

## THE RHETORIC OF HOPE AND FEAR IN TOCQUEVILLE'S DEMOCRACY<sup>1</sup>

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"It is always a significant question to ask of any philosopher: what is he afraid of?"<sup>2</sup> This query, which is Iris Murdoch's, is a particularly good one to put to Tocqueville, who was afraid of many things, of which I will here examine three.<sup>3</sup> First, he was afraid of other people's fears, in particular the fears of the European elites whose terror of the people, deeply ingrained in European political culture since antiquity, threatened to ruin his hopes for democracy. Second, he was afraid that the image of a tranquil republic that he invented to quell this inveterate fear of democracy misrepresented the actual republic on which it was based. Third, he feared that the problem of leadership in democracy might be inherently insuperable owing to an intrinsic gulf between "superior souls" and the people, opening the way for corrupt imposters to ensconce themselves firmly in power. In the movement of his own thought he thus mirrored the classical cycle whereby democracy succumbed to despotism.<sup>4</sup>

### Democracy as *Fantasia*

The first difficulty that Tocqueville faced in writing about democracy in America was his knowledge that many of his contemporaries feared the people and the prospect of popular sovereignty. He knew this because he was no stranger to their apprehensions. "This entire book was written in the grip of a kind of religious terror," he remarked, a terror occasioned by the "indubitable signs of God's will."<sup>5</sup> It was hardly surprising that such fears existed. In France memories of revolutionary violence were still fresh. Of greater moment, however, was the unshakable cultural memory of 2,000 years of disparagement of democracy by the highest authorities. For Plato, as John Dunn reminds us, democracy was "an all but demented solvent of value, decency, and good judgment ... the rule of the foolish, vicious, and always potentially brutal,"<sup>6</sup> while "Aristotle taught many centuries of European speakers to mean [that it was] ill-intentioned and disreputable."<sup>7</sup>

It was against this fear of the untamable popular beast with its ravenous, insatiable, and capricious appetites that Tocqueville had to argue in order to persuade his audience that "the development of equality was at once their past and their future ... an expression of the sovereign master's will."<sup>8</sup> His argumentative strategy is classical.<sup>9</sup> He begins by immediately establishing his *ethos*, or worthiness to be believed. He tells us that he has "sought out the best-informed people," yielded judiciously only to "the preponderance of facts," avoided tailoring his judgments "to anyone's point of view," and aimed to "see further" than others.<sup>10</sup>

In order to overturn two millennia of accumulated anti-democratic prejudice, he then employs a powerful rhetorical device, a striking image of what a virtuous

democratic people might look like, a depiction “so vivid and energetic as to set the thing virtually before our eyes.” Now this, as Laurence Guellec informs us in her fine book on Tocqueville’s rhetoric, happens to be the definition of the rhetorical figure known as *hypotyposis*.<sup>11</sup> Quentin Skinner prefers Quintilian’s name for this same trope: *fantasia*.<sup>12</sup> Tocqueville did not content himself, as writers from Aristotle to Montesquieu had done, with conceding that democracy might be viable if a people should happen to possess the requisite virtue; what he proposed instead was to *show* a democratic society that *did* possess such virtue, to provide a *fantasia* to which he then applied the evocative caption “the Anglo-American people.” As the name of the trope implies, this was an invention, a fancy, or, to use an anachronistic jargon, an ideal type.

