about the French intellectual elites that unlike the English were unable "to change their ethos gradually in a practical way…without destroying their former institution" (AR., p. 143). He also notes that England,[26] in spite of becoming a "fully

[26] Tocqueville's views on England often seem inconsistent. Seymour Drescher (1964) suggests that there is a cyclical pattern to Tocqueville's favorable and critical descriptions of Great Britain. However, in his chief published writings Tocqueville seems to consistently assert that England compares favorably with France, although, not necessary with America, which according to Tocqueville managed to combine the English aristocratic liberty with the French democratic equality.

developed Modern nation as soon as in the seventeenth century," conserved "within its center, as if embalmed, a few medieval relics" (AR, p. 32).

Tocqueville's praise of the Anglo-American solutions to the antinomies of modernity is, however, not unconditional. He reveals his misgivings in his discussion of "general ideas" in politics, which is very similar to his teaching on the democratic and aristocratic historians. Indeed, Tocqueville seems to assume that through shared political consciousness, all citizens are historians of their own polity and thus general ideas are for people what democratic history is for historians. In DA, Tocqueville observes that both the English and Americans displayed less of the typically French preference for political generalizations. Nevertheless, elsewhere in DA, he writes that one can "assert that the taste for general ideas is developing there [in England] as the ancient constitution of the country is becoming weaker" (DA III, p. 731). Furthermore, Americans, according to Tocqueville, already display a deeper taste for general ideas than their "fathers" – the British (DA III, p. 726). Perhaps that is why in AR Tocqueville writes about ancient English liberties as "embalmed relics" rather than a living tradition.

Ultimately, for Tocqueville, the contemporary history of both France and America are just the most prominent examples of a larger phenomenon. According to him, a paradoxical tension that cannot be resolved dominates all modern politics. Democracy needs the old "aristocratic liberalism" (see Kahan 1992) in order to avoid new forms of despotism. "Aristocratic liberalism," however, relies on non-democratic values of unconditional property rights, and unmitigated personal sovereignty. Thus, democracy has a perpetual tendency to sap its own foundations. At a certain point, even the English bulwarks of liberty may give in to the extreme form of equalizing. At least when writing the first volume of DA, Tocqueville seems to hope that the drive away from liberty can be stopped or significantly slowed down. In the second volume of the DA and in the AR, he, however, becomes more somber.

In general, Tocqueville describes the results of three revolutions that exemplify the modalities open to various polities globally. DA deals with the "great revolution" and the American way of coping with it through cautious changes. AR is a tale of the French revolutionary pursuit of the democratic ideal of equal conditions, which, paradoxically, necessitates a radicalization of the old form of ruling. R describes one more scenario: the formation of the bourgeois, liberal democracy threatened by the specter of socialism and ultimately developing into an authoritarian reign of a man (Louis Napoleon), who with Tocqueville's words combined the "abstract adoration of the

people" with a lack of a "taste for liberty" (R, p. 204).[27] According to the general pattern proposed by Tocqueville, the "normal" revolutions are an unfortunate by-product of the one "great" democratizing revolution. Typically, the particular revolutions try to quickly eradicate all vestiges of the former regimes, and while some succeed, very often they eventually return to political forms derived from the previous rule and characterized by a despotic destruction of intermediary powers. At the same time, the actual development of well-institutionalized liberal democracy seems to be a much slower, gradual process. This discovery of a spiraling revolutionary pattern of modernity is clearly one of the most important insights of Tocqueville's science of politics. Moreover, it is not an accidental *ad hoc* observation. Tocqueville's remarks in R reveal a consistent implementation of the general model that he first introduced in 1840 when he included the following passage in DA:

> The citizens fall under the control of the public administration at every instant; they are carried imperceptibly and as if without their knowledge to sacrifice to the public administration some new parts of their individual independence, and these same men who from time to time overturn a throne and trample kings underfoot, bow more and more, without resistance, to the slightest will of a clerk.
>
> So therefore, two revolutions seem to be taking place today in opposite directions: one continually weakens power, and the other constantly reinforces it. In no other period of our history has it appeared either so weak or so strong.
>
> But when you finally come to consider the state of the world more closely, you see that these two revolutions are intimately linked to each other that they come from the same source, and that, after having had a different course, they finally lead men to the same place. (DA IV, p. 1243)

On reading this passage and bearing in mind all the previous observations, one may venture to propose a more detailed description of the Tocquevillian model of revolutions and the resulting regimes. Firstly, for Tocqueville, as for Guizot (see 2001) and Marx (see especially 1998) modernity is born out of the rejection of political particularism of medieval politics. Therefore, modern politics in its equalizing and unifying zeal runs the risk of destroying any form of independence of local communities, corporations and associations. In AR, Tocqueville especially mourns the loss of independence of the

[27] Contemporarily, developing Tocqueville's models Kurt Weyland (2009) describes the whole 1848 Spring of the Nations as an exemplification of the pattern of revolutions that is applicable to a whole range of events; most notably to the recent developments in the Arab World (see Weyland 2012).

European townships and local governments of rural parishes. Nevertheless, he also notes that because of its insularity, England is exceptionally good at preserving the local liberty of medieval life. Similarly, in the USA the equalizing influence of the frontier combined with the English legal tradition leads to the creation of a relatively stable democratic republic. In Europe equality first asserts itself through the leveling power of absolutism. Soon, however, it becomes apparent that absolutist institutions and symbols cannot indefinitely accommodate themselves to the growing social push towards equality. As the democratic spirit becomes political flesh, it disposes of the last vestiges of mediaeval past and for that very reason runs the risk of creating a distinctively modern, administrative despotism. In certain conditions of a particularly great internal turmoil, this despotism can be further modified by being subjugated to the will of a strong peacemaker – a military despot (DA IV, p. 1247*n*d). Ultimately, all modern despotisms reach their perfection in the final form of modern government, which Tocqueville calls the soft or mild despotism. Interestingly, Tocqueville, also assumed that the faith in the "perfectibility of man" will progressively grow as humanity embarks on the path to soft despotism. However, it will not create a desire to perfect the features that make humans independent. It will promote characteristics that make them socially agreeable and economically successful. In the course of this modern perfection through a peculiar "domestication," the sovereign power, as Tocqueville notoriously puts it, "reduces each nation to being nothing more than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd" (DA IV, p. 1252).

As I have already mentioned, Tocqueville did not go as far as to envision eugenics or genetic engineering; for him soft-despotism was more of a political than an anthropological notion. However, the Tocquevillian inspired theorist of post-human history such as the Straussian Peter Lawler (2005) and the famous historicist Francis Fukuyama[28] (2002, p. 147) see a clear connection between soft-despotism and engineering human nature and note that such engineering, indeed, does not have to be the result of a direct coercion. As in Tocqueville's vision, humans may simply choose to instill certain features into their offspring based only on the opinions coming from the majority and gentle nudges coming from the authorities. The "timid animals" of the future are according to Tocqueville a product of a "network of small, complicated, minute, and uniform rules, which the most original minds and the most vigor-

[28] Fukuyama has a Straussian biography but in his mature works he clearly strayed away from the main current of the school.

ous souls cannot break through to go beyond the crowd; it does not break wills, but it softens them, bends them and directs them" (DA IV, p. 1252).[29]

In spite of his strong criticism of political modernity, Tocqueville is, however, adamant in his assertion that in order to slow down the march towards the soft despotism one may never try to simply reverse its course. In his vision of history, there is no return to the feudal liberty of aristocrats. Aristocratic institutions have to be substituted by something decidedly new. Tocqueville says, for instance, that the political associations of the USA "must take the place of the powerful individuals that equality of conditions has made disappear" (DA III, p. 901). He, therefore, describes political associations as modern, collective aristocrats, who would keep the new despotism in check. Nevertheless, the risk (albeit smaller) of arriving at despotism exists also in a democratic republic established on a solid foundation of local liberties and free associations. Therefore, the general revolutionary process leading to soft despotism may be slowed down or paused, but not definitively terminated. As a result, the general Tocquevillian model of political change is a vicious spiral in which the social power – tantamount to Rousseau's general will constantly increases and constantly threatens liberty.

As I have already noted, soft despotism is the final point of Tocqueville's spiral of modern regimes; along with the democratic republic, the administrative and the military despotism we thus arrive at five regimes that constitute the modern spectrum of democratic forms of government.[30] Out of those, only the republic, however, manages to preserve some liberties, hence Tocqueville's cautious praise of America and England, which mixes old symbols with modern republicanism. The old regimes that preceded the great democratic revolution are all located closer to the aristocratic extreme on the democracy-aristocracy social continuum. However, not all old regimes are equally aristocratic. Tocqueville differentiates three main types: aristocratic republics (e.g. Classical Athens), medieval monarchies (with their local governments);[31] and early modern absolutisms (e.g. *Ancien Régime*). Absolutisms significantly differ from the remaining two old regimes; in social terms they are the most decadent, proto-democratic political form of aristocracy and, according to

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[29] In a crossed out, unpublished passage he, however, notes that "in certain moments of great passions and great dangers, the sovereign power becomes suddenly violent and arbitrary. Habitually it is moderate, benevolent, regular and humane" (ibid.).

[30] Compare James T. Schleifer (2000, pp. 241-305). Schleifer also mentions the tyranny of majority. It is, however, more of a process than a regime.

[31] Both feudal states and aristocratic republics, according to Tocqueville seem to be equally aristocratic.

Tocqueville in Europe they serve as aristocracies' undertakers. Absolutism is also the least liberal old regime. The overall Tocquevillian typology of regimes is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Tocqueville's Typology of Regimes

Regimes	**Despotic**	**Liberal**
Democratic	– administrative despotisms; – military despotisms; – soft despotism (the ultimate form into which the previous two evolve);	– democratic epublics (e.g. USA); – "republican" monarchies (in Great Britain);
Aristocratic	– absolutims; – "Asiatic" despotisms;	– feudal monarchies, (with old townships, parishes etc.); – aristocratic republics (e.g. Athens).

