

**TOCQUEVILLE AND THE POLITICAL THOUGHT  
OF THE FRENCH DOCTRINAIRES  
(GUIZOT, ROYER-COLLARD, RÉMUSAT)**

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**Abstract:** This paper investigates the relation between Tocqueville's conceptual framework and the political thought of the French doctrinaires (Guizot, Royer-Collard, Rémusat), that has been unduly neglected by political theorists in the English-speaking world. After a brief description of the doctrinaire group, the paper points out similarities and differences between Tocqueville and the doctrinaires with regard to such issues as history, civilization, the French Revolution, the politics of the July Monarchy, centralization and local liberties, and the contrast between aristocratic and democratic societies. The most important section is devoted to democracy as social condition, a theme which appeared in the political writings of the French doctrinaires more than a decade before Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. The final section explores the fundamental distinction between social and political order, which looms large in both Guizot's and Royer-Collard's writings and speeches.

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'You judge democracy like an aristocrat who has been vanquished and is convinced that his conqueror is right'

(Guizot to Tocqueville)

**I**

**Introduction**

In one of his famous essays, Sainte-Beuve prophesied that Tocqueville would be an inexhaustible subject of reflection for the generations to come.<sup>2</sup> Time has proved him right. More than a century and a half after the publication of *Democracy in America*, the Tocqueville industry — in both France and the United States — is in full spate and his reputation has risen since the fall of the

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<sup>2</sup> Sainte-Beuve, *Nouveaux Lundis* (Paris, 1886) t. X, nouvelle édition, p. 330.

Berlin Wall in 1989. Over the years, political theorists fascinated by Tocqueville's new science of politics have attempted to unearth the sources that nourished his political writings. In doing so, they have often been struck by a feature of Tocqueville's style which was also recognized by his astute contemporaries. As a kindred spirit, Charles de Rémusat,<sup>3</sup> once rightly remarked with regard to *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, that Tocqueville rediscovered and reinterpreted in an original manner what others had said before him and attributed this characteristic to Tocqueville's spirit searching for certainty and truth.

This paper attempts to highlight the impact of the political debates during the second Restoration in France (1815–30) upon Tocqueville's writings. It concentrates on the political thought of three leading French doctrinaires, François Guizot (1787–1874), Pierre Royer-Collard (1763–1845) and Charles de Rémusat (1797–1875).<sup>4</sup> Students of Tocqueville have often tried to identify the writers who have influenced him; an alternative — and less often taken — approach has been to point out the problems from which Tocqueville started, or those issues which were publicly debated in the 1820s in Paris.<sup>5</sup> In attempting to combine both approaches we may be able to shed new light on the academic dispute between those Tocquevillian scholars who claim that the second volume of *Democracy in America* (1840) offers a different vision of democracy than

<sup>3</sup> Writes Rémusat: 'M. de Tocqueville a suivi dans son travail une habitude qu'il s'est faite . . . Il a écarté tout ce que d'autres avaient trouvé, écrit, pensé. Il a marché droit aux choses mêmes, consultant les pièces et non les livres, s'enquérant des faits et non des réflexions d'autrui' (Charles de Rémusat, 'L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution', *Revue des deux mondes* (1er août 1856), p. 655). George Armstrong Kelly, *The Human Comedy* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 3–4, also discussed Tocqueville's strange silence on his sources. In a letter to Duvergier de Hauranne, Tocqueville observed: 'Quand j'ai un sujet quelconque à traiter, il m'est quasi impossible de lire aucun des livres qui ont été composés sur la même matière; le contact des idées des autres m'agite et me trouble. Je m'abstiens donc, autant que je le puis, de savoir comment leurs auteurs ont interprété après coup les faits dont je m'occupe, le jugement qu'ils en ont porté. Je me donne, au contraire, une peine incroyable pour retrouver moi-même les faits dans les documents du temps; souvent j'obtiens ainsi, avec un immense labeur, ce que j'aurais trouvé aisément en suivant une autre route' (quoted in Eduardo Nolla, 'Introduction' to Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, ed. Eduardo Nolla (Paris, 1990), p. xxxviii).

<sup>4</sup> The group of the French doctrinaires also included: Prosper de Barante (1782–1866), Victor de Broglie (1792–1867), Hercule de Serre (1776–1824), Camille Jordan (1771–1821), Victor Cousin (1792–1867), Jean-Philibert Damiron (1794–1862), Théodore Jouffroy (1796–1842) and Pellegrino Rossi (1787–1848).

<sup>5</sup> François Furet eloquently argued for the need to concentrate on the very problems that led Tocqueville to his famous voyage to America in order to find answers to the problems of the Old World. For more detail, see François Furet, 'The Intellectual Origins of Tocqueville's Thought', *The Tocqueville Review*, Vol. 7 (1985–6), pp. 117–27.

the first one does (1835) and those who stress their continuity.<sup>6</sup> Though it is not my aim here to take sides in this academic debate, I shall demonstrate, by drawing on Tocqueville's correspondence and notes of 1828 to 1831, that he had plenty of opportunities to reflect on important themes that loom large in his masterpiece *before* arriving in America, and that his political outlook was significantly influenced by the parliamentary debates which took place during the Bourbon Restoration. Even if some changes in emphasis can be detected between the two halves of *Democracy*, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that Tocqueville's political vision had crystallized *before* he embarked on his famous voyage to America that led to the writing of *Democracy in America*. The French doctrinaires — above all, Royer-Collard and Guizot — exerted a crucial influence in this respect.

The study of ideas, their origins, influence and adaptation, is often an interesting but challenging endeavour. Tocqueville was not only a writer with an uncommon power of synthesis and generalization, but also an unconventional thinker who wanted to play an influential role in politics. He not only felt an irrepressible need for greatness, but also had a sharp sense of independence that often put him at odds with his contemporaries. Given his style and own way of writing, it would then be appropriate to speak of Tocqueville's intellectual affinities *and* debts. Nonetheless, to analyse Tocqueville's affinities and debts poses a few problems to the interpreters of his works. As Robert Nisbet<sup>7</sup> remarked in an influential article published two decades ago, there are many Tocquevilles: the conservative, the liberal conservative, the conservative liberal, the liberal *malgré lui*, or the liberal aristocrat. Tocqueville the prophet of mass society vies with Tocqueville the prophet of totalitarianism. He was also praised for his analysis of modern bureaucracy and administrative penetration of society by government, and was often considered as the prophet of modern alienation and anomie. Finally, other interpreters saw in Tocqueville a prophet and critic of the decline in intellectual and cultural values under democratic regimes.

Confronted with these puzzles, the interpreter of Tocqueville should, then, attempt to analyse Tocqueville's adaptation of the doctrinaires as a means of understanding how a great political philosopher made use of his predecessors'

<sup>6</sup> Seymour Drescher, 'Tocqueville's Two *Démocraties*' (*Journal of the History of Ideas*, 25 (April–June 1964), pp. 201–16) and Jean-Claude Lamberti, *Tocqueville et les deux démocraties* (Paris, 1983), have insisted on the existence of a definitive shift between the two halves of *Democracy*. The opposite view is shared by, among others, James Schleifer, *The Making of Tocqueville's 'Democracy in America'* (Chapel Hill, 1980) and George Wilson Pierson, *Tocqueville in America* (Baltimore, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Robert Nisbet, 'Many Tocquevilles', *The American Scholar* (Winter 1976–7), pp. 59–75.

conceptual framework.<sup>8</sup> It behoves us to demonstrate the ways in which Tocqueville's conceptual apparatus was shaped by the political debates between the doctrinaires, radical liberals and ultraconservatives in France between 1815 and 1830.<sup>9</sup> I will attempt to answer these questions by focusing on issues such as revolution and civilization, centralization and decentralization, democracy as social condition, and the distinction between political and social order. Other important themes, such as the liberty of the press or representative government, will not be discussed in this essay, but a thorough comparison between Tocqueville and the doctrinaires will have to address them as well.

## II

### Who Were the French Doctrinaires?

Tocqueville's writings were often presented as works without lineage in the history of political thought. Not surprisingly, the relation between the author of *Democracy in America* and the French doctrinaires has been poorly documented in the abundant literature on Tocqueville published outside France.<sup>10</sup> I do not want to convey the impression that the influence of Guizot and Royer-Collard on Tocqueville has gone entirely unnoticed in the academic literature. I only argue that this influence has been underestimated and understudied in the English-speaking world, and that this neglect has prevented us from discovering and studying the original political thought of the French doctrinaires. The

<sup>8</sup> For a chart of Tocqueville's intellectual affinities and debts see Pierson, *Tocqueville in America*, pp. 761–2. An excellent discussion of Tocqueville's writings and milieu can be found in Françoise Mélonio, *Tocqueville et les Français* (Paris, 1993). For a critical discussion of the 'strange' liberalism of the doctrinaires and a competent overview of nineteenth-century French liberalism see Lucien Jaume's recent *L'individu effacé ou le paradoxe du libéralisme français* (Paris, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> This paper does not aim, however, at downplaying Tocqueville's striking originality; his *Democracy in America* is a masterpiece that outlined the principles of a 'new science of politics, and revolutionized our understanding of democracy.

<sup>10</sup> Pierre Rosanvallon's magisterial *Le moment Guizot* (Paris, 1985) marked the rediscovery of the doctrinaires in France; in the United Kingdom and United States, the political works of the doctrinaires are still waiting for an editor. There are, however, a few exceptions that must be acknowledged here. Larry Siedentop's writings are particularly important in this respect. His article 'Two Liberal Traditions', originally published in *The Idea of Freedom*, ed. Alan Ryan (Oxford, 1979), pp. 153–74, drew attention to the unduly neglected liberalism of the French doctrinaires, a theme also developed in Chapter 2 of his *Tocqueville* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 20–40. More recently, Siedentop has written a valuable introduction to Guizot's *The History of Civilization in Europe*, which has just been re-edited in the Penguin Series (London, 1997). On Guizot and the doctrinaires also see Douglas Johnson, *Guizot* (London, 1963), and Vincent Starzinger, *The Politics of the Center* (New Brunswick, 1991). Starzinger offers a comparative analysis of the *juste milieu* theory and practice in France and England, 1815–48. George Armstrong Kelly highlighted Royer-Collard's influence over Tocqueville in *The Human Comedy*. Last but not least, a good discussion of the intellectual climate during the

fact is all the more surprising given that Volume Two of *Democracy in America* was written in a period of intense correspondence with Royer-Collard (1836–9),<sup>11</sup> one of the two most astute contemporary readers of *Democracy in America* (according to Tocqueville the other was John Stuart Mill). At the same time, the theses developed in *The Old Regime and the Revolution* bear some similarities to those advanced by Guizot in his courses on the history of civilization in France and Europe, courses which Tocqueville attended between April 1829 and May 1830 in a crowded auditorium at Collège de France. As to the relation between Rémusat and Tocqueville, we have Tocqueville's written testimony in which he acknowledged the affinity between their political views.<sup>12</sup> His statement is intriguing enough, given the fact that he was notoriously parsimonious in disclosing his sources and affinities. Was he overly courteous towards Rémusat, as etiquette required him to be, or did he utter the plain truth? We are left, therefore, with the difficult task of ascertaining the ways in which the doctrinaires influenced the development of Tocqueville's political ideas.

Despite the astonishingly high reputation he enjoyed during the first half of the nineteenth century, the leading doctrinaire, Guizot, posthumously had a bad reputation and fell into oblivion. Today he is remembered mostly for a famous phrase, *enrichissez-vous*, which is always detached from the larger context to which it belongs. The correct quotation that sheds light on Guizot's true message is: '*éclairez-vous, enrichissez-vous, améliorez-vous la condition morale et matérielle de notre France: voilà les vraies innovations*'.<sup>13</sup> The *Petit Larousse* presented Guizot as a staunch defender of conservative ideas and went on to make him responsible for the revolution of 1848, when people cried *down with Guizot!* on the streets of Paris.<sup>14</sup> He is also mentioned at the beginning of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, where Marx and Engels placed him, along with the Pope, the Czar and Metternich, in the 'holy alliance' of reactionaries, who attempted to exorcize the spectre of communism. Of Royer-Collard, those who have visited Paris may remember that a street with his name can be found in the vicinity of Sorbonne; his writings remain, however, known only to a small number.

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Bourbon Restoration can be found in Stanley Mellon, *The Political Uses of History* (Stanford, 1958).

<sup>11</sup> For a good discussion of the influence of Royer-Collard on Volume Two of *Democracy* see Lamberti, *Tocqueville*, pp. 155–84.

<sup>12</sup> Writes Tocqueville: 'Vous étiez l'homme du monde qui m'avait le plus fait peur et avez le plus précipité mon travail. Je pressentais que vous marchiez sur la même route, et je voyais que vous jetiez chaque jour dans la circulation les idées mères sur lesquelles je voulais établir mon œuvre'. *Œuvres et correspondance inédites d'Alexis de Tocqueville*, ed. Gustave de Beaumont (Paris, 1851), t. II, p. 315.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Eugen Weber, 'The Man Who Tamed the Past', *Times Literary Supplement* (25 April 1997), p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> See Stanley Mellon, 'Introduction' to François Guizot, *Historical Essays and Lectures* (Chicago, 1972), pp. xvii–xlv.

