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## THE STRANGE LIBERALISM OF ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE

Roger C. Boesche

In one fashion or another, Tocqueville is almost always associated with those thinkers of the early and mid-nineteenth century whom we customarily call liberals: in France, Royer-Collard, Constant, Guizot, and Thiers; in England, Bentham, Mill, Cobden, and Bright. To some political scientists, Tocqueville is the liberal theoretician who offers a pluralist analysis of modern politics that provides an answer to Marx's class analysis;<sup>1</sup> to a few critics, he is just one more liberal spokesman defending the propertied classes;<sup>2</sup> to others, he soundly endorses the middle-class principle of self-interest rightly understood, arguing that a harmony of interests can knit society together;<sup>3</sup> to still others, he is by nature an aristocrat seeking a new élite in a middle-class world;<sup>4</sup> and finally, some argue that, although

There are two editions of Tocqueville's 'complete' works, neither of which is complete. The first was published by Madame de Tocqueville and edited by Gustave de Beaumont (*Oeuvres complètes d'Alexis de Tocqueville* [Paris, 1862–66]). I refer to this edition as *Oeuvres* (B). The second is in the process of publication under the direction of J.P. Mayer (*Oeuvres complètes* [Paris, 1951– ]). I refer to this edition as *Oeuvres* (M). Whenever possible I have used available English editions.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Reinhard Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship* (Garden City, 1969); Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (Garden City, 1963); Jack Lively, *The Social and Political Thought of Alexis de Tocqueville* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 127–33; Raymond Aron, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, I, Montesquieu, Comte, Marx, Tocqueville (Garden City, 1968), pp. 237–45.

<sup>2</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789–1848* (New York, 1964), pp. 284–5; Maxime Leroy, 'Alexis de Tocqueville', *Political Thought in Perspective*, ed. William Ebenstein (New York, 1957), p. 474; Maxime Leroy, *Histoire des idées sociales en France*, Tome II, *De Babeuf à Tocqueville* (Paris, 1950).

<sup>3</sup> Marvin Zetterbaum, *Tocqueville and the Problem of Democracy* (Stanford, 1967), pp. 133–6; R. Pierre Marcel, *Essai politique sur Alexis de Tocqueville* (Paris, 1910), p. 131; Max Lerner, 'Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*: Politics, Law and the Elite', *Antioch Review*, XXV (1965–6), pp. 543–63.

<sup>4</sup> Introduction by John Lukacs to Tocqueville's *The European Revolution and Correspondence with Gobineau* (Massachusetts, 1968), pp. 14–28; Antoine Redier, *Comme disait M. de Tocqueville* (Paris, 1925).

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Tocqueville criticizes nineteenth-century middle-class society severely, he ultimately looks to this new middle class for enlightened leadership.<sup>5</sup>

Tocqueville probably rests within the liberal tradition, because he consistently defends such liberal principles as representative government, freedom of press and speech, freedom of association, the right to private property, equality under the law, equality of opportunity, and so forth. Nevertheless, Tocqueville's liberalism is a strange mixture with a markedly different flavour from the liberalism of the mid-nineteenth century, because he blends liberal principles we associate with Constant or Mill together with some conservative ideas similar to those of Montesquieu or Chateaubriand, spicing the entire concoction with a few mildly radical ideas that remind us of Rousseau or Michelet. As a result, Tocqueville's liberalism strays from, and is even critical of, the mid-nineteenth-century liberal tradition. In particular, mid-nineteenth-century liberals, even Mill,<sup>6</sup> almost always offer at least a qualified defence of the new industrialism and the emerging capitalist society. By contrast, Tocqueville offers a liberal philosophy highly critical of some of the most basic principles and assumptions of bourgeois society.

Why have so many of Tocqueville's interpreters, even those who so ably point out Tocqueville's reservations about the middle class,<sup>7</sup> tended to understate Tocqueville's deep-seated hostility to nineteenth-century bourgeois society? Two reasons appear most likely. First, Tocqueville's interpreters have generally paid insufficient attention to his correspondence,

<sup>5</sup> J.P. Mayer, *Alexis de Tocqueville: A Biographical Study in Political Science* (Gloucester, Mass., 1966), pp. 109–16; Seymour Drescher, *Tocqueville and England* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), Chapter VII; Edward Gargan, *De Tocqueville* (New York, 1965); Harold Laski, 'Alexis de Tocqueville and Democracy', *The Social and Political Ideas of Some Representative Thinkers of the Victorian Age*, ed. F.J.C. Hearnshaw (London, 1933); Georges Lefèbvre, 'A propos de Tocqueville', *Annales historiques de la révolution française*, XXVII (1955), pp. 313–23; Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche* (Garden City, 1967), pp. 250–4.

<sup>6</sup> I do not wish to understate Mill's complexity, but despite many reservations about the new industrial society, despite early essays critical of the new middle class, and despite a late conversion to a 'qualified' socialism, Mill's most common stance was one that favoured *laissez-faire*. 'Laissez-faire, in short, should be the general practice: every departure from it, unless required by some great good, is a certain evil.' *Principles of Political Economy* (London, 1848), p. 947.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Albert Salomon, 'Tocqueville: Moralistic and Sociologist', *Social Research*, II, No. 4 (November, 1935); Albert Salomon, 'Tocqueville's Philosophy of Freedom', *The Review of Politics*, I (1939); Albert Salomon, 'Tocqueville, 1959', *Social Research*, XXVI, No. 4 (Winter, 1959); Herbert Read, 'De Tocqueville on Art in America', *The Adelphi* (October–December, 1946); Gargan, *De Tocqueville*; Edward T. Gargan, *Alexis de Tocqueville: The Critical Years, 1848–1851* (Washington, D.C., 1955); Lefèbvre, 'A propos de Tocqueville'.

much of which has appeared only in the past fifteen years.<sup>8</sup> But second, and most important, Tocqueville's commentators have failed to situate his thought in what Carl Becker calls the 'climate' of Tocqueville's time or what Quentin Skinner refers to as 'the general social and intellectual matrix out of which [one's work] arose'.

Skinner rejects the 'textualist' approach to political theory, arguing that, by simply reading the text 'over and over again' as a critic like Plamenatz advises, one finds limitations in understanding the intentions and convictions of an author. Instead, Skinner would like to uncover to what extent a political theorist is 'accepting and endorsing, or questioning and repudiating, or perhaps even polemically ignoring, the prevailing assumptions and conventions of political debate'.<sup>9</sup> Thus, I would like to resurrect, within the confines of this short essay, what Skinner calls the 'general political vocabulary of the age', but I wish to proceed one small step further. Whereas Skinner usually, although of course not exclusively, discovers this general political vocabulary by examining the assumptions of political thinkers and statesmen, I feel that such a political vocabulary emerges at least as readily in ideas presented by dramatists, novelists, poets, painters, and historians as in the ideas considered important by political and social theorists. Hence, far from rejecting Skinner's approach, I would like to add to it by borrowing from Becker's notion that every age has a 'climate of opinion', by which Becker means common concerns, assumptions, hopes, anxieties, all of which he labels 'those instinctively held preconceptions in the broadest sense'. For example, consider the common atmosphere that makes the intellectual world of St. Thomas, Duns Scotus, and Dante so chilling to those writing in the intellectual atmosphere of Voltaire, Helvétius, and Condorcet.<sup>10</sup> Similarly one can find a common political vocabulary and a broad climate of opinion tracing its way through the sentiments of Tocqueville's generation, because, after all, it is a generation that witnessed Saint-Simon cherish Bonald while

<sup>8</sup> For example, in the definitive edition of Tocqueville's complete works, *Oeuvres* (M), Tocqueville's all important correspondence with Beaumont only appeared in 1967, his letters to Royer-Collard and Ampère in 1970, and his complete letters to Kergorlay in 1977.

<sup>9</sup> Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, Vol. I, *The Renaissance* (London, 1978), pp. x–xiv.

<sup>10</sup> Carl L. Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers* (New Haven, 1932), p. 5. Two books have been especially helpful in interpreting the 'climate' of mid-nineteenth-century France: Cesar Graña, *Bohemian Versus Bourgeois: French Society and the French Man of Letters in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1964), and Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (New York, 1966).

Comte hailed 'the great de Maistre', that is, two of the most seminal sources for modern radical thought embraced important elements of the reactionary critique of the new commercial society.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, Tocqueville's private correspondence and private notebooks startle us by locating Tocqueville—who scoffs at sad-eyed romantics and prefers Bossuet to Musset—in his own restless, romantic generation. We find that Tocqueville shared the concerns, if not all the convictions, of his contemporaries, and we discover that his political philosophy has deep roots in political questions that circulated throughout French society in response to nineteenth-century industrialization, middle-class culture, and the emergence of a large working class. Too many of Tocqueville's interpreters have uprooted him from his age. William James once used an enjoyable metaphor to suggest that men are alterable only to a small degree: you can rinse and rinse the bottle, but the smell of whiskey still remains. At the risk of abusing, to the point of diminishing, this metaphor, may I say that too many commentators have assumed Tocqueville lived in the bottle, yet emerged without a whiff of whiskey, as if he read Locke, Montesquieu, and Mill and began to write, relatively unruffled by his own tumultuous era. But since he was a bright young man when Hugo's followers fought for *Hernani*, when Lamartine's *Méditations* drew sighs all over Europe, when Balzac's satires struck caustically at the new capitalist class, when young men and women all over France rushed to embrace the new religion of Saint-Simon, can Tocqueville have remained detached? Of course not. In fact, at every point, Tocqueville's political thought is responding to the anxieties and concerns of his generation.