Tocqueville's Paradigmatic Revolutions and Polybian Moments

My analysis of Tocqueville's theory of history left one more crucial issue unanswered. It might be still unclear whether Tocqueville, while constructing his theory of history, managed to avoid the dual trap of ending history and constructing a deterministic closed model. As far as his method is concerned, Tocqueville, as Eduardo Nolla observed, "does not like philosophy" (DA, Editors Preface, p. cxxi) and in a letter to Stoffels calls it the "essence of gibberish" (quoted ibid.). Naturally, elsewhere in DA, Tocqueville praises the philosophic contemplation (DA III, pp. 775-779). What he seems to fear, however, is that in modern societies philosophy will be divorced from the rapidly developing practical sciences and as a result both will take on new, savage forms. He vividly paints the Scylla of the practical sciences eagerly developed by "industrious animals" (DA IV, p. 1252) and the Charybdis of general ideas which enchant democratic historians and politicians turning them into "real madmen" (R, p. 122). Eduardo Nolla connects these two threats with historical periods that will "pass from the total predominance of action, which is characteristic of barbaric peoples who know only the practice of politics, to the triumph of theory separated from all forms of practice" (DA, Editor's Introduction, p. cxxv). However, Tocqueville himself does not indicate any such periodization; on the contrary, he seems to suggest that both tendencies will coexist at the same time within the same society. In

Tocqueville's thought, both the dehumanized technology that turns men into machines and the yearning for one great theory capable of explaining all the elements of social that reinforce each other, leading to a situation in which political theories are at once less constrained by common rationality and more able to affect reality with the technological tools left at their disposal.

This passivity of modern men in service of general ideas could, however, be justified and indeed salutary if there truly existed one definite theory explaining the nature of human societies and the mechanics of human history. This end-goal of political science would finally put an end to philosophizing about politics, which as Tocqueville admits is "a voluntary torment man inflicts upon himself" (quoted as in DA, Editors preface, p. cxxi). Indeed, such a theory would end political history, and in accordance with Kojéve's observations we would be left with a choice between returning to the state of nature and becoming innocent savages occupied with their everyday pleasures or turning into snobs who busy themselves with formulaic exercises in order to gain a fleeing sensation of the bygone era in which ideas and judgments still mattered (Kojéve 1969, pp. 161-162). Tocqueville, however, clearly rejects the very possibility of the existence of the ultimate theory of politics and blatantly exorcises the Hegelian *Geist* from history by writing that:

> There is no man in the world who has ever found, and it is nearly certain that none will ever be met who will find the central ending point for, I am not saying all the beams of general truth, which are united only in God alone, but even for all the beams of a particular truth. Men grasp fragments of truth, but never truth itself. This admitted, the result would be that every man who presents a complete and absolute system, by the sole fact that his system is complete and absolute, is almost certainly in a state of error or falsehood, and that every man who wants to impose such a system on his fellows by force must *ipso facto* and without preliminary examination of his ideas be considered as a tyrant and enemy of the human species. (DA III, p. 715*n*f)

Eduardo Nolla comments on the above fragment by saying:

> If absolute truth existed, the constant, complex interconnections of the elements of the motor of history would cease. The consequence of this provisional nature of all intellectual study is doubt, which Tocqueville considers characteristic of man and in particular philosophy. (DA, "Editor's Preface," p. cxxii)

Reference to God as the truly ahistorical mind that grasps all truths and thus moves beyond history naturally brings Tocqueville close to Bossuet's (see Bonald 2004, pp. 43-71) or Pascal's providentialism. However, one does not

need to make a direct reference to God to think about history of politics in terms of probabilistic models. In a letter to Stoffels Tocqueville for instance writes:

> I ended by convincing myself that the search for absolute, *demonstrable* truth, like the search for perfect happiness, was an effort toward the impossible. Not that there are no such truths that merit the entire conviction of man, but be assured they are very few in number. For the immense majority of points that are important for us to know, we have only probabilities, only approximations. To despair about this is to despair about being a man; for that is one of the most inflexible laws of nature. (DA, quoted in Editor's Introduction, p. cxxiii)

Interestingly, Tocqueville's methodological insights resonate extremely well with the methodological trends that became prominent in political science fairly recently, that is after 1990 and resonate very poorly with the methodological trends that reigned the field of both descriptive political science and political theory for over a century that immediately followed Tocqueville's lifetime. Of course, the waning of academic Marxism following the fall of the Berlin Wall was what immediately preceded the Tocquevillian revival in political philosophy; but at the same time a deeper methodological shift had already been slowly taking place in all social sciences. Marx, after all, came from a great school of thinkers who were convinced that it is possible to achieve a law-like level of certainty in studying human societies and thus predict their future development with near certainty, or at any rate avoiding the explicit use of probabilities. Over twenty years ago, however, this dominance of the Comtean positivistic paradigm in academia ended, and even the descriptive, analytical social sciences were ready to return to the more commonsensical, probabilistic approach; to do so, they however, needed more than Tocquevillian intuition or Aristotelian prudence. Descriptive social sciences had by that time amassed gigabytes (and later terabytes) of very specific data the scientists could analyze only with models phrased in an unambiguous formal language rather than with discursively formulated hypotheses.

Fortunately, for descriptive political science math itself turned out to be less "mathematical" than Comte suspected and provided statisticians, sociologists and political scientists with formal models that instead of creating universal, positivistic laws of social life gave the researchers an ability to formulate useful "approximations" of the trends present in different societies. At the same time, the new way of looking at politics provided the politicians and social activists with a better knowledge of the outer limits of what Tocqueville calls a "fatal circle out of which [they] cannot go" and thus made them understand how to effectively make the differences they can make.

In a way, the social sciences took a step back and rather than follow the spirit of Durkheim, Comte and Marx returned to some of the methods proposed by Tocqeuville. Unfortunately, although Tocqueville was praised for his insightful prediction, he rarely received the deserved credit for his methodological innovativeness. One of the few works that attempted to change this was a breakthrough study of Tocqueville's methodology by Saguiv A. Hadari (1989). Sadly, Hadari passed away at a young age, shortly after receiving his Ph.D. from Stanford and his research program was not continued, nor did it receive the full recognition it deserved.

Hadari's work is of course still partly enshrouded in the old paradigm of the positivistic social science, however, it tries to break free from its confines and at the same time avoid plunging into an obscure jargon or presenting mathematical formulas without any discursive comment. What Hadari sets out to do is to find a pioneer of formal modeling in political science, who is free from the prejudices of modern scientism and progressivism. The profound discovery Hadari made was that Tocqueville is the only widely recognized thinker whose political science demonstrably worked thanks to probabilistic thinking and whose models predated the contemporary formal modeling and avoided its unnecessary jargon.

Hadari justifies the importance of reviving some of Tocqueville's methods by claiming that political science cannot confine itself in the extremely complex formal languages, since it deals with political reality of human life and as such needs to provide results that can be understood, recognized as significant and translated into the language of normal politics. As Hadari notes, "beyond a certain threshold in the system studied precision and significance become almost mutually exclusive." One of the great advantages of Tocqueville's science of politics is that its "methodological discourse" does not adopt a stance of "superiority towards practice" (ibid., p. 33). In other words, rather than assuming that facts will always eventually conform with the philosophically established ideas, Tocqueville mines the facts for models that will provide the researcher with a range of probabilities, that history can ultimately put to the test. The applicability of his models as Tocqueville himself admits has, however, a limited lifespan that is measured by the coming and going of the "great revolutions" that enable "new worlds" to appear and thus necessitate "new political sciences" (DA I, pp. 6-16). And unfortunately the beginning of those revolutions is shrouded behind the veil of ignorance similar to the one present in the Rawlsian (2003) "original position."[32]

[32] I am, however, speaking of a historical and not a hypothetical phenomenon.

How does Tocqueville arrive at his models without being a seer, one might ask? The answer is fairly simple. Tocqueville never writes about the exact form of great revolutions that are to come, he only describes the revolution that with his words "is taking place" (DA I, pp. 6-16) and the two historically recent events that he treats as his main case studies, i.e. the French revolution and the rise of the American republic. It is thus little wonder that, as Lucien Jaume notes, Tocqueville was not as original as one would expect. On the contrary, he "continually reworked themes that were circulating in the political, religious, and literary culture of his time yet drew from those themes a work that overshadowed much of the writing of his contemporaries and that stands with that of the best of them…" (Jaume 2008, p. 8). Indeed, Tocqueville quite frankly admits that his originality does not rest in the fact that he saw the changes that "everyone sees" (DA I, p. 6) but in judging them better and using a perspective that later would be very hard to obtain.

Saguiv Hadari, however, notes that the Tocquevillian vision of the development of political science in incoherent, such sudden jumps are very much in line with Max Weber's observation that "there are sciences to which eternal youth is granted, and the historical disciplines are among them – all those to which the eternally onward flowing stream of culture perpetually brings new problems" (quoted in Hadari 1989, p. 55). At the same time, we must remember that, as I have noted in the previous chapter, for Tocqueville, actual revolutions cannot be separate from the revolutions in the perception of science, history and politics. All actors who engage in politics do so based on certain general theories about the main political dilemmas they face and thus all relevant political actors and in democracies, indeed, the whole societies are to a certain extent engaged in the science of politics. Hence Tocquveille's constant admonitions to prepare various nations for the advent of democracy by educating them in "the schools of local liberties" (DA III, p. 914). Democracy for Tocqueville is, as I have established in the previous chapter, a perception of what we want social life to become, rather than a description of what it actually is. Therefore, de Tocqueville's notion of "great revolutions" anticipates not only Weber's insights but also the concept of paradigm shifting scientific revolutions developed by Thomas S. Kuhn (1996/1962).