Oddly enough, the very term *doctrinaire* seems to be a misnomer. In the middle of heated parliamentary debates during the first years of the second Restoration (1816), a monarchist of the right, wary of the endless repetition of words such as ‘principles’, ‘theories’ and ‘doctrines’, which loomed large in the discourses of Royer-Collard and his friends, contemptuously remarked: *Voilà bien nos doctrinaires*.<sup>15</sup> They were doomed to carry that title ever since. Be that as it may, it appears that the group of doctrinaires became a politically salient force in 1817 during the famous debates on the law of the press<sup>16</sup> and the Concordat. In his memoirs, Guizot wrote that the doctrinaires were ‘moderate reformers’,<sup>17</sup> who defended the interests of new French society against its political opponents from both the left and the right. The doctrinaires did not form a political party; they were intellectuals whose talents and knowledge brought them to the forefront of the political arena in post-revolutionary France. They displayed their outstanding skills in famous parliamentary debates, or when working in the administration.<sup>18</sup> Rémusat also emphasized the originality of the doctrinaires’ style, that he viewed as their most salient characteristic; for him, the term *doctrinaire* referred more to a quality of tone and spirit than to a rigid set of political principles.<sup>19</sup>

To be sure, as professors, politicians and intellectuals, the doctrinaires were prototypes of nineteenth-century liberals. Forward-looking spirits, they accepted the original ideas of the Revolution and foresaw the dawn of a new age whose principles they understood and feared at the same time. Well-educated individuals of bourgeois extraction (with few exceptions), the doctrinaires attempted to rebuild the institutions of France in keeping with the new *Zeitgeist*. They wanted to ‘cure’ the country of any form of revolutionary fervour and opposed to the revolutionary spirit (of 1793) the ‘noble’ spirit of the Revolution, as manifested in the principles and ideals of 1789. In the doctrinaires’ view, ‘ending’ the Revolution was the priority on the political agenda and they fought hard to constitutionalize the civil liberties of 1789, while vigorously condemning the totalitarian turn of 1793. The doctrinaire group took an active part in

<sup>15</sup> The detail can be found in Jean-Jacques Chevalier, ‘La pensée politique des doctrinaires de la Restauration’, Conseil d’État, *Études et documents* (Paris, 1964), p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> For a thorough discussion on this issue see Lucien Jaume, ‘La conception doctrinaire de la liberté de la presse’, in *Guizot, les Doctrinaires et la presse* (Second Guizot Colloquium, Le Val Richer, 23–24 September 1993), ed. Dario Roldán, Fondation Guizot-Val Richer, 1994, pp. 111–24.

<sup>17</sup> François Guizot, *Mémoires pour servir à mon temps* (Paris, 1870), t. I, p. 159.

<sup>18</sup> *La vie politique de M. Royer-Collard. Ses discours et ses écrits*, ed. Prosper de Barante (Paris, 1861), t. I, p. 422. Guizot was too young to run for the Chamber of Deputies; the minimal age required for a candidate was thirty. He would be elected only in 1830, on the eve of the July Revolution.

<sup>19</sup> The passage is taken from Rémusat’s *Mémoires de ma vie* as quoted by Chevalier, ‘La pensée politique des doctrinaires’, p. 13.

the famous political debates of the Bourbon Restoration, an epoch when the foundations of a new parliamentary regime were laid. They supported the principles enshrined in the Charter of 1814, which brought forth a much-needed political settlement that was supposed to heal the deep wounds of the past. The Charter established a constitutional monarchy based on the idea of mixed government; the upper house of Parliament was controlled by a hereditary nobility, while the Chamber of Deputies was elected by a narrow franchise.<sup>20</sup>

The doctrinaires were independent spirits whose originality may easily escape our black-and-white categories which divide the world into democrats and anti-democrats, liberals and anti-liberals. From its early days, the doctrinaire camp had its own dissenters who were keen on preserving their originality; furthermore, as Charles Pouthas once remarked, there had been no single doctrinaire ideology.<sup>21</sup> The doctrinaires developed a rational and systematic way of *doing* and *thinking* about politics that was based on a careful observation of the new social condition of post-revolutionary France. Nonetheless, it was not only their style which separated the doctrinaires from their political opponents. Their aim was to replace the politics of passion carried on by ultraconservatives on the right and the radicals on the left with a politics of the centre, aiming at creating new institutions and steering a middle course between Revolution and Reaction.

Tired of all forms of political extremism, the French doctrinaires looked for a *juste milieu* that would prevent society from falling into extremism and ideological intransigence; their purpose was to reconcile liberty and order in a society ridden by intense political conflicts. They opposed ‘prophets of the past’ like Joseph de Maistre and Louis de Bonald, legitimists like Chateaubriand, and radical liberals like Laffitte, Lafayette or Manuel. No one has better explained the doctrinaire method than Guizot himself. In his memoirs he described the political project of the doctrinaires in the following terms:

En acceptant la nouvelle société française, telle que toute notre histoire et non pas seulement 1789 l’a faite, ils entreprirent de fonder son gouvernement sur des bases rationnelles et pourtant tout autres que les théories au nom desquelles on avait détruit l’ancienne société, ou les maximes incohérentes qu’on essayait d’évoquer pour la reconstruire. Appelés tour à tour à combattre et à défendre la Révolution, ils se placèrent dès l’abord et hardiment dans

<sup>20</sup> For more detail see François Furet, *Revolutionary France, 1780–1870* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 271–2. Every citizen paying at least 300 francs in taxes had the right to vote. To be eligible for the Chamber of Deputies, the minimal age was thirty; only about 100,000 citizens (out of a population of 23 million) could vote under the principles of the Charter of 1814.

<sup>21</sup> Rosanvallon offers a good overview of the doctrinaires’ writings (*Le moment Guizot*, pp. 389–93). For more detail on the initial group of the doctrinaires as well as the temperamental differences between them see Charles-H. Pouthas, *Guizot pendant la Restauration* (Paris, 1923), pp. 167–72.

l'ordre intellectuel, opposant des principes à des principes, faisant appel à l'expérience mais aussi à la raison . . . Ce fut à ce mélange d'élévation philosophique et de modération politique, à ce respect rationnel des droits et des faits divers, à ces doctrines à la fois nouvelles et conservatrices, anti-révolutionnaires sans être rétrogrades et modestes au fond, quoique souvent hautaines dans leur langage, que les Doctrinaires dûrent leur importance comme leur nom.<sup>22</sup>

Worth noting are the very words chosen by Guizot to illustrate the doctrinaires' method: opposing principles to principles, combining experience and reason, philosophical sophistication and political moderation, respect for rights and facts. The favourite expression of the doctrinaires, *la force des choses*, is itself a proof of their enlightened pragmatism.

To offer a coherent presentation of the doctrinaires' writings is not an easy task; their political thought must be reconstituted from books, pamphlets, articles, memoirs and parliamentary speeches, most of which have long been out of print in France and have not been translated into English. Some of Guizot's historical works were translated in the nineteenth century in England, where he acquired a solid reputation as a historian of European civilization and representative government. In addition to Guizot's monumental *History of Representative Government* (written in 1821–2, but published only in 1851), theorists should read his political writings, most notably *Du gouvernement de la France* (*On the Government of France*, 1820), *Des moyens de gouvernement et d'opposition* (*On the Means of Government and Opposition*, 1821) and the posthumously published treatise of political philosophy *Philosophie politique: de la souveraineté* (*Political Philosophy: On Sovereignty*, 1822). Royer-Collard's famous parliamentary discourses, collected and published by Prosper de Barante in 1861, are also worth reading today, as is Rémusat's *Politique libérale* (*Liberal Politics*). In their works, the doctrinaires addressed important issues such as democracy as social condition (*état social*), the distinction between the social and political order, power, centralization, social levelling, and the distinction between the spirit of the Revolution and revolutionary spirit. All these topics also loom large in Tocqueville's works, on which we will concentrate in the next sections.

### III

#### A Few Similarities and Differences

The correspondence between Tocqueville and Royer-Collard bears witness to the affinities between the two men and demonstrates the extent to which the old doctrinaire served as a model to his younger friend. The first letter from Tocqueville to the then seventy-two-year-old Royer-Collard is dated January 1835, just before the publication of Volume One of *Democracy in America*. The

<sup>22</sup> Guizot, *Mémoires* (Paris, 1870), t. I, pp. 157–9.

exchange continued over the years and ended shortly before Royer-Collard's death in 1845 (his last letter to Tocqueville was written on 23 October 1844). For us, the importance of these letters lies in the information they convey about the writing of the second volume of *Democracy* and, above all, about Royer-Collard's influence on his younger disciple, who attempted to describe the profile of the future democratic society.<sup>23</sup> To be sure, Royer-Collard had words of praise for the first volume of *Democracy in America*, which he compared with Aristotle's *Politics* and Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*: 'I have read it five times', he confessed to his friend, Becquey; 'it is for me an inexhaustible source of instruction and pleasure'.<sup>24</sup> Royer-Collard realized that Tocqueville was ready to embark on a path similar to his own and admired the style and determination with which he tried hard to create his own style.<sup>25</sup> The correspondence between Royer-Collard and Tocqueville also demonstrates that the latter was familiar with the famous parliamentary discourses of the old doctrinaire during the second Restoration (1815–30). Tocqueville considered them as 'seminal discourses, by their ideas, method, and style',<sup>26</sup> and later tried hard — albeit unsuccessfully — to emulate them in his own parliamentary speeches.

Above all, the affinity between Tocqueville and Royer-Collard can be traced at the level of political ideas, an affinity that manifested itself in the second volume of *Democracy in America*. Tocqueville cherished Royer-Collard for being the last representative of an age of great passions; he saw in him a unique political character descending from a noble past, whose ideas and sentiments were superior to those of Tocqueville's 'petty' age.<sup>27</sup> He admired Royer-Collard's fierce spirit of independence<sup>28</sup> and aspired to achieve the same degree of autonomy from the factions of the day as his mentor had, by occupying distinctive ground between the radical left, the monarchist left, the doctrinaires, and the royalist ultraconservatives. Tocqueville envied Royer-Collard's fortune in having lived at a crucial juncture in time, when the foundations of a new regime were laid and parliamentary life started anew. Both were keen on distinguishing the noble spirit of the Revolution from the revolutionary spirit that led to the Terror of 1793. This explains their common concern with ending the Revolution, constitutionalizing its liberties, and teaching the virtues of

<sup>23</sup> An excellent discussion on this topic can be found in Lamberti, *Tocqueville*, pp. 167–84. He points out that Royer-Collard's intellectual authority over his younger friend reached a peak in 1836–7 and declined thereafter.

<sup>24</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Œuvres Complètes*, t. XI, ed. A. Jardin (Paris, 1970), p. V.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42–4; p. 54.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 102–3.

<sup>28</sup> Writes Royer-Collard: 'En aucun temps je n'ai fait profession d'être auxiliaire; je cherche, selon mes lumières, la vérité et la justice.' Tocqueville comments sadly: 'Position qui n'est possible que dans des époques exceptionnelles, par des hommes exceptionnels' (*ibid.*, p. 104).

political moderation. The project of purifying the liberal ethos from revolutionary passions united them,<sup>29</sup> as did the idea of constitutional monarchy. That Tocqueville was a defender of constitutional, hereditary monarchy may surprise us today, given the fact that political theorists have often neglected this aspect of his political thought. Yet, as a letter to his friend Stoffels demonstrates,<sup>30</sup> Tocqueville preferred hereditary monarchy, which he thought to be more suitable to the conditions of France than a republic.

Furthermore, both Royer-Collard and Tocqueville vigorously defended the liberty of the press. The doctrinaire insisted on the link between liberty and legitimacy, defended right against privilege, and opposed absolute power; all these aspects of Royer's thought exerted a lasting influence on Tocqueville. Furthermore, in his letters to his old mentor, Tocqueville shared with him his dislike of Machiavelli. The *Prince*, Tocqueville used to say, was a second-rate work dominated by cruelty and cunning, a view also shared by Royer-Collard, who denounced in Machiavelli's work the doctrine of utility in its most hideous form.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, Tocqueville confessed to Royer-Collard his taste for great political actions,<sup>32</sup> a need also felt by the old doctrinaire, who missed the spirit of the old aristocratic society.<sup>33</sup> Royer-Collard, who had parted company with Guizot in 1835,<sup>34</sup> also shared Tocqueville's melancholy. Politics, wrote Royer-Collard to his electors in 1837, is now devoid of its former greatness and individual interests prevail over more noble passions.<sup>35</sup> Royer-Collard's complaint, albeit somewhat different from Tocqueville's, echoes the latter's fear that

<sup>29</sup> See Tocqueville's letter to Freslon of 8 July 1858, quoted in Lamberti, *Tocqueville*, pp. 171–3.