To establish this, in the first part of this essay I will delineate themes that emerge repeatedly in the writing of Tocqueville *and* many, but not all, of his contemporaries. In doing this, I am trying neither to depict some 'spirit' of Tocqueville's age, nor am I trying to argue that Tocqueville and contemporary writers with similar concerns somehow represent this entire era. No age exhibits unanimity, and while I do seek to explore what Skinner calls the political vocabulary of this age or what Becker describes as a climate of opinion, certainly a common vocabulary does *not* imply uniformity of political opinion and a common climate of opinion does *not* suggest that, in any political meteorology, there is no atmospheric variation.

The first part of this essay merely seeks to demonstrate that Tocqueville and so many of his generation share some major concerns, anxieties, assumptions, and hopes. In other words, I attempt only to outline similarities

<sup>11</sup> Frank E. Manuel, *The New World of Henri Saint-Simon* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1963), p. 320; Auguste Comte, *A General View of Positivism* (Stanford, n.d.), p. 70.

between Tocqueville and many contemporary writers who share a similar pessimism and similar anxieties. I do this, quite simply, because it helps us make sense of Tocqueville's thought. With this background, the ways in which Tocqueville's liberalism challenges so many of the assumptions of mid-nineteenth-century liberal thought become more evident.

## TOCQUEVILLE AND HIS GENERATION

### An Era of Disenchantment

Many writers and artists of Tocqueville's generation regarded their era as an age of transition, believing that history had destined them to live between a glorious past and a yet to be constructed future. Too late and too soon, each felt condemned to an age of aristocratic cultural decline on the one hand and bourgeois cultural immaturity on the other. Deprived of any chance for the literary glory of the Enlightenment, for the political excitement of the Revolution, or for the military grandeur of the Napoleonic conquests, Tocqueville and his generation protested against their selection for a barren era inhabited only by narrow, flourishing merchants. As Musset says, 'Everything that was is no more; everything that will be is not yet. Look no farther for the secret of our troubles', or in the words of Stendhal's Lucien Leuwen, 'Am I doomed then to spend my life between mad, selfish, and polite legitimists in love with the past, and mad, generous, and boring republicans in love with the future?'.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Tocqueville perceived himself to be living in an age of transition and hence an age of uncertainty and instability. In a letter to Reeve, he attributes his own ability to analyze his era accurately to this fact of living after the collapse of one great age and before the emergence of something permanent that could replace it.

I came into the world at the end of a long revolution which, after having destroyed the ancient state, had created nothing lasting. The aristocracy was already dead when I began to live and democracy did not yet exist; my instinct, therefore, could carry me blindly away neither toward the one nor the other . . . In a word, I was so much in an equilibrium between the past and the future that I sensed myself naturally and instinctively attracted to neither the one nor the other.<sup>13</sup>

This feeling of living in an age of transition, however, is only symptomatic of a widespread disenchantment with their age that surfaces again and again in

<sup>12</sup> Harry Levin, *The Gates of Horn, a Study of Five French Realists* (New York, 1963), pp. 79–80; Stendhal, *Lucien Leuwen*, I, *The Green Huntsman* (New York, 1950–61), p. 136. See also Arnold Hauser, *Social History of Art* (New York, 1958), Vol. III, pp. 168–76.

<sup>13</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), VI, to Reeve, 22 March 1837.

the writings of Tocqueville's contemporaries. Tocqueville shares the emptiness, anxiety, and depression that distinguishes his generation, a generation producing Géricault who laments that men are 'born to suffer', Berlioz who complains that everything 'bores me, disgusts me, offends and revolts me', and Baudelaire who writes, 'what I suffer through being alive is inexpressible'.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, this generation suffers from the well known *vague des passions*, 'an indefinite longing after an indeterminate object', a malady typified by Chateaubriand's character René, who claims 'What I lacked was something that would fill the emptiness of my existence'.<sup>15</sup> Tocqueville's letters, by revealing his own anxious and occasionally tormented nature, shatter the image of Tocqueville as the calm, composed, and contented nineteenth-century Montesquieu (whose eighteenth-century counterpart had confided, 'I wake up every morning with a secret joy').<sup>16</sup> While Tocqueville confesses to Beaumont that, 'there are certain moments when I am so tormented and so little master of myself', to his brother he concedes that his continued anxiety may propel him to great efforts, but more often 'torments him without cause'.<sup>17</sup>

Brilliant men often hound themselves with doubts and fears; it is a familiar picture of only moderate interest, and indeed Montesquieu's avowed happiness tugs more readily at our curiosity. But Tocqueville's anxious and occasionally desperate temperament impinges upon his political writings in ways that appear most clearly when we have wound our way down and into his letters. Tocqueville despaired partly because his era flourished on the ruin of his most noble hopes, because his era betrayed the immense potential of the French nation. An 'infinite sadness' seized him upon comparing 'what we imagined, desired, hoped for our country during all those years with what we see'.<sup>18</sup> Although he refuses to retreat from the world, he laments what he calls his 'solitude among men'.<sup>19</sup> In one letter, he likens his feelings to those of a traveller who, having just arrived in a foreign country, finds himself

<sup>14</sup> Maurice Raynal, *Goya to Gauguin* (Cleveland, 1951), p. 56; Jacques Barzun, *Berlioz and His Century: An Introduction to the Age of Romanticism* (New York, 1956), p. 189; Martin Turnell, *Baudelaire: A Study of His Poetry* (New York, 1972), p. 51.

<sup>15</sup> N.H. Clement, *Romanticism in France* (New York, 1939), p. 344; Robert T. Denonmé, *Nineteenth Century French Romantic Poets* (Carbondale, Illinois, 1969), p. 70.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Loy, *Montesquieu* (New York, 1968), p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), VIII, Pt. 1, to Beaumont, 5 September 1843; Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (B), VI, to Edouard, 2 November 1840.

<sup>18</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), VIII, Pt. 3, to Beaumont, 22 November 1855.

<sup>19</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (B), VI, to Madame Swetchine, 7 January 1856.



surrounded by a crowd but feels as alone as if he were in 'the middle of a forest'.

This is what often happens to me in the midst of my countrymen and contemporaries. I find that there are scarcely any points of contact left between their modes of feeling and thinking and mine. I have preserved many strong feelings which they have lost; I still love passionately the things to which they have become indifferent; and I have an antipathy which grows stronger and stronger for the things which seem to please them more and more.<sup>20</sup>

The disenchantment that envelops Tocqueville impels him toward a desire for political success, even political glory, and not merely literary success. In this, the letters dispel the accusation that Tocqueville was a shy, bookish man, intensely uncomfortable outside his study stuffed with ancient authors. To Royer-Collard, he confides his wish to attain power, to Kergorlay he claims that there is an 'internal flame' burning within him anxious to undertake something 'grand', and just after the February 1848 Revolution, when so many of his friends thought only of salvaging a few remnants of the July Monarchy, Tocqueville confides to Beaumont, 'Perhaps a moment will come in which the action we undertake will be glorious'.<sup>21</sup> He harbours a 'heroism that is hardly of our time', he tells Beaumont, notwithstanding that it makes him feel 'mad in the manner of Don Quixote'.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, in an age of mediocrity, in an age contenting itself with the pleasures of prosperity, he remains convinced that his noble political ideas delineating a grand political future are swallowed in the bustle of business. In another age, one that nourished grandeur and great ideals, he might have accomplished more. 'It seems to me, however, that in other times and with other men, I could have done better . . . The true nightmare of our era is in not perceiving before oneself anything either to love or to hate, but only to despise.'<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, to the Countess de Circourt, 2 September 1853 (1862 trans.). Volumes V and VI of *Oeuvres* (B) were translated in 1862 by an unknown translator and published as *Memoir, Letters, and Remains*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1862). In a few places in this essay, I have chosen to use this translation, although I continue to footnote the Beaumont edition since it is more accessible. In such cases, I have put '1862 trans.' after the reference.

<sup>21</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), XI, to Royer-Collard, 27 September 1841; *Oeuvres* (B), V, to Kergorlay, 6 July 1835; *Oeuvres* (M), VIII, Pt. 2, to Beaumont, 22 April 1848.

<sup>22</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), VIII, Pt. 1, to Beaumont, 21 March 1838.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, XI, to Royer-Collard, 27 September 1841.