Without belaboring the features of Tocqueville’s fancy, let me recall some of the most salient.<sup>13</sup> His “Anglo-American people” – epitomized by New Englanders, the purest example of the type – had “become accustomed to respecting intellectual and moral superiority.”<sup>14</sup> They had founded a society in which “everyone ... takes an interest in the affairs of his town, county and state.”<sup>15</sup> Their pious and tranquil domesticity had fostered “regularity in life” that governed “opinions as well as tastes.”<sup>16</sup> They were a people who “shared more notions of rights and more principles of true liberty than most other European peoples.”<sup>17</sup> Among their inveterate habits, imported from England, was a passion for “local government.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, “the local community” had preceded county, state, and federal governments and had ceded only so much of its original powers as was necessary to form a more perfect union.<sup>19</sup> The Anglo-Americans had formed “a loftier and more comprehensive idea of society’s duties toward its members” than any other scion of the European stock.<sup>20</sup> They had anticipated and satisfied “a host of social needs.”<sup>21</sup> They had made “provisions ... for public education” that spread enlightenment as universally and uniformly as the God-given natural inequality of intelligences permitted.<sup>22</sup> They were from the beginning “eminently democratic.” In New England, at least, “the very seed of aristocracy was never sown.” Yet a beneficial deference to human excellence, that characteristic ordering principle of the purest, most uncorrupted aristocracy, prevailed nonetheless, because “people became accustomed to venerating certain names as emblems of enlightenment and virtue. The voices of a few citizens obtained a kind of power over them that might reasonably have been called aristocratic had it been possible always to pass it on from father to son.”<sup>23</sup> Though inequalities of fortune subsisted, as they did everywhere, “wealth circulates with incredible rapidity, and experience teaches that it is rare for two successive generations to garner its favors.”<sup>24</sup>

This congenitally democratic society is unblemished by the characteristic democratic vices of which the philosophers had warned through the ages: “Democracy such as antiquity had never dared to dream of leapt full-grown and fully armed from the middle of the old feudal society.”<sup>25</sup> Here, *unripeness* is all, for the virtue of Anglo-American society is a gift of its immaculate conception: “The whole man already lies swaddled in his cradle. Something analogous happens with nations. Every people bears the mark of its origins.”<sup>26</sup>

Unblemished, Tocqueville’s Anglo-American people is also blessed with virtues remarkably similar to those that he elsewhere ascribes to pre-absolutist aristocratic

society in France.<sup>27</sup> “America is ... par excellence the land of provincial and local government.”<sup>28</sup> Because “men generally bestow their affections where there is strength,” moreover, most will invest their energies and ambitions locally because they see their town as “a free and powerful corporation.”<sup>29</sup> Above the towns are the states, whose governments “never rest.” These governments “visibly influence the well-being of everyone who lives in them,” unlike the “government of the Union,” which “looks after the country’s general interests” – general interests that “have at best a debatable influence on individual happiness.”<sup>30</sup> Hence the direction of the central government is really of interest to only “a small number of superior men, who aspire to lead it,” whereas “state governments are supported by the interests of men of a secondary order who do not hope for power beyond their own states, and because these men are close to the people, they exert the greatest power over them.”<sup>31</sup> In short, the Anglo-Americans’ instinctive deference to natural superiority persists despite equality of conditions because power grows organically from towns where its exercise is unpretentiously direct. The superior excellence of those few men of large views who neglect their own local interests to take up general interests is thus gratefully acknowledged by enlightened citizens who remain at home, content to cultivate their gardens. Despite this, they remain actively engaged, because intermediary institutions conveniently attuned to their circumscribed purposes exist to absorb their civic impulses.

Here, then, is Tocqueville’s *fantasia* of the Anglo-American social state: a central government superintended by “a small number of superior men”; a provincial government sustained by “men of secondary order”; and town-corporations enjoying the enviable *privilege* of managing all affairs bearing most directly on the lives of their inhabitants, who exhibit the exemplary virtue of taking an active interest in public affairs safely circumscribed by a proper deference to men of superior enlightenment.

This is really a rather remarkable description to which to apply the name *democracy*. Somehow the American wilderness has spontaneously generated something very like a pre-absolutist society of estates, a constitution so harmonious by nature as to deserve the epithet “organic.” One divines the latent power of this pre-modern social paradigm in Tocqueville’s thinking from his frequent substitution of the word “provincial” for “state” in his depictions of the federal system, as though he worked with a representation of the French provincial estates in mind.<sup>32</sup> Note, too, the image of the New England town as a “corporation,” harking back to the corporatist conception of society as a hierarchy of privileged bodies.<sup>33</sup> In New England the same supposedly “natural” differentiation reproduces itself, but happily purged of the “cascade of contempt” that had plagued the aristocratic order and been exploited by absolutism to effect its downfall.<sup>34</sup>

