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Alexis de Tocqueville:
The Psychologist of Equality

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Alexis de Tocqueville: The Psychologist of Equality

What is the relation between equality and liberty? While now the word democracy generally is used to refer to *liberal* democracy - the adjective is implicit - the relationship between liberty and equality is neither historically nor theoretically uncontroversial. In its original form, the democracy of Ancient Greece, freedom was neither universal nor guaranteed even to its citizens. In Aristotle's definition, democracy means merely rule of the many, or rule by the people, a regime that seeks its justification in the principle of equality. How the people *will* rule is another question, an ambiguity that is best demonstrated by the fact that a democratic Athens put Socrates to death. In contemporary debates about the nature of liberalism, the tension between liberalism and democracy is presented in other ways. Often, it is seen as a

philosophical conflict stemming from a general point about the plurality of values.¹ Or, it is presented as a conflict at a less abstract level, one that results from questions of distributive justice, and one that appears in debates about questions of varieties of affirmative action, and more generally about all redistributive policies.²

Alexis de Tocqueville is often enlisted in this debate, as an illustration of this apparent tension between liberty and equality. For example, Stephen Lukes writes that Tocqueville presents a sociological generalisation about the "irreconcilable conflict between equality and liberty, how equality "poses several likely dangers to the survival of liberty." Nonetheless, despite the observations of those such as Lukes, we shall find that Tocqueville to the contrary, does not present an irreconcilable conflict between equality and liberty. To the contrary, he argues the relation between the two principles is undetermined. Equality both may or may not coexist side by side with liberty. In studying Tocqueville the interesting question is not whether there is a

conflict between equality and liberty, but rather how it is that equality may support two such divergent political outcomes.

Equality and the Need for a New Political Science

Tocqueville tells us that he writes in times of a global democratic revolution, where "the gradual progress of equality is fated, permanent, and daily passing beyond human control."⁴ Yet despite this recognition of historical inevitability, Tocqueville famously demands that "a new political science is needed for a world itself quite new."⁵ This new world is the emerging world of democracy. But why does it require a new political science?

Tocqueville's assertion is puzzling because there are reasons to think why a political science would no longer be necessary at all. The ground for the new world of liberal democracies was prepared by appealing to nature, to read within it the rights - the natural rights it guarantees, to liberty, equality and human dignity. Locke writes in his

Second Treatise (1689) "there is nothing more evident" than that men "should also be equal one amongst one another" and that "reason...teaches all Mankind who will but consult it," that we are "all equal and independent" creatures.⁶ Similarly, the American Declaration of Independence begins with the phrase, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and that they have certain inalienable rights... to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." These rights are self-evident or obvious: to recognise them, all that is required is to consult nature. But if this legitimacy is natural, then why does Tocqueville tell us that science, or something that is created by man, needed to be added to nature?

We can approach this question by trying to understand what Tocqueville means by the word equality. He cautions that "an abstract word is like a box with a false bottom; you can put in it what ideas you please and take them out again unobserved."⁷ And indeed, Tocqueville himself has been taken to task with his own warning words, criticised for

imprecision in his references to equality.⁸

Nonetheless, there are two most important ways in which Tocqueville uses the term. He describes equality as the equality of social conditions - or the absence of any fixed social hierarchy that would separate human beings from one another. But more significantly for his thesis of how equality may lead to opposing political results, he also describes equality as a passion. And this passion manifests itself in two forms:

There is indeed a manly and legitimate passion for equality which rouses in all men a desire to be strong and respected. This passion tends to elevate the little man to the rank of the great. But the human heart also nourishes a debased taste for equality, which leads the weak to want to drag the strong down to their level, and which induces men to prefer equality in servitude to inequality in freedom.⁹

Thus, for Tocqueville, though a social state may be democratic, there are two chief political consequences to which it may lead: either freedom or tyranny. However, the road to servitude is not at all obvious, it leads there "by a more roundabout and secret road."¹⁰ And hence the necessity for a new political science.