### Alarm at the Fragmentation of Society

A second major theme that emerges in the writers of Tocqueville's generation is an apprehension at what they believe, rightly or wrongly, to be the extreme fragmentation, and the resulting individualistic selfishness, that was springing from the demise of aristocratic society. Although paternalistic and frequently oppressive, aristocratic society knit men together, drew them into well-defined groups, classes, communities, and extended families. By contrast, the new bourgeois society, according to Tocqueville's generation, was severing those ancient ties, reducing affection and fellowship to their usefulness in a possessive scramble, and, as Carlyle feared, establishing the cash payment as the 'sole nexus' among men. 'Society,' claims Saint-Simon, 'is today in a state of extreme moral disorder; egotism is making terrible progress, everything tends towards isolation.'<sup>24</sup> While Vigny laments that 'each individual is as if walled in himself',<sup>25</sup> Balzac's Goriot moans that, with money, he would have been loved. Delacroix wonders in his journal if the world has ever seen such a spectacle of men and women isolated from one another, with 'selfishness replacing all the virtues which were regarded as the safeguards of society'.<sup>26</sup> Even when people come together (and one can see this vividly in Daumier's paintings) they congregate as self-interested strangers united, not by affection, but by utility. Consider Michelet:

Machines (I do not except the most beautiful, industrial, administrative) have given to man, among so many advantages, one unfortunate faculty, that of uniting man's forces without need of uniting hearts, of cooperating without linking each other, of acting and living together without knowing each other.<sup>27</sup>

Bonald, de Maistre, and Comte yearned for what they saw as the lost unity of the middle ages, while Saint-Simon, Fourier, Michelet, and Lamennais worked to found new associations distinguished by a new brotherly unity, but all harboured a common dislike for the new atomization of society and its emerging selfishness (and one is tempted to say they idealized the past in an unrealistic fashion). All felt disdain for a society depicted so well by Balzac, when his character Rastignac was advised to 'use men and women only as horses for your coach'.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Manuel, *The New World of Henri Saint-Simon*, p. 284.

<sup>25</sup> C. Wesley Bird, *Alfred de Vigny's Chatterton* (Los Angeles, 1941), p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> Eugène Delacroix, *The Journal of Eugène Delacroix* (New York, 1972), p. 168.

<sup>27</sup> Jules Michelet, *Le Peuple in Société des textes français modernes* (Paris, 1946), p. 129.

<sup>28</sup> Honoré de Balzac, *Père Goriot and Eugénie Grandet* (New York, 1950), p. 81.

Once more Tocqueville's letters, perhaps more than his published writings, reveal that he shares the concerns of his contemporaries. Tocqueville bemoans that the new society 'throws citizens more apart', and at times he shows a fondness for the 'sweet and paternal' relations of times past, although never any wish or expectation of resurrecting aristocratic society.<sup>29</sup> Always a political thinker, Tocqueville focuses on the political consequences of this atomization in which 'each is retired and as if buried in his private affairs'.<sup>30</sup> Excessive individualism can be dangerous, he argues, because it 'saps the virtues of public life', entices men into the private sphere, and subsequently leaves a public and political vacuum swiftly occupied by an ever-enlarging government.<sup>31</sup> To Royer-Collard he writes, 'I have never seen a country in which the first manifestation of public life, which is frequent contact of men among themselves, is less to be found. There is never a meeting of any kind . . .'.<sup>32</sup> The fragmentation of society, by rendering citizens isolated and by making associations of citizens increasingly difficult to sustain, smooths the way for individual passivity and eventual centralized despotism.

### Concern for the Powerlessness that Emerges with Individual Isolation

In addition, Tocqueville and his generation witnessed the evaporation of eighteenth-century confidence, an evaporation that left, as a residue, a pervasive sense of powerlessness, a nearly ubiquitous conviction that individual men and women were helpless when confronted by the march of events. While Hugo intones 'vast forces shape our darkened destinies', one of Balzac's characters sighs, 'We are all the plaything of some unknown and Machiavellian power'.<sup>33</sup> One of the most forceful and haunting images of this sense of insignificance, however, comes from Gerard de Nerval's story *La Main enchantée*. Before his hanging, a man asks if he might say a few prayers: 'But the executioner replied that the folks stationed there had their chores to do and that it would not be proper to keep them waiting, especially for such a paltry spectacle: a single hanging.'<sup>34</sup> Men, says Michelet, are 'poor and alone,

<sup>29</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York, 1945), II, 208; *Oeuvres* (B), VII, to Hubert de Tocqueville (a nephew), 23 February 1857.

<sup>30</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (B), VII, to Barrot, 3 July 1852.

<sup>31</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy*, II, 104.

<sup>32</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), XI, to Royer-Collard, 15 August 1840.

<sup>33</sup> *A Treasury of French Poetry*, ed. and trans. Alan Condon (New York, n.d.), p. 185; Honoré de Balzac, *A Murky Business* (Baltimore, 1972), p. 198.

<sup>34</sup> *An Anthology of French Poetry from Nerval to Valéry*, ed. Angel Flores, New Rev. edn. (Garden City, 1958), p. 6.

surrounded by immense objects', dragged along by 'enormous collective forces', made to feel 'weak, humiliated'.<sup>35</sup> To Tocqueville's generation, it seemed to be an age when historical events thrust men in unwanted directions, when the manufacture of things forced men to dance to a strange, machine-like rhythm. 'We searched,' Sismondi says in a famous passage, 'and while we found in our century the triumph of things, man seemed to us more badly off than ever.'<sup>36</sup> Industrialization, Bonald contends, has debased and enslaved the workingman. 'Having become a machine himself, he exercises his fingers, but never his mind.'<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Michelet deplors those factories in which the 'iron and copper, dazzling, polished, seem to go by themselves, have the appearance of thinking, of willing, while the weak and pale man is the humble servant of these giants of steel'.<sup>38</sup>

Tocqueville's writings, once more especially his letters, teem with this same sentiment, and indeed the belief in an accelerating sensation of individual powerlessness might well be his central concern. 'There has never been anything smaller than our time', he writes to his brother.<sup>39</sup> It is a century of 'grand movements . . . in the middle of which each man feels himself so weak and so small', and it is a time when 'individuals, even the greatest, are very little of anything'; indeed the 'most striking characteristic of the times is the powerlessness of both men and governments'.<sup>40</sup> Tocqueville attributes this sensation of insignificance to the dissolution of the old order and the resulting atomization of society.

When the inhabitant of a democratic country compares himself individually with all those about him, he feels pride that he is the equal of any one of them; but when he comes to survey the totality of his fellows and to place himself in contrast with so huge a body, he is instantly overwhelmed by the sense of his own insignificance and weakness.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Michelet, *Le Peuple*, p. 145.

<sup>36</sup> Emile Durkheim, *Socialism and Saint-Simon* (Ohio, 1958), p. 73.

<sup>37</sup> Vicomte de Bonald, *Économie sociale et oeuvres politiques*, Tome II of *Oeuvres complètes* (Migne, 1859), p. 240.

<sup>38</sup> Michelet, *Le Peuple*, p. 59.

<sup>39</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (B), VII, to Edouard, 24 August 1842.

<sup>40</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (B), IX, *Études, économiques, politiques, et littéraires*, p. 115; *Oeuvres* (M), VIII, Pt. 2, to Beaumont, 29 January 1851; *Oeuvres* (B), VI, to Corcelle, 13 September 1851 (1862 trans.).

<sup>41</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy*, II, 11.

Isolation and powerlessness go hand in hand, because isolated individuals necessarily confront both powerful governments and the power of public opinion alone and unaided. Echoing claims by Sismondi and Michelet that their age makes great things, but does not cultivate great men, Tocqueville closes his *Democracy* with a suggestion for his age. 'It would seem as if the rulers of our time sought only to use men in order to make things great; I wish that they would try a little more to make great men; that they would set less value on the work and more upon the workman.'<sup>42</sup>

### Concern About the Intellectual Mediocrity of Bourgeois Society

The writers of this era contend that the new bourgeois society is subverting all values, reducing art to a marketable commodity and casting each individual on a sea of possessiveness. Flaubert speaks of 'the suspicion that our middle-class society of manufacturers, businessmen and bankers . . . has ended by cheapening and invalidating all departments of culture . . . as well as corrupting and weakening all ordinary human relations: love, friendship and loyalty . . . till the whole civilization seems to dwindle'.<sup>43</sup> Lukács argues that the eclipse of culture and art was Balzac's greatest fear.<sup>44</sup> Balzac's character Cousin Pons, an art collector commenting on Dresden china, says 'they manufactured wonderful things in those days, such as will never be produced again'.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, Balzac's character Lucien suffers great ridicule when he announces he wants to be a great writer, because, as his critics say, he still clings to 'his illusions' about art, refusing to realize that literature is a 'business proposition'.<sup>46</sup> Tocqueville's generation distinctly portrays the culprit and their accusations descend upon the middle-class obsession with wealth. 'Trade and art are mortal enemies', Berlioz announces, echoing Vigny's claim that 'spiritual man [is] smothered by a materialistic society'.<sup>47</sup> Art, once patronized by the established church and the landed aristocracy, was now circulating in the market place as another commodity and, in this generation's view, was scurrying across the fine line between art and entertainment. Dumas wrote for profit and his *Capitaine Paul* was so popular that it increased

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 347.