Of course Tocqueville’s implicit assumption that the town and state would be the focal point of politics for the vast majority of people begs a number of questions.<sup>35</sup> In contrasting the sturdy townsmen of New England with Europeans who live “indifferent to the fate of the place they live in,” Tocqueville alleges that the latter “are unconcerned with ... the safety of their streets, the fate of their church and its vestry. They think that such things have nothing to do with them, that they belong to a powerful stranger called ‘the government.’”<sup>36</sup> In the debate over the

ratification of the Constitution, however, Melancton Smith of New York had asked “what confidence or even interest would the people bestow on the state legislatures, should they be reduced to ‘meet once in a year to make laws for regulating the height of your fences and the repairing of your roads?’”<sup>37</sup> Smith foresaw more accurately than Tocqueville the consequence of a functional hierarchy that assigned to the people of the towns and hamlets only the homely chores, the *corvées*, of attending to roads, roofs, and fences while reserving high political affairs for the few blessed with a “taste” for them: namely, encouraging the people’s withdrawal from the public sphere into the sphere of purely private interests that Tocqueville would in a later stage of his argument call “individualism” and rank among the aspects of democracy to be feared.<sup>38</sup>

## Composite Republicanism

Tocqueville is too scrupulous a writer to let us suppose that he mistakes his *fantasia* for an unvarnished likeness of the Anglo-American people *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. He is not the dupe of his own device. “Everything about [New England] was singular and original.”<sup>39</sup> Elsewhere—and here I mean the ideal elsewhere, since the idealized New England did not exist even in New England—colonists were less enlightened, less equal, less inclined to venerate superior wisdom, less imbued with “admirable elements of order and morality,” less in the grip of a sanctifying idea of the very purpose of society.

Hence there is a problem of transmission or coordination. For this he proposes two solutions: cultural diffusion and elite republican leadership. The hope of cultural diffusion, expressed in yet another celebrated simile, is that the ideal, the imaginary, New England will be like a “bonfire on a hilltop, which, having spread its warmth to its immediate vicinity, tinges even the distant horizon with its glow.”<sup>40</sup> Had he encountered Samuel Johnson’s variant of this same image, he might have hesitated to use the metaphor of radiance to explain how American democracy’s wilder elements might be tamed. For Johnson had predicted that when British emigrants “scattered in the boundless regions of America,” they would resemble “rays diverging from a focus. All the rays remain but the heat is gone. Their power consisted in their concentration: when they are dispersed, they have no effect.”<sup>41</sup>

Tocqueville’s bonfire simile disguises his anxiety that the Jacksonian winds from the south and west might extinguish altogether rather than spread the waning embers in the northeast. To calm his own fear on this score, he advances a rather peculiar argument. It hinges on a distinction between the “Union,” which he says is the mere creature of “the law that created it,” namely, the Constitution, and the “republic,” which “has deeper roots.”<sup>42</sup>

In the United States, Tocqueville writes,

the word “republic” means ... the slow and tranquil action of society on itself. It is an orderly state truly based on the enlightened will of the people. ... Republicans in the United States value mores, respect beliefs, and recognize rights. They profess the opinion that insofar as a people is free, it must be

moral, religious, and moderate. ... Standing above [the majority] in the moral realm are humanity, justice, and reason, and, in the political realm, established rights. The majority recognizes these two barriers ...<sup>43</sup>

This definition of *republic* is, I think, original with Tocqueville. A republic of the Anglo-American kind is thus seen to be a composite object, at once action and state, the former "slow and tranquil," the latter "orderly" and "enlightened." Elsewhere colonies had been founded by "men with neither education nor means" or by "greedy speculators and industrial entrepreneurs."<sup>44</sup> How were the order and enlightenment of the Northeast to be imposed on the more unruly regions by slow and tranquil action? The implicit assumption here is that the Anglo-American mores of which Tocqueville approves are in some undefined sense more potent than the mores established elsewhere. This is essential, because we know that some mores are more apt to survive than others. For instance, the mores of the American Indians, in whom Tocqueville recognizes virtue of a different kind from the Anglo-American, cannot survive: in the "unequal contest" with the European invader, the Indian "succumbs," because his pride "condemns him to death."<sup>45</sup>

What then predisposes our author to believe that the idealized New England culture will diffuse throughout the United States? Tocqueville pins his hopes on a basic institutional homology between the states of New England and the other states. Though settled by people with different purposes and of utterly different character, the rest of the country will eventually come to share New England's mores because "local and provincial liberties" exist everywhere: "The nature of the country, the very way in which the English colonies were founded, and the habits of the earliest immigrants all conspired to develop local and provincial liberties to an extraordinary degree. In the United States, the institutions of the country in general are therefore essentially republican."<sup>46</sup> Here, "essentially republican" means that the majority is content to occupy itself with local interests while ceding responsibility for central interests to a cadre of natural leaders.