The Tocquevillian element in Kuhn rests in his observation that the vision of a linear, cumulative development of natural sciences, as opposed to historical sciences, is a misperception. The error results from the fact that students of natural sciences pay little attention to studying the history of their disciplines. As Kuhn puts it:

> In history, philosophy, and the social sciences, textbook literature has a greater significance. But even in these fields the elementary college course includes parallel readings in original sources, some of them the "classics" of the field, other the contemporary research reports that practitioners write to each other. As a result, the student in any one of these disciplines is constantly made aware of the immense variety of problems that the members of his future group have, in the course of time, attempted to solve…
>
> Contrast this situation with that in, at least contemporary, natural sciences. In these fields the student relies mainly on textbooks until, in his third or fourth year of graduate work, he begins his own research. (Kuhn 1996/1962, p. 165)

Kuhn later proceeds to challenge Weber's claim and show that in fact the development of natural sciences and humanities is far more similar than one might expect. Most strikingly, however, although Kuhn retains the belief in evolutionary progress of science, which Tocqueville abandons, in general terms the similarities between his theory of great revolutions in science and Tocqueville's theory of the great revolutions in history is more than clear. Kuhn, for instance, writes about the "normal science" that accumulates evidence supporting a given paradigm and at the same time also slowly gathers small inconsistencies. When the weight of inconsistencies within the old paradigm becomes too apparent for it to hold, the time is ripe for paradigm shifting research conducted by an individual or a group whose work will "include law, theory, application, and instrumentation together" and thus "provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions" (ibid., p. 10). Tocqueville describes the historical development of democracy and his mission as a social scientists in almost identical terms. On the one hand, he notes that "for seven hundred years there is not a single event among Christians[33] that would not turn to the profit of democracy" (DA, p. 10), which resonates with the Kuhnian notion of the slow build-up of minor cracks on the surface of the old aristocratic paradigm. On the other hand, Tocqueville makes no secret of the fact that only recently "everyone" (DA I, p. 6) saw the great revolution which he now describes. Only in this rare moment when the old paradigm of thinking about the society no longer holds and the new one is still underdeveloped does Tocqueville's new science step in and along with the ideas of other more or less talented authors immensely contributes to finalizing the paradigm shift. At the same time the Kuhnian logic explains why, although, humans may harbor

[33] As noted earlier, Tocqueville writes about the history of Christian nations as the history, which he knows best. However, elsewhere, he noted that the democratic revolution is by no means limited exclusively to societies with a Christian tradition (see Chapter 5).

hopes of progress or fears of decline, ultimately, one can only see the future as far as it is permitted by the current paradigm and its major contenders. The future paradigms remain a mystery while the new one are still young because the normal science has not yet amassed evidence to challenge them. On rare occasions when a paradigm shift does occur certain minds can peek into the relatively near future but they can never conceive a complete theory of progress in terms other than purely wishful thinking.

It seems that progress for Kuhn occurs only with reference to the range of different phenomena a paradigm can explain or otherwise account for. Tocqueville is even more pessimistic, especially about social sciences, which are his main area of interest, he assumes that focusing on certain aspects of political life and human nature always creates a partial blindness to others. Hence, he bemoans that there will be no more "Pascals" in democratic societies (see the previous chapter). Perhaps Tocqueville's pessimism stems from the fact that he treats human liberty as an immanently positive quality that, however, cannot be progressively increased without disturbing certain social equilibria.

To the chagrin of his extremely conservative and the extremely progressive readers Tocqueville never conclusively settles the philosophical issue of human nature or the ultimate human good. At the same time he, however, insists on one immanently positive quality that not so much brings happiness to humans as enables them to return to their nature; it makes them organic beings or God's creatures as opposed to "industrious animals." Tocqueville calls this quality "liberty." The strange nature of liberty in Tocqueville's thought is, however, such that it cannot be mechanically produced and increased indiscriminately in all spheres of life at the same time. It can, however, be indiscriminately reduced. For instance, increasing individual liberty in the family life and within local communities may mean that the central state will have to be more coercive in establishing political order; and vice versa. At the same time a state we would now call totalitarian can reduce liberties both at the local and the central level of social life. That is why Tocqueville dismissed Whig historicism and sees no liberal progress. Instead in his works he assumes the existence of the three equilibria of liberty: 1) personal liberty versus the liberty of associations, churches, families and local communities; 2) great liberty of the few versus the small liberties of the many and, 3) liberty[34] from the influence of other humans versus the liberty from the influence of natural phenomena.

[34] Just like Tocqueville I assume that liberty and freedom are synonymous.

Regarding the first equilibrium Tocqueville observes that in modern democracies individualism has to be tempered by local communities but at the same time the tyranny of families and associations and localities can produce the type of a fundamentally inhuman, slavery-based society Tocqueville sees in the South of the USA and very much despises.

With reference to the second equilibrium, Tocqueville assumes that a society either has a small number of aristocrats whose actions are limited by few economic and legal factors or it preserves a number of "smaller" liberties of the members the middle class. They, in turn need to form an association in order to achieve the same amount of liberty that previously was the privilege of an aristocrat (see DA III, p. 901) but in order to form associations the individual liberties need to be diminished.

As for the third equilibrium, Tocqueville, as all modern political thinkers, assumes that the aim of technological progress is to free human beings from the despotic reign of the natural phenomena. But at the same time the development of industry, as Tocqueville observes, also gives many opportunities for greater control and greater centralization of power.[35]

It all the case of all three equilibria losing the balance means that citizens will lose some of the ability to influence political power they otherwise could have had. Perfect balance is, however, impossible and various polities in different times differ both in the scope of imbalance and in types of imbalance they are more willing to accept. An overall, progressive increase in liberty, where all humans would become beings that are similar to the twelve Olympians for Tocqueville is simply not an option. Needless to say that those equlibria of liberty are as close as Tocqueville comes to creating his own theory of the political nature of human beings and they form the axiomatic framework for all possible regimes and their historical changes.

One more question, however, remains unanswered. What circumstances led Tocqueville to a conclusion that the paradigm shift in the study of revolutions and regime cycles was necessary? It would seem trivial to remark that paradigm shifters are not supernatural beings; they are merely extremely gifted researchers who happen to have the opportunity and the resources to write and publish the right works at the right time. This simplistic conclusion, however, seems not very far from the truth. As for the time, one might venture to only very vaguely characterize the moments of history when it offers the student of politics an opportunity to see the new paradigm with clarity that will not be granted to the future generation toiling in the ordinary science.

[35] See the previous chapter for details.

Indeed determinism so typical of, for instance, mature Marxism is a typical ailment of "normal" science that becomes unconscious of its own origin. In response to Kuhn one must remark that even if philosophers and historians still read classical texts, very often they interpret them in a quite uniform and paradigmatic way up until some great events force them to change their perspective.

The first Western political science was of course that of the Greek polis and it did not have a predecessor in the existing written records. From the point of view of the development of the science of politics, Plato and Aristotle were thus not so much ahistorical as ante-historical. Human nature, of course, did not change considerably since that time, but as Pierre Manent (2010) observed the city went through several metamorphoses. Those metamorphoses are, however, confusing to those who witness them in their adulthood and become obvious for those are born long after they occurred. It seems that political change is best visible to the generations that come early enough to feel it but not so late as to take it for granted. Tocqueville writes, for instance, that since the democratic majority rests "in perpetual self-adoration…, only foreigners and experience can bring certain truths to the ears of Americans" (DA II, p. 419).

If Tocqueville in the above passage speaks about himself one has to, however, wonder what kind of foreigners does he actually mean given that he writes about America as a case study of democracy in general and elsewhere admits that he "did not write a page [of DA] without thinking of France" (quoted in Jaume 2008, p. 174). Perhaps Tocqueville suggests that to write well about democracy and democratic opinions one needs to be at least in part an intellectual foreigner? In the same sense Kuhn would agree that once a paradigm becomes established, it becomes the invisible, default mode of thinking for those who produce normal science within it. It is only the creator or the creators of the paradigm that see it in its full glory precisely because it differs so greatly from what not so long ago was universally accepted in their milieu.

Understanding the paradigm shifters as they understood themselves, once the new paradigm (they helped to create) comfortably sets in, becomes difficult, if not impossible. The originality of the thought of the previous paradigmatic thinkers to a certain extent becomes more visible only as their paradigm begins to age and decompose. Perhaps that is why it is now a good moment to reread Tocqueville. After so many of his predictions became corroborated by history, we finally see Tocqueville's democratic science of politics both in full glory and in its waning. As Paul Rahe notes, "liberal's democracy's

sudden and unexpected achievement of seemingly unchallenged hegemony" was greeted with "at best a cautious optimism and at the worst a sense of resignation" (2009, pp. xi-xii). The resignation Rahe speaks of is simply an early sign of the appearance of a different approach to politics and focusing on different issues. As to the next great revolution, Tocqueville was, however, also the first to express a fear that this time the period of resignation may be prolonged and the political mind, as well as political aspiration, may be ultimately imprisoned in ennui mixed with self-satisfaction and the dangerous illusion of the end of history. Thus Tocqueville described the preoccupation of the ordinary politicians and "normal" political science with the following words:

> I do not think that men who live in democratic societies are naturally immobile, I think on the contrary, that within such a society eternal movement reigns and that no one knows rest; but I believe that men there become agitated within certain limits beyond which they hardly ever go. They vary, alter, or renew secondary things every day; they take great care not to touch principal ones. (DA IV, p. 1140)

He also expresses his fears that a very long time may elapse before the new paradigm of thinking about politics will emerge:

> You [it is said, Fr. *On croit*] believe the new societies will change face every day, and as for me, I fear that they will end by being too invariably fixed in the same institutions, the same prejudices, the same *mores*; so that humanity comes to a stop and becomes limited; that the mind eternally turns back on itself without producing new ideas; that man becomes exhausted in small solitary and sterile movements, and that, even while constantly moving, humanity no longer advances. (DA IV, p. 1151)

The title of the chapter from which the above quote comes reads: "Why Great Revolutions will become rare" (DA IV, p. 1133); interestingly, however, in spite of his fears, Tocqueville does not preclude the possibility of new, great, paradigmatic revolutions. Polybius, who similarly to Tocqueville was in his time an old-world aristocrat who witnessed the birth of a new type of republic (and created an astonishing treatise inspired by this experience), wrote that "just as rust eats away iron, and woodworm or shipworm eats away timber, and these substances even if they escape any external damage are destroyed by the processes which are generated within themselves, so each constitution processes its own inescapable vice" (Polybius 1979, p. 310). If this observation is true, there is already a post-democratic or at the very least

post-liberal-democratic society in the making. Of course, given the rareness of what Tocqueville calls "great revolutions" it is still too early to adumbrate its shape. One may, however, venture to make certain educated guesses based on the problem we see. In the same way physicists can often easily describe the paradoxes a new theory has to solve, well before the solutions appears. In the same vein the famous *Times* article which in 1894 predicted that in 50 years the street of London would be covered in nine feet of horse-manure (see Davies 2004) could have suggested to an innovative mind that with all probability some new, more efficient method of transportation will soon appear.