<sup>43</sup> Edmund Wilson, *The Triple Thinkers* (New York, 1948), p. 81.

<sup>44</sup> Georg Lukács, *Studies in European Realism* (New York, 1972), pp. 22–7; see also Balzac's comments in *Catholic Political Thought, 1789–1848*, ed. Béla Menczer (London, 1962), p. 113.

<sup>45</sup> Honoré de Balzac, *Cousin Pons* (Baltimore, 1968), p. 50.

<sup>46</sup> Honoré de Balzac, *Lost Illusions* (Baltimore, 1971), p. 354.

<sup>47</sup> Barzun, *Berlioz and his Century*, p. 386; Jean Giraud, *L'École romantique française, les doctrines et les hommes* (Paris, 1927), p. 121.

the circulation of the newspaper in which it was published by 110,000 in just three weeks!<sup>48</sup> The epoch's most prolific playwright, Eugene Scribe (who openly viewed the theatre as a mere 'financial institution') declared that 'he had nothing more to do' once he outlined his plot.<sup>49</sup> As Saint-Beuve laments 'money, money, one cannot say how much it is truly the nerve and god of literature today'.<sup>50</sup>

Only Tocqueville's letters and the records we have of his private conversations reveal the extent to which he absorbed this analysis of bourgeois society. In a letter to the Countess de Circourt, he writes, 'It seems as if there is no longer anyone in France who knows how either to read or to write. I dare to affirm, Madame, that for the last two hundred years, we have not seen in our country so little taste for matters of the mind . . .'.<sup>51</sup> Despite all the immense achievements in industry and science, Tocqueville saw little fundamental progress in his time. 'If the brilliant talkers and writers of [the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries] were to return to life, I do not believe that gas, or steam or chloroform, or electric telegraph, could so much astonish them as the dullness of modern society.'<sup>52</sup> Bossuet or Pascal would gaze past dazzling machines and railroads, sadly concluding that France was receding into semi-barbarism.<sup>53</sup> Molé's death, he writes Ampère, eliminated one of the last havens for intelligent conversation.

His death is going to close one of the last salons in which people conversed. Assuredly, neither his son-in-law nor his daughter will continue it. With him we had an aristocracy that loved ideas and letters; with them, we will have one that likes carriages, fine liveries, great names, titles, and pious works, all mixed and kneaded together. A bad mixture that I will hardly go near.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Albert Joseph George, *The Development of French Romanticism: The Impact of the Industrial Revolution on Literature* (Syracuse, 1955), p. 153.

<sup>49</sup> Neil Cole Arvin, *Eugene Scribe and the French Theatre, 1815–1860* (Cambridge, Mass., 1924), pp. 7, 41.

<sup>50</sup> Leroy, *Histoire des idées sociales en France*, II, *De Babeuf à Tocqueville*, p. 196.

<sup>51</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (B), VII, to the Countess de Circourt, 31 December 1854.

<sup>52</sup> Tocqueville, *Correspondence and Conversations of Alexis de Tocqueville with Nassau William Senior, From 1834 to 1859*, two volumes in one (New York, 1968), II, p. 85.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 140–1.

<sup>54</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), XI, to Ampère, 27 December 1855.

### Men Rendered Petty by Bourgeois Society

In the opinion of Tocqueville's generation, not only does this single-minded quest for wealth convert art into another commodity, not only does it isolate men and sever ties of human affection, but while it relentlessly manufactures goods, it simultaneously produces mediocre and petty men. 'More braid, more pins, more threads and tissues of silk and cotton,' complains Sismondi, 'but at what an odious price they have been purchased; it is by the moral sacrifice of so many thousands of men.'<sup>55</sup> Baudelaire fears men and women are making themselves into 'marionettes', while Chateaubriand bemoans that they are becoming 'busy bees'.<sup>56</sup> In all this, Flaubert's Emma Bovary represents the concerns of the writers of Tocqueville's time. In rebelling against the stultifying routine of her very bourgeois provincial town, she yearns for an exciting age of romance, daring, and intelligence, refusing to resign herself to the suffocation of her surroundings. Love and fantasy offer no escape and ultimately she succumbs, as the forces of the new society reclaim a rebel. 'The upshot of all Emma's yearnings for a larger and more glamorous life,' Edmund Wilson adds, 'is that her poor little daughter, left an orphan by Emma's suicide and the death of her father, is sent to work in a cotton mill.'<sup>57</sup>

Those who escape the oppressive rhythm of factory life are tempted into the chase for position and possessions. Clerks, Michelet claims, must learn to smother their personalities. 'The wisest work to make themselves forgotten; they avoid living and thinking, pretending to be non-existent, and they play this game so well, that at length they do not need to pretend.'<sup>58</sup> Excessive concern with wealth degrades and enslaves, Stendhal asserts, and indeed anyone who consecrates his life to luxury is a 'scoundrel'.<sup>59</sup> Bonald sneers at the supposed link between commerce and freedom, since even the richest merchants 'pawn every day, at every hour, their personal liberty . . . for the smallest sums'.<sup>60</sup> And Michelet embraces the same critique of the middle

<sup>55</sup> Leroy, *Histoire des idées sociales en France*, II, *De Babeuf à Tocqueville*, p. 303.

<sup>56</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *Flowers of Evil, A Selection* (New York, 1955), p. 89; Menczer, *Catholic Political Thought*, p. 101.

<sup>57</sup> Wilson, *The Triple Thinkers*, p. 77.

<sup>58</sup> Michelet, *Le Peuple*, p. 106.

<sup>59</sup> Cited by Baudelaire in Charles Baudelaire, *Selected Writings on Art and Artists* (Baltimore, 1972), p. 388.

<sup>60</sup> Bonald, *Oeuvres complètes*, II, 237.

classes. 'I do not hesitate to affirm that for the man of honor the situation of the most dependence is free in comparison [with that of the merchant].'<sup>61</sup>

While these writers and artists do fear a working class rebellion—what Flaubert calls the 'barracks-like' life of a society envisioned by Babeuf or Cabet—more often they dread that European civilization, to paraphrase Baudelaire, will fall asleep on a heap of riches.<sup>62</sup> The nineteenth-century perception of China emerges as a model for this new oppression through stagnation and bureaucratization, proving that Tocqueville's theory of despotism had contemporary analogues. Chateaubriand worries that bourgeois society is metamorphosing Frenchmen into 'Chinamen' who are 'whiling away [their] days in well-being' and 'peacefully vegetating amidst all that progress which has been accomplished'.<sup>63</sup> The passion for wealth might well form the cornerstone of this new despotic structure. 'It could happen,' Chateaubriand continues, 'that, as a result of the total deterioration of the human character, the peoples of the world would be content to make do with what they have got: love of gold would take the place of a love of their independence.'<sup>64</sup> Most frightening of all, in *The Charterhouse of Parma*, Stendhal depicts a world in which servants embrace their servitude, delight in imitating their masters, and ridicule those fellow servants who want independence; a world in which the leading opposition liberal assumes the job of running the hated prison that confines his own opposition; a world in which the prisoners, constricted to a cell only three feet high, compose a *Te Deum* in gratitude for the recovery of the health of their jailer.<sup>65</sup>

Once more Tocqueville proves himself a part of his disenchanted generation. France, he tells Beaumont, is becoming 'covetous and frivolous', a nation of petty men intent on their fortunes, and, as he writes Royer-Collard, incapable even of conceiving 'great things'.<sup>66</sup> After inculcating a love of wealth, the new bourgeois society circumscribes and compresses men, contenting them with their small existences, 'till the very men who from time to time upset a throne and trample on a race of kings bend more and more

<sup>61</sup> Michelet, *Le Peuple*, p. 93.

<sup>62</sup> Baudelaire, *Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, p. 123.

<sup>63</sup> Menczer, *Catholic Political Thought*, p. 104.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Stendhal, *The Charterhouse of Parma* (Baltimore, 1958), pp. 31, 315, 374–5.

<sup>66</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), VIII, Pt. 3, to Beaumont, 22 March 1857; *Oeuvres* (M), XI, to Royer-Collard, 6 April 1838.



obsequiously to the slightest dictate of a clerk'.<sup>67</sup> To be sure, Tocqueville abhorred the effects of nineteenth-century industry on the factory worker. Well before Engels depicted England's urban misery, Tocqueville noted at Manchester, 'Here is the slave, there the master: there the wealth of some, here the poverty of most . . . From this filthy sewer pure gold flows . . . Here civilization works its miracles, and civilized man is turned back almost into a savage'.<sup>68</sup> And in *Democracy* he poses his famous question, 'What can be expected of a man who has spent twenty years of his life in making heads for pins?'. Yet the sentence following this question plunges more to the heart of Tocqueville's concern, for, while to oppress is bad, to degrade is perhaps worse. He continues, 'And to what can that mighty human intelligence which has so often stirred the world be applied in him except it be to investigate the best method of making pins' heads?'.<sup>69</sup>

Tocqueville maintained that the industrial process that was destroying the workers of Manchester was simultaneously rendering the rest of society selfish and petty, timid in the face of functionaries, greedy in relationships with others. All aspirations toward artistic triumph or political glory withered in the open quest for comfort. In his letters, where he is willing to talk frankly about the new bourgeois society, Tocqueville connects such suffocation with the pettiness of the industrial classes.