## The Crisis of Leadership

This brings us to the second strand in the explanation of why New England's mores will triumph: leadership. In the Tocquevillean republic, civic virtue has its gradations, as we have seen. It is only the "superior men" devoted to the national good who are required to renounce their self-interest; for the rest, self-interest properly understood will suffice.<sup>47</sup> This leaves judgment as to the nature of the general good to those superior men who, we must presume, direct "the slow and tranquil action of society on itself" and thus benignly influence the expansion of sympathy necessary to the proper understanding of self-interest.<sup>48</sup> Hence his argument requires him to assume what Madison thought it dangerous to suppose, that superior men will somehow always be found in sufficient number and by some means manage to radiate their enlightenment to the hinterland.

In fact, however, Tocqueville believed no such thing. Even before his thought takes a more pessimistic turn in *Democracy II*, we find him already in the 1835 *Democracy* "surprised to discover how common talent was among the governed and how rare in government." Seldom are "the most outstanding men ... called to public

office."<sup>49</sup> The reasons for this are multiple: the people, intent on gratifying their desires, have but limited time to enlighten themselves. And even if democracy does not lack "the capacity to choose men of merit," it will lack "the desire and taste to do so," because its judgment will have been warped by envy.<sup>50</sup>

In the second *Democracy* these themes—the conflict between industriousness and enlightenment and between envy and taste—are developed into a full-blown critique of the very organic *fantasia* that Tocqueville had made the rhetorical centerpiece of his plea for democracy. Fear of restless materialism has sapped his faith in the pre-established harmony of two distinct forms of civic virtue: the deferentially industrious virtue of an enlightened but self-absorbed populace and the selflessly patriotic virtue of a "small number of superior men." Organic democracy had depended on an equilibrium between the two, but when "the taste for material gratifications develops ... more rapidly than enlightenment or than the habits associated with liberty," this equilibrium breaks down. Citizens absorbed by their private interests "cannot waste their precious moments in pointless activities." Those "who work do not choose to turn their minds to the public's business, and because the class that might take this chore upon itself to fill its hours of leisure no longer exists, the place of the government is ... empty."<sup>51</sup> This is the negation, point by point, of the Anglo-American fancy, and it comes into focus now precisely because the normative image, intended to carry the day with its hopeful *hypotyposis* of democratic stability, has lost its hold over Tocqueville's own mind. The repressed fears of a classical *demokratia* in thrall to its basest appetites resurface. The captain who has imagined himself and his *semblables* keeping the republic on a steady course by the force of their rhetoric is now replaced "on the world's vast stage by a few men, just as in the theater," and these few "speak in the name of an absent or inattentive crowd. They alone act amid universal immobility ... and it is astonishing to see how few, how weak, and unworthy are the hands into which a great people can fall."<sup>52</sup>

A second equilibrium is thus possible, another quite vivid and convincing *fantasia* of a democracy that is no longer a republic of gently graded civic virtues but an embodiment of negative liberty so extreme as to constitute a negation of liberty, in which the public sphere not only does not interfere but barely even intersects with the private. This democracy differs, in truth, only subtly from the Anglo-American republic warmly glowing on its hilltop. Most of its citizens are still content in their self-absorbed way with the cultivation of their private gardens, herborizing close to the homes and families in which their principal passions are invested. At the center, however, the "superior men" have been replaced by professionals of the spectacle, actors "on the world's vast stage." It cannot even be ruled out that liberty of a kind exists, if the actors are sufficiently skilled to maintain in the audience the belief that they are themselves the authors of the laws they obey, and Tocqueville does not deny that a people of individualists may imagine themselves to be living lives they have freely chosen.<sup>53</sup> It is not impossible, in fact, that the spectators feel more at home in this theatrical polity than in its organic predecessor, which arguably inflicted on the "provincial" populace the discomfort of deference to an elite claiming to have been anointed by nature. By contrast, the actors who dominate the democratic stage may be at pains to represent themselves

as quite indistinct from the spectators they rule. That may, in fact, be the essence of their political art, the pragmatic translation of a new populist political science of their own.