Democracy and Tyranny

Tocqueville is not the first to point to the relationship between democracy and tyranny. Montesquieu's famous chapter on extreme equality in his *Spirit of the Laws* is usually cited as one of the cardinal intellectual influences on Tocqueville's theory of tyranny.¹¹ Nonetheless, while Tocqueville's debt to Montesquieu is well documented,¹² we can also better understand Tocqueville by reference to a thinker with whom he is less often compared: Plato. In Book VIII of the *Republic*, Plato offers a theory of corruption and revolution, and like Tocqueville he too claims that democracies naturally decay into tyranny. According to Plato, excess destroys every regime: revolutions occur when a regime departs from its ruling principle, when this principle becomes corrupted through excess. For example, oligarchies, or the rule of the rich, are destroyed when wealth turns into greed. Similarly, democracies come undone when their governing principle, freedom, is transformed into license.

However, Tocqueville differs from Plato, both in claiming that in democracies the passion for equality is stronger than the passion for freedom, and in holding that rather than destroyed by excessive zeal for freedom, democracy is corrupted by its opposite: indifference to freedom. Tocqueville presents this argument in three parts in the chapter *Why Democratic Nations Show a More Ardent And Enduring Love For Equality Than For Liberty*. First, he says that in democracies the desire for equality rather than freedom is fundamental, because freedom is not what is distinctive to such regimes - freedom can be found in different places and in different forms. But this merely an argument about uniqueness, not about value; though liberty may not be exclusive to it says nothing about how democracies value it. Second, Tocqueville tells us that democratic peoples are extremely attached to equality because they think it will last forever; equality is valued because it is assumed to be eternal. But this is not a very persuasive psychological account of motivation: it does not seem particularly convincing to claim that

the reason why something is loved or desired is because it is thought it will last forever. To the contrary, desire is customarily understood as fuelled by the opposite motive, in recognition of the fleeting nature of its object. In fact, this is a lesson which Tocqueville elsewhere himself admits: "that which most vividly stirs the human heart is not the quiet possession of something precious, but rather the imperfectly satisfied desire to have it and the continual fear of losing it again."¹⁴ Lastly Tocqueville argues that the pleasures of political liberty are only enjoyed infrequently and even then only by the few. Furthermore, such liberty demands sacrifice and effort, while equality, to the contrary, is easy: it "daily gives each man in the crowd a host of small enjoyments," and "offers its pleasures for free."¹⁵ For this reason it is more highly valued. But how do we value those who are free? And do we love those who are easy?

Because Tocqueville's argument in this central chapter is not very convincing, some interpreters have looked for other explanations, for example,

holding his position to be simply the expression of an aristocrat's contemptuous view of the masses, particularly the new rising middle class.¹⁶ But Tocqueville's argument about how equality lowers human aspiration, and so threatens freedom, is much more complex. Rather than dismissing his account as an implausible one, we must look further in order to understand it. We need to understand Tocqueville's account of the passions, especially the mechanism of the passion of equality.

The Maladies of Equality

Tocqueville claims that equality effects everything. He tells us that in every age there is some "peculiar and predominating element that controls all the rest,"¹⁷ and in democracies that is equality. Equality of social conditions is the "creative element from which each particular fact derives."¹⁸ Here Tocqueville's political science is again similar to Plato's, though it differs from its point of departure. Again in Book VIII of the

Republic, Plato tells us that there are "as many forms of human characters as there are forms of regimes."¹⁹ Plato's teaching is this one: if you want to know what people are like, ask them under what kind of political regime do they live, for politics is the most important factor determining human character.²⁰ Unlike Plato, Tocqueville sees the origin of this shaping in social conditions rather than politics, but like Plato in his analysis of democracy, he finds the role of equality to be all powerful.