<sup>30</sup> Tocqueville's preference for hereditary monarchy has somewhat escaped the attention of political theorists. Here is what he had to say on this subject in a letter to E. Stoffels in 1836: 'Ce que je veux, ce n'est pas une république, mais une monarchie héréditaire. Je l'aimerais même mieux légitime qu'élue aussi que celle que nous avons' (quoted in Lamberti, *Tocqueville*, p. 160).

<sup>31</sup> Tocqueville, *Œuvres Complètes*, t. XI, pp. 19, 22. It remains an open question whether or not Tocqueville was familiar with Machiavelli's *Discorsi*.

<sup>32</sup> Writes Tocqueville: 'Le sentiment du grand me manque et on dirait que l'imagination du grand s'éteint' (*ibid.*, p. 61). Astonishingly, the need for greatness was a Machiavellian theme.

<sup>33</sup> Here is Royer-Collard once again: 'Ce n'est pas la vieille forme de la société que je regrette, mais les hommes qui en sortaient, les esprits, les âmes, les caractères. Il me faut de la grandeur, n'en fût-il plus au monde; je ne redemande pas assurément les privilèges de la noblesse, mais je redemande le gentilhomme, et je ne le retrouve pas dans notre société' (*ibid.*, p. 117).

<sup>34</sup> They would be reconciled only ten years later, shortly before Royer-Collard's death in 1845.

<sup>35</sup> The whole passage is worth quoting: 'La politique est maintenant dépouillée de sa grandeur; les intérêts qu'on appelle matériels la dominant. Je ne dédaigne point ces intérêts; ils ont leur prix et ils méritent l'attention favorable des gouvernements, mais ils ne viennent dans mon estime qu'après d'autres intérêts bien supérieurs où les nations

by furthering an endless and relentless quest for material success political freedom would sow, in the end, the seeds of its own destruction. Their views on democracy as social condition also bear striking similarities, to which we shall return in the final section.

If the affinities between Tocqueville and Royer-Collard seem to be obvious, it is more difficult to describe the relation between Tocqueville's political thought and the ideas of the most famous French doctrinaire, Guizot. At first glance, it seems easier to point out what separated Tocqueville from Guizot than what united them.<sup>36</sup> To be sure, by reading Tocqueville's private letters of 1835 to 1848, or the opening chapter of his *Recollections*, one may be tempted to conclude that Guizot was the politician Tocqueville hated most during the second half of the July Monarchy. Tocqueville's letters of 1837 to 1848 convey his antipathy towards Guizot the politician, whom he found to be 'fundamentally alien'<sup>37</sup> to his own way of thinking and feeling. The bourgeois life of the July Monarchy seemed to the author of *Democracy in America* marred by pettiness, egoism and mediocrity, with which he could not reconcile himself. It was an age devoid of greatness, Tocqueville noted, in which true politics became impossible, while government itself resembled more and more a huge industrial company.<sup>38</sup> Tocqueville saw the cause of this predicament in the then widespread belief that politics had become nothing more than an arena for trivial ambitions and sordid manipulations. He was displeased by the increasing materialism of both private and public life in France and disliked any form of eclecticism.

This dissatisfaction with the regime led by Guizot was expressed by Tocqueville in a well-known parliamentary speech on the eve of the Revolution of 1848: 'It seems to me', Tocqueville said, 'that the present state of things, the state of opinion and of men's minds in France, gives cause for alarm and

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doivent chercher leur véritable prospérité et leur solide gloire', *La vie politique de M. Royer-Collard*, ed. Barante, t. II, p. 523.

<sup>36</sup> Both François Furet, 'The Intellectual Origins', and Pierre Manent, 'Guizot et Tocqueville devant l'ancien et le nouveau', in *François Guizot et la culture politique de son temps*, ed. M. Valensise (Paris, 1991), pp. 147–59, insist on the differences between Tocqueville and Guizot. On the relations between the doctrinaires and Tocqueville also see Rémusat, 'De l'esprit de réaction: Royer-Collard et Tocqueville', *Revue des deux mondes* (Paris, 15 Octobre 1861), tome 35, p. 803; Luiz Diez del Corral, 'Tocqueville et la pensée politique des Doctrinaires', *Alexis de Tocqueville: Livre du Centenaire, 1859–1959* (Paris, 1960), pp. 63 ff.; Luiz Diez del Corral, *El pensamiento político de Tocqueville* (Madrid, 1989), pp. 33–9, 46–52, 353–92; Louis Girard, *Les libéraux français, 1814–1875* (Paris, 1985), pp. 69–79, 93–103.

<sup>37</sup> Letter to Royer-Collard, in Alexis de Tocqueville, *Selected Letters on Politics and Society*, ed. Roger Boesche (Berkeley, 1985), p. 154.

<sup>38</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Souvenirs* (Paris, 1942), pp. 26–7.

sorrow.<sup>39</sup> When his taste for great events remained unsatisfied, Tocqueville was not shy in disclosing his idiosyncrasies as well as his being tired of the ‘little democratic and bourgeois pot of soup’<sup>40</sup> of the day. On 27 September 1841 he confessed to Royer-Collard that he felt an almost invincible repugnance to associating himself in a permanent manner with any of his contemporaries, including Thiers and Guizot. Furthermore, Tocqueville also wrote that among all the parties that divided France at that time he did not see a single one to which he would want to be tied.<sup>41</sup> A few lines later, he concluded in a famous sentence that the ‘*liberal but not revolutionary*’ party, which alone suited him, did not exist.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, should we consider, for example, Guizot’s theory of middle class or mixed regime, it appears that Tocqueville’s writings belong to a universe alien to the political imagination of the famous doctinaire. Unlike Guizot, Tocqueville did not believe that the triumph of the middle class was the culminating point in history; for him, the rise of the middle class was the manifestation of a certain form of individualism rather than the march of reason on earth. Moreover, *political* democracy<sup>43</sup> was not Guizot’s central curiosity; for him, the value of representative government and democracy as *état social* derived from their being a mechanism of selection of natural superiorities, whereas Tocqueville admired them for the effervescence they spread into the social fabric. More importantly perhaps, Guizot did not travel to America to surmise the profile of the future society, as Tocqueville did; America is not for us, Guizot said in 1831.<sup>44</sup> Instead, he looked across the Channel to England, whose institutions he admired and cherished. He also delved into the past and studied the development of European civilization by highlighting its diverse components in their perpetual struggle for supremacy. He worked mainly with concepts — civilization, representation and the like — inherited from his

<sup>39</sup> Tocqueville’s speech pronounced in the Chamber of Deputies on 27 January 1848 during the discussion of the proposed answer to the speech from the throne, republished as an appendix in Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J.P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence (New York, 1969), p. 749.

<sup>40</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Selected Letters*, p. 143. The passage is taken from a letter to his old friend, Gustave de Beaumont, written on 9 August 1840.

<sup>41</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville: ‘Je sens une répugnance presque invincible à m’associer d’une manière permanente avec aucun des hommes politiques de notre temps, et, parmi tous les partis qui divisent notre pays, je n’en vois pas un seul avec lequel je voulusse contracter un lien . . . Le parti *libéral, mais non révolutionnaire*, qui seul me conviendrait, n’existe pas et certes il ne m’est pas donné de le créer’ (Tocqueville, *Œuvres Complètes*, t. XI, p. 108).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> I explain and elaborate on the distinction between democracy as social condition and political democracy towards the end of this paper.

<sup>44</sup> I owe this point to Lucien Jaume.

French and Scottish predecessors.<sup>45</sup> Tocqueville took a different tack. He did not share Guizot's obsession with replicating on French soil the English Glorious Revolution (as the permanent foundation of representative government), nor was he overly sympathetic to the idea of mixed government. Guizot's interest in the sovereignty of reason was not echoed by Tocqueville. Finally, Tocqueville understood that the new democratic social condition characterized by the equality of conditions would make revolutions more and more rare in the future. Guizot failed to grasp this point and continued to fear the spectre of the Revolution until his fall from power in 1848.

It is not my aim to deny the existence of these obvious differences; yet they must not obliterate the lasting influence exerted by Guizot over Tocqueville, especially during the last years of the Bourbon Restoration (1828–30). To be sure, there have been important similarities between Tocqueville and Guizot<sup>46</sup> that may escape us if too much emphasis is put on what separates them. Closing this section without mentioning these less visible affinities would fail to render justice to both Tocqueville and Guizot. A cursory look at what the two men saw as their particular task in the context of post-revolutionary France would reveal that they were both preoccupied with finding a way to 'end the Revolution' (a point also shared with Royer-Collard), which is another way of acknowledging that both Tocqueville and Guizot were concerned with establishing and consolidating the free institutions of a new liberal regime. They both disliked government by the masses<sup>47</sup> and believed that a synthesis could be achieved between philosophy and politics.<sup>48</sup> They also insisted on the harmony between freedom and religion and argued, against ultra-conservatives, that the French Revolution, far from being an aberration (as Burke and Maistre believed), was in fact the outcome of a long historical evolution of European civilization. True, one may think that the intensity with which Guizot and the other doctrinaires opposed the revolutionary spirit was not matched by Tocqueville's more moderate fear of the Revolution. Nonetheless, one must not forget that the doctrinaires and their young disciple were always keen on dissociating the spirit of 1789 from the political radicalism of 1793. In a letter which can be viewed as one of the best expressions of his political credo, Tocqueville confessed his staunch opposition to revolutionary spirit in the following terms: 'I do not think that in France there is a man who is less revolutionary than I, nor one who has a more profound hatred for what is called the revolutionary spirit (a spirit which

<sup>45</sup> This point is also made by Manent, 'Guizot et Tocqueville', pp. 147–8.

<sup>46</sup> Johnson (*Guizot*, pp. 84–5) also discusses this topic.

<sup>47</sup> 'The most rational government is not that in which all the interested parties take part, but that which the most enlightened and most moral classes of the society direct' (Tocqueville to Kergolay, in *Selected Letters*, ed. Boesche, p. 56).

<sup>48</sup> Nonetheless, in spite of his political ambitions, Tocqueville was not a gifted politician. He lacked a certain willingness to compromise, the ability of seizing an advantage, and the authority to dominate a chaotic assembly. Guizot had all these gifts.

is very easily combined with the love of an absolute government).<sup>49</sup> These words could also have been uttered by Guizot, who rarely disguised his fear and hatred of anarchy and revolutionary spirit.

A few years before Tocqueville's death, Guizot wrote to him: 'You judge democracy like an aristocrat who has been vanquished, and is convinced that his conqueror is right.'<sup>50</sup> He wanted, in fact, to point out that in spite of their apparent disagreements, their position *vis-à-vis* the new world was surprisingly similar in many respects. This idea was best conveyed by Guizot in a discourse at the *Académie française* in 1861, in which he celebrated the memory of Tocqueville (who had died two years before) by explicitly pointing to the affinity between their political ideas. The long-term goals they pursued, Guizot claimed, were very much the same — the establishment of a liberal regime in post-revolutionary France — even if the means they envisaged in order to achieve them were sometimes different. Both of them cherished the new civil liberties and liberal institutions<sup>51</sup> and rejected the political principles of the Old Regime. A closer look at the hidden affinities between their works would persuade us that Guizot's eulogy for the man who had just passed away was more than a simple rhetorical device. Let us attempt now to demonstrate in greater detail the impact of the doctrinaires' writings on Tocqueville by looking at their reading of the past and their understanding of the French Revolution.

#### IV

##### History, Civilization and the French Revolution

In a letter to his friend Kergolay written in January 1835, on the eve of the publication of *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville acknowledged: 'Nearly ten years ago I was already thinking about part of the things I have just now set forth. *I was in America only to become clear on this point.* The penitentiary system was a *pretext*: I took it only as a passport that would let me enter thoroughly into the United States' (all emphases added).<sup>52</sup> For any interpreter of Tocqueville this statement is of utmost importance, for it helps us put his masterpiece in a proper conceptual framework. To understand the profile of the

<sup>49</sup> This revealing letter to his friend Eugène Stoffels on 5 October 1836 was published in Tocqueville, *Œuvres*, t. V, ed. G. de Beaumont (Paris, 1866), pp. 436–8. The letter was translated into English in Tocqueville, *Selected Letters*, ed. Boesche, pp. 112–15.

<sup>50</sup> Guizot to Tocqueville as quoted by Pierson, *Tocqueville in America*, p. 750.

<sup>51</sup> Writes Guizot: 'Ce que souhaitait, ce que cherchait pour notre patrie M. de Tocqueville, je le souhaitais, je le cherchais comme lui; nous portions aux libertés publiques et aux institutions qui les fondent, le même amour, inspiré par des idées et des sentiments à tout prendre *très semblables*' (emphasis added), 'Réponse de M. Guizot', in Tocqueville, *Œuvres Complètes, XVI: Mélanges*, ed. Françoise Mélonio (Paris, 1989), p. 343.