## The Taste for Liberty

Why, then, if this theatrical democracy is at once potent and welcomed by the people, does Tocqueville reject it as a sham, seeing it not as a paragon of what has been called negative liberty but rather as a soft or mild form of despotism? The essential reason he gives is one of “taste.” Now, “taste” is at first sight a peculiar word to use in this context, but it is one that Tocqueville uses repeatedly. His most extended discussion of the term occurs in a contrast of the “taste that men have for liberty” with “the one they feel for equality.”<sup>54</sup> What is clear from this discussion is that the taste for liberty that Tocqueville has in mind is nothing like that extolled by Rev. Eliot when he exclaimed in dismay at the prospect of having to support a standing army, “Good God! What can be worse to a people who have tasted the sweets of liberty!”<sup>55</sup> Liberty for Tocqueville is not so much a sweetmeat as an aesthetic harmony, a principle of composition like that which determines one’s response to a painting, even if its characteristic features cannot be fully articulated or rationally explained. His use of the term is probably informed by Montesquieu’s essay on the subject. There we read that taste is a mixture of instinct, reason, and *je ne sais quoi*.<sup>56</sup>

This suggests a way to interpret Tocqueville’s idiosyncratically mixed notion of republican virtue. In the imaginary Anglo-American republic, some citizens might be less than fully active yet still intimately and personally engaged with the public world, the movements of which would be subject to their tasteful evaluation. But “taste” also suggests something not altogether yielding, a firmness of judgment, a resistance to flux. Hence in Tocqueville’s “taste” there is something, too, of Spinoza’s *conatus*, which Steven Smith defines as “the power exercised by each and every being to persevere in its own existence and to resist invasion and domination by the other beings that exist around it.”<sup>57</sup>

## The Unquiet Soul

It was precisely the fear that democracy might take a form that would invade and dominate superior souls rather than submit to their enlightened guidance that began to gnaw at Tocqueville’s mind. What troubled him increasingly was his sense that this second *fantasia*, that of a republic of industrious individualists ruled by cunning mountebanks, might in fact prove to be a social state more potent than the Anglo-American republic he had invented to quell his own fears. What he saw in the confrontation between the Indian and the European he feared he might see again in the confrontation between the Anglo-American and the mutant new American already rising to dominance in the New World barely fifty years after the American Revolution had called forth a generation of “superior men,” the Federalists whose conception of democracy Tocqueville had found so congenial. In wealth there was power, and democracy’s restlessness, though it might rob

Americans of joy in what they possessed, would impel them, Tocqueville believed, to create wealth without parallel in human history. Equally significant, restlessness would spur the “bellicose spirit,” and no republic, however “pacific” the temper of its citizens, was likely to remain content with “slow and tranquil action on itself” if it harbored within its borders an “uncivilized smaller nation” of warlike men invested with exclusive knowledge of the use of arms.<sup>58</sup>

We sense the psychological consequences of these gnawing doubts in a letter Tocqueville wrote to his brother in 1840, as he was finishing the second *Democracy*: “Great affairs and powerful feelings generally calm me, but the daily vexations of practical life and regular contact with people easily get me down.”<sup>59</sup> His characterization of his depression as a sign of inaptitude for the petty and mundane bears all the hallmarks of the literary melancholic:

Melancholy, however, is not only an infirmity but also a character trait that confers extraordinary prestige. ... In the most popular and accepted image, the melancholic is the man of exceptional sensibility, difficult to rouse to action, but abnormally receptive. Suffering from partial paralysis of the will, he does not act without reflection and out of habit, but must force himself into action. ... Escaping from the routine of ordinary behavior, the melancholic has pretensions to superiority.<sup>60</sup>