According to Tocqueville, equal social conditions serve to foster and shape the human passions in ways that may not be compatible with freedom. First, equality tends to lower human aspirations. In his melancholy moods when he laments the passing of aristocracy, this is Tocqueville's fundamental complaint about democracy. In democratic times, as the differences between men become smaller and smaller, the notion of honour grows feeble, and when these differences disappear, "honour will vanish too."²¹ More generally, "heroic devotion and any

other very exalted, brilliant, and pure virtues" become increasingly rare, there is neither great learning nor refinement nor genius.²² Here, Tocqueville's critique is far more restrained than that of Plato, who tells us that equality will spread so far in democracies as to stamp out virtue entirely by making equality the standard of all social relations: children will have no shame or fear of their parents, students will not respect their teachers. Even every ass becomes equal to a man: horses and donkeys will feel completely free to bump into anyone they "happen to meet on the roads if he doesn't stand aside."²³

But while Tocqueville's critique of democracy is more even-handed than Plato's, he agrees with Plato about equality's force. In his diagnosis, equality may lead to two kinds of overarching maladies, two chief illnesses that together serve to lower human aspiration:

One must admit that equality, while it brings great benefits to mankind, opens the door...to very dangerous instincts. It tends to isolate men from each other so that each thinks only of himself. It lays the soul open to an inordinate love of material pleasure.²⁴

But why does democracy lead to such effects? To begin with, why does democracy favour the taste for physical pleasures and why is materialism a particularly dangerous malady in such times? Tocqueville explains that desire for material goods increases in democracies because of the instability and anxiety of such times. The aristocrat, whose tastes and needs for physical comfort are "satisfied without trouble or anxiety," naturally turns his attention to other pursuits.²⁵ The democratic citizen, to the contrary, lives in an age when fortunes are always won and lost. In such times, Tocqueville writes, "the poor conceive an eager desire to acquire comfort, and the rich think of the danger of losing it...the owners [of fortunes] never win them without effort or indulge in them without anxiety."²⁶ But again Tocqueville's account seems incomplete here. Though his remarks about anxiety seem plausible, his contention about democratic attachment to material goods is more problematic. For example, Montesquieu, to the contrary, writes that healthy democracies are characterised by frugality, both because of

equality's tendency to promote distributive policies and because equality makes impossible the acquisition of great fortunes.²⁷ And while Montesquieu acknowledges that laws are necessary to promote such habits, his account of equality's natural tendencies is still very different from that of Tocqueville. Here Plato again is instructive, for he provides a theory explaining Tocqueville's assertion that democracy leads to materialism.

According to Plato, democratic belief in equality will eventually encompass not merely political and moral belief, but taste as well. For the democratic removal of all hierarchies levels not only all social relations, but ultimately all separations between what is low and what is high, indeed, all we think of, or evaluate as either noble or base. Plato writes that if someone should ask a democratic man what is valuable, whether there are some pleasures or desires that are good and bad, better or worse, he will reply that "they are all alike and must be honoured on an equal basis."²⁸ The practical result of this equality is a turn to the body, to materialism. For if

democracy holds everything as equivalent, the most readily available pleasures - or the pleasures of the body, the taste for physical comfort, will become not only most commonly, but also legitimately, sought.

This is Plato's account of democratic materialism, but is it Tocqueville's? We need not infer Tocqueville's familiarity with Plato. Rather, it is sufficient that Plato provides a theory that seems consistent with, and fills in the background to Tocqueville's concern about materialism in democratic times. Plato best explains the argument that Tocqueville himself does not provide.