<sup>52</sup> Tocqueville's letter to Louis de Kergolay, January 1835, in Tocqueville, *Selected Letters*, ed. Boesche, p. 95.

new society, Tocqueville undertook in fact not one, but two, voyages. The first and best-known one — the voyage in space — took him to America, where he saw the new democracy at work. Volume One of *Democracy in America* came out in 1835, followed five years later by Volume Two, in which he offered a more abstract analysis of democracy and its mores. The second voyage — in time — led him to analyse the political and social order of the Old Regime, and explain the causes of its fall.

The legacy of the Old Regime had been, in fact, a long obsession for Tocqueville, with which he started wrestling before embarking for America. In 1836 he published a less-known essay, *État social et politique de la France avant et depuis 1789* (*The Social and Political Condition of France Before and After 1789*), bearing a title that foreshadowed the book published twenty years later. Tocqueville wrote only the first part of the study; his analysis stopped at 1789, which demonstrates that he was interested in writing neither a *histoire événementielle* nor a detailed chronicle of the Revolution. On the contrary, he was concerned with the *longue durée*, by highlighting the obscure forces that had shaped the profile of his age. The affinity with Guizot is worth noting here. The doctrinaire espoused a similar approach in his historical writings, above all in his magisterial *History of Civilization in Europe* (1828), which had a lasting impact on Tocqueville. Guizot's main project was to insert the history of France in the larger framework of European civilization, a path followed in part by Tocqueville in the *Old Regime and the Revolution*. As Pierre Rosanvallon aptly pointed out, the true object of Guizot's historical writings was the modern revolution, which he identified with the slow rise of the equality of conditions and the third state.<sup>53</sup>

All the major topics that loom large in Tocqueville's last major book are already present in the short essay published in 1836: the division (segregation) of classes, aristocracy and political privileges, the connection between aristocracy and local government, democracy and centralization, liberty under the Old Regime, and the rise of the *Tiers État*. In Tocqueville's view, the most important trend in the history of France had been neither the consolidation of monarchy nor the emergence of the French nation.<sup>54</sup> He pointed instead to the spontaneous march towards *equality* — the equality of conditions — that emerged in the bosom of the old society. This was a theme which loomed large in Guizot's historical writings as well, above all in connection with his analysis of the rise of the third state and the levelling of social conditions. 'The earthquakes we call revolutions', Guizot once wrote, 'are less the symptom of what begins than the declaration of what had already occurred.'<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> See Rosanvallon, *Le moment Guizot*, pp. 205–6.

<sup>54</sup> Also see F. Mélonio's Introduction to Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, ed. Françoise Mélonio (Paris, 1988), p. 11.

<sup>55</sup> François Guizot, *Essais sur l'histoire de France* (Paris, 1884), p. 16.

In addition to discussing the levelling of conditions, Tocqueville also deplored the divorce between the social condition of the country and its institutional superstructure, which had been based on political inequality and privilege. In France, Tocqueville argued, the trend towards social democracy, understood as equality of conditions, had had a long tradition. Nonetheless, in spite of this evolution, the institutions failed to adapt to the new social condition and continued to acknowledge the priority of privilege and social inequality.<sup>56</sup> Tocqueville's diagnosis foreshadows his famous description of the Revolution as the outcome of a long historical process. To those who argued that the Revolution was an entirely new phenomenon, he pointed out that the years 1789 to 1794 brought to fruition tendencies and developments that had in fact preceded the fall of the Bastille. The Revolution was not a cause in itself, but the effect of many hidden factors, which had been at work during centuries before. The key to comprehending the Revolution lies, therefore, in the heart of the Old Regime, in the dark corners of the history of France. It was neither a 'true' Revolution, nor a purely French event. The real event was, first and foremost, a European Revolution, which had started with the Reformation and continued with Bacon, Descartes and the Enlightenment:

La révolution a créé une multitude de choses accessoires et secondaires, *mais elle n'a fait que développer le germe des choses principales; celles-là existaient avant elle*. Elle a réglé, coordonné et legalisé les effets d'une grande cause, plutôt qu'elle n'a été cette cause elle-même. En France les conditions étaient plus égales qu'ailleurs; *la Révolution a augmenté l'égalité des conditions* et introduit dans les lois la doctrine de l'égalité. Chez les Français le pouvoir central s'était déjà emparé, plus qu'en aucun pays du monde, de l'administration locale. La Révolution a rendu ce pouvoir plus habile, plus fort, plus entreprenant. Les Français avaient conçu avant et plus clairement que tous l'idée démocratique de la liberté; la Révolution a donné à la nation elle-même, sinon encore toute la réalité, du moins toute l'apparence du souverain pouvoir. Tout ce que la Révolution a fait se fût fait, je n'en doute pas, *sans elle*; elle n'a été qu'un procédé violent et rapide à l'aide duquel *on a adapté l'état politique à l'état social, les faits aux idées et les lois aux mœurs*.<sup>57</sup>

*The Old Regime and the Revolution* (1856) contains in a condensed form all the themes that occupied Tocqueville's attention during his short life. The

<sup>56</sup> Writes Tocqueville: 'En France, cependant, tout marchait déjà depuis longtemps vers la démocratie . . . Celui qui eût rassemblé tous ces objets divers, n'eût pu manquer de conclure que la France d'alors avec sa noblesse, sa religion d'État, ses lois et ses usages aristocratiques, était déjà, à tout prendre, la nation la plus véritablement démocratique de l'Europe; et que les Français de la fin du XVIIIe siècle, par leur état social, leur constitution civile, leurs idées et leurs mœurs, avaient devancé de très loin ceux même des peuples de nos jours qui tendent le plus visiblement vers la démocratie.' 'État social et politique de la France avant et après 1789', in Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime*, p. 69.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84, all emphases added.

spectre and fear of the Revolution must have been one of the main reasons for writing this book. The political and social turmoil of the three years that separated the fall of the July Monarchy from the dictatorial regime of Napoleon III demonstrated that the age of revolution was far from over. Tocqueville recalled that the 'noble' spirit of 1789 had led ten years later to Bonaparte's rise to power, and drew a parallel between this episode and the years 1848–51, which demonstrated that France was still prone to the seduction of absolutism. In *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, Tocqueville addressed issues such as social levelling, administrative centralization, the rise of individualism and equality, and the segregation of classes in order to demonstrate that, far from representing a sharp break with the past, the Revolution had been the outcome of a long period of gestation, the work of six generations. It made far fewer changes than it was commonly admitted, though it furthered the modernization of the country by eliminating the legacy of feudal institutions. In other words, to understand the import of the Revolution, one must place it in a larger historical context; to grasp the causes and meanings of the Revolution requires, therefore, a foray into the history of the French nation.

As already indicated, Tocqueville was not the first to have reached this conclusion; before him, Guizot had espoused a similar historical approach, which is worth sketching here. In the 1820s he published political as well as historical works, such as *Essai sur l'histoire de la France (Essays on the History of France, 1823)* and *Histoire de la révolution de l'Angleterre (History of the English Revolution, 1826–7)*. Guizot's courses at Collège de France (1828–30) exploring the history of civilization in Europe and France brought him well-deserved fame and recognition as one of the leading historians of his epoch. Equally famous were his lectures on the history of representative government, which were suspended in 1822 after the takeover of the ultras (the lectures were published three decades later, in 1851).

As François Furet rightly argued,<sup>58</sup> from the time when Tocqueville attended Guizot's lectures on the history of civilization in Europe, he entered into a substantial intellectual and political dialogue with the latter. What united the two minds was, as we have already seen, a similar view of history. Neither of them was primarily interested in writing a *histoire événementielle* of the French Revolution; instead, they concentrated on factors and forces that had made possible the events of 1789. By writing a history of European civilization in light of the French Revolution, Guizot unearthed a whole tradition of representative institutions and local freedoms which were connected to the rise of *tiers état* in modern Europe. In the history of France, he discerned the march towards an ever more complex social organization, based on certain unifying principles. He pointed out the existence of a tradition of local liberties in pre-Revolutionary France and claimed that 1789 had not been a radical break

<sup>58</sup> François Furet, *Penser la Révolution française* (Paris, 1978), pp. 177 ff.

with the past but the culmination of a long historical process. To concentrate exclusively on the events and achievements of the Revolution would then be a wrong approach, insofar as, in doing so, one would overlook previous developments which had led to the momentous movement of 1789.<sup>59</sup> The Old Regime had been characterized not only by a trend towards centralization, but also by a growing equality of conditions and the substitution of public powers (*pouvoirs publics*) for individual wills. Tocqueville addressed the same issues in the second part of *The Old Regime*.

Guizot's historical works — above all *History of Civilization in Europe* and *History of Civilization in France* — impressed his contemporaries with their 'consistency, coherence, and comprehensiveness'.<sup>60</sup> Like J.S. Mill, whose words I have just quoted, Tocqueville too admired Guizot's many-sidedness and his ability to outline a general scheme, 'so well wrought and digested beforehand'.<sup>61</sup> It is important to bear in mind that, unlike many of his contemporaries,<sup>62</sup> Guizot did not write narrative history. His talent consisted in articulating a philosophical and sociological history (not very different from the tradition of *Kulturgeschichte*), by which he meant the identification of a general pattern that would help us grasp the underlying causes and effects of particular events. His reverence for facts — *la force des choses* was a phrase often used by the doctrinaires — should be understood as a corollary of the attempt to highlight general patterns of history. In Guizot's view, in history there are both material (visible) facts such as wars, battles and the official acts of governments, and 'moral' facts. Guizot's task was to throw light on those 'general facts, without any particular designation, to which it is impossible to assign any precise date, but which are yet no less facts than the rest'.<sup>63</sup> Civilization was precisely one of those general, hidden, complex facts which he set out to explore by highlighting the role of institutions, wars, government, individual facts,

<sup>59</sup> Writes Guizot: 'Soit qu'on les célèbre ou qu'on les déplore, pour les bénir ou pour maudire, tous s'accordent à tout oublier en présence des révolutions, à les isoler absolument du passé, à les rendre responsables de la destinée du monde, à les charger seules de l'anathème ou de la gloire. Il est temps d'échapper à ces mensongères et puérides déclamations.' Quoted in Hoeges, 'Guizot und Tocqueville', *Historische Zeitschrift*, Band 218, Heft 2 (1974), p. 347, n. 38. Needless to say, this view of Guizot is a personal historical interpretation; one could alternatively point to the rise of royal absolutism, which dispensed with the convocation of the General Estates for almost two centuries.

<sup>60</sup> John Stuart Mill, 'Guizot's Essays and Lectures on History', *Collected Works*, Vol. 20: *Essays on French History and Historians*, ed. John M. Robson (Toronto, 1985), p. 259.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259.

<sup>62</sup> One of the most distinguished representatives of the narrative school was another doctrinaire, Prosper de Barante, the author of a magisterial history of the dukes of Bourgogne. For more information see B. Reizov, *L'Historiographie romantique française 1815–1830* (Moscow, n.d.).

<sup>63</sup> Guizot, *The History of Civilization in Europe*, p. 12.

religious creeds and philosophical ideas, sciences, letters and arts.<sup>64</sup> In other words, Guizot concentrated on the development of both the social state and individuals, two facts that stand in an intimate relation.

By emphasizing Europe's unity in plurality, Guizot suggested that the greatness of European civilization lies in the coexistence of rival principles of social organization and powers (monarchy, aristocracy, democracy, the Church), none of which had ever been able to stifle the development of others. Guizot also pointed out that the progress of European civilization was due to many factors, among which the most important had been the development of Roman municipal institutions and civil law, the liberty of thought, the Christian Church, and the separation between temporal and spiritual authority. A believer in progress — civilization, he used to say, was inseparable from the idea of progress<sup>65</sup> — Guizot called our attention to the gradual and inevitable forward march of society and civilization, accompanied by the gradual rise of the Third Estate and a slow levelling of permanent distinctions between classes. Finally, Guizot argued that the dissolution of feudalism eventually led to centralization, which emerged in response to the lack of social ties and means of regular maintenance of order in the waning feudal world.

There are few references to Guizot's works in Tocqueville's early writings and letters, but the ones we have demonstrate his deep admiration for Guizot, whose courses on the history of civilization in France and Europe he attended in 1829–30.<sup>66</sup> On 30 August 1829, Tocqueville informed his friend, Gustave de Beaumont, that he had devoted all his time to reading the historical and political works of Guizot, whom he found 'truly prodigious' in his analysis of ideas and choice of words; he also proposed that both of them would together re-read Guizot the following winter.<sup>67</sup> Only a week after his arrival in New York (May 1831), he asked a friend, Ernest Chabrol, to send him some volumes of Guizot that were supposed to help him find the most suitable *method* for understanding American society as well as the history of France. 'We cannot find here a book which is very necessary in helping us to analyze American society,' Tocqueville wrote; 'these are the lectures of Guizot, containing what he said and published three years ago about the society of Rome and the Middle

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>66</sup> For more detail see André Jardin, *Alexis de Tocqueville. 1805–1859* (Paris, 1984), pp. 80–2; and Edward Gargan, *Alexis de Tocqueville: The Critical Years 1848–1851* (Washington, DC, 1955), pp. 1–20. On the similarities between Guizot and Tocqueville, see Siedentop, 'Two Liberal Traditions', pp. 153–74, and Siedentop, *Tocqueville*, pp. 20–40; Hoeges, 'Guizot und Tocqueville', pp. 338–53, as well as his doctoral dissertation, Dirk Hoeges, *François Guizot und die französische Revolution* (Cologne, 1973).