It requires strong hatreds, ardent loves, great hopes, and powerful convictions to set human intelligence in motion, and, for the moment, people believe strongly in nothing, they love nothing, they hate nothing, and they hope for nothing, except to profit at the stock exchange.<sup>70</sup>

Even war, despite all its horrors, can elicit passions and grandeur that furnish a momentary relief from the mediocrity and complacency surrounding him. 'What gigantic efforts!' he writes Reeve in regard to the Crimean War, 'What energy, what manly and heroic virtues come spontaneously from the breast of those societies [France and England] that seemed to sleep in well-being.'<sup>71</sup> Political passions, political turmoil, and even war have at least the benefit of

<sup>67</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy*, II, 332.

<sup>68</sup> Tocqueville, *Journeys to England and Ireland* (Garden City, 1968), p. 96.

<sup>69</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy*, II, 168–9.

<sup>70</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), IX, to Gobineau, 16 September 1858.

<sup>71</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), VI, to Reeve, 30 November 1854; see also, *Oeuvres* (B), VII, to Madame Phillimore, 29 November 1856; and *Democracy*, II, 283. War, he says in this last passage, 'almost always enlarges the mind of a people' and is a 'necessary corrective to certain inveterate diseases to which democratic communities are liable'.

disturbing the drift toward despotism and stagnation that Tocqueville describes in ways so similar to Chateaubriand and Stendhal.

I seek to trace the novel features under which despotism may appear in the world. The first thing that strikes the observation is an innumerable multitude of men, all equal and alike, incessantly endeavoring to procure the petty and paltry pleasures with which they glut their lives.<sup>72</sup>

### THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS FOR TOCQUEVILLE'S LIBERALISM

One might legitimately object to this portrait of Tocqueville's epoch by noting that, in fact, this era had its defenders—writers and thinkers who, though at times critical and wishing for reform, thought that the new middle-class society offered material advances and an increase in individual freedom that was valuable and progressive. Without question this age had its defenders, but these writers were generally the very liberals—Constant, Cousin, Guizot, and Thiers—with whom Tocqueville quarreled, but with whom he is loosely associated (even if nearly all commentators grant Tocqueville's intellectual superiority). But how does this depiction of one large part of the 'climate' of Tocqueville's time help us to see in what ways his liberalism differs from that of men like Constant, Guizot, Thiers, Bentham, and Mill?

#### **Tocqueville's Anti-Bourgeois Liberalism**

It should be obvious by now that Tocqueville offers us a variety of liberalism that is, in its most fundamental sense, critical of bourgeois society. More than anything else, this one fact makes Tocqueville an unusual liberal when compared to his nineteenth-century counterparts.<sup>73</sup> Once we have

<sup>72</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy*, II, 336.

<sup>73</sup> See Constant who praises the 'commercial tendency of the age' for bringing a spirit of world peace, individual enlightenment, security of property, and an increase in private happiness (Benjamin Constant, *Choix des textes politiques* (Paris, 1965), pp. 49, 96–7). Also Mill, who, despite early essays critical of bourgeois society, still looked to the leadership of this society for moral, economic, and intellectual progress. For example, the middle class rulers of England 'willingly make considerable sacrifices, especially of their pecuniary interest, for the benefit of the working classes, and err rather by too lavish and indiscriminating beneficence'. *Considerations on Representative Government*, III.

For a discussion of Bentham's support of emerging bourgeois society, see Elie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism* (Boston, 1955), pp. 93–116, and Crane Brinton, *English Political Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1933), pp. 23–6. For Guizot's support of bourgeois society, see his *The History of Civilization in Europe* (New York, n.d.), and Douglas Johnson, *Guizot: Aspects of French History, 1787–1874* (Toronto, 1963), pp. 76–81.

situated Tocqueville within his generation, we see that, without question, he blames the new bourgeois society for the isolation among men, the atomization of society, the powerlessness overwhelming each individual, the intellectual mediocrity of middle-class culture, and the chase for wealth and comfort that degrades and oppresses the workman, while rendering the rest of society complacent and petty. But why doesn't Tocqueville attack the bourgeoisie more openly?

In his published writings, Tocqueville describes the transition from aristocracy to democracy, and Mill, among others, criticized Tocqueville for using the word *democracy* too broadly, allowing the word to encompass all the economic aspects of the new industrial society as well as the political. Mill failed to see however, that Tocqueville chose a broad and ambiguous word like *democracy* on purpose. Tocqueville took great pains in his published writings to avoid angering the middle classes, precisely because he was seeking political power and running for office under a regime that had disenfranchised both the old aristocracy and the labouring classes. The very ambiguity of the word *democracy* allows him to speak of the new bourgeois society without offending his electorate, even though in his notebooks, his letters, and occasionally his published works he tells us *democracy* means government by the new manufacturing class.<sup>74</sup>

To Beaumont he writes not of a transition between aristocracy and democracy but of 'the prevalence of the bourgeois classes and the industrial element over the aristocratic classes and landed property. Is this a good or an evil? Your grandchildren will discuss this question. A society calmer and duller, more tranquil and less heroic . . .'.<sup>75</sup> In another letter and in his *Recollections* (not originally intended for publication), Tocqueville portrays the bourgeois class under the July Monarchy as 'the most selfish and grasping of plutocracies', one which 'treated government like a private business'.<sup>76</sup> 'The middle classes,' he writes Senior, have become a 'little aristocracy, and without its higher feelings: one feels ashamed of being led by such a vulgar and corrupt aristocracy.'<sup>77</sup> Indeed, his letters reveal his reflexive, almost elemental, antipathy for bourgeois society. In regard to a family he has

<sup>74</sup> See, for example, Tocqueville, *Journey to America* (Garden City, 1971), pp. 271, 290; *Recollections* (Garden City, 1971), pp. 3–16; a previously unpublished note in Marcel, *Essai Politique*, p. 396; Tocqueville, *Correspondence and Conversations . . . With Senior*, I, 32; *Democracy*, II, 37, 219, 328–9.

<sup>75</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), VIII, Pt. 3, to Beaumont, 23 March 1853.

<sup>76</sup> Tocqueville, *Correspondence and Conversations . . . With Senior*, I, 134; *Recollections*, p. 6.

<sup>77</sup> Tocqueville, *Correspondence and Conversations . . . With Senior*, I, 32.

visited, Tocqueville writes, ‘They have the virtues of the middle classes, combined with the narrowest possible range of ideas, and are quite free from all aristocratic extravagances, such as the love of one’s country, and enthusiasm for bold and brilliant actions.’<sup>78</sup> And in his private notebooks on North America, he acknowledges that the ‘middle classes can govern a state’ despite ‘their petty passions, their incomplete education and their vulgar manners’.<sup>79</sup> Finally, to Beaumont he confides how weary he is ‘of our little democratic and bourgeois pot of soup’.<sup>80</sup>

### **Tocqueville’s Dislike for a Society Founded on Self-Interest**

Liberal thinkers, from Locke to contemporary American pluralists, have always defended a politics grounded in the self-interest of both individuals and political groups.<sup>81</sup> Many commentators, anxious to usher Tocqueville into the pluralist interpretation of contemporary American politics, seize upon both a famous chapter in *Democracy in America* and also a letter written from America to Chabrol in order to prove that Tocqueville advocates a politics based upon the principle of self-interest rightly understood.<sup>82</sup> But even in these selected passages, Tocqueville never argues that the general good issues from the unorchestrated action of self-interested groups and individuals. Rather he notes that Americans seem to find contentment when

<sup>78</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (B), V, to Kergorlay, 5 July 1837 (1862 trans.).

<sup>79</sup> Tocqueville, *Journey to America*, p. 271.

<sup>80</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), VIII, Pt. 1, to Beaumont, 9 August 1840.

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, Hume’s essay, ‘Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth’, in *Hume’s Moral and Political Philosophy*, ed. Henry Aiken (New York, 1948); Madison in *Federalist Papers* No. 10 and No. 51; Bentham, who argues that politics can become a science because all men are governed by ‘two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*’, (*Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Ch. 1, Sect. 1).

Constant declares that modern liberty has little to do with public participation, but instead means merely the protection of property, private enjoyments, and the right to pursue our individual interests (Constant, *Choix des textes politiques*, pp. 93–101). Guizot sought to avoid a politics based on self-interest, but only because he was certain that the interests of his ruling middle class coincided with the general good of France (Johnson, *Guizot: French History*, pp. 63–78). Certainly Mill wishes individuals and statesmen to focus less on self-interest and more on the general good; nevertheless, he defines liberty as the right of the individual to pursue his or her own interests in his or her own fashion (*On Liberty*, III), and he specifically tries to design a pluralist representative system that will include nearly all minority interests (*On Representative Government*, VII, and Brinton, *English Political Thought*, pp. 89–103).