As far as non-democratic regimes are concerned, the so-called authoritarian and totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century on closer inspection turned out to be just the extremely pernicious forms of the one and same phenomenon to which de Tocqueville gave the name "democracy." At the philosophical level, even Nietzsche's vociferously anti-democratic thought did not move beyond stylized fairy tales in its description of the post-democratic future. Similarly, Marx's visions of the ultimate form of socialism were all notoriously vague. Therefore, it would be a mistake to claim that then 20th century totalitarian and authoritarian ideologies are a true philosophical alternative to democracy. If a post-democratic society is to emerge, it would have to resemble what Tocqueville calls "aristocracy"[36], and at the same time logically follow from what we accept as modern democracy. For instance, it is not inconceivable that the democratic urge for infinite perfectibility will ultimately be able to gain a near-perfect mastery over human biological nature. Naturally, such a bio-revolution would realize the ultimate postulate of the democratic revolution in general; that is to eradicate all accidental and therefore "unjust" differences in social status.

The old democracy did swiftly away with the aristocracies of convention, the future one could go further and finally do away with aristocracy of nature. The very same change may, however, also give birth to a newly manufactured post-human class of *aristoi* that unlike the old aristocratic classes will be able to truly select both its nature and nurture and thus separate itself from the rest of humanity as a different species. All those things are, however, for now merely conjectures, since according to Tocqueville's own theory a new paradigm can be described only after the great revolution that creates them has already taken place. The smaller revolutions naturally also constitute crucial elements of Tocqueville's model, but the great one is the single cause that enables all the motion.

[36] For a discussion of Tocqueville's industrial aristocracy see (DA III, 985).

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The above examination seems to suggest that Tocqueville's insights on the theory of history make him one of the most important authors contributing to creating new paradigms in political science. His general theoretical model owes its unique flexibility and predictive power to describing revolution both as a development and a cycle and thus finding a middle ground between the two great theories of revolutionary change in politics. That is also why, contrary to the initial assertion of the anti-historicistic Straussian school of interpretation of Tocqueville's political philosophy, Tocqueville did have a grand theory of history and the development of political thought. Nevertheless, contrary to the historicist description, Tocqueville's vision was not deterministic. Determinism is typically an ailment of what Kuhn calls "normal science," a science that cannot see past the paradigm in which it is submerged, a science that forbids the researchers to even imagine an alternative. In this context, Tocqueville indeed seems to be one of the most important paradigm shifters in political science.

Chapter 3

Tocqueville and Modern Revolutionary Studies

As I have observed in the previous chapter, political philosophy no longer adheres to the once influential Marxian revolutionary theory. This work argues that over time, especially the theories of another XIX century thinker –Tocqueville have proven to be remarkably perceptive and endowed with immense predictive power, especially when it comes to the description of revolutions. Tocqueville owes the popularity of his theories on revolution among contemporary students of politics to three aspects of his thought. Firstly, he bases his theses on a combination of empirically recorded history and philosophy proper rather than just on deductively devised theories. Secondly, Tocqueville explicitly refuses to construct a closed system where all philosophical phenomena are ultimately reduced to a single cause and all conclusions follow from axiomatic assumptions. Thirdly, Tocqueville neither demonized revolutions, nor glorified them, although, in general he saw those phenomena as tragic failures of politics in changing societies.

Tocqueville and the Modern Explanations of Revolutions

Tocqueville is now quoted by students of revolution of almost all hues. He, however, remains more important for some researchers than for others. One of the first major non-Marxian theories of revolution derived from Tocqueville's DA and AR is that of the James Davies who stresses that "revolutions are most likely to occur when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a period of sharp reversal" (Davies 1962,

p. 6). This phenomenon is also described by Jon Elster who claims that "in the social sciences, 'the Tocqueville paradox' refers to the idea that subjective discontent (and hence the likelihood of revolution) and objective grounds for discontent may be inversely related to each other" (2006, p. 58). And although Davies claims that his theories are derived from both Marx and Tocqueville, the quotations from Tocqueville are far more precise and conspicuous.

Tocqueville in AR argued that the absolutist regime replaced the local elites and intermediary institutions with centralized administration and this process resulted in a proto-democratic preponderance of central authorities. Power, however, is bought at the price of increased responsibility, and therein the J-curve[1] mechanism of democratic revolution becomes apparent. As the central government becomes omnipotent, it also becomes ultimately responsible for all social affairs (AR, pp. 71-80). Thus, when minor setbacks occur the society immediately turns against the government. Davies himself, however, veers into the psychological reading of Tocqueville and ascribes the revolutionary mechanism to the universal features of human character, noting that we become easily accustomed to improving standards or liberty and more demanding as the quality of life increases.

Tocqueville, however, does not simply state that economic advancement causes revolution. Firstly, the advancement needs to be fairly rapid and sped up by economic growth. Tocqueville notes the following:

> The number of factories, workshops and blast furnaces had multiplied so rapidly in Paris as the Revolution drew near that, in the end, the government grew alarmed. The sight of this increase filled its mind with purely imaginary fears. One particular council decree of 1782 carried the that 'the King, fearing that the rapid increase of factories might result in a use of wood which would damage town supplies, henceforth forbids the erection of such establishments within a radius of fifteen leagues around the city'. (AR, p. 84)

Secondly, the newly affluent society needs to encounter a set of clientalist social networks that stifle its activities but do not prevent its economic progress. This constitutes another Tocquevillian paradox; as the new elites raise their heads, the old ones insist more and more on the traditional and conventional divisions since they are the only real source of their declining

[1] The term comes from a famous shape of the graph that shows the economic advancement of citizens over time. According to the theorem, a "J" shaped pattern is indicative of a possible revolution. The pattern occurs when a long period of economic advancement is followed by a sharp but relatively shallow downfall of in affluence. Such a temporary slump is not enough to materially deprive the society, but just enough to anger it.

power. The French thinker first observes that the economic advancement indeed equalized the French society since "seemingly all men living, there especially those occupying the middle and higher ranks of society – the only two ones which could be observed – resembled each other exactly" (AR, p. 85). However, "on the other hand, within this uniform crowd there was still an extraordinary collection of minor barriers which split it up into a large number of groups within each of which there existed, as it were, a particular social group that was involved with only its own concerns while not taking part in the life of the whole community" (ibid.).

Thirdly, the conflict is exacerbated if the old elites are losing their factual status while retaining most of their formal privileges. Tocqueville is amply clear about the fact that as French noblemen "gradually grew poor" they started ceding their "land, piece by piece, to the peasant farmers, retaining for himself only his manorial dues which maintained the appearance rather than reality of his former status" (AR, p. 87). At the same time, "the instinct of government slipped away from them [the nobles]" (ibid) and the absolutist intendants have circumvented the former prerogatives of feudal lords. Now the aristocrats were locked in the cage of their own privileges. Being himself an aristocrat, Tocqueville is naturally not as critical of the French nobles as he could have been. However, using Mancur Olson's terminology (1982), one can easily observe that French aristocrats during the reign of Louis XVI actually fell below the status of "stationary bandits" or common gangsters since they collected the "protection money" without offering any substantial protection services. The only real protection that was available was provided by the king and his clerks (mostly of modest background).

Generally, the peasants were prepared to continue to pay the *taille* –a tax levied on non-nobles as they did in the past. Interestingly, however, Tocqueville finds the cities and especially Paris at the same time most opposed to *taille* and least likely to pay in full. As he notes "the urban middle class as a group had a thousand ways of reducing the burden of the *taille* and often of escaping it altogether" (AR, p. 97). It is, however, precisely the fact that the privileges were not attached to any real power that was so irritating. According to Tocqueville, in the feudal past:

> …the nobles possessed annoying privileges, enjoyed rights that people found irksome but they safeguarded the public order, dispensed justice, had the law upheld, came to the help of the weak and directed public business. As the nobility ceased to conduct those affairs, the weight of its privileges seemed more and more burdensome and its very existence was, in the end, no longer understandable. (AR, p. 44)

Thus, the history of certain type of nobility comes to an end. Olson described, how the roaming bandits become stationary bandits; Tocqueville described how their descendants became "melancholic" bandits and were eventually swept away by the social forces they themselves unleashed but could no longer control. Interestingly, having only their family traditions and titles left untouched by the economic changes, made the nobles cling to those the more desperately and thus with each generation become more and more separated from the persons of non-noble birth.

The Olsonian analogy goes even further. Although the real power rested with the king, the absolutist state was still not locked in the "iron cage" of professional bureaucracy. On the contrary, it retained a lot of the characteristics of a clientalist structure. Aristocracy was only one of the clients of the court; other included guilds, corporations, and various coteries. All of those bodies were vertically structured and seeking to effectively block all the ambitions of young, educated but not well connected persons. As Tocqueville notes in his descriptions of guilds, "the right to work was tantamount to a privilege which the king could sell" (AR, p. 108); as a consequence each guild became "a small closed aristocracy and finally we saw the creation of those monopolies so damaging to any progress in the skilled professions" (ibid.).