<sup>67</sup> The letter is quoted in Alexis de Tocqueville, *Œuvres*, ed. de Beaumont, t. VI, p. 10. It is also discussed by Jardin, *Alexis de Tocqueville*, p. 81, and Gargan, *Alexis de Tocqueville*, p. 4, n. 7.

Ages.<sup>68</sup> It is important to note here that Tocqueville was more interested in Guizot's sociological *method* than the content of his lectures. The doctrinaire was intent on capturing the spirit of a civilization, society and people as reflected in their mores, opinions, laws and other 'monuments of intelligence' (the social condition). This was in accord with the spirit of the age, dominated by a revival of interest in monumental history and science.

Tocqueville's notes convincingly attest to the impact of Guizot's lectures on his younger disciple, an influence that would become more visible in Tocqueville's later writings, most notably in *The Old Regime*. The course notes taken by Tocqueville in 1829 nicely illustrate his search for a method that was reminiscent of Guizot's own historical approach. A history of civilization, noted Tocqueville, aims at a comprehensive understanding of the world by examining man and his social life; it explores and incorporates brute facts and opinions, mores and laws.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, Tocqueville did not miss another theme of crucial importance in Guizot's writings: the relation and interaction between society and the individual. In other words, the history of civilization consists of both the history of society and *l'histoire de l'intelligence*.<sup>70</sup> The first presents not only the history of civil society, with its facts and laws, but also the evolution of the religious society. *L'histoire de l'intelligence* traces the development of both scholarly and popular literature. All these insights drawn from Guizot's course helped Tocqueville design, a few years later, his own original approach, which, as we shall see in the next sections, consists of describing democracy as *état social* (social condition), as opposed to the *political* definition of democracy (based on popular sovereignty, universal suffrage and political participation). It is not a mere coincidence that Guizot himself valued highly *The Old Regime and the Revolution*; he considered it to be Tocqueville's most beautiful work, albeit less brilliant and confident than *Democracy in America*. The precision of ideas and the fine reflections on the prerequisites of liberty impressed Tocqueville's readers, including Guizot.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>68</sup> The letter is quoted by Gargan, *Alexis de Tocqueville*, p. 13, n. 35.

<sup>69</sup> Writes Tocqueville: 'L'histoire de la civilisation veut et doit vouloir embrasser tout en même temps. Il faut examiner l'homme dans toutes les positions de son existence sociale. Il faut qu'elle suive ses développements intellectuels dans les *faits*, dans les *murs*, dans les *opinions*, dans les *lois* et dans les monuments de l'intelligence.' Tocqueville as quoted by Jardin, *Alexis de Tocqueville*, p. 81, all emphases added. Tocqueville's course notes were published as 'Notes sur les cours d'histoire de la civilisation en France de Guizot', Tocqueville, *Œuvres Complètes*, t. XVI, pp. 439–534.

<sup>70</sup> Tocqueville, 'Notes sur les cours d'histoire de la civilisation en France de Guizot', p. 485.

<sup>71</sup> This is how Guizot referred to *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*: 'livre moins brillant, moins confiant, plus sévère que le premier [*La Démocratie en Amérique*], mais supérieur par l'élévation et la précision des idées, par la fermeté du jugement politique et l'intelligence des conditions impérieuses de la liberté' ('Réponse de M. Guizot', pp. 343–4).

Nonetheless, Tocqueville did not limit himself to refining Guizot's method. Starting from the notion of civilization as described by Guizot in his course, Tocqueville went on to draw a few interesting conclusions which anticipated his theory of democratic despotism from *Democracy in America*. In a seminal (and too often neglected) letter to Charles Stoffels, dated 21 April 1830, Tocqueville contrasted the social condition of a 'semi-enlightened' people with that of a highly civilized people. In the latter case, he noted, the individual is gradually replaced by the social group, while society becomes a new Leviathan that takes care of all aspects of the human life. The similarity between the message of this letter and the famous description of democratic despotism from Volume Two of *Democracy in America* is, indeed, striking. It convincingly proves that Tocqueville had developed the idea of democratic despotism *before* visiting America, while meditating on Guizot's lectures on the history of European civilization. Given the importance of this letter, it deserves to be quoted *in extenso*:

Maintenant, comparons à ce peuple demi-éclairé celui qui a atteint un haut degré de civilisation. Chez celui-là, le corps social a tout prévu; l'individu se donne la peine de naître; du reste, la société le prend dans les bras de sa nourrice, elle veille à son éducation, ouvre devant lui les chemins de la fortune; elle le soutient dans sa marche, écarte de sa tête les périls; il s'avance en paix sous les yeux de cette *seconde providence*; ce *pouvoir tutélaire* qui l'a protégé pendant sa vie, veille encore sur le repos de ses cendres: voilà le sort de l'homme civilisé. Le sentiment et le spectacle du bonheur amollit bientôt le sauvage âpreté de sa nature; il devient doux, sociable, ses passions se calment . . . les crimes deviennent rares, malheureusement aussi les vertus. L'âme endormie dans ce long repos ne sait plus se réveiller dans l'occasion; l'énergie individuelle est presque éteinte; on s'appuie les uns sur les autres quand il faut agir; dans toute autre circonstance au contraire on se referme en soi-même, *c'est le règne de l'égoïsme*, les convictions s'ébranlent à la fois . . . Le monde entier finit par être un problème insoluble pour l'homme qui s'accroche aux objets les plus sensibles et finit par se coucher à plat ventre contre terre de peur que le sol ne vienne à lui manquer à son tour.<sup>72</sup>

Note the language used by Tocqueville in this letter. In 1830, a year before embarking for America, he spoke of the reign of individualism and the state as a second Providence, endowed with an immense new power. He also understood that the advance of civilization would bring forth a public administration that becomes not only more centralized, but also more inquisitive and minute, by interfering to a greater extent in private concerns and regulating more undertakings than ever before. This was the new soft despotism which Tocque-

<sup>72</sup> Tocqueville's letter to Charles Stoffels, Versailles, 21 April 1830, in the Tocqueville Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University, MS Vault Tocqueville, A VII (copy of Mlle Stoffels-d'Hautefort), all emphases added.

ville described in *Democracy in America*, but whose first sketch appears in the letter to Stoffels.

A thorough exploration of the similarities between Tocqueville and Guizot requires that we also discuss another topic on which their views displayed important affinities. In the *Old Regime*, Tocqueville drew a comparison between English and French political institutions and highlighted two different historical patterns that led to entirely different political outcomes. In doing so, Tocqueville followed a whole tradition of interpretation which was a common *topos* in nineteenth-century French political thought. To be sure, attitudes towards England ranged from unrestrained admiration to sceptical criticism, and even outright rejection. The apogee of liberal praise for England can be found in the third volume of Madame de Staël's *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française* (*Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution*, 1818) and in Benjamin Constant's political writings. England was hailed for its model of free government, which was seen by many as *the* solution to many political problems in France. French liberals praised the unwritten English constitution, which defined the royal power as neutral power, and admired the English mixed government, the independence of judiciary, or the freedom of municipal and provincial bodies. Nonetheless, there was no general agreement on whether the English model and its institutions should be copied or rejected in France.

Tocqueville became involved in this debate at an early age and was, for the greater part of his life, an Anglophile (in addition to being the founder of the 'American school' in France). Tocqueville was interested in comparing the ways in which English and French political institutions developed over time and affected the balance of power in the two countries. This preoccupation with the history of England arose early in his career, as a seminal letter to Beaumont, written in October 1828, attests.<sup>73</sup> The result of this comparative analysis can be found in Part Two of the *Old Regime*. In fact, the whole book can be read, above all, as a comparison between France and England, which would explain why he considered England as his second *patrie*. Tocqueville's debt to Guizot — a fervent admirer of the English system himself — should not be overlooked here. In the fourteenth lecture from *The History of Civilization in Europe*, Guizot accounted for the stark contrast between the relentless growth of administrative centralization in France and the English political system that was based on decentralization and local liberties. The key to explaining these divergent patterns lies, he argued, in the patterns of interaction between the monarch, aristocracy and the commons. In France, the various elements of society — monarchy, aristocracy and democracy — developed, not together, but in suc-

<sup>73</sup> Letter to Gustave de Beaumont, 5 October 1828, in Alexis de Tocqueville, *Œuvres complètes, t. VIII: Correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville et de Gustave de Beaumont*, ed. A. Jardin (Paris, 1969), pp. 47–71.

cession; each principle reigned in turn at the expense of the other. Thus feudalism reigned sovereign until the thirteenth century, while royalty and the democratic principle were more or less powerless during that time. This situation led to the predominance of local interests and was responsible for their lack of co-operation with the central power. A few centuries later, it was this sharp division of classes which paved the way for the consolidation of royal power and the decay of the nobility in France. The consequence of the struggle between the king and the nobles was the destruction of local autonomy, absolutism, and a highly centralized administrative system.

On the contrary, in England, the feudal aristocracy allied itself with the commons, while attempting to counteract the power of the monarch. This co-operation generated a unique balance of forces between aristocracy, royalty and liberty, that created an original political system, different from any other system on the Continent. The civil and religious orders, aristocracy, democracy, royalty, and local and central institutions developed hand in hand; never had any element wholly triumphed nor attained an exclusive preponderance over the others. There had always been a simultaneous and harmonious development of different forces, which furthered a culture of compromise and bargaining between rival political powers.<sup>74</sup>

Like Guizot, Tocqueville noted the different class patterns followed by the two countries and insisted on the close relation between self-government and liberty. He pointed out that, in England, an open aristocracy had kept local affairs in its own hands and preserved its independence *vis-à-vis* the Crown by allying itself with the democratic principle; a culture of compromise emerged and it furthered social co-operation. France was forced to take a different path. Each of the thousands of small groups of which the French nation was composed thought for itself alone and acted in isolation from other social groups and classes. Tocqueville blamed this isolation for having led to a 'group individualism' *sui generis*, which paved the way for the emergence of a strongly centralized administrative and political system. This was, in fact, a new form of (group) individualism that prepared people's minds for the thorough-paced individualism, denounced by Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* as the rust of democratic societies.<sup>75</sup> The French nation was split into many compact groups living in isolation at the very moment when the egalitarian wave was drawing them together into a homogenous whole. The nation was an aggregate of different and incompatible social groups, whose members had few links between themselves and were not concerned with public issues beyond the

<sup>74</sup> Guizot, *History of Civilization in Europe*, p. 229.

<sup>75</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York, 1955), p. 96. For a good discussion of Tocqueville's comparative analysis of France and England see Semour Drescher, *Tocqueville and England* (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 193–223.

sphere of their personal interests. As Turgot (quoted approvingly by Tocqueville) once bemoaned, ‘no trace of any feelings for the public weal [was] anywhere to be found’.<sup>76</sup> The French nobility stubbornly held aloof from the other classes and was keen only on increasing its immunities, thus following a different path from the third estate. Oddly enough, the latter did nothing to prevent its own isolation and ended up cutting any contacts with the peasants. In the end, the segregation of classes — ‘the crime’<sup>77</sup> of the late monarchy — paved the way for the consolidation of absolutism in France. ‘Though the nation came to be seen as a homogenous whole,’ wrote Tocqueville, ‘its parts no longer held together. Nothing had been left that could obstruct the central government, but, by the same token, nothing could shore it up.’<sup>78</sup>

## V

### A Plea for Decentralization

The comparative analysis of the French and English political systems highlights the central place occupied by such issues as centralization and decentralization in the political thought of early nineteenth-century French liberals. The *locus classicus* is, of course, *Democracy in America*, where Tocqueville drew a famous distinction between centralized government and centralized administration.<sup>79</sup> When the power that directs the general interests of a country is concentrated in one place, he wrote, we have a centralized government in charge of all political affairs. A centralized administration concentrates in one place, under the umbrella of a huge bureaucratic apparatus, the direction of all local interests, thus stifling self-government and furthering political apathy.

A closer look at Guizot’s writings during the Bourbon Restoration shows that the notion of *administrative centralization* occupied a prominent place in his political thought too. Throughout the history of modern Europe he observed a general tendency towards administrative centralization and the predominance of general interests.<sup>80</sup> Though he was not primarily interested in drawing a clear-cut distinction between centralized government and centralized administration, Guizot was keenly aware of the importance of centralization in the history of France. In a letter to Thierry, he deplored the ‘centralization of mind’,<sup>81</sup> which, in his view, was even worse than the centralization of affairs.