Tocqueville’s account of his melancholy contains a telling phrase: *cette âme inquiète et insatiable*, this restless and insatiable soul. It is not only the word that recalls the theme of *inquiétude* in the *Democracy* but also the description: “This restless and insatiable soul, which is contemptuous of all the goods of the world and which nevertheless needs to be in constant pursuit of them so as to escape the painful numbness it feels the moment it relies on itself alone.”<sup>61</sup> Though he recommends religion as a lodestar to the rulers of restless republics, Tocqueville finds it unavailing for his own unquiet soul: “For boundless desires of this sort, you will tell me that there is but one thing that can offer some relief: the infinite prospects of the other world. But I have no such resource. Not that I am, thank God, either a materialist or an anti-Christian. But the general truths in which I believe present themselves to my mind in a form so abstract, and shrouded in such a thick cloud, that my soul cannot rest upon them to establish its own point of view.”<sup>62</sup>

What we see in this letter, composed in 1840, the year in which the second volume of *Democracy* was published, is Tocqueville’s loss of faith that his Anglo-American *fantasia* possesses the persuasive force with which he had hoped not only to guide his contemporaries but also to rouse himself to active engagement in public life. Only by leading a life combining the honorable with the useful could he meet the demands he placed on himself and sustain his hope that despite the unpromising conditions of modernity—the sovereignty of the people, the empire of commerce, the pernicious influence of materialism and pantheism—two fundamentally different kinds of civic virtue might still coexist in pre-established harmony, affording superior men an honorable way to make themselves useful to their fellow human beings, or *semblables*, a word well chosen to cloak the prideful assertion of superiority with the saving democratic grace of redemptive identification.



Insofar as taste implies resistance, however, the pathos of the superior soul remains. There is already pathos in the complacent assumption of superiority itself, a blindness implicit in making the stability of an egalitarian society dependent on a principle not in its nature, not unlike the blindness that Tocqueville attributes to Mme de Sévigné to account for the insouciant cruelty he finds in several letters to her daughter: "It would be a mistake to assume that Mme de Sévigné ... was a selfish, barbarous creature. ... But [she] had no clear notion of what it meant to suffer when one was not a nobleman."<sup>63</sup> The superior soul, absorbed in the pathos of its own drift on the seas of mediocrity, has no clear notion of what it means to suffer when one is of and not above the people. It seeks to assuage its manifold disappointments by inventing a people adequate to its superior notion of what democracy might be. Much of value came from Tocqueville's yielding to this temptation, but it did not resolve his existential dilemma, nor will it resolve ours.

[end]

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (Boston: Ark, 1985), p. 72, quoted in Steven B. Smith, *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism* (Chicago: 1991), p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Although in some respects he exemplifies what has been called "the liberalism of fear," his deeper fear was of the enervation of the virile republican spirit that a too timorous liberalism might entail. Cf. Judith N. Shklar, "The Liberalism of Fear," in *Political Thought, Political Thinkers* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 3-20.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Plato, *Republic* 562a-d; Aristotle, *Politics*, 1279b, 1290b, 1291b-1292a.

<sup>5</sup> All quotations Tocqueville's *De la Démocratie en Amérique* are from my translation, *Democracy in America* (New York: Library of America, 2004), hereafter cited as DA: I, Introduction, pp. 6-7.

<sup>6</sup> John Dunn, *Setting the People Free: The Story of Democracy* (London: Atlantic Books, 2005), pp. 45-47. Aristotle, less categorical, conceded that government by the many could be good government, but he introduced a fatal distinction between *politeia* and *demokratia*. The former, meaning constitutional government, might be exercised in the interest of the whole community and therefore be good, but the latter was government in the interest of the poor, not of all. These people, *ton aporon* as opposed to *ton plethos*, the many, were said (by Plato) to be governed by "pleasures and appetites." They disparaged temperance as "want of manhood." They spent their days "winebibbing and abandoning [themselves] to the lascivious pleasing of the flute." In politics they succumbed as readily to promises of military plunder as to the blandishments of wealthy panderers. *Republic* 559c, 560d, 561d.

<sup>7</sup> Dunn, *Setting*, p. 50.