The description of this system of patronage and the new middle class that opposed it bears a striking resemblance to Michael Mousseau's (2002) account of the clash between the meritocratic, contract-based market society and the traditional, clientalist community. In Moussau's terms, the various "small aristocracies" and their clients were the main in-groups. Their power was based mainly on a set of allegiances, traditional ties and rituals. According to this approach, the in-group/out-group conflict is one of the main mechanisms behind some of the most violent processes in history. In one of his most well-known articles, Mousseau uses this theory to explain Islamic terrorism in which the former members of a traditional in-group rebel against the new, impersonal, market-society. The same theory can explain modern revolutions; some of them can be described as rebellion of neo-aristocrats who reject market society (the Russian revolution, the Chinese revolution, the Iranian revolution) and some as rebellions of out-groups that favor transparence and economic freedom (the beginning of the French revolution, the American revolution and the initial phase of the Arab Spring).[2]

Of course, Tocqueville would add that the rule of law necessary for conducting exchanges based on voluntary contracts, is predicated on under-

[2] See (Mousseau 2002b).

standing how to exercise ones freedom, which in neither a short, nor an easy process. The legacy of centralization and corruption, (which is essentially a word market cultures' use for "normal" clientalist relations) can be therefore expected to be extremely prevalent. Hence consecutive French governments were so quick to become surrounded by new interest groups and thus continually kept inciting new revolutions. Scarcely had the flamboyant Napoleonic era ended, and Stendhal in his *The Red and the Black* (2002) was once again obliged to bemoan rise of a new set of "small aristocracies" that precluded social advancement based on work and merit. Needless to say that the West should have no illusions about the long march that the third world states are facing in their attempt to overcome clientelism. Indeed, it is Mousseau's conclusion that the best way to combat phenomena such as global terrorism is to provide some assistance to the states that find themselves in the difficult moment of transition from the clientalist society to the market economy.

The Weakness of the State and the Need to Overcome the Revolutionary Violence

Probably the weakest point in Tocqueville's model is the strange ambiguity in which he at the same time tries to praise the local feudal, organic community and criticize the particularism, corruption and clientelism of the absolutist regime. Clientelism is clearly something the old regime inherited from feudalism. Tocqueville, however, has a soft spot for feudal history; he, for instance, describes how feudal lords often became godfathers to the offspring of their tenants or how the nobles defended the liberties of their people, etc. However, just as in case of Marx, Tocqueville's political theory makes sense only if one assumes that feudalism is something that has to be rejected. And Tocqueville paints two possible types of such a rejection: the new despotism that increases the state control, and the new republicanism that tries to combine the rule of law with liberty (at least for a time being).

One explanation of Tocqueville's ambiguity about feudalism is to assume that in AR he uses the word "feudal" as a synonym to what he calls aristocracy in DA. And thus just as in DA, in AR he advocates for the preservation of some of the feudal/aristocratic virtues but at the same time desires to find for them a new form of articulation. And, if we are to adopt a Straussian interpretation, we may safely conclude that Tocqueville believes that political virtue is always aristocratic (in the Platonic sense).

Interestingly, however, according to Tocqueville, the problem of the old regime and of its last great men, such as the physiocrat Turgot or the lawyer Malesherbes, was precisely that it was too ambiguous in its understanding of what constitutes civic virtue. The meaning of the old symbols was lost and the new ones were not allowed to develop. The old township and parish became replaced by a rule of court statisticians rather than some new forms of local government. And because the future revolutionaries and the *philosophes*, according to Tocqueville, had usually no experience in governing even a hamlet, their rhetoric became their only skill and their only weapon. Hence the old regime was becoming dangerously despotic in its center but at the same time it was less and less able to penetrate the society. It also kept using and abusing the feudal symbols that carried little real power. Those symbols of power eventually became items left for sale, which further confused the society. The procedures of buying a title and then pretending to be a member of the closed aristocratic caste or entering the guild were more or less clear; but what one needs to do to become a minister or an intendant or a person responsible for a large governmental enterprise was a well-guarded secret one could learn only by trial and error.

According to Tocqueville, once the government had sold all the offices it could it was left both without that "endless, supply of favors, supports and honors and money" (AR, p. 114) and without the democratic legitimization. It was thus unable to tap into the human resources that can be freed only through political liberty and at the same time had nothing to offer to the hirelings. It is not without a reason that according to Tocqueville it is the destruction of political liberty and the separation of classes that ultimately weakened the French government. Let us for a moment return here to the discussion of the problem of democratic legitimization presented in Chapter 1. What Tocqueville seems to suggest is that the old regime's problem was that although it was already as centralized as a modern democratic state, it still did not find a suitable way to use the new, democratic form of legitimization. This constituted a major difference between the French court and the strikingly "republican" English monarchy. To put it bluntly, the French citizens interacted with the government only through curious practices that we would nowadays label as corruption and the government communicated with the citizens mainly through edicts.

Thus Tocqueville touches upon another paradox, the problem with the old regime was that it was both despotic and weak. Or to put it differently, it used its force to destroy active political life but could not maintain power due to its internal contradictions. Tocqueville aptly notes that when the monarchy

tried to gain popularity, it ran into debt and created a deeper dependency of the local authorities on the resources coming from Paris. Moreover, none of the government's prerogatives was "consistently acknowledged or established on a sturdy footing" (AR, p. 114). As a result, "its scope for action was extensive, but it still moved forward with hesitant steps, as in a dark, unknown place" (ibid.). To make matters worse, the administration "feeling that it was recently created and of low birth, was always hesitant in its approach if it should meet any obstacle in its path" (AR, p. 114). Thus the business of government became increasingly "complicated, cumbersome, slow and costly" (AR, p. 120).

The economic (debt) and political weakness (detachment from the society) of the government is another prerequisite for the revolution. Revolution is after all characterized by violence, and violence used for political purposes is in modern times monopolized[3] by the state. Therefore, in order for a revolution to take place, there must be a power vacuum within the state.

Tocqueville provides substantial support to the J-Curve psychologistic approach to revolutions. However, the above insights are also conducive to an interpretation in the tradition of power-struggle theories of revolution elaborated by such contemporary authors as Theda Skocpol (1980) and Charles Tilly (1973). Tilly, for instance, describes politics as strife between contending groups that form sub-polities within the large polity. In the contest between those factions the government is the ultimate prize. As for revolutions, according to Tilly:

> The multiplication of polities is the key. A revolution begins when a government previously under the control of a single, sovereign polity becomes the object of effective, competing, mutually exclusive claims from two or more separate polities. A revolution ends when a single polity – by no means necessarily the same one – regains control over the government. (1973, p. 439)

In other words revolutions are not sparked by the society's aspirations, but by the ruling elite's practice of limiting the access to the precious resource called "power." Of course, every government by definition limits access to power: thus, in accordance with Skocpol's expansion of Tilly's theory, government needs to be relatively weak if it gives in to contenders.

It seems that Tocqueville's original philosophy provides a connection between the psychological J-curve theory and the power-struggle theories

[3] This has been true already in the case of the French old regime that for instance outlawed duels (since 1626) and progressively decreased the amounts of weapons in private hands.

of Skocpol and Tilly. Tocqueville agrees that the first impulse is created by a temporal drawback, but at the same time stresses that in states like France, which are imperfectly centralized and absolutist, the revolution's aim is not to uproot the government but to increase its role. Based on Tocqueville's detailed account one may argue that the same mechanism occurred in Russia and China (primary focuses of Skocpol's study). In other words, in an absolutist state a particular revolutionary group wins precisely because it promises to create a government that is stronger, more oppressive and more decisive. Moreover, in the course of revolutionary civil war, the winning revolutionary faction usually has ample occasions to prove its determination, cruelty and ruthlessness.

According to Tocqueville, "the regime destroyed by the revolution is almost always better than the one that immediately preceded it and experience teaches us that the most hazardous moment for a bad government is normally when it is beginning to reform" (AR, p. 175). Therefore, an extremely sudden and profound political change can cause a shock that will lead to a reoccurrence and radicalization of the atavistically-despotic elements of the former regime. Eventually, new, post-revolutionary polities can simply „succeed in being more perfect tyrannies" (Fukuyama 2011, p. 286).

Goldstone (1982) agrees with Tocqueville and expands his theory of post-revolutionary government even to the American Revolution. As he writes, "it is widely agreed that full-scale revolutions, whether liberal or socialist, from the American colonies to the Chinese republic, have led to more centralized, more powerful governments than had existed under the old regime" (ibid., p. 201). One may, naturally, argue that the level of violence and terror in the course of a revolution varies, but it is never smaller than the prerevolutionary. Similarly, the overall size of government almost always increases after a revolution.

One should cast aside the romantic myth of liberalizing revolutions for at least one additional reason. There is no evidence that mass revolutions lead to democracy, and there is some evidence that points to the contrary. Indeed, according to Adam Przeworski (1991) democratization (in the normal sense) seems to be more of a revolution-avoidance strategy, in which the old regime strikes a deal with the moderate opposition, than an outcome a mass uprising that usually marks a failure of any negotiations.