<sup>76</sup> Tocqueville, *The Old Regime*, p. 107.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Phillips Bradley (New York, 1958), Vol. 1, pp. 89–101.

<sup>80</sup> ‘Partout nous trouvons la même tendance vers la centralisation, à l’unité, à la formation et à la prépondérance des intérêts généraux, des pouvoirs publics.’ François Guizot, *Histoire générale de la civilisation en Europe* (Brussels, 1835), p. 319.

<sup>81</sup> Guizot, *Mémoires*, t. 2, p. 57.

This seemingly innocuous statement is at the very core of his critique of the policies of the Villèle ultra-conservative government.

At the heart of Guizot's analysis one can find a sophisticated distribution of emphases and an original combination of various themes. It is enough to mention here that the critique of centralization was only one of the elements that helped Guizot elaborate a new view of political power. Moreover, his views on this topic were reciprocated by the other doctrinaires. In one of his parliamentary speeches from 1821, Royer-Collard explicitly linked the art of being free to the preservation of local liberties. In his view, individual independence and local liberties went hand in hand and were mutually reinforcing; furthermore, the old doctrinaire warned that centralization would be the natural government of the future society, an idea that was going to have a deep impact on Tocqueville. 'I think', said Royer-Collard, 'that in the democratic centuries to come, individual independence and local liberties will always be a product of art, while centralization will be the natural government.'<sup>82</sup> Royer-Collard's emphasis on individual independence and local liberties as products of inspired political crafting foreshadows Tocqueville's superb description of the art of being free from Volume One of *Democracy in America*.

The importance of self-government was also addressed by Guizot in an important book published in 1821, *On the Means of Government and Opposition*, in which his defence of local liberties is unequivocal:

Il faut choisir. Il faut savoir être despote ou souffrir qu'un peuple soit libre. Or la liberté consiste à faire soi-même, dans ses affaires, tout ce qu'on peut faire soi-même avec sagesse et selon le bien commun. J'ai vécu dans les départemens, au sein de cette société qui ne renferme, dit-on, que des individus épars, isolés, sans liens qui les unissent. Ce fait m'a semblé apparent, mais point réel. J'ai trouvé partout des liens méconnus, des influences perdues, des supériorités sans emploi.<sup>83</sup>

Guizot pointed to the existence of numerous *supériorités sans emploi* — propertied individuals, lawyers, notaries, entrepreneurs, manufacturers and merchants<sup>84</sup> — that represented the backbone of the new middle class. They lived in isolation, separated from each other, with no close ties between themselves that would help them put to work their energies, talents and resources. Guizot then went on to deplore their lack of self-government in a tone that foreshadowed Tocqueville's chapters on the same topic from *Democracy in America*.

The way in which Guizot developed his argument is worth examining here. He argued that, while visiting the small towns and villages of France, he had

<sup>82</sup> Royer-Collard, in *La vie politique de M. Royer-Collard*, ed. Barante, t. II, p. 131.

<sup>83</sup> François Guizot, *Des moyens de gouvernement et d'opposition dans l'état actuel de la France* (Paris, 1821), p. 266.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 264–5.

met individuals capable of doing many good things, but was surprised to discover that they had no initiatives and rarely co-operated with each other; they lived in isolation and were, therefore, condemned to political powerlessness. These were individuals who lacked mutual bonds and whose civic apathy contributed, among other things, to the inefficiency of the central government and administration. He had heard them speaking of their local affairs and realized that they talked about them as if those local matters were alien to their own interests. In other words, Guizot concluded, the art of association was unknown to them and they lived a life of quiet desperation.<sup>85</sup>

The assumption underlying Guizot's argument is that each society contains a number of 'natural superiorities' that are in fact the new means of government; a wise government must put them to work for the benefit of the entire country. In each department, town or village, Guizot argued, there are many individuals who form an essential part of the 'true government of society'.<sup>86</sup> Too often, the greatest mistake a central government makes is to believe that it can govern solely from above, without eliciting the co-operation of these individuals, as if society were a large and deserted field at the mercy of its all-powerful owner. Guizot's analysis of society and the emphasis he put on self-government reminds us of Tocqueville. Society, Guizot argued, cannot be compared to a barren field waiting for the government to 'sow' it. Wise political crafting starts from the assumption that each society has its own means of government, which any political leader must take into account and try to work with.<sup>87</sup> The greatest failure of both Napoleon's Empire and the first governments of the Bourbon Restoration had been the divorce between their policies and the new social state that had arisen in the wake of the Revolution. The solution proposed by Guizot would hardly surprise a (Tocquevillian) liberal. Any central power must give up its pretension to control everything; instead, it must attempt to call to life the dormant energies of its subjects and co-operate with all individuals.<sup>88</sup>

Guizot was not alone in highlighting the existence of a French *tradition of local freedoms*; this was a theme also cherished by the other leading doctrinaire, Royer-Collard. In his parliamentary discourses, he bemoaned the disappearance

<sup>85</sup> Writes Guizot: 'J'ai rencontré des hommes qui pouvaient beaucoup et qui n'étaient rien. Je les ai entendus s'entretenir des affaires publiques, des affaires locales, mais comme de choses étrangères, sinon à leur destinée, du moins à leur activité. Ils en causaient comme on en cause au café ou au spectacle, nullement comme ils auraient parlé d'affaires qui eussent été les leurs, et pour lesquelles ils auraient besoin de s'entendre, de s'unir.' *Ibid.*, pp. 266–7.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>87</sup> 'Grace au ciel,' writes Guizot, 'la société humaine n'est pas un champ que vienne exploiter un maître; elle possède et produit elle-même ses plus sûrs moyens de gouvernement; elle les prête volontiers à qui sait les manier; mais c'est à elle qu'il faut s'adresser pour les obtenir.' *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>88</sup> 'Que le mensonge se dissipe; que le pouvoir central renonce à la prétention d'être tout, et bientôt il cessera d'être seul.' *Ibid.*, p. 268.

of intermediary bodies and linked it to the growth of centralized administration. Moreover, he pointed to the uneasy alliance between democracy and centralization, a theme that was going to become a central topic in Tocqueville's political writings. Royer-Collard's famous speech of 1822 on the liberty of the press addressed this crucial issue and advanced, more than a decade before *Democracy in America*, the thesis of an atomized society, *la société en poussière*, as a first step towards administrative centralization. Royer-Collard explained:

Nous avons vu la vieille société périr, et avec elle cette foule d'institutions domestiques et de magistratures indépendantes qu'elle portait dans son sein, faisceaux puissants des droits privés, vraies républiques dans la monarchie. Ces institutions, ces magistratures ne partageaient pas, il est vrai, la souveraineté; mais elles lui opposaient partout des limites que l'honneur défendait avec opiniâtreté. Pas une n'a survécu, et nulle autre ne s'est élevée à leur place. La révolution n'a laissé debout *que des individus*. La dictature qui l'a terminée a consommé, sous ce rapport, son ouvrage. *De la société en poussière est sortie la centralisation*.<sup>89</sup>

Worth noting here is the similarity between Royer-Collard's and Tocqueville's arguments on the importance of local freedoms. They both see a connection between administrative centralization, individualism, and the rise of a new form of despotism. In their view, administrative centralization furthers social leveling and the disappearance of intermediary bodies, which, in turn, fuels individualism and a new form of (democratic) despotism.<sup>90</sup>

Surprising as it may sound, the doctrinaires addressed the issue of democratic despotism a decade or so before Tocqueville; they arrived at the surprising conclusion that democracy was in fact *compatible* with a new form of despotism. As a letter of Royer-Collard to Molé demonstrates, the old doctrinaire feared a tyranny of a new kind — democratic despotism — which could dispense with soldiers, tribunals and prisons by resorting to new and softer

<sup>89</sup> *La vie politique de M. Royer-Collard*, ed. Barante, t. II, pp. 130–1 (all emphases added).

<sup>90</sup> This similarity did not escape the attention of another doctrinaire, Charles de Rémusat. Speaking of Royer-Collard, he noted: 'Il voyait sinon le plus grand vice de la société française, au moins l'un des principaux obstacles qu'elle offrit à l'établissement d'un gouvernement libre et stable, dans ce nivellement social qui a enfanté la centralisation. Il lui paraissait que de ce côté la démocratie civile n'était propre qu'à exercer le despotisme. Ce caractère saillant de notre organisation sociale avait été observé et jugé il y a longtemps, et par personne il n'a été décrit avec plus de vivacité et de sévérité que par Royer-Collard. Nul n'a plus déploré cette uniformité administrative qui assimile le pays politique à une plaine nue, où on ne se voit ni asile, ni défense, ni hauteur, ni rivière, et sur laquelle la force organisée du gouvernement manuvre comme une garnison sur une esplanade . . . Tocqueville prenait la peine de découvrir pour son compte ce qu'on avait trouvé avant lui.' Charles de Rémusat, 'L'esprit de réaction: Royer-Collard et Tocqueville', p. 804.

means of domination.<sup>91</sup> One is reminded here of Tocqueville's parallel between, on the one hand, democracy and centralization, and, on the other hand, aristocracy and local freedoms. In another well-known speech, Royer-Collard bemoaned the emergence of a nation of isolated and powerless individuals, at the mercy of irresponsible bureaucrats within a highly centralized system. 'Thus we have become', argued Royer-Collard, 'a nation of administered people, under the power of irresponsible bureaucrats'.<sup>92</sup> The outcome of this evolution should hardly surprise us. Where only isolated individuals are left, the state will soon be entrusted with everything that goes beyond their individual affairs.

With the benefit of hindsight, it can be said that one of the main obstacles to the establishment of a free and stable government in France had been the disappearance of intermediary bodies, whose main function had been to create bonds between individuals and protect them against absolute power. Administrative centralization and arbitrary power — 'un pouvoir monstrueux et dérégulé',<sup>93</sup> as Royer-Collard called it — were the consequences of the gradual vanishing of these intermediary bodies and independent institutions.<sup>94</sup> The atomized society that resulted from this evolution was prone to a new kind of despotism, the soft and lenient democratic despotism, whose first sketch can be found in Royer-Collard's parliamentary speeches and Guizot's historical writings, and whose definitive description was offered by Tocqueville in the fourth book of Volume Two of *Democracy in America*.

## VI

### Democracy as *État Social*

It is high time to turn now to Tocqueville's understanding of democracy and to explore the fundamental distinction between social and political democracy in the political thought of the French doctrinaires. Tocqueville was in fact notorious for having worked with many definitions of democracy that have puzzled his numerous readers, including the most sympathetic ones. More than half a century ago, George Wilson Pierson deplored Tocqueville's 'inexact and confusing use of the word *démocratie*' and thought that this was an 'unconscious lack of precision'<sup>95</sup> on the part of the French author. To be sure, in *Democracy*

<sup>91</sup> This letter is quoted by André Jardin in his introduction to Volume XI of Tocqueville's *Œuvres Complètes*, p. VI.

<sup>92</sup> Writes Royer-Collard: 'c'est ainsi que nous sommes devenus un peuple d'administrés, sous la main de fonctionnaires irresponsables, centralisés eux-mêmes dans le pouvoir dont ils sont les ministres' (*La vie politique de M. Royer-Collard*, ed. Barante, t. II, p. 131).

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>94</sup> Writes Royer-Collard: 'C'est parce que les institutions se sont écroulées que vous avez la centralisation; c'est parce que les magistratures ont péri avec elles que vous n'avez que des fonctionnaires.' *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>95</sup> Pierson, *Tocqueville in America*, pp. 158–9, n. 2.

in *America*, the term ‘democracy’ refers primarily to the civil equality of conditions, but it also designates political self-government, an inescapable phenomenon, and the government by the people. More recently, James Schleifer advanced a slightly different interpretation that attempted to explain this ambiguity. He argued that, far from being a flaw in Tocqueville’s argument, the imprecision in the definition of democracy in his writings should be viewed in a more positive light, as a token of his intention to offer a broad definition of democracy as a multi-faceted phenomenon.<sup>96</sup> The plural definitions of democracy in Tocqueville’s work should not obscure the fact that one of his greatest merits was to emphasize the *social* condition of a democratic regime or, to put it differently, to treat democracy, above all, as ‘*état social*’ (social condition). Democracy, Tocqueville wrote, represents the *social* condition, while the sovereignty of the people is primarily a *political* right. On this view, democracy refers to a new type of society, whereas the sovereignty of people signifies a form of government.<sup>97</sup> This is a major departure from our contemporary understanding of democracy, which concentrates more on *political* democracy — equated with the sovereignty of people and the will of the majority — than on democracy as social condition.