But why is this turn to materialism dangerous for liberty? Tocqueville writes:

While man takes delight in this proper and legitimate quest for prosperity, there is danger that in the end he may lose the use of his sublimest faculties and that, bent on improving everything around him, he may at length degrade himself. That, and nothing else, is the peril.²⁹

Tocqueville is more than merely a prophet of doom here. He claims that a healthy liberal democracy requires its citizens be politically active, vigorous ones concerned with their own betterment: he tells us that there has never been a great nation without a great people. And this is not merely a question of

greatness, but also of survival. For an increased attention to material prosperity may lead to consider political activity a "tiresome" and "distracting" bother, and so to a dangerous neglect of politics, allowing for the possibility of despotism.³⁰

But while equality tends to lower mankind's hopes and aspirations, it is also dangerous for another reason: its tendency to isolation and separation. Despotism, as Tocqueville learned from Montesquieu, demands above all such separation of human beings, for isolation is the best guarantee of powerlessness.³¹ And because isolation is the necessary feature of despotic government and because equality has a tendency to lead to it, equality may be very dangerous. Again, Tocqueville's argument is not simple, because equality not only divides but also unites at the same time. On one hand, as social hierarchies disappear, democratic peoples become far less divided than ever. Equality of social conditions leads human beings to identify emotionally and intellectually with each other as never before. In an egalitarian age, it is no longer possible for

someone like the aristocrat Madame Sevigné, whom Tocqueville quotes at length, to blandly describe the weather and the torturing of peasants in one breathe, to say how hanging and breaking them upon a wheel will "teach them to respect the governors...and never throw stones into [our] gardens."³² For in democratic times, "there is no misery that [a human being] cannot readily understand,"³³ an understanding that is combined with pity, the universal sentiment that Rousseau describes as natural to all mankind. Yet, while equality may allow for immediate identification and pity, "a general compassion for all the human race,"³⁴ equality also drives human beings apart. For, more than ever, it focuses the individual's attention on himself.

Stendhal's Mirror: Democratic Self-Preoccupation

Tocqueville's contemporary, Stendhal, describes the novelist's art as one of furnishing a moveable mirror for the reader to recognise himself as he turns the pages. In Tocqueville's analysis of

equality, this mirror becomes larger than ever, for democracy gives rise to unprecedented self-preoccupation. Or as Tocqueville famously writes, each is "forever thrown back alone on himself, and the danger is that he may be shut up in the solitude of his own heart."³⁵

There are several reasons for this increased self-attention, the first of which are philosophical. In one of his notes, Tocqueville describes the history of modern philosophy as essentially democratic.³⁶ Elaborating this thesis in the chapter in *Democracy in America* entitled, *Concerning The Philosophical Approach of the Americans*, he explains that while he is hardly ever studied, the precepts of Descartes are followed there more than anywhere. Descartes, of course, begins his philosophical method with the adjunction that his aim is "to seek no knowledge other than that which could be found in myself."³⁷ And this command is a democratic one, because, as Tocqueville explains, now philosophy demands of the individual, each and every individual, to use his "own judgement as the most apparent and

accessible test of truth."³⁸ This emphasis on the individual is not restricted merely to philosophical reflection for modern politics also shares the same individual point of departure. The idea of the social contract, whether it is in Hobbes', Locke's or Rousseau's formulation, is based on a voluntary coming together of men. It begins with the individual, one who joins in the body politic on the basis of self-interested calculation.³⁹

Yet this philosophical and political emphasis on the importance of individual judgement becomes dangerous. Here Tocqueville is again paradoxical showing how characteristics of the new democratic world both prepare the way for freedom and take it away at the same time. Tocqueville observes that an important current of scepticism also accompanies modern philosophy. Scepticism may be described as the most democratic of philosophies - it makes all judgements equally uncertain, equally distant from the truth. But in a sceptical age, not only is all authority discredited, even the individual's own judgement is called into question. And so, the

freedom of judgement that is prepared for through modern philosophy is, at the same time, taken away from it through the rise of doubt. In such times of scepticism, Tocqueville warns, "men ignobly give up thinking at all" and may "easily fall back into a complete and brutish indifference about the future." Such a state, says Tocqueville, "inevitably enervates the soul, and relaxing the springs of the will, prepares a people for bondage."⁴⁰