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, Zetterbaum, *Tocqueville and the Problem of Democracy*, pp. 124–36; Lively, *Social and Political Thought*, especially pp. 127–33; Mayer, *Tocqueville: A Biographical Study*, Ch. 2.

they 'sacrifice themselves for their fellow creatures' (a position reminiscent of Montesquieu's and Rousseau's insistence that republics demand public virtue), something one might suspect in a chapter that follows twenty-two pages after he affirms the pernicious consequences of individualism and fifteen pages before he describes the restless dissatisfaction that accompanies the pursuit of material wealth.<sup>83</sup> Nowhere else in all of his writings does Tocqueville bestow even cautious praise on a politics of self-interest, and in his letters he repeatedly confesses his desire for a new party founded on 'political morality', a new liberalism grounded in 'morality and religion' (although he never naively believes politics can exist without the pleading of special interests).<sup>84</sup> What, however, are Tocqueville's objections to a politics based on self-interest?

First, Tocqueville argues that a society propelled by self-interest and love of gain invariably becomes a nation embroiled in class antagonism, an argument that appears most frequently in his letters and in the newspaper *Le Commerce* that he edited for a year.<sup>85</sup> Some scholars assume Tocqueville accepts the nineteenth-century liberal's defence of *laissez-faire*.<sup>86</sup> Tocqueville does occasionally defend *laissez-faire*, because he admits it promotes individual initiative and because he fears government intervention into the economy will hasten a suffocating centralization.<sup>87</sup> Nonetheless, he never holds a consistent *laissez-faire* position, and he tries to expose both the errors and the dangers of such an economic system.

<sup>83</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy*, II, 129–30.

<sup>84</sup> Marcel, *Essai Politique*, p. 336; Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (B), V, to Stoffels, 24 July 1836 (1862 trans.); see also Doris Goldstein, *Trial of Faith: Religion and Politics in Tocqueville's Thought*, (New York, 1975), Ch. 3.

<sup>85</sup> In June of 1844, Tocqueville joined several friends in assuming control of the faltering and somewhat leftist newspaper called *Le Commerce*. For the next year, from the summer of 1844 to late spring of 1845, Tocqueville became the dominant force behind the newspaper, the intellectual leader who delineated the political posture of *Le Commerce*, and the most distinguished figure in Paris whose name was linked publicly and directly with this journalistic experiment. As André Jardin, the editor of France's definitive edition of Tocqueville's complete works, has written, *Le Commerce* reflects Tocqueville's ideas because it was edited 'in strict accord' with Tocqueville's wishes. *Oeuvres* (M), VIII, Pt. 1, p. 528. To my knowledge, the only complete collection of *Le Commerce* for 1844–45 is in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The author plans to develop more fully the ideas Tocqueville expresses in *Le Commerce* in an article to be published at a later date in *The Journal of the History of Ideas*.

<sup>86</sup> Zetterbaum, *Tocqueville and the Problem of Democracy*, pp. 133–6; Lerner, *Tocqueville's "Democracy in America"*.

<sup>87</sup> See Drescher, *Tocqueville and England*, Ch. 7.

He begins by scoffing at those political economists who argue that the self-interested actions of all individuals and groups generally lead to the common good, because of some natural harmony of interest. On an international level, *laissez-faire* does not produce a harmony among nations; the English argue that it does, but as the most advanced industrial nation, England can use inexpensive, mass-produced commodities to control overseas markets and destroy foreign, local industry.<sup>88</sup> In fact, Tocqueville argues in *Le Commerce* that, armed with the platitudes of free trade, the English exploit countries already impoverished. Ireland, for example, reveals to the world nothing but poverty, but Ireland has been the victim of 'exploitation by the most repulsive egoism'. 'Everyone knows that the cause [of Ireland's distress] is this: an English and Protestant aristocracy is exploiting for its own profit the sole industry of the Irish—agriculture.'<sup>89</sup>

Just as the international division of labour does not lead to a harmony of interests, neither does the domestic division of labour. A *laissez-faire* economy commends the quest for self-interest, but Tocqueville repeatedly contends that this acquisitive ethic generates urban working-class poverty and class antagonism. Tocqueville and the editors of *Le Commerce* point out that the urban poverty is enormous and the suffering has increased in 'intensity'.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, Tocqueville scoffs at the idea that *laissez-faire* allows any significant upward mobility. Indeed, one seems to inherit poverty and misery as much as one ever did under the fixed classes of the old regime. 'In sum, misery is an hereditary evil in our social state. Each generation receives it and carries it forward to pass on to those who follow.'<sup>91</sup> Finally, Tocqueville allowed *Le Commerce* to print an article by Lamartine in which he declared that '*laissez faire* and *laissez passer*, the brutal axioms of the English system . . . invariably mean nothing less than *laissez souffrir* and *laissez mourir*'.<sup>92</sup>

When Tocqueville was in control of *Le Commerce*, he argued that the danger of an aristocracy of manufacturers that he first delineated in *Democracy in America* had become a reality in the new economic system of the bourgeoisie. Tocqueville is perhaps most famous for his warning about the potential for a tyranny of the majority, a fear that permeates the writings of such liberals as Locke, Madison, Constant, Guizot, and Mill. But Tocqueville

<sup>88</sup> Tocqueville, *Le Commerce*, 9 October 1844; 12 October 1844.

<sup>89</sup> *Le Commerce*, 2 October 1844.

<sup>90</sup> *Le Commerce*, 7 January 1845.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Le Commerce*, 30 December 1844.

warns that the tyranny of a manufacturing minority is just as dangerous, if not quite as violent, as the tyranny of the majority.<sup>93</sup> Freedom is threatened by 'egotistic interests'; in England, Parliament is controlled by the wealthy, while in France, the Chamber of Deputies is 'recruited . . . in large part from among the industrialists'.<sup>94</sup> In fact, through *Le Commerce*, Tocqueville argues that the will of the majority is 'hidden' and disregarded, and the new bourgeois society displays just another form of class domination.<sup>95</sup>

Tocqueville's second objection to a society based on self-interest rests on moral and religious convictions. The new commercial society offers the individual no goal in life higher than ceaseless cupidity and an ultimately dissatisfying materialism. The acquisitive ethic that distinguishes the bourgeoisie is responsible, in Tocqueville's eyes, for the selfishness and emptiness that sweeps through all levels of the nation.

The principle which, at this moment especially, makes the misery in the lower classes so oppressive, is the same principle of self-love that generates the burning thirst for riches and pleasures in the highest classes . . . The present powers furnish the example for this cupidity and this materialism, and they use government as a means to accomplish their goals. By restricting man in the narrow and coarse sphere of material well-being, by exciting his needs and desires beyond all measure, one deprives work of its moral goal and its most satisfying reward. Nothing remains any longer but the love of gain.<sup>96</sup>

For Tocqueville, a society founded upon material self-interest is unhealthy, a 'feverish' society that threatens public morality.<sup>97</sup> The American who asks only 'how much money will it bring in', as Tocqueville says in a letter to Chabrol, 'trades in everything, not excluding even morality and religion'.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>93</sup> *Le Commerce*, 27 October 1844.

<sup>94</sup> *Le Commerce*, 27 October 1844; 25 March 1845.

<sup>95</sup> *Le Commerce*, 1 November 1844; 27 October 1844.

<sup>96</sup> *Le Commerce*, 7 January 1845; also 20 March 1845.

<sup>97</sup> *Le Commerce*, 19 February 1845. Compare Tocqueville to Bonald. 'A people that puts commerce in the rank of social institutions, that sees in it a duty and not a need . . . can dazzle by the glitter of its enterprises and the grandeur of its successes, but its physical strength hides degraded souls and abject mores.' Bonald, *Oeuvres*, II, 101–2. Note the similarity to Rousseau: 'The money which a man possesses is the instrument of freedom; that which we eagerly pursue is the instrument of slavery.' Rousseau, *Confessions* (New York, n.d.), p. 37.

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in Mayer, *Tocqueville: A Biographical Study*, p. 23; see also Tocqueville, *Journey to America*, p. 364.