Tocqueville also seems to suggest that democratization (understood as the creation of a democratic republic) in France did not occur in the wake of a revolution but as a slow, gradual process. In Russia and China, full democratization did not occur at all. America, on the other hand, was already

locally democratic before the war of independence. Moreover, American elites consciously limited the revolutionary upheaval[4] and later prudently saw to it that the Tories, many of whom were initially supporters the former regime, were not automatically excluded from all political processes. In spite of those historical evidence, many thinkers still cherish a very romantic myth of the masses tossing away the yoke of tyranny, which, indeed, remains one of the most resilient influences of the Marxian vision of modern history. Tocqueville, on the other hand, clearly proposes a more somber and realistic approach to revolutions that allows his students to see both the opportunities and the costs of all revolutionary actions. This view is for instance supported by Zimmerman (1990), who, while believing that the French revolution was relatively liberalizing in general, adheres to Tocquevillian realism and dutifully quotes him on that (ibid., p. 42). Among the most common results of revolution Zimmerman lists economic crisis (ibid., p. 38), violence, oppression and very rarely democracy and liberalization

A valid question that may arise, however, is how, do we account for the huge democratizing shift of 1989? For the author of this work as for Jeff Goodwin (1994) and Jadwiga Staniszkis (1991), the crucial observation is that this was not a typical mass revolution. One might actually argue that in comparison to the old revolutions in France, Russia and China, the changes of 1989 were revolutions avoided rather than executed. They were clearly less violent (Goodwin 1994, p. 591) and resulted from a pact between the old regime and the opposition (ibid., p. 592). One might also add that they empowered civil society rather than the state. A possible explanation for this is, however, that the state in many of the central European cases was a force representing the interests of the Kremlin elites. This hypothesis is corroborated by the fact that, in Russia itself the collapse of communism consisted mainly in a reshuffle of elites and a revision of economic policies without any lasting democratization.[5] What followed 1989 in Russia was a period of near anarchy and more recently an effort to rebuild the authoritarian and imperial power. Goodwin; also stresses that since the whole social hierarchy in the Central European regimes was tied to a central government; the social change did not turn against society itself but focused solely on negotiating with

[4] Let us not forget that even the founding fathers' and Benjamin Franklin's preference was initially to negotiate with the British government or at least have an amicable divorce, war was a painful and expensive alternative for both sides.

[5] According to recent research of the Freedom House, immediately after the Russian state started rebuilding its temporarily lost administrative strength, it became more authoritarian, see Freedom House (2013).

the government. This naturally led to the privatization of the *nomenklatura* and a compromise that at first glance seemed quite rotten to the radical opposition.[6]

Generally, the path to democracy and capitalism in Central and Eastern Europe only further confirmed the Tocquevillian concept of the gradual unfolding of all substantive social changes. When the post-soviet states were freed from the influence of Moscow, most of them simply returned to where they found themselves politically prior 1945. Poland again became a democratic republic that is somewhat marred by the old specter of authoritarian rule. Czech, Slovaks and the Baltic States also returned to their republicanism. Bielarus and Eastern Ukraine, on the other hand, continued to cling to Russia not being able to find their own identity, which is exactly the same political problem they had before the war. Finally, the central Asian states again became sultanic autocracies.

It would also seem that addressing the doubts concerning the truthfulness of Tocqueville's account one must examine the Tocquevillian theory of the expansion of government in its full perspective. Although sudden, extremely steep hikes of administrative power in a given area, like those produced by totalitarian regimes and political communism are bound to be relatively quickly corrected, the overall global trend is, indeed, clearly visible. Centralization, concentration and the penetrative abilities of administrative power increase over time in most corners of the earth.

The New Tocquevillian Dark Ages?

In the final section of the final content chapter of this work, I would like to return to the question whether Tocqueville saw something even newer looming beyond the great democratic revolution? Firstly, however, we must focus on one more paradox. In spite of, all his criticism of the French revolution, Tocqueville feared, as we have already noted, that revolutions with time will become rare. Moreover, there are things for which Tocqueville cautiously praises the revolution. Interestingly, his commendation of revolutions is phrased in a way very similar to his conditional praise of war. In the notes to the projected second part of AR, Tocqueville writes for instance that there is "sincerity and warmth" among revolutionary exaggerations and notes:

[6] Staniskisz (1992) provides a good example of such a disillusionment.

> People had real convictions, everyone followed his own convictions boldly, passionately, was concerned with them and not with the role they would make him play, thus doing the most eccentric the most bizzare, sometimes the most ridiculous things, without intending to make themselves noticed. (Tocqueville 2001, p. 237)

Let us juxtapose this with the fears he voices in DA:

> Will I dare to say it amid the ruins that surround me? What I dread most for the generations to come is not revolutions.
>
> If citizens continue to enclose themselves more and more narrowly within the circle of small domestic interests and to be agitated there without respite, you can fear that they will end by becoming as if impervious to these great and powerful public emotions that disturb peoples, but which develop and renew them. When I see property become so mobile, and the love of property so anxious and so ardent, I cannot prevent myself from fearing that men will reach the point of regarding every new theory as a danger, every innovation as an unfortunate trouble, every social progress as first step toward a revolution, and that they will refuse entirely to move for fear that they would be carried away. I tremble, I confess, that they will finally allow themselves to be possessed so well by a cowardly love of present enjoyments, that the interest in their own future and that of their descendants will disappear, and that they will prefer to follow feebly the course of their destiny, than to make, if needed, a sudden and energetic effort to redress it. (DA IV, p. 1150)

Thus we see the notion of revolution in a completely new light. Tocqueville does not praise the phenomenon itself, but he openly praises something even the bloodiest revolution is indicative of. Tocqueville seems to yearn for a certain social youthfulness that is expressed by general preoccupation with political issues and the boldness in asserting one's views. In the two passages, one coming from the beginning of his writing career and one penned in his last years, he writes about revolutions as one would write about the youthful excesses of a gifted and talented human being. Such excesses are dangerous and will easily destroy someone who does not possess at least some moderation, but still they are a sign of vitality.

As we have already noticed, the soft despotism in Tocqueville's general model is the ultimate regime, since it stifles all political movement for an unpredictably long stretch of time. Tocqueville openly ties this phenomenon with the aforementioned "cowardly love of present enjoyments" since form the point of view of the democratic people soft despotism is precisely the

regime that "facilitates their pleasure, conducts their principal affairs, directs their industry, settles their estates, divides their inheritance" (DA, p. 1251). By promising stability, the soft despotism extinguishes normal revolutions understood as violent political events. Thus in the democratic era it is the last regime, analogous to Nietzsche's last man (1999, p. 7). This regime, indeed, cannot be quickly overthrown. One would have to wait for another slow process of a truly great revolution to see a lasting change after the soft despotism is born. This section will entertain the proposition that historically this period of stagnation that Tocqueville seems to predict can be deemed the new "Dark Ages." Such an era would share many characteristics with the period that modern historians since the Renaissance traditionally described as the Middle Ages. The name is indicative of the "smaller" centuries that are neither primordial nor progressive; the hundreds of decades that differ very little between each other; a time with little observable time in it, so to say.

The crucial point I wish to make is that the new Medieval era predicted by Tocqueville would by no means be a simple return to the past. The Tocquevillian Dark Ages could be characterized by a different spiritual identity and a far greater level of administrative centralization of power. Nevertheless, in this period, we would still see a somewhat perverse analogy to the era following the fall of the Roman Empire and predating the Reformation.

James Schleifer very aptly asks the pivotal question whether "*Démocratie*" would "usher in a New Dark Ages"[7] (2000, p. 279). Unfortunately, he does not expand that thought and omits to juxtapose the ideas of Tocqueville with other authors who also predicted that modernity will end in some neo-medieval era. Apart from MacIntyre (1984) one should focus especially on Pitrim Sorokin (1941/1991) and Nikolai Berdyaev (1933). Both of them, described their "New Middle Ages" as a rejection of the present materialism and a simple return to the spiritual past. The Tocquevillian though, however, is inherently suspicious of any easy returns to the past. Moreover, Tocqueville suspected that democracy has its own spirituality and thus the return to traditional religiosity may be problematic, in spite of all the salutary effects, it may or may not have on democracy. Thus, if we are to paint a truthful picture of the Tocquevillian Dark Ages, we would have to focus on the following factors: 1) the transformation of the drive towards equality into a neo-religious dogma; 2) the neo-feudal rise of the new aristocracy, the economic smoldering of the middle class and the rise of aristocratic war-making techniques; 3) reduction of technical innovativeness; 4) population decline and the lack of political revolutions over

[7] Schleifer with all probability borrowed the concept from Alasdair MacIntyre (1984, p. 263).

a prolonged period of time (the lifespan of several generations). Indeed, one may venture to make a claim that thus understood the "New Dark Ages" may have already commenced in certain corners of the world that not so long ago saw themselves as the most progressive.

Most of the abovementioned four points have already been discussed in previous chapters. Now, I am merely trying to form a new Tocquevillian theory that in some points departs from the political reality known to Tocqueville himself and apply Tocqueville's thought to the decidedly contemporary political conditions.

Regarding the issue of the discrepancy between democratic dogma and democratic practice, one needs to note it was not historically uncommon for the old ethical prescriptions (ones that for various reasons become less observed in everyday-life but remain revered) to become fetishized.[8] Mankind has always tried to appease the God or gods by offering sacrifices, raising temples, building monasteries etc. All those activities are aimed at restoring the power of the ethical law that was not obeyed. Of course, creating a token of faith or, for that matter, a fetish does not necessarily imply disregarding the rule it represents. Nevertheless, the danger of appeasing the old law is clearly visible. The problem is by no means a new one, the Bible, for instance, describes numerous occasions on which either Yahweh himself or through his prophets rejected the sacrifices of Israel precisely because he felt they were just an act of appeasement.