Tocqueville also cites sociological reasons for this increased individualism. Democratic man longer orients his life by the decrees, commands and values of his superiors in a fixed social hierarchy: "democracy breaks the chain and frees each link."⁴¹ Tocqueville best illustrates the mechanism of these changes in describing how the relations between masters and servants are altered by democracy. While in aristocracies, masters and servants were joined together in a symbiotic relation of protection and obedience, honour and respect, in democracies the relations formed are purely contractual one of interest. As a result, masters and servants are no

longer joined to each other as they were before, and though each is recognised as equal now, each thinks only of himself, "their souls remain apart."⁴²

There are also economic reasons for this increased self-attention. Equality destroys privilege but brings with it competition, insecurity and anxiety, and thus greater self-preoccupation. For "when all men are more or less equal and are following the same path, it is very difficult for any of them to walk faster and get out beyond the uniform crowd surrounding and hemming them in." Moreover:

As the principle of equality quietly penetrates deep into the institutions and manners of the country, the rules of advancement become more inflexible and advancement itself slower...all men, whatever their capacities are forced through the same sieve, and all without discrimination are made to pass a host of preliminary tests, wasting their youth and suffocating their imagination.⁴³

Competition naturally demands extraordinary self-attention. For this reason, because their lives are constantly filled with a host of worries, Tocqueville describes the Americans as very serious-minded people.⁴⁴

The Psychology of Equality

In addition to the philosophical, sociological and economic factors in the democrat's greater self-preoccupation, Tocqueville also presents psychological ones. And these behavioral mechanisms are the key to understanding why Tocqueville thinks that democratic peoples have a stronger attachment to equality than liberty.

According to Tocqueville, equality appeals to, and strengthens, what he claims is one of the strongest passions: vanity, or pride. Equality appeals to human pride, for the equality of social conditions teaches that every man is as good as anyone else. And this teaching is strengthened by the notion of the sovereignty of the people: every man is given an equal say in governing, further confirming that he is just as valuable, just as important as everyone else. Individual pride is also strengthened by the philosophical underpinning of the dogma of popular sovereignty: the teaching that all are equal in the essential capacities of reasoning and

judgement. Equality thus swells human pride, and human vanity. The democratic man begins to think - and justifiably so, that he is equal to everyone else in EVERY respect. But this promise of equality is belied in fact. Though he is told he is equal, he soon sees that in reality he is far from equal: some are more successful, wealthier than others. The dogma of equality, which takes hold of the imagination and thus feeds his hopes that he REALLY is equal to everyone furnishes him with perpetual dreams which will be perpetually unfulfilled, and so:

[Democrats] will never get the equality they long for. That is a quality which ever retreats before them without getting quite out of sight, and as it retreats it beckons them on to pursue. Every instant they think they will catch it, and each time it slips through their fingers. They see it close enough to know its charms, but they do not get near enough to enjoy it, and they will be dead before they have fully relished its delights.⁴⁵

This explains why Tocqueville claims that democratic peoples will always be restless, and why it is that equality is psychologically very taxing: the "constant strife between the desires inspired by equality and the means it supplies to satisfy them harasses and wearies the mind."⁴⁶ Tocqueville's account of democratic equality is Hobbes' dream come

true: a world of restless desire after desire ending only in death.

The ephemeral nature of equality also explains Tocqueville's description of the base kind of equality. We should now see that this equality is not essentially a sign of meanness or baseness. Tocqueville tells us that human beings cannot live questioning everything, that "it can never happen that there are no dogmatic beliefs, that is to say, opinions which men take on trust without discussion."⁴⁷ And in democratic ages, this fundamental dogma is equality; it is the one principle that is never called into question. Moreover, if we recall Tocqueville's remarks about the power of democratic majorities, that he knows no country where there is "less independence of mind and true freedom of discussion than in America,"⁴⁸ then it should come as no surprise that when the democratic man encounters inequalities *in fact* his first desire will be to wish to lower those who seem superior to his own level. For he cannot accept, and *legitimately* so, that the other would naturally not be his equal.

His envy is naturally and understandably aroused, for this inequality jars with the dogma of equality he believes.