To focus on interests rather than convictions is, in Tocqueville's view, to address the small side of the human heart rather than the grand, and to rely on the 'miserable interests of tomorrow', he warns Royer-Collard, is to generate an 'almost universal pettiness'.<sup>99</sup> In a speech to the Chamber of Deputies, Tocqueville adds, 'And besides, Gentlemen, are therefore so many words needed to prove that in substituting private interest for the general interest, one depraves society?'.<sup>100</sup> In all this, Tocqueville prefigures Durkheim who will articulate more fully a dislike of anomie, atomization, lack of all stable moral values, lack of satisfying work, and antagonism between individuals and classes.<sup>101</sup>

In contrast to a politics based on self-interest, Tocqueville yearns for the time when principled men with 'settled opinions' confronted each other in honourable public debate concerning the public good. But, he notes with dejection, 'there are no longer opinions, but [only] individual interests'.<sup>102</sup> To Beaumont he writes:

I cannot tell you, my dear friend, the disgust I feel in watching as the public men of our day traffic, according to the smallest interests of the moment, in things as serious and sacred to my eyes as principles . . . They frighten me sometimes and make me ask myself whether there are only interests in this world, and whether what one takes for sentiments and ideas are not in fact interests that are acting and speaking.<sup>103</sup>

When Tocqueville objects to an acquisitive ethic and to a politics rooted in self-interest, he is offering a very unusual liberalism that, as he well knows, is hostile to the dominant motivations of bourgeois society.

### **A Challenge to the Nineteenth-Century Liberal View of Freedom**

In general, nineteenth-century liberals viewed freedom as a private, individual matter. Freedom is the ability of the individual to pursue his or her

<sup>99</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), XI, to Royer-Collard, 20 August 1837.

<sup>100</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (B), IX, 380–2.

<sup>101</sup> Consider, for example, this passage: 'A society composed of an infinite number of unorganized individuals . . . constitutes a veritable sociological monstrosity . . . A nation can be maintained only if, between the State and the individual, there is . . . a whole series of secondary groups.' Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor* (Illinois, 1952), p. 28. See also Durkheim's chapters on 'Anomic Suicide' and 'Egoistic Suicide' in his *Suicide* (Illinois, 1951).

<sup>102</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), VIII, Pt. 1, to Beaumont, 4 August 1839.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, to Beaumont, 22 April 1838.

self-interest, as long as this quest hurt no one else.<sup>104</sup> Without question, Tocqueville wants to preserve this individual freedom, but he finds this notion of freedom far from complete. In an attempt to delineate a less limited view of freedom, Tocqueville adds both conservative ideas and radical democratic ideas to this predominant liberal view.

Like a classical conservative, Tocqueville argues that the mere independence to do as one pleases is not freedom. 'So wrong it is to confound independence with liberty. No one is less independent than a citizen of a free state.'<sup>105</sup> Or, 'it was never assumed in the United States that the citizen of a free country has a right to do whatever he pleases; on the contrary, more social obligations were imposed upon him than anywhere else.'<sup>106</sup> For Tocqueville, freedom involves the mastery of one's passions, because men can enslave themselves to their desires, an idea that Tocqueville probably inherited from French thinkers such as Pascal, Bossuet, Fénelon, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. Burke, however, probably puts this conservative argument best.

Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their own disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites . . . It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things, that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters.<sup>107</sup>

Tocqueville echoes this view when he speaks of slavery. To attain freedom, a slave must not only obtain legal emancipation, but also self-control over his own passions; otherwise, he becomes the 'prey' of his own desires. 'A thousand new desires beset him, and he has not the knowledge and energy necessary to resist them: these are masters which it is necessary to contend with, and he has learned only to submit and obey.'<sup>108</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Consider Constant: 'The goal of the ancients was the sharing of social power among all the citizens of the same country. That was what they called freedom. The goal of modern men is the security of private possessions, and they call freedom the guarantees accorded by institutions to these possessions.' Constant, *Choix des textes politiques*, p. 97. Similarly, the freedom Mill outlines in *On Liberty* is extremely private and individualistic: 'The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way . . .' *On Liberty*, I.

<sup>105</sup> Tocqueville, *The Old Régime and the French Revolution* (Garden City, 1955), p. 275.

<sup>106</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy*, I, 73.

<sup>107</sup> *Burke and Paine on Revolution and the Rights of Man*, ed. Robert B. Dishman (New York, 1971), p. 138.

<sup>108</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy*, I, 345.

Individual freedom and happiness require the mastery of one's desires, because, according to Tocqueville, 'every passion gathers strength in proportion as it is cultivated, and is increased by all the efforts made to satiate it',<sup>109</sup> like a blackmailer who returns again and again, promising each successive time is the last. Like so many of this generation, Tocqueville thinks that the new bourgeois society mistakenly promises that 'individual selfishness is the source of general happiness', that the self-interested race for wealth coincides with individual freedom.<sup>110</sup> But in fact, this very craving for 'material well-being', a craving he regards as 'essentially a passion of the middle classes', smooths the way 'to servitude'.<sup>111</sup>

There is, indeed, a most dangerous passage in the history of a democratic people. When the taste for physical gratifications among them has grown more rapidly than their education and their experience of free institutions, the time will come when men are carried away and lose all self-restraint at the sight of new possessions they are about to obtain . . . It is not necessary to do violence to such a people in order to strip them of the rights they enjoy; they themselves willingly loosen their hold.<sup>112</sup>

But Tocqueville adheres to the conservative's insistence on individual mastery over desires, because only this can ensure that individuals will be able democratically and cooperatively to master their world. This insistence on widespread democratic participation as an essential component to the word *freedom* again sets him apart from almost all of his nineteenth-century liberal counterparts.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, Tocqueville insists that only through participation do

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 164.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 411.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 137–8; *The Old Régime*, p. 118.

<sup>112</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy*, II, 149.

<sup>113</sup> Constant argues that only the propertied should be able to participate in government, because only those with property have the free time in which to become enlightened. Constant, *Choix des textes politiques*, pp. 204–6. Guizot managed successfully to restrict political power to a propertied élite under the July Monarchy, Johnson, *Guizot: French History*, pp. 63–77.

Mill certainly argues that political participation cultivates the practical and intellectual potentials of citizens; indeed, political participation in the 'school of public spirit'. *Considerations On Representative Government*, III, VIII. On the other hand, he seeks universal suffrage only in a distant future when the vast numbers of working people have developed a greater 'political intelligence', and he definitely seems afraid of popular participation. When Mill talks of local government, he presents such a contrast with Tocqueville, because Mill wants to restrict participation to property owners and he wants the central government to be able to intervene in local decisions on such issues as taxation and welfare. *Considerations On Representative Government*, VIII, XV.

men recognize that they can in fact shape their destinies. Once this lesson has been learned, a tremendous popular energy infuses the body politic as, for example, in the United States where man managed to 'fashion the universe to please himself'.

Under their hand, political principles, laws and human institutions seem malleable, capable of being shaped and combined at will. As they go forward, the barriers which imprisoned society and behind which they were born are lowered; old opinions, which for centuries had been controlling the world, vanish; a course almost without limits, a field without horizon, is revealed: the human spirit rushes forward and traverses them in every direction.<sup>114</sup>

Democratic participation may not offer the efficiency of a structured governmental hierarchy, but it brings about a popular energy that can transform the world.

Democracy does not give the people the most skillful government, but it produces what the ablest governments are frequently unable to create: namely, an all-pervading and restless activity, a superabundant force, and an energy . . . which may . . . produce wonders.<sup>115</sup>

In his letters and in his newspaper *Le Commerce*, Tocqueville leaves little doubt that he would like to transport such decentralized participation to France, precisely because such democratic mastery over the world is a necessary part of what is meant by freedom.<sup>116</sup> The key to this is, of course, municipal freedom, but Tocqueville also advocates worker self-help associations, worker controlled savings plans, and unions controlled by the workers themselves.<sup>117</sup>

Sadly, however, the French have no experience in public participation and democratic control over their lives. Whereas the American, says Tocqueville, would feel betrayed if he suddenly lost the opportunity to participate in public affairs, the Frenchman looks upon community affairs as concerns over which he has no control, as concerns to be handled by a 'powerful stranger whom he calls the government'.<sup>118</sup> Again, he blames this development on the

<sup>114</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy*, I, 45; *Journey to America*, p. 186.

<sup>115</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy*, I, 261—2.

<sup>116</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (B), V, to Stoffels, 5 October 1836 (1862 trans.); *Le Commerce*, 24 July 1844; 27 October 1844; 21 January 1845.

<sup>117</sup> *Le Commerce*, 30 December 1844; Drescher, *Tocqueville and England*, p. 140.

<sup>118</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy*, I, 96.

acquisitive ethic of bourgeois society, on the new and nearly universal ‘taste for material enjoyments, that taste so fatal to liberty and so dear to those who want to ravish men’.<sup>119</sup> This acquisitive ethic teaches citizens to become consumers, encourages men to withdraw from public concerns and concentrate on private self-interest, and leads men out of the public sphere, thus destroying democratic participation. Gradually, men no longer bother to vote, no longer bother to help make decisions: ‘The better to look after what they call their own business, they neglect their chief business, which is to remain their own masters.’<sup>120</sup> Freedom, says Tocqueville, must not be confounded with its effects; freedom tends to promote prosperity, but in doing so freedom generates a danger with which it must deal, because prosperity can ‘deaden political passions’.<sup>121</sup> Not only does the preoccupation with wealth undermine political participation, it predisposes people to accept and obey any government that promises a growing standard of living. ‘Thus men are following two separate roads to servitude; the taste for their own well-being withholds them from taking a part in the government, and their love of that well-being forces them to closer and closer dependency on those who govern.’<sup>122</sup> In sum, freedom, for Tocqueville, encompasses much more than merely the ability to follow one’s self-interest; it requires individual mastery over one’s desires and democratic mastery over a community’s affairs. In fact, when Tocqueville depicts his vision of a new despotism, he pointedly says that this despotism will *encourage* individuals to do nothing but pursue their self-interest.