Tocqueville suggests that the spiritual undercurrent of modern civilization is the strong belief in equality. He also stressed that this faith is expressed in such neo-religious forms of worship as pantheistic imagery and activities underscoring the possibility of infinite perfectibility. In modern times, it is very easy to recognize those categories in our humanitarianism ideas, eco-awareness and the perfectionist piety of healthy lifestyle. However, apart for those fairly obvious examples, one can also argue that we observe an increasing fetishization of the main principle of the democratic spirituality – the belief in human equality itself. According to most available data, the social mobility in the USA and Western Europe has progressively decreased in the recent decades (Milanovic 2011, Pikety 2014); the rich tend to stay rich and the poor tend to remain poor. Thus the Tocquevillian "revolving door" is turning more and more slowly. Moreover, the recent economic crisis disproportionately affects the younger generations, forming what some may call a new "lost generation" (Casselman and Walker 2013). However, as this very fundamental

[8] For a discussion of various forms of fetishism see Pietz (1984).

issue becomes more and more visible, we also witness that more and more of the political attention becomes focused on non-economic inequalities as if in a deliberate effort to overlook the obvious. This can create a suspicion that equality itself is being fetishized. Any hint of political, legal or economic disadvantage based on gender, ethnicity and sexual practices immediately irks our sensibilities. Formally[9] or informally, the developed countries are introducing various quotas to guard themselves against accusations of supporting such practices. But, at the same time, there seems to be a certain insincerity in our extreme preoccupation with those issues. In light of those processes, it may be that the famous switch from the modern to postmodern values (see Ingelhart 1997) was premature and, perhaps, artificially engineered.

Unlike the socialists, however, Tocqueville never saw a state, even a socialistic state, as an answer to social problems. It is not a coincidence that he often referred to the political product of centralization and bureaucratization not as "state power" but as "social power." In stating this he indicates that future centralized and illiberal power structures may in many ways differ from the nation states. However, whatever social power they will have, will still be a product of the centralization that according to Tocqueville was initiated by nation states. Moreover, as I have already noted, Tocqueville clearly states that powerful states favor powerful industrial institutions and indeed transfer some of their power to such entities.[10] He also explicitly warns of the rise of a new "industrial aristocracy" that may be far less benevolent than the previous ones:

> I think that, everything considered, the manufacturing aristocracy that we see arising before our eyes is one of the harshest that has appeared on the earth; but at the same time it is one of the most limited and least dangerous.
>
> Nonetheless, it is in this direction that the friends of democracy must with anxiety constantly turn their attention; for if permanent inequality of conditions and aristocracy ever penetrate the world again, you can predict that they will come in through this door (DA III, p. 985).

In the twentieth century it seemed that Tocqueville was right and the new aristocracy, indeed, seemed to be the "least dangerous" of them all. Fortunes of the new nobles rose quickly and disappeared with equal speed. During the early phases of the digital revolution, the foundations of multibillion dollar companies that were still created in garages. However, recently the decreas-

[9] For example, according to the Quota Project website (2013) about 40 countries (mostly considered developed) have introduced gender quotas to date.

[10] On the ties between modern states and modern corporations – see David Ciepley (2012).

ing social mobility and practices such "patent trolling"[11] or the insistence on treating patent rights and copyrights as absolute, uninfringeable entitlement seem to suggest that a less dynamic period in the global economy is just about to begin. The visible slowdown of innovativeness, which was previously discussed, is yet another disturbing symptom.

Many readers of Tocqueville also overlook how much attention he pays to the issue of the democratic way of war-making and the level of expertise he displays in military matters. Tocqueville, for instance, recognizes the importance of the military revolution, i.e. the creation of large infantry armies. He was even aware that in modern European history, this method of fighting was first put to practice in the fourteenth century by the Swiss (DA IV, p. 1180). Before that in the early middle-ages, the battlefields of the West were dominated by armored, well trained, smaller and highly mobile cavalry units. In European history the classical Greco-Roman era was the only major period before the modern times in which infantry armies played a major role.

Historically, some scholars[12] have pointed out that the rise of modern democracies in the nineteenth century (and earlier in France) correlated with the need to provide political payoffs to the soldiers in large infantry armies. This naturally begs to draw a comparison between the modern republic and the ancient ones. In both cases, the republican government correlated with the predominance of the infantry armies. Interestingly, however, the late modern neo-aristocratic traits are also visible in the military practices. In the recent decades, the most powerful armies not only became fully professionalized, but just as in the Middle Ages they are increasingly reliant on highly skilled individuals using extremely expensive equipment. In extreme cases, the modern "knights" are merely operators of billion-dollar unmanned vehicles.

Finally, we must note that all the trends that can be collectively singled out as the founding elements of the new Middle Ages or the New Dark Ages form a fairly stable social system that in the foreseeable future will not be threatened by great revolution comparable to the events of 1783, 1789 or 1917. To be sure, our new-old world might be threatened by slow decay visible in the pauperization of the citizens and recurring economic crises or wars (especially in the civilizational peripheries), but not by revolutions in major political centers. This is mainly because the social vitality Tocqueville so praises seems

[11] That is patenting concepts without specific technological solutions solely for the sake of suing smaller entrepreneurs, who may not afford adequate legal services. Recent reports accuse Samsung, Microsoft and Apple of patent trolling; there is also a growing number of companies that specialize exclusively in this kind of activity, see Duhigg and Lohr (2012).

[12] See Townshend (2005) for an overview.

to be lost in the modern advanced societies both factually and figuratively, and the less advanced societies are already not far behind. It is not only the case of losing a taste for the political life due to "material enjoyments;" the tendency has also a lot to do with the demographic processes. The current Western "millennials" might be a lost generation not just because there are no more assets they can use; even more significantly, it is unlikely that they can perform a revolutionary change of the old social order simply because they do not live in young societies. Aging societies with negative or stable birth rate by their very nature favor safety over reform. Conversely, all major revolutions, civil wars and uprisings shared at least one common feature: they were all fought by young men and women in relatively young societies.

Let us also add that negligible demographic growth and periodical demographic decline was historically one of the most prominent features of the medieval social reality. It is only in the nineteenth century that the West woke up to the new, Malthusian fears. Now, after decades of fear of overpopulation, we can finally say that both the UN[13] and major scientists predict that due to a set economic and cultural phenomena the global population will eventually stabilize. In Western Europe and the Far-East, the populations are, actually, already declining. Of course, fewer people will use less natural resources and this will decrease the stress mankind puts on its natural environment. The question is, however, can we avoid returning to the feudal social practices once there will be no more threats of young people's revolutions. One would, for instance, expect that the number of jobs for young people will grow as their numbers decline. However, the social reality of the rapidly aging Western Europe is radically different. Astonishingly, as the European demographic crisis exacerbates the unemployment numbers among young adults continue to grow (See Casselman and Walker 2013). One explanation is that a social group that is not threatened by a revolution[14] and has a democratic majority (the older population) will automatically twist all the possible regulations in its favor.

Tocqueville spoke about the old regime's corporations as the providers of the "the right to work". One may argue that late-modern, increasingly

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[13] See Chapter 2.

[14] It is not certain that even a complete collapse of the global economic system due to the debt crisis in the Western states will reverse the march towards neo-feudalism. Revolutions do not rejuvenate political bodies when they are coupled with a demographic decline. For instance, although, the late Roman Imperial culture was replaced by Christianity in one of the great historical revolutions, the demographically feeble Western empire was no longer salvageable (see Scheidel 2007).

complicated labor codes and increasingly byzantine corporate structures play the same role, they protect the senior workers from the competition.

* * *

This chapter points to the vitality of Tocquevillian insights in the realm of modern revolutionary studies. Tocqueville is a classic for the proponents of the J-curve theorem, as well as for the researchers favoring the institutional approach. He is also known for exploring the often illiberal effects of revolutions. At the same time, the "strange liberalism" of Tocqueville enabled him to combine his criticism of "normal" revolutions with a conditional commendation. Indeed, for all their dangers revolutions are for Tocqueville a sign of social vitality. The final section of this chapter deals with the description of the opposite of this social vitality, the historical category I call the "New Dark Ages." By introducing this category I strive to arrive at a general description of a modern developed society that becomes fossilized in the post-democratic state suggested by Tocqueville's theory of revolutions.

Conclusions

The main goal of this work was to provide evidence for the argument that in all his three major works: DA, AR and R Tocqueville operates within the framework of the same model of democracy and political change. In DA he, a European aristocrat, with audacious innovativeness rejects the image of America as a civilizational backwater and sees it as a forerunner of a great global social and political change: the "great democratic revolution". This revolution forms a nearly-classless society, promotes equality in all spheres of life and does away with aristocratic forms and habits. It also promotes technology and industry but at the same time is very suspicious of brilliance, refinement and art.

Needless to say that Tocqueville was wary of some of the possible results of that revolution and the particular, "small" political revolutions that it would entail. Nevertheless, in the descriptive and the perceptive layers of his writings, especially in the first part of DA, Tocqueville remained optimistic. Observing the results of the American experiment he believed that the negative outcomes of the "great democratic revolution" can be moderated. This can help societies develop and avoid violent political events akin to the French revolution. Paradoxically, while Tocqueville observed that the aristocracy of convention was absent from the American social reality; he also observed many elements of the natural, Aristotelian aristocracy attenuating the democratic sentiment. This made him think of a liberal democracy, a regime combining popular legitimacy with aristocratic liberty, as the optimal modern form of government.

Apart from the descriptive and the practical/prescriptive level Tocqueville's major works, however, all possess also a philosophical dimension. And at that level of analysis Tocqueville proposes his own vision of philosophy of history and becomes, if not pessimistic, at least somewhat deterministic. The extent to which Tocqueville is a historical determinist is one of major bones of contention between the readers of his work. This book identifies the two major

camps as the Straussians and the (Hegelian) historicists. As the French thinker predicted, members of divergent schools of thought both praise and chastise him, however for some very different reason. Trying to reconcile the two main positions, this work proposes a third approach. This new interpretative turn consists in describing Tocqueville as an extremely brilliant paradigmatic thinker who indeed describes a certain historical logic of modern politics but unlike Hegel refrains from absolutizing his own philosophy.

When Tocqueville opens DA by saying that the grand democratic revolution is something that "Providence[1]" (DA I, p. 14) imposes upon nations and that to want to stop democracy "would then seem to be struggling against God himself [*contre Dieu même*]" (ibid.), one should take him with all seriousness. One should also remember that providentialism implies a peculiar type of historicism, which assumes that history has an internal logic of development; the ultimate outcomes of that development are, however, not something a human mind can be privy to. Humans can only make accurate prediction within a limited time-span of "normal" events. For Tocqueville, this timeline is marked by the grand revolutions, of which he names two – the rise of Christianity and the rise of democracy. Since a statesmen can never foresee the nature of the next great revolution, rather than trying to fuel the current trend, he should focus on preserving the *salus populi* and salvage those elements of social life that seem to be frail but hold some intrinsic value that might render them useful in the future.