We should also then better understand Tocqueville's claim that the more equal social conditions, the greater will be the longing for equality, that "the flames of democratic passion blaze brighter the less fuel there is to feed them,"⁴⁹ for now each sign of inequality not only becomes for more apparent than ever, but it also disturbs the cherished imagination of equality - an imagination that is both constantly fed and constantly unsatisfied.

The perpetually unfulfilled nature of equality not only predisposes to a lowering of human aspiration, but it also points to the second of Tocqueville's diagnoses of democratic maladies: the separation and isolation of democratic human beings. Equality leads to two contradictory instincts. On one hand it stimulates pride, giving democratic man confidence and pride that he is equal to all, equality also widens the scope of comparison. Unlike

one living in an aristocratic age who naturally compares himself only with those who are of similar social status - a status that is fixed and unalterable - the democratic man is led to compare himself to everyone, for the removal of all fixed social hierarchies also removes all barriers to the imagination. And this comparison is overwhelming; it tends to make the democratic man feel insignificant and weak. And so, "the same equality which makes him independent of each separate citizen leaves him isolated and defenceless in the face of the majority."⁵⁰ Equality thus may foster a sense of powerlessness. And this powerlessness may translate not only into an automatic deferring to the opinion of the majority, but also to a general indifference to politics.

These different factors all serve as the mechanisms behind what Tocqueville describes as the chief vices of democratic times: individualism, a vice which he defines as a "a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself" and to withdraw himself into private life.⁵¹

Individualism is a vice because for Tocqueville liberty does not mean being left alone to do whatever one would like. This does not mean that Tocqueville is against the flowering of individuality - the virtue with which his friend John Stuart Mill was so enamoured. To the contrary, his concerns about the general lowering and confirming tendencies of democracy all lead him to hope that human beings better themselves but not that these private concerns entirely overwhelm public ones. For Tocqueville, liberty is not independence; to the contrary, liberty is understood as demanding active political participation.

This is Tocqueville's diagnosis of the potential maladies of democracy. How then does Tocqueville answer our question on the relation of equality to liberty? While Tocqueville may claim that equality understood as a social state is an undetermined category, one that may lead to two very different destinations, either liberty or despotism, our exposition of equality understood as a passion might seem far less undetermined. The passion of equality

seems naturally to tend to isolation and to the lowering of human aspiration, and thus to prepare the ground for despotism. To be sure, Tocqueville's account of the passion of equality is not entirely one sided. Despite his pessimism, he also gives contrary examples. He tells us of the American businessman who reacts to the superior performance of a competitor not by wishing to lower his competitor to his own level, but by rising to the challenge. More generally, he writes that while equality may lower human sights, it also may raise them at the same time, for the breaking down of all barriers that equality effectuates also suggests the infinite perfectibility of man. Alongside with his description of the lowering tendencies of equality, he also says that mores become more gentle, humane, habits become more orderly, cruelty and violence rare, brutality in taste disappears, general cultural ignorance diminishes. However, Tocqueville still gives far greater weight to the maladies engendered by equality rather than to its virtues. Nonetheless, this still does not mean that the relation between equality and

freedom is not an undetermined one. To the contrary, it merely emphasises the importance of Tocqueville's declaration at the beginning of *Democracy in America* that a new political science is required for the new democratic world: the passion of equality demands many cures, for unchecked it tends toward many kinds of ailments.

The cures Tocqueville proposes for democracy's maladies are well known, and cannot serve as part of our exposition here - political participation, a free and active press, the importance of associations, juries, lawyers, administrative decentralisation, religion, the protection of formalities, particularly rights. What is less emphasised, is Tocqueville's concern not for the division but for the general lowering towards which democracy tends, and his efforts to counteract such tendencies. Tocqueville is not the aristocrat content to look down upon democracy. To the contrary, he writes that his first duty is to educate and ennoble democratic man - to give human beings a higher idea of themselves and of humanity.