<sup>8</sup> DA I, Introduction, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> I follow the account in Quentin Skinner, *Rhetoric and Reason in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 127-33.

<sup>10</sup> He also tells us that he refrained from "serving or opposing any party" and aimed to think not about "tomorrow only" but "about the future." DA I, Introduction, pp. 16-17.

<sup>11</sup> Laurence Guellec, *Tocqueville et les langages de la démocratie* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004), p. 378.

<sup>12</sup> Skinner, *Rhetoric and Reason*, p. 183.

<sup>13</sup> DA I.1.2, I.1.3, passim.

<sup>14</sup> DA I.2.5, p. 228.

<sup>15</sup> DA I.2.6, p. 271.

<sup>16</sup> DA I.2.9, p. 330.

<sup>17</sup> DA I.1.2, p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> DA I.1.2, p. 45.

<sup>20</sup> DA I.1.2, p. 46.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*; cf. pp. 58-59.

<sup>23</sup> DA I.1.3, p. 52.

<sup>24</sup> DA I.1.3, p. 57.

<sup>25</sup> DA I.1.2, p. 40. French, p. 39. Here “milieu” must be translated as “middle,” not “midst” as some translations have it, because the point is that the Puritans came from the middle classes of the old society

<sup>26</sup> DA I.I.2, p. 31.

<sup>27</sup> AR and 1836 notes.

<sup>28</sup> DA I.2.10, p. 457.

<sup>29</sup> DA I.1.5, p. 75.

<sup>30</sup> DA I.2.10, p. 423.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Seymour Drescher (private communication) has pointed out that Tocqueville may not have intended as sharp a distinction between local and national political structures as I am suggesting here. In particular, he discusses two types of association that organized nationally, anti-tariff unions and temperance societies. Yet Tocqueville clearly regarded the anti-tariff agitation as the expression of a local, or at any rate sectional, interest: “The southern states, being purely agricultural, had no manufacturing to encourage” (DA I.2.10, 450). And while he credited Andrew Jackson with having “shrewdly and vigorously defended the rights of the Union in the tariff affair” (DA I.2.10, 452-3), he nevertheless saw the president as “acting as the agent of provincial jealousies” (*ibid.*). Despite Tocqueville’s conviction that associations should form the core of civil society’s resistance to the centralizing power of the state, on the very important tariff issue he seems to have regarded the recourse to nationwide association as an unfortunate aberration, probably because he accepted the view of his informant John Quincy Adams, who responded “to the insistence of southern free traders that their interests were contrary to those of the North” that “it cannot be true.” (See Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979], p. 138.) Like Adams, Tocqueville preferred to believe that once self-interest was “properly understood,” harmony would arise naturally and conflict would vanish. (On the concept of “self-interest properly understood” and its relation to associations, see Arthur Goldhammer, “Translating Tocqueville: The Constraints of Classicism,” *Tocqueville Review* 26:1(2005):498-531.) That the local-national dichotomy was fundamental to Tocqueville’s conception of economic regulation is also clear from his remarks on industrial associations: citizens, he says, “can do nothing in industry without forming associations.” While it might therefore seem “reasonable” for the “social power” to curtail the “independence” of industrial associations, he fears that this might lead to undue increases in the prerogatives of the central power. (See DA II.4.5, 811-813.) Finally, the temperance societies, though nationally organized through Lyman Beecher’s evangelical movement, aimed at changing local laws, not national ones. The national influence that Tocqueville imagined for them was to be achieved through their effect on the national character. Their members “behaved precisely as a great noble would do,” seeking to inspire emulation in others “less civilized” than themselves. (See DA II.2.5, p. 599.)

<sup>33</sup> He remarks, for instance, that “the idea of subsidiary powers placed between sovereign and subjects occurred naturally to aristocratic peoples because those powers comprised individuals and families marked out by birth, enlightenment, and wealth as exceptional and destined to command.” DA II.4.2, p. 789.