In fact, it was the doctrinaires who referred for the first time to democracy as *état social* during the Bourbon Restoration, a significant conceptual innovation at that time. To understand the magnitude of this change, one must bear in mind that in France the concept of democracy had a peculiar history. Very few considered it as the future form of government and society, for democracy did not designate at that time the best political regime. At least until Rousseau, democracy represented an obsolete form of government that had been appropriate to the small polities of ancient Greece, but was considered unsuitable for the conditions of modern, large-size states. In the eyes of the people living in the aftermath of the Terror of 1793, democracy had a bad odour; it was equated, for obvious reasons, with anarchy, despotic rule and a perverted form of popular sovereignty. The events of the French Revolution demonstrated that the knowledge of the few cannot counteract the ignorance of the many. Malignant passions had been hidden under the mask of humanity, while innocent victims had been sacrificed on the altar of noble ideals. The ultras insisted *ad nauseam* on this point and capitalized on the dark legacy of the years 1793–4. Democracy, Joseph de Maistre once said, has a brilliant moment, but the price to pay exceeds its benefits. Feared for its revolutionary potential, democracy acquired mostly pejorative connotations which would haunt the French post-revolutionary mind even after 1848. This historical context and the scepticism towards revolutionary democracy explain why the doctrinaire theory of representative government

<sup>96</sup> For more detail see the excellent Chapter 19 (‘Some Meanings of *Démocratie*’) in Schleifer, *The Making of Tocqueville’s ‘Democracy in America’*, pp. 263–74.

<sup>97</sup> For more detail see Lamberti, *Tocqueville*, p. 33.

based on the concepts of the sovereignty of reason and political capacity was devised as an alternative to popular self-rule.

To be sure, reconciling democracy as a new type of society with representative government seemed a daunting task. The doctrinaires' merit is to have accepted this challenge and attempted to 'marry' representative institutions to democracy understood as social condition. They shifted the attention from political to *sociological* considerations by scrutinizing the social underpinnings of democracy — mores, ideas, habits of the heart — that fostered the ever-growing equality of conditions. By democracy as social condition the doctrinaires (and later Tocqueville) referred to the advent of a new type of *society*, which brought forth a new configuration of mores, sentiments, laws and institutions.<sup>98</sup> In other words, they used the term 'democracy' to designate the new *egalitarian* society — democracy defined primarily as equality of conditions, equality before the law, *not* as sovereignty of people — rather than an old form of government suitable only to the small polities of the ancient world.<sup>99</sup> The implications of this conceptual change were fully fleshed out by Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*, but its roots could be traced back to the famous debates of the second Restoration, to Royer-Collard's parliamentary speeches as well as to Guizot's historical writings.

Obvious as these ideas may seem to us today, their true significance and origin have often been misrepresented or misunderstood by political theorists, who have concentrated exclusively on political democracy at the risk of overlooking the equally important aspect of democracy as social condition. The definition of democracy as *état social* is commonly attributed to Tocqueville,<sup>100</sup> whereas it was in fact one of the many *topoi* in the debates during the Bourbon Restoration<sup>101</sup> and figured prominently in the political writings of the French

<sup>98</sup> On democracy as social condition see Rémusat, 'De l'esprit de réaction', pp. 797–8.

<sup>99</sup> A good discussion on this topic can be found in Pierre Manent, *Tocqueville et la nature de la démocratie* (Paris, 2nd edn., 1993), pp. 13–29; and Pierre Rosanvallon, 'L'histoire du mot démocratie à l'époque moderne', *La pensée politique, I: Situations de la démocratie*, ed. M. Gauchet, P. Manent, P. Rosanvallon (Paris, 1993), pp. 23–6.

<sup>100</sup> For example, Michael Zuckert makes this argument in an otherwise excellent essay on democracy as social condition (M. Zuckert, 'On Social State', in *Tocqueville's Defense of Human Liberty*, ed. P.A. Lawler and J. Alulis (New York, 1993)). He claims that 'Tocqueville speaks of social condition as though it were a well-known concept, but in fact it was not so. He is, so far as I know, the first to use it' (*ibid.*, p. 4). When attempting to trace this idea back to Tocqueville's precursors, Zuckert invokes Rousseau but — oddly enough — ignores Royer-Collard and the other doctrinaires: 'social state is Tocqueville's great discovery, but he seems to owe a great debt to Rousseau' (*ibid.*, p. 15).

<sup>101</sup> The same view is shared by Siedentop, who writes: 'Tocqueville turned many of those debates into chapters of his book. They provided him with a guide to the most prominent features of a democratic society. The progress of social equality, the subdivision of property, the separation of Church and State, religious freedom and its consequences, the importance of voluntary association, freedom of the press and trial by

doctrinaires. Tocqueville's contemporaries were mindful of the true genealogy of ideas; as Rémusat showed, Tocqueville owed a great debt to Royer-Collard, whose thoughts on social democracy exerted a lasting influence on the author of *Democracy in America*.<sup>102</sup>

'We ourselves are moving', wrote Tocqueville in 1831 to his friend Louis de Kergolay, 'toward a democracy without limits. I am not saying that this is a good thing; but we are being pushed toward it by an *irresistible force*. All the efforts that will be made to stop this movement will only provide pause.'<sup>103</sup> This view of democracy as an irresistible phenomenon was a common *topos* in the parliamentary debates of the Bourbon Restoration; it was also shared by doctrinaires like Serre and Royer-Collard. 'In our country,' Serre said in 1820, 'democracy is full of energy; one can find it in industry, property, laws, memories, people, and things. The flow is in full spate and the dikes can hardly contain it.'<sup>104</sup> The phrase *democracy is in full spate* instantly captured the imagination of Serre's contemporaries, who were concerned, above all, with 'taming' the social and political consequences of democracy. They were looking for a way to reconcile democracy, liberty and social order and were fearful of the potentially anarchical consequences of political democracy. For his part, Royer-Collard equated democracy with equality of rights<sup>105</sup> and argued that democracy had already become the universal form of society. Here is what he said in response to Serre:

A mon tour, prenant la démocratie comme opposée ou seulement comparée à l'aristocratie, je conviens que la démocratie coule à pleins bords dans la France, telle que les siècles l'ont faite . . . Les classes moyennes ont abordé les affaires publiques; elles savent que ce sont leurs affaires. Voilà notre démocratie, telle que je le vois et la conçois; oui, elle coule à pleins bords dans cette belle France, plus que jamais favorisée du ciel . . . Il faut accepter cet état ou il faut le détruire, et pour le détruire il faut dépeupler, appauvrir,

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jury — these themes from *Democracy in America* reflect questions first raised in Tocqueville's mind by the Great Debate.' Siedentop, *Tocqueville*, p. 34.

<sup>102</sup> 'Nous ne voulons ici le [Tocqueville] considérer que comme une sorte de continuateur de Royer-Collard par rapport à cette grande question de la démocratie.' Rémusat, 'De l'esprit de réaction', p. 801.

<sup>103</sup> Tocqueville, *Selected Letters*, p. 55 (emphasis added).

<sup>104</sup> 'La démocratie, chez nous', Serre said, 'est partout pleine de sève et d'énergie; elle est dans l'industrie, dans la propriété, dans les lois, dans les souvenirs, dans les hommes, dans les choses. *Le torrent coule à pleins bords* dans de faibles digues qui le contiennent à peine.' Hercule de Serre as quoted in Rémusat, 'De l'esprit de réaction', p. 797 (emphasis added).

<sup>105</sup> Royer-Collard said: 'A travers beaucoup de malheurs, *l'égalité des droits* (c'est le vrai nom de la démocratie, et je le lui rends) a prévalu; reconnue, consacrée, garantie par la Charte, elle est aujourd'hui *la forme universelle de la société*, et c'est ainsi que la démocratie est partout. Elle n'a plus de conquêtes à faire', *La vie politique de M. Royer-Collard*, t. II. p. 137 (all emphases added).

abrutir les classes moyennes. L'aristocratie, la démocratie, ne sont pas de vaines doctrines livrées à nos disputes . . . Toute oeuvre de la sagesse est de les observer et de les diriger.<sup>106</sup>

Few passages illustrate better than this the originality of the doctrinaires' political thought. Their entire political philosophy — with the exception of the sovereignty of reason — is nicely captured here. Royer-Collard pointed out the irresistible march of democracy and the need for regulating and moderating its effects. He linked democracy to the rise of the middle class and drew a sharp contrast between the aristocratic and democratic social condition. At the same time, he acknowledged the power of social facts, a theme which can also be found in Guizot's writings and which forms the core of their relentless attacks on the ultraconservatives. Bonald and his fellows, Royer-Collard claimed, failed to understand that the state, composition and the ethos of the new society were social facts which nobody could oppose or tamper with.<sup>107</sup> The advent of the new democratic society could not be counteracted by obsolete policies, drawing their inspiration from a holistic and rigid view of society. Government ought to accommodate itself to society instead of trying to mould the latter according to its old-fashioned plans. In order to demonstrate why turning back the clock of history could not have been a solution to the problems faced by the country, the doctrinaires pointed out that a new type of society had arisen from the ruins of the Revolution and went on to describe its profile by espousing an original *sociological* approach, which stressed the influence of the social order on the functioning of political institutions.<sup>108</sup> The doctrinaires also referred to the new social condition based on the equality of rights and the rising influence of public opinion as a *generative principle*, an idea that was refined and

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 134–5.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135. Also see Rémusat, 'De l'esprit de réaction', pp. 795–6: 'C'est là le point fondamental que les [les doctrinaires] séparait de leurs adversaires du côté droit. Sur ce point, ils se montraient absolus et intraitables . . . Lorsqu'on on les pressait d'établir ou de supposer dans la société un classement fixe, une hiérarchie immobile qui s'opposait à la libre ascension des individus, ils résistaient impérieusement, ils répondaient que le problème politique était d'accommoder le gouvernement à la société et non de refaire arbitrairement la société pour la commodité du gouvernement.'

<sup>108</sup> Whether or not the doctrinaires were influenced by Montesquieu's sociological approach is a topic that I cannot address here, due to space constraints. Another important influence could have been the Scottish Enlightenment, as illustrated by the first contributors to the famous *Edinburgh Review*, which had a wide circulation in the epoch. It is known that the doctrinaires were familiar with Montesquieu, who, in Book VIII of *The Spirit of the Laws*, had spoken about the ethos of extreme equality which characterized corrupt ancient democracies. Albeit admirers of Montesquieu, the doctrinaires found his theory of the separation of powers wanting. In Guizot's political works under the Restoration, for example, the emphasis is put on the unity of government, i.e. on the harmony of powers, rather than on the separation of powers.

developed later by Tocqueville in Chapter Three, Part One, of Volume One of *Democracy in America*.

To illustrate the originality of this sociological approach let us consider a small book written by Guizot on the death penalty in 1821. He opposes it by combining political and sociological arguments which were supposed to prove the futility of the death penalty in the context of post-revolutionary France. After drawing a sharp contrast between the principles underlying aristocratic and democratic societies, he commented on the consequences of the disappearance of aristocratic institutions. Above all, he emphasized the increasing *uniformity* in the fabric of society and the narrowing of the gap between social classes. Inequality and aristocratic privilege are on the wane, he argued, and there are more individuals than ever before whose voices have a say in the economic and political affairs of the country. The way in which Guizot described the profile of the new France reminds one of Tocqueville's own analysis of democratic society:

Cette communauté de condition, cette *égalité sous la main de Dieu* n'est pas le moins puissant des liens qui unissent les hommes; elle les attire l'un vers l'autre, les confond dans *les mêmes sentiments*, les empêche de s'isoler par la lutte de leurs intérêts, les ramène enfin constamment sous *des lois semblables*, et leur fait sentir qu'ils ne sont, les uns envers les autres, ni si divers, ni si étrangers . . . *Les mêmes lois* se donnent, *les mêmes chances* s'offrent à tous; les grandes diversités s'affaiblissent; les idées, les sentiments, les intérêts *communs*, se répandent et se fortifient . . . Ainsi, d'une part, beaucoup plus d'existences individuelles ont de l'importance et de la force; d'autre part, toutes les existences sont étroitement enlacées, retentissent l'une dans l'autre.<sup>109</sup>

Note the very words Guizot chose to describe the profile of the new society that was the outcome of the Revolution: *same* sentiments, *same* laws, *same* chances, *same* interests, no more privileges. In other words, the Revolution accelerated the trend towards an equality of conditions. It had not laid the foundations of a free government, but it created instead a new type of society, to which the government and administration of the Old Regime were entirely inappropriate.<sup>110</sup> The aristocratic society, Guizot argued, which was based on limited social mobility and rigid social hierarchy was, therefore, a relic of the past.<sup>111</sup> In a democratic regime, individual influences are scattered throughout

<sup>109</sup> François Guizot, *De la peine de mort*, republished in F. Guizot, *Mélanges politiques et historiques* (Paris, 1869), pp. 277–8 (all emphases added).

<sup>110</sup> Guizot, *Des moyens de gouvernement*, pp. 8, 119–20.