Today Tocqueville is enjoying a tremendous renaissance. Whether it is in America, France or Italy, the amount of attention given to Tocqueville is greater than ever before. And his thought is now appropriated by all kinds of current academic points of view. Tocqueville is alternatively understood as conservative, liberal, communitarian, and even post-modern precursor.⁵² This should not come as a great surprise, for like any great thinker, the treasure chest of his thought is rich enough to furnish clothing for a wide variety of interpretations. This is particularly so because Tocqueville is always attentive to the different and often contradictory sides of every phenomenon, warning "one of the most familiar weaknesses of the human mind is to want to reconcile conflicting principles and to buy peace at the cost of logic."⁵³ To this list of interpretations, we now may add one more: to recognise Tocqueville as a master psychologist, who perhaps better than any political thinker since Plato, reveals to us the mechanisms of the passion of equality, the springs which motivate and move the democratic soul.

¹This position is perhaps most famously expressed by Isaiah Berlin, who writes:

Faced with choices between ends equally ultimate, and claims equally absolute, the realisation of some of which must inevitably involve the sacrifice of others...The ends of men are many and not all of them are in principle compatible with each other... (And so), The extent of a man's or people's liberty to choose as they desire must be weighted against the claims of many other values, of which equality, or justice, or security, or public order are perhaps the most obvious examples." From "Two Concepts of Liberty", in *Four Essays on Liberty* Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), pp.167, 168-70.

²This list is by no means exhaustive. For a fine introductory summary of varieties of opposing positions claiming either a harmony or conflict between the principles of liberty and equality see S. Lukes, "Equality and Liberty: Must they Conflict" in *Morality and Conflict in Politics* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), pp.51-70.

³Ibid. p.51.

⁴Tocqueville's remarks in 1847 about the spread of equality in France are remarkably prescient. He wrote that while the French revolution abolished all privileges and destroyed all exclusive rights, it had however, allowed one to continue: that or property. He predicted that the future battlefield of equality would become property. In 1848, Marx issued his Communist Manifesto. See Pierre Gilbert, ed., *Egalité Sociale et Liberté politique* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1977) pp.37-42.

⁵Intro. p.12. All references from Tocqueville, unless otherwise noted, are from *Democracy in America*, the Mayer edited English translation. Trans. G. Lawrence. (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

⁶Ch.2, Sect. 6.

⁷II,I,16, p.482.

⁸E.g. See Jean-Claude Lamberti *Tocqueville and the Two Democracies*, trans. A. Goldhammer, (Harvard University Press, 1989) pp. 15-18. For a criticism of Tocqueville's vagueness in his use of the term liberty, see A. Redier, *Comme Disait M. de Tocqueville* (Paris: Perrin, 1925), ch. 4; Jack Lively, *The Social and Political Thought of Alexis de Tocqueville* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965). ch.1.

⁹I, I, 3, p. 57.

¹⁰II, IV, 3, p. 667.

¹¹*Spirit of the Laws*, Ed. A. Cohler et. al. (Cambridge, 1989). I, 8, 3, p. 114.

¹²See especially Lamberti, op. cit.

¹³Tocqueville left a series of notes on his readings of Plato. However, these notes refer above all to the *Laws*, rather than the *Republic*. See *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), Tome xvi, pp. 55-8. For a useful discussion of these notes and Tocqueville's general relation to the thought of antiquity, see Luis Diez del Corral, *El pensamiento político de Tocqueville*. (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1989), ch. 4.

¹⁴II, I, 10, p. 530.

¹⁵II, II, 1, p. 505.

¹⁶The examples of Tocqueville's distaste for the new bourgeoisie are legion. In his correspondence, he describes France as a new country of "cattle and vendors of cattle,"; he says that the entire nation has become "covetous and frivolous, and he writes that the U.S. is a surprising example demonstrating that "the middle class can govern a state in spite of their petty passions, incomplete education and vulgar manners." As quoted in R. Boesche, *The Strange Liberalism of Alexis de Tocqueville* (Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 1987.) pp 87-89. See also 168-70; also Lamberti, pp. 48-51, 194-198.