#### **His Disenchantment With the Ahistorical Nature of Liberalism**

In a further criticism of the liberalism of the new bourgeois society, Tocqueville argues that this new commercial society attempts to fasten men to the present, by severing them from past and future. Like a conservative, he thinks some of the culture, the traditions, and the institutions of the past can furnish the tools necessary for self-mastery; like a radical, Tocqueville contends that a vision of a better future can offer a definition of a society’s values, purposes, and goals. Thus, he criticizes the ahistorical approach to politics found so often in liberal thinking, for example, Locke, Madison, Bentham, and Constant.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (B), IX, p. 11.

<sup>120</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy*, II, 148–9.

<sup>121</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), XIII, Pt. 2, to Kergorlay, 18 October 1847.

<sup>122</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy*, II, 325.

Tocqueville complains that his epoch busies itself only with the pleasures of the present; it 'interests [itself] in nothing that has preceded and in little of what is to follow'.<sup>124</sup> In aristocracies, 'A man almost always knows his forefathers and respects them; he thinks he already sees his remote descendants and he loves them. He willingly imposes duties on himself towards the former and the latter.' By contrast, the new middle-class society focuses only on present enjoyment of goods and pleasures, and 'those who went before are soon forgotten; of those who will come after, no one has any idea . . . Thus not only does democracy make every man forget his ancestors, but it hides his descendants and separates his contemporaries from him; it throws him back forever upon himself alone and threatens in the end to confine him entirely within the solitude of his own heart.'<sup>125</sup> Without a knowledgeable respect for the lessons of the past, without a love for a better future, men tend to content themselves with the petty concerns of the present.

Only when impassioned for a grand public purpose can men escape isolation and pettiness and shoulder a certain nobility of character. Here Tocqueville's political ideas have the flavour of 1789 or of the radical republicans of his own time, but not liberalism which, more often than not, tends to encourage individuals to seek prosperity, private concerns, and present enjoyment. Again his letters help reveal what otherwise might be inferred. In a letter to Freslon, for example, Tocqueville relates his encounter with an old man who was twenty-seven when the French Revolution began; seventy years later the old man recalled those times to Tocqueville.

'Ah! monsieur,' he answered me, 'I think I am dreaming when I recall the condition of minds in my youth, the vivacity, the sincerity of opinions, the respect for oneself and for public opinion, the disinterestedness in political passion. Ah! monsieur,' he added, while shaking my hand with the effusion and grandiloquence of the 18th century, 'then people had a cause; now they have only interests. There

<sup>123</sup> There are at least two exceptions to this generalization. Guizot, of course, is one liberal thinker who was an eminent historian with a powerful theory of history that influenced both Tocqueville and Marx. His theory of history, however, suggested that the centuries old class struggle between the aristocracy and the middle classes ended in the *Juste milieu* of the July Monarchy, and thus he had no vision of the future.

Mill's notion of progress certainly embodies a vision of the future and a rudimentary theory of history. History, Mill suggests, has been and will be propelled by the increasing enlightenment of men.

<sup>124</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), VIII, Pt. 3, to Beaumont, 15 June, 1852.

<sup>125</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy*, II, 104–6.

were ties between men then; there are none any more. It is very sad, monsieur, to outlive one's country.'<sup>126</sup>

And in a letter that greatly provoked Mill, a letter arguing that France should go to war rather than surrender her grand ideals and content herself with mere prosperity, Tocqueville says:

. . . one cannot let this nation take up easily the habit of sacrificing what it believes to be its grandeur to its repose, great matters to petty ones; it is not healthy to allow such a nation to believe that its place in the world is smaller, that it is fallen from the level on which its ancestors had put it, but that it must console itself by making railroads and by making prosper in the bosom of this peace . . . the well-being of each private individual . . . [we must] seek to check it in this enervating taste that drags it more each day toward material enjoyments and small pleasures.<sup>127</sup>

This insistence on a visible, grand future goal underlies Tocqueville's occasional approval of popular turmoil (an approval absolutely foreign to nineteenth-century liberalism), because anything is better than a somnambulatory France studying stock market advances. 'Revolutionary times have this benefit,' he confides to Beaumont, 'that they do not permit indifference and egoism in politics,' and in an 1848 letter he writes, 'I was so wearied by the monotony of the previous period, that I have no right to complain of the stormy variety of this.'<sup>128</sup> Turmoil, for all its dangers, injects life and energy into a society, brings forth men and women with bold minds and courageous wills, and invigorates ideas and art. Florence was never more brilliant, Tocqueville argues, than when engulfed in civil conflict, never more insipid than when basking in peace and riches.<sup>129</sup> So convinced of this is Tocqueville, that he even suggests that leaders introduce their citizens to moments of difficulty and danger.

I think, then, that the leaders of modern society would be wrong to seek to lull the community by a state of too uniform and too peaceful happiness, and that it is well to expose it from time to time to matters of

<sup>126</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (B), VI, to Freslon, 16 March 1858.

<sup>127</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), VI, to Mill, 18 March 1841. Mill responded that the French seemed to be a 'nation of sulky schoolboys', and France should stop such assertions of grandeur and get on with the business of 'industry, instruction, morality, and good government'.

<sup>128</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), VIII, Pt. 2, to Beaumont, 14 June 1850; *Oeuvres* (B), VI, to the Countess de Kergorlay, May 1848 (1862 trans.).

<sup>129</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (B), VIII, p. 443.



difficulty and danger in order to raise ambition and give it a field of action.<sup>130</sup>

Of course Tocqueville never advocates revolution (although he almost always praises the first years of the French Revolution), and he consistently condemns street violence, but he longs to capture the vitality of public agitation in order to extract men from their petty, private pursuits and to push them into cooperative endeavours. In this, Tocqueville knowingly throws himself against the goal of Constant, Guizot, Bentham, and Mill—a tranquil amble toward prosperity. Great political passions, Tocqueville declares, cannot dwell in the same breast with a passion for material interests.

There are more family ties than you suppose between political passions and religious passions. In each case a general good, immaterial to a certain degree, is in sight; in each case one pursues an ideal society, a certain perfection of the human species, the picture of which raises souls above contemplation of private interests and carries them away. For my part, I more easily understand a man animated at the same time both by religious passion and political passion than, for example, by political passion and the passion for well-being. The first two can go together, and be embraced in the same soul, but not the second two.<sup>131</sup>

Or consider a speech before the Chamber of Deputies.

Did the French Revolution, as a speaker claimed yesterday, achieve the great deeds which shone before the world by appealing to baser feelings, to man's material needs? . . . No, gentlemen, no! These great things were done by speaking of love of country, of disinterestedness, of glory. After all, gentlemen, there is but one real secret to making men do great things—by appealing to great feelings.<sup>132</sup>

#### CONCLUSION: IS TOCQUEVILLE REALLY A LIBERAL?

As I said earlier, Tocqueville probably belongs in the liberal tradition, because he consistently defends such liberal principles as representative government, freedom of press and speech, and so forth. But, as I have tried to

<sup>130</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy*, II, 261–2.

<sup>131</sup> Tocqueville, *Oeuvres* (M), XIII, Pt. 2, to Kergorlay, 18 October 1847. Contrast this to Mill who had considerable faith that material and moral progress went hand in hand.

<sup>132</sup> *Tocqueville and Beaumont on Social Reform*, ed. Seymour Drescher (New York, 1968), pp. 183–4.

demonstrate, it is an unusual liberalism in a variety of ways: it is a liberalism that is highly critical of bourgeois society, a liberalism that longs for a politics that is not based on self-interest, a liberalism that wants to incorporate both conservative and radical democratic ideas of freedom, and a liberalism that praises popular turmoil in search of a grand future. As unusual as this political liberalism is, it should not surprise us after we have placed Tocqueville within the context of his own generation. Tocqueville and many of the writers of his generation were concerned about new problems arising with bourgeois society—problems such as the atomization of society, the powerlessness of individuals, the supposed decay of works of art, and the triumph of things or manufactured goods over man. Tocqueville's political ideas embrace the most fundamental principles of liberalism, but seek to find solutions for the concerns that dominated his own era. But is this enough to warrant placing Tocqueville in the liberal tradition? In the end, one must wonder about the usefulness of a political label such as 'liberal', for we can feel free in calling Tocqueville a liberal only if we see in his thought a strange mixture of the 'liberalism' of Constant and Mill, the 'conservatism' of Chateaubriand and Burke, and the 'radical republican' ideas of Michelet and Lamartine.

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