<sup>34</sup> It is as if Tocqueville’s brief on behalf of the democratic social state required something like this archaic paradigm of a tranquil, hierarchical, organic order to contain the anarchic tendencies of democracy that he numbers among its “more terrifying” aspects, particularly to “timid spirits.” See DA II.4.1, p. 787: “Of all the political effects produced by equality of conditions, this love of independence is the one that is most striking and most frightening to timid spirits, and it cannot be said that they are absolutely wrong to be frightened, because anarchy has a more terrifying aspect in democratic countries than elsewhere.”

<sup>35</sup> This was lifted, as James Schleifer has noted, in part from Alexander Hamilton’s cunning arguments in *Federalist* 17 as well as from Madison’s less disingenuous ones in *Federalist* 46. See James Schleifer, *The Making of Tocqueville’s “Democracy in America”* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), p. 93: “In Number 17, Hamilton had also summarized the reasons for the alleged predominance of state governments: ‘It is a know fact in human nature ... that its affections are commonly weak in proportion to the distance or diffusiveness of the object: Upon the same principle that a man is more attached to his family than to his neighborhood, to his neighborhood than to the community at large, the people of each state would be apt to feel a stronger bias towards their local governments than towards the government of the Union.’” Schleifer does not note, however, that Tocqueville conveniently ignores Hamilton’s complementary point, that “the persons entrusted with the administration of the general government” would not be tempted to usurp the prerogatives reserved to the states because those prerogatives “hold out slender allurements to ambition. Commerce, finance, negotiation and war seem to comprehend all the objects which have charms for minds governed by that passion. ... All those things ... which are proper to be provided for by local legislation can never be desirable cares of a general jurisdiction.” *Federalist* 17, in *The Federalist Papers*, Gary Wills, ed. (New York: Bantam, 1982), p. 80.

<sup>36</sup> DA I.1.5, p. 105.

<sup>37</sup> Jack N. Rakove, *Original Meanings* (New York: Vintage, 1996), p. 182.

<sup>38</sup> “Individualism is a reflective and tranquil sentiment that disposes each citizen to cut himself off from the mass of his fellow men and withdraw into the circle of family and friends, so that, having created a little society for his own use, he gladly leaves the larger society to take care of itself.” DA II.2.2, p. 585.

<sup>39</sup> DA I.1.2, 36. See also I.1.3, pp. 52 ff; I.2.5, p. 229; I.2.9, p. 349.

<sup>40</sup> DA I.1.2, p. 36.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Bernard Bailyn, *Faces of Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1992), p. 167.

<sup>42</sup> DA I.2.10, p. 456.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> DA I.1.2, p. 36.

<sup>45</sup> DA I.2.10, p. 369.

<sup>46</sup> DA I.2.10, p. 458.

<sup>47</sup> DA II.2.8, pp. 610-613.

<sup>48</sup> See my "Translating Tocqueville: The Constraints of Classicism," *op. cit.*

<sup>49</sup> DA I.2.5, p. 225.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>51</sup> DA II.2.14, p. 630.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 631.

<sup>53</sup> "Men whose passions run to material gratifications will usually be aware of the ways in which the unrest associated with liberty disrupts well-being before they notice how liberty helps to procure it. ... Fear of anarchy will keep them in constant suspense and prepared to abandon liberty at the first sign of disorder. ... When the mass of citizens is willing to concern itself only with private affairs, not even the smallest parties need abandon hope of seizing control of public affairs" DA II.2.14, pp. 630-631.

<sup>54</sup> DA II.2.1, p. 582.

<sup>55</sup> Bailyn, *Faces*, p. 119.

<sup>56</sup> "Goût," a lengthy fragment submitted to the *Encyclopedia*. Cf. J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 108: "Taste and science, important terms in [Edward Gibbon's] vocabulary, meant the exercise of a judgment that called on all the powers of the intellect."

<sup>57</sup> Steven B. Smith, *Spinoza's Book of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 97.

<sup>58</sup> DA II.3.22, p. 764.

<sup>59</sup> Letter to Edouard, 2 September 1840, in Alexis de Tocqueville, *Lettres choisies. Souvenirs*, ed. Laurence Guellec and Françoise Mélonio (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), p. 465.

<sup>60</sup> Charles Rosen, review of Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, in *New York Review of Books*, June 9, 2005, p. 56.

<sup>61</sup> Letter cited in n. 52.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> DA II.3.1, p. 658.