¹⁷II, II, 1, p. 504

¹⁸*Introduction*, p. 9.

¹⁹*Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 544d.

²⁰Tocqueville himself points to this interpretation in his notes on Plato. He writes that "the principal characteristic of Plato's politics is a moral one." *Oeuvres*, op. cit., p. 555.

²¹*Intro.*, p. 15; II, III, 18, p. 627.

²²II, IV, 8, p. 702.

²³563c.

²⁴II, I, 5, p. 444.

- ²⁵ II, II, 10, p. 530.
- ²⁶ Ibid., p. 531.
- ²⁷ *Spirit of the Laws*, I, 5, 3-4, p. 43-44.
- ²⁸ 561b.
- ²⁹ II, II, 15, p. 543.
- ³⁰ II, II, 10, p. 531.
- ³¹ Montesquieu writes, "in despotic states, each household is a separate empire," (I, ch3, p. 349;) *Spirit of the Laws*. On Montesquieu's general influence on Tocqueville see Lambert, *op. cit.*
- ³² II, III, 1, p. 563.
- ³³ Ibid., p. 564.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ II, II, 2, p. 508.
- ³⁶ Lambert, *op. cit.*, p. 210.
- ³⁷ *Meditations on First Philosophy, Dedicatory Letter to the Sorbonne*.
- ³⁸ II, I, 1, p. 430.
- ³⁹ For an unsurpassed account of how Tocqueville explores the implications of the new modern politics of the social contract, see Pierre Manent, *Tocqueville and the Nature of Democracy*. trans. J. Wagoner (Rowman & Littlefield, 1996.)
- ⁴⁰ II, I, 5, p. 445.
- ⁴¹ II, II, 2, p. 508.
- ⁴² II, III, 5, p. 576.
- ⁴³ II, II, 13, p. 537.
- ⁴⁴ II, III, 15, p. 609.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 538.
- ⁴⁶ II, II, 13, p. 537.

⁴⁷II, I, 2, p.433.

⁴⁸I, II, 7, p.257.

⁴⁹II, IV, 3, p.673.

⁵⁰Ibid., p.672.

⁵¹II, I, 2, p.506.

⁵²For Tocqueville as a conservative see Robert Nisbet, *Twilight of Authority* (New York, 1975); Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind* (Chicago, 1978); John Lukacs, *Introduction to Tocqueville, The European Revolution and Correspondence with Gobineau* (Gloucester, Mass., 1968); Redier, *op. cit.* The interpretations seeing Tocqueville as a liberal are varied. Some claim that he is a liberal theorist whose pluralist analysis provides a response to Marx, e.g. Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man* (Garden City, NY, 1963); Jack Lively, *op. cit.*; Raymond Aron, *Les Étapes de la Pensée Sociologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967). Others hold he is a liberal spokesman defending the propertied classes. E.g., E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* (New York, 1964). He is also interpreted as the endorser of the principle of self-interest rightly understood from which a harmony of interests might be created. E.g., Marvin Zetterbaum, *Tocqueville and the Problem of Democracy* (Stanford, 1967). Further, others see him as the proponent of the new middle class, J.P. Mayer, *Alexis de Tocqueville* (Gloucester, Mass., 1966); Seymour Drescher, *Tocqueville and England* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964). For Tocqueville as a communitarian see M. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent* (Harvard, 1996). For Tocqueville as consistent with, and a forerunner of postmodern liberalism, see M. Reinhardt, *The Art of Being Free* (Cornell, 1997). For a more general assessment of the different interpretations in Tocqueville scholarship see Boesche, *op. cit.* pp.15-17, and S. Hadari, *Theory in Practice: Tocqueville's New Science of Politics* (Stanford, 1989) pp.2-6.

⁵³II, I, 8, p.453.



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