<sup>111</sup> Guizot, *Mélanges*, p. 262. It is worth noting that J.S. Mill paid considerable attention to the transition to the new society as described in Guizot's historical works. Here is the passage from Guizot's *Civilization en France* selected by Mill: 'We have lived for half a century under the empire of general ideas, more and more accredited and powerful; under the pressure of formidable, almost irresistible events. There has resulted

the entire society and millions of people enjoy more or less similar conditions, think and feel in more or less the same way. Power had left the families and descended into the basement of society, continues Guizot's argument. Strong personalities of aristocratic type had given way to the empire of general ideas, which are more and more accredited and powerful. People assent often to prevailing public opinions, obey general impulses, and abide by the social rules. The conclusion of Guizot's argument is unambiguous: we all live under the empire of democracy and must obey its laws.<sup>112</sup>

Based on these sociological considerations, Guizot foresaw, a decade before Tocqueville, that nobody could control or stop this irresistible process towards more equality of conditions. He understood that social facts were all-powerful and became convinced that one ought to learn how to accommodate them within the framework of the new society. It is worth noting here the language of inevitability of social change that foreshadows Tocqueville's own religious awe when contemplating the march of democracy in the modern world. One cannot compete with social facts, Guizot argued. Their roots lie beyond the reach of human beings; all we can do is to learn how to live under the empire of social facts and adjust to them in an intelligent manner.<sup>113</sup> Both the boldness and the significance of this advice must be duly underscored here. In a conflict-ridden country like post-revolutionary France, acknowledging the power of *faits sociaux* as a first step towards social peace amounted to nothing else than declaring the triumph of the new democratic society over the old aristocratic order. The *ultras* were not prepared to make this step yet.

One can easily realize the extent to which Tocqueville followed in the footsteps of the doctrinaires in this respect. He refined and enriched their

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a certain weakness, a certain effeminacy, in our minds and characters. Individual convictions and will are wanting in energy and confidence in themselves. Men assent to a prevailing opinion, obey a general impulse, yield to an external necessity. Whether for resistance or for action, each has but a mean idea of his own strength, a feeble reliance on his own judgment. Individuality, the inward and personal energy of man, is weak and timid. Amidst the progress of public liberty, many seem to have lost the proud and invigorating sentiment of their own personal liberty.' Guizot as quoted in Mill, 'Guizot's Essays', p. 286.

<sup>112</sup> The whole passage is worth quoting for its sociological acumen: 'Où sont maintenant ces chefs éminents, avoués, qu'il suffit de détruire pour détruire un parti? Peu d'hommes ont un nom, et ceux-là même sont peu de chose. La puissance a quitté les familles; elles est sortie des foyers qu'elle habitait jadis; elle s'est répandue dans la société tout entière; elle y circule rapidement, à peine visible en chaque lieu, mais partout présente. Elle s'attache à des intérêts, à des idées, à des sentiments publics dont personne ne dispose, que personne même ne représente assez pleinement pour que leur sort dépende un moment du sien.' Guizot, *Des moyens de gouvernement*, p. 262.

<sup>113</sup> 'On ne lutte point avec les faits sociaux; ils ont des racines où la main de l'homme ne saurait atteindre, et quand ils ont pris possession du sol, il faut savoir y vivre sous leur empire.' Guizot, *Mélanges*, p. 282 (emphasis added).

sociological arguments on the interaction between the social condition and the government of a free society. Guizot's picture of the new society, in which millions of people enjoy the same social condition and have the same sentiments without ever meeting each other,<sup>114</sup> reminds one of Tocqueville's description of the democratic society. The equality of conditions, the growth of individualism, and the rise of public opinion<sup>115</sup> are emphasized in the works of both Guizot and Tocqueville. They concluded that the new democratic society required new means of government that were entirely different from those employed by a highly centralized administration, under which local life and liberties were stifled. In order to be effective, they argued, the government must draw on institutions, laws and the habits of the heart, which was another way of saying that political order and social conditions are interdependent.<sup>116</sup>

It would be a mistake, however, to believe that there were no differences between Tocqueville and the doctrinaires on this point, or that the latter concentrated exclusively on the sociological definition of democracy at the price of ignoring its political aspects. In fact, having lived through the years of the Revolution, the doctrinaires were much less hopeful than Tocqueville about avoiding the evils associated with the sovereignty of the people and political democracy.<sup>117</sup> The Terror of 1793, they argued, was precisely the sovereignty of the people in action, an illegitimate attempt to create an infallible sovereign on earth. It proved to be an extreme case of political idolatry, which was doomed to fail in the long run.<sup>118</sup> In Guizot's (later) view, for example, the four cardinal sins of democracy as manifested in the French Revolution had been revolutionary despotism, the lack of protection of rights, centralization of power, and the despotism of majority.<sup>119</sup> After the revolution of 1848, which ended his politi-

<sup>114</sup> Guizot speaks of a society 'où des millions d'hommes de condition pareille, de sentiments analogues, sans s'être jamais vus ni parlé, connaissent réciproquement leur sort' (*ibid.*, pp. 281–2).

<sup>115</sup> Writes Guizot: 'La force publique est immense, les forces individuelles petites et peu agressives.' *Ibid.*, p. 367.

<sup>116</sup> 'Regardons la question sous son autre face; de l'établissement de la liberté passons à celui du pouvoir. Sa tâche est immense; des forces lui sont indispensables pour y suffire; il doit les trouver dans les institutions, dans les lois, dans les dispositions de la société à son égard.' Guizot, *Des moyens*, p. 13.

<sup>117</sup> 'Quand il proclame la souveraineté du peuple, c'est qu'il [le système démocratique] est las de chercher le pouvoir légitime, de veiller aux droits de la liberté, de rentrer, pour se reposer, dans les voies de la tyrannie.' François Guizot, *Philosophie politique: de la souveraineté*, in Guizot, *Histoire de la civilisation en Europe*, ed. Pierre Rosanvalon (Paris, 1985), p. 372.

<sup>118</sup> On political idolatry see *ibid.*, pp. 319–27.

<sup>119</sup> 'Dans sa constitution je retrouve le despotisme révolutionnaire. Point de pouvoirs assez distincts et assez forts pour eux-mêmes pour se contrôler et se contenir réciproquement. Point de solides remparts à l'abri desquels les droits et les intérêts divers se puissent établir. Nulle organisation de garanties, nul contre-poids de forces au centre de l'Etat et

cal career, Guizot went so far as to equate political democracy with chaos,<sup>120</sup> by resorting to one of the classical instruments of conservative rhetoric, the jeopardy thesis. It claims that attempts at reform would do nothing other than jeopardize the existing order and must therefore be discarded.<sup>121</sup> Needless to say, Guizot's use of the jeopardy thesis was not a novelty in his epoch. Ultraconservatives like Maistre and Bonald had already bemoaned the 'evils' of the Revolution, by resorting to a combination of jeopardy and futility theses (*plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*) that were meant to demonstrate the negative character of the French Revolution. It is through their emphasis on the sociological definition of democracy that the doctrinaires brought an original contribution in the context of the great political debates during the Bourbon Restoration.

## VII In Lieu of Conclusion

The importance of defining democracy as an *état social* can hardly be overestimated; it enriches our contemporary discussions on democracy and sheds light on the fundamental distinction between *social* and *political* order, a topic on which the doctrinaires put special emphasis in their political writings and speeches. The French doctrinaires considered the egalitarian *social condition* reflected by laws, mores, customs and ideas to be the core of the new democratic regime as well as the prime cause of its institutions. They believed that *political* institutions and laws were the expression or the manifestation of the *social* condition, that is to say the outcome of mores, ideas, customs, habits and traditions. The writings of the doctrinaires were remarkably clear on this central point and the conclusion of their analysis of democracy as social condition is of considerable interest to the student of politics. In a nutshell, it can be stated as follows: one must start by studying the social condition of a country in order to attempt to change its political order, which is another way of saying that a

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au sommet du gouvernement. Rien qu'un moteur et des rouages, un maître et des agents. Partout les libertés individuelles des citoyens seuls en présence de la volonté unique de la majorité numérique de la nation. Partout le principe de despotisme en face du droit de l'insurrection.' François Guizot, *De la démocratie en France* (Paris, 1849), pp. 43–4. This is a late work of Guizot, which differs from his earlier writings. For an earlier statement on democracy see Guizot's article 'De la démocratie dans les sociétés modernes', *Revue française* (November 1837), Vol. III, pp. 139–225.

<sup>120</sup> 'Le chaos se cache aujourd'hui sous un mot: Démocratie . . . C'est le chaos de nos idées et de nos murs politiques, ce chaos caché tantôt sous le mot démocratie, tantôt sous le mot égalité, tantôt sous le mot peuple, qui lui ouvre toutes les portes et abat devant elle tous les remparts de la société.' Guizot, *De la démocratie*, pp. 9, 65.

<sup>121</sup> For the classical treatment of this issue see Albert O. Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Reaction* (Cambridge, 1991).

good knowledge of the *état social* is a necessary condition for improving the workings of a government.<sup>122</sup> Let us listen once more to Guizot:

C'est par l'étude des institutions politiques que la plupart des écrivains, érudits, historiens ou publicistes, ont cherché à connaître l'état de la société, le degré ou le genre de sa civilisation. Il eut été plus sage *d'étudier la société elle-même* pour connaître et comprendre ses institutions politiques. Avant de devenir cause, les institutions sont *effet*; la société les produit avant d'en être modifiée.<sup>123</sup>

In other words, changes in laws and institutions must respond to — and be attuned to — the fabric of society, and institutions must adjust themselves to the mores and the habits of the heart. As I have already indicated, this was an argument the doctrinaires used to combat the political agenda of the extreme right, by pointing out that any attempts at restoring the old aristocratic society were doomed to fail insofar as they contradicted the new social condition. Furthermore, the doctrinaires insisted that the constitution of society lay to a certain extent beyond the reach of human beings. Even when individuals successfully draft laws and set up new institutions, they cannot swim against the tide of ideas, mores or mentalities. That is why in the early 1820s the French doctrinaires viewed the march of democracy as an irresistible phenomenon; a decade later Tocqueville's writings would elaborate on this topic and flesh out all its consequences. As Charles de Rémusat put it, the originality of the doctrinaires was to have called our attention to the fundamental distinction between social and political order:

Alors se produisit avec plus de netteté que jamais la distinction fondamentale entre l'ordre social et politique. Ce sont les doctrinaires qui mirent en lumière cette distinction et qui s'attachèrent avec plus d'insistance à en faire ressortir toutes les conséquences. L'ordre social n'est pas l'ordre politique, puisque la société n'est pas le gouvernement; mais l'ordre social agit sur l'ordre politique: si la société n'est pas un pouvoir, elle est une influence. Or ce que la révolution française a voulu, a tenté, a fait, ce qui la rend une plus grande révolution qu'aucune autre, peut-être, c'est d'avoir sciemment changé l'ordre social . . . Cet ordre social, qui a pour lui les opinions, les habitudes, les murs, les intérêts, la législation civile, est fondé sur l'égalité, en ce sens on peut dire que la démocratie est dans l'ordre social. C'est là le résultat le plus certain, le plus éclatant de la révolution. C'est là le fait irrévocable, indépendant de la volonté des hommes et des gouvernements. La constitution de l'état reste jusqu'à un certain point à notre discrétion. La constitution de la société ne dépend pas de nous; elle est donnée par la force des choses, et si on veut élever le langage, elle est l'oeuvre de la Providence.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>122</sup> Larry Siedentop also addresses this issue in *Tocqueville*, pp. 22–3.

<sup>123</sup> Guizot, *Essais sur l'histoire de France*, p. 73 (all emphases added).

<sup>124</sup> Rémusat, 'De l'esprit de réaction', p. 795.

The Tocquevillian ring of this passage should not surprise anyone by now; it is yet another valuable proof of the influence of the doctrinaires upon Tocqueville. Of all the doctrinaires, it was perhaps Charles de Rémusat,<sup>125</sup> whose voice we've just heard, who went almost as far as Tocqueville to reconcile himself with the advent of democracy. An indefatigable optimist opposed to any form of political nostalgia, Rémusat invited his contemporaries, much as Tocqueville did, to contemplate democracy, understand its principles and consequences, and attempt to regulate and constitutionalize the liberties of the new regime. Constituting democracy, he once said, means moderating and purifying it from potentially destructive revolutionary passions.<sup>126</sup> The future proved him right.

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<sup>125</sup> On the political thought of Rémusat see the study of Darío Roldán, 'La "Démocratie mouvante" et le gouvernement représentatif. Politique et société dans la pensée politique doctrinaire: Charles de Rémusat', paper delivered at the Fifth Conference of the International Society for the Study of European Ideas, Utrecht, 19–24 August 1996.

<sup>126</sup> Writes Rémusat: 'La démocratie n'est pas cette monstruosité qui scandalise tant de bonnes âmes, mais enfin elle place le monde dans une situation nouvelle et inconnue; l'expérience nous manque ou n'est pas suffisante pour nous éclairer sur ses besoins, ses lacunes, ses difficultés, ses ressources . . . Constituer la démocratie, c'est la modérer . . . Contemplez la démocratie, en songeant que vous devez y vivre, qu'elle est l'affaire de tout le monde, et que ses destins sont les vôtres.' Rémusat, 'De l'esprit de réaction', pp. 810, 812, 813.