Like a masterful stock-exchange investor, Tocqueville sees the dominant trends with ease, but at the same time strongly advises against blindly following the trend that is already apparent to all. Paradoxically, the fact that Tocqueville does not want to speed up the coming of complete equality testifies to the fact that he is far more convinced of the strength of those tendencies than some of the revolutionary political actors of the era. Tocqueville, in contrast to Marx, assumes if the *Zeitgeist* exists, it surely will not be in need of a wet-nurse, but perhaps it could benefit from employing an old-fashioned teacher of etiquette.

Admittedly, in his recently published work on Tocqueville, Lucien Jaume (2008) speaks against treating Tocqueville simply as our contemporary and overlooking the particular historical context that gave birth to his thought. In my work I have, however, argued that while examining Tocqueville's times and life does provide important insights into his work, it does not give Tocqueville full credit for the importance of his thought. That is why this work departed

[1] Capitalized as in the original.

from the historical approach, which indeed can be seen as both a source of its strength and weakness. On the one hand, I have attempted to show the Tocquevillian theory as tool for exploring modern politics; on the other, in order to achieve my goal I necessarily had to simplify some of the historical nuances.

One may even argue that Tocqueville, like Rousseau, is a victim of his own mastery as a writer. Academics attached to the German school of philosophy may even suspect that there can be little deep thought in a work that reads so well. Nevertheless, this book suggests that there is a guiding philosophical notion in Tocqueville's oeuvre. This guiding notion is, however, not what we might today call democracy. Tocqueville does not focus on one particular regime examined in a state of isolation. He is the philosopher of revolution and change. He focuses on the mutability of modern politics. He tries to classify the changes he sees. He views some of them, in line with ancient insight, as cycles that do not institute a lasting change. Others, like passing from aristocracy to democracy, constitute for Tocqueville changes that may not be overlooked. And even though, as I have pointed in the final chapter, he does mention the possibility of a return to some form of aristocracy, he is adamant that the great revolutions never repeat themselves. It is we who need to use old notions to describe new things based on their remote resemblance.

To be sure, cyclical revolutions still happen, but in the general scheme of politics the Polybian wheel of regimes is in Tocqueville's science of politics replaced with the two vectors of equality and liberty. Tocqueville also asks fundamental methodological questions: what can we reasonably expect to predict in politics, and what changes can be perceived only after they occur? Asking those questions in earnest is precisely what enables him to make bold prediction about the democratization on a global scale and remain skeptical of his own theories. This skepticism, however, does not stifle Tocqueville, but on the contrary it is a major source of his creativity. This part of Tocqueville's legacy was taken up by generations of other researchers. Long after the fall of the great "–isms" in political science, Tocqueville's open-ended political science of revolutions still continues to inspire. And part of the inspiration comes from the fact that his skepticism is a clear invitation to continue to challenge him and continue to develop "new sciences of politics" for worlds "entirely new." It is thus impossible to box Tocqueville's theories in and change them into a dogmatic belief.

Alluding to great, modern political philosophies such as Hegelianism, Marxism, etc., Robert Nisbet notes that, "it is in a way a high tribute to Tocqueville that at no time has there been, or is there likely to be, any-

thing called Tocquevilleism" (1976, p. 65). Indeed, Tocqueville's approach to political philosophy embraces even its own mutability and finitude. In this respect Tocqueville anticipates Kuhn's philosophy of revolutions in science. He sees himself both as a paradigm-shifter and a part of the paradigm that will eventually be shifted. In spite of stressing his moderation and attachment to tradition, Tocqueville is thus a true revolutionary, who did not insist even on the conservation of his own theories.

This, however, does not imply that he did not possess a general model of revolution and regime change that he persistently used in all his major works. This work examined precisely this model and insisted that although Tocqueville's writings and his interest evolved over time, he was constantly working within the same general theoretical scheme. In this sense, there truly is a Tocquevilleism, but it is not perceived as such because Tocqueville's infatuating writing style makes the conclusions he reaches almost too obvious. One does not see the forest for all the trees. An "–ism" indicates the existence of something external and tangibly different from the more natural and organic reality. Tocqueville, on the other hand, creates a theory of the political world in which we live in a way that does not immediately alert us. At no point does he attempt to upset all the reader's commonsensical convictions. He targets them progressively and slowly weaves a net of small, brilliant and paradoxical *bon mots*. He seems chaotic and incomprehensive, but with each new paragraph he slowly pulls the reader deeper into his philosophy.

Indeed, we only see how innovative this philosophy was, when we compare how the comparative political science based on the Tocquevillian philosophy differs from its main contenders.

The essence of Tocqueville's unique model rests in understanding that the "great democratic revolution," which is a general social drive towards equality of conditions, can make the particular, historical revolutions more violent and dangerous to respective societies. What was a relatively mundane cycle for the ancients, for Tocqueville becomes a spiral that incessantly moves in the direction of greater social power.

Importantly, with each new cycle the net level of administrative control increases; that is why the cycle ultimately becomes a spiral. Nevertheless, as Tocqueville himself observes "new worlds" (DA I, p. 6) do come into existence; in other words, political history has a way of surprising humans with the unexpected. According to Eduardo Nolla (DA, Ed. Into, p. cxxvi), Tocqueville, deliberately abandoned a thoroughly systematic and consistent discourse in order to show that political actors are not imprisoned by historic necessity or causality suggested by various cycles, schemes and theories. Tocqueville,

simply, defended the right of the free will to assert itself in politics in spite of the various forms of direct and indirect oppression. That is why he says that what he "dreads most for the generations to come is not great revolutions but apathy" (DA IV, p. 1150). Elsewhere in his works, Tocqueville uses the term "great revolution" only to denote democratization. In AR, however, he suggests that the appearance of new large religions such as Christianity is also an example of a "great revolution." By great revolutions, he seems to mean breaking free from the confines of deterministic social theories, predictable political changes and petty, individual interests.

The Tocquevillian theory of regime change and revolutions is, therefore, open-ended and perhaps for that reason immensely useful in understanding modern political phenomena. Humans, however, even within the limits of various schemes and cycles, remain "powerful and free" (DA IV, p. 1285). Of course, as this work argues, Tocqueville is far from the Marxian or Hegelian historical optimism. For Tocqueville, human freedom does not include the freedom to end history by creating an ultimately post-historical and post-political society, which would never be shattered by any unrest or revolution. Even if a certain "political world" avoids minor revolutions for centuries, it will ultimately reach one of the great thresholds that will put its existence to an end.[2] Human freedom for Tocqueville is the freedom to continue to make political choices not for the sake of an ultimate goal that would render normal politics obsolete, but for the sake of avoiding "cowardly doctrines that can produce only weak men and pusillanimous nations" (ibid.). Political choice is, in other words, valuable because the activity of choosing creates better humans. In this observation, Tocqueville returns to the ancient vision of civic virtue in spite his rejections of Plato's and Aristotle's discussion of political change. To be sure, Tocqueville does hint at the existence of two classical principles that guide all politics: the more or less democratic rule of the many and more or less aristocratic rule of the few. However, apart from those two natural tendencies the number of possible, particular regimes and their developmental schemes (emerging from future great revolutions) is virtually unlimited. And even if at times those revolutions become rare, they eventually return. In short, humans will always be celebrating some form of renaissance (or modernity) or descending into some form of dark ages (or post-modernity).

[2] This pertains even to the soft despotism that is ultimate regime in the Tocquevillian democratic cycle and therefore ushers in the new Middle Ages.

Summary

This book examines the theory of revolutions and democracy presented in the main writings of Alexis de Tocqueville and its importance in the field of political theory as well as its possible application in the field of comparative politics. Scholars specializing in the study of the writings of Tocqueville have for many years debated on whether the works of this author offer a comprehensive political theory of regimes and political change. This work supports the idea that in all his major writings de Tocqueville works within the same theoretical framework and develops his own typology of modern regimes. At the same time the work argues that de Tocqueville focuses not on "democracy" as such, but on the notion of revolution in modern politics. The resulting general model proposed by the work combines elements of the ancient cyclical science of regimes with the modern concepts of political progress. In my work I argue that this theoretical scheme is endowed with immense predictive power and avoids some of the mistake of other contemporary political and sociological theories. The usefulness of Tocqueville's theory of revolutions for political analysis is exemplified with both historical and contemporary examples. The final chapter contains a possible expansion of the Tocquevillian theoretical framework to account for the political phenomena that are still in their nascent stages of development.

Streszczenie

Książka bada teorię rewolucji obecną w głównych pracach Alexisa de Tocqueville. Skupia się też na możliwych aplikacjach tej teorii w badaniach politologicznych. Badacze pism de Toqueville'a od lat spierali się, czy francuski myśliciel prezentuje spójny model zmian politycznych i konsekwentną typologię reżimów politycznych. Ta praca dowodzi, że istotnie istnieje tocquevillowska typologia reżimów i teoria rewolucji. Co więcej, jest ona konsekwentnie stosowana we wszystkich ważniejszych pracach de Tocqueville'a. Model ten jest połączeniem starożytnej koncepcji cyklicznej przemiany reżimów i nowoczesnej koncepcji demokratyzujących rewolucji. Praca stawia tezę, że taki model unika błędów wielu współczesnych teorii politologiczno-socjologicznych i pozwala dokonywać niezwykle wartościowych obserwacji. Ostatni rozdział proponuje zaś możliwe rozwinięcie teorii Tocqueville'a, przyglądając się niektórym słabo jeszcze opisanym fenomenom politycznym, które zdają się wpisywać w model tocquevillowski.

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