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[**Editor's Note:** Only after this review was prepared did we learn with sadness of Anne Cohler's sudden death within the year. She died suddenly of natural causes at age 49, at the apparent prime of her scholarly life. Her scholarship on Montesquieu has enriched us all.]

TOCQUEVILLE, REVOLUTION AND LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

Jean-Claude Lamberti: *Tocqueville and the Two Democracies*. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989. Pp. xiii, 323. \$50.00.)

Joan B. Landes: *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989. Pp. xi, 275. \$32.95.)

Saguiv A. Hadari: *Theory in Practice: Tocqueville's New Science of Politics*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989. Pp. vii, 182. \$27.50.)

For two hundred years it has been possible to believe what Tocqueville said he came to appreciate in the Revolution of 1848: that the essence of the French Revolution of 1789 was socialism, and that liberal democracy can well appear an illegitimate compromise of principle with privilege. Events of 1989 have made this view less plausible. The French really celebrated the bicentennial of the Revolution, not just because they like to throw nice parties, but because they finally had reason to be pleased with the political consequences of the Revolution. Then socialism crumbled from within, rejecting the unfulfilled promise of perfect freedom and equality in the future for a possible, decent, if imperfect, present.

It is hard enough to keep up with events, much less to figure out the significance of the revolution of 1989. It is less hard to see some questions that need to be asked about it. Why did no one in the West, neither politician nor political scientist, expect this? Will the expressed desire of the erstwhile socialist republics for democracy lead to anything like the more or less stable liberal democracies we have in the West? Should supporters of liberal democracy in the West or elsewhere be satisfied with liberal democracy and confident for its future?

Three recent books, written and published before the tumultuous events of 1989, suggest some answers to these questions. Two of the books treat of liberal democracy's first and still best analyst, critic, and defender, Alexis de Tocqueville. The third is an examination of the emergence of liberal democracy in France.

Saguiv Hadari concurs in John Stuart Mill's dictum that "the value of [Tocqueville's] work is less in the conclusions, than in the mode of arriving at them" (p. 4). The opposite could be said of Hadari's book. Taking seriously the demand for a new science of politics made by Tocqueville, Hadari gives him credit for having met that demand. Unlike Tocqueville, however, Hadari understands that claim methodologically, not substantially. *Theory in Practice* attempts to defend Tocqueville's applied methods as superior to methodology or, ambiguously, as superior methodology. Although he abjures interest in the substance of Tocqueville's thought, Hadari

allows us to see the way in which this new science of politics might not only meet his requirements for a methodology in the "postmodern" world, but to be, in its unique way, substantively true.

Hadari presents Tocqueville's as one possible model for a coherent social science, not as an authority. He shows how Tocqueville employed each of today's competing modes of political analysis, formal modeling and hermeneutics. Considering the merits and defects of each, he contends that neither alone nor both together could suffice without the addition of a "normative stand" and the kind of synthesis of the three "moments" we find in Tocqueville's works. For example, Tocqueville uses formal modeling to good advantage in the first part of his *Souvenirs* to show how the actions of politicians had the unintended consequence of the Revolution of 1848. His use of hermeneutics is best exemplified by the *Old Regime*, the intention of which is to recapture the spirit of the late old regime to see how and why the Revolution of 1789 occurred. Tocqueville employed both methods, relying on neither exclusively. For while formal modeling can show how actions lead to consequences, it cannot explain, much less evaluate, the intentions with which actors act. So it permits us to learn little from political history. Hermeneutics can bring to light shared cultural understandings, but since the analysis must take each society on its own terms, it cannot arrive at the cross-cultural generalizations which comprise social science. The first method leads to excessive rationalism and/or relativism; the second leads either to relativism or to "cultural conservatism."

Hadari turns finally and of necessity to an elaboration of how Tocqueville incorporates his "normative stand." He discusses no normative theory, perhaps because he rejects (against Habermas's good advice) classical thought for its absolutism. Indeed, he admires Tocqueville precisely for his "spirit of resolute anti-absolutism," (p. 127), for his "thoroughly historicist attitude" (p. 115). Because he maintained his normative stand, Tocqueville could be a "quasi postmodern," though not a "disenchanted nihilis[t]" (p. 137). Neither was he a mere subjectivist: He strove for "distance" (geographical or temporal) from his subject matter, and engaged in delineations of "value trade-offs," both means by which he was forced to state and reflect on his own assumptions and values.

Tocqueville's normative commitment, Hadari clearly sees, is to "liberty and human dignity." He argues well and at length in the first part of his book that it is this commitment that prompts Tocqueville to limit his use of the causal explanations of formal theory. Causal explanations make freedom seem impossible, and they lead us to neglect "chance, or rather the concatenation of secondary causes, which we call by that name because we can't sort them all out . . ." (p. 29). "His whole theoretical practice was undertaken in this spirit" (p. 48).

Hadari ought to have thought more about the significance of his observation and to have considered the content, not just the mode, of Tocqueville's thought. To say that Tocqueville is "thoroughly historicist" one would have to make Tocqueville hold what he denies — that the desire for and possibility of freedom are not natural, but rather belong exclusively to certain historical epochs. For surely an insistence that liberty and dignity are best preserved by different institutions and mores in democracies and aristocra-

cies (though they need always be infused with some of the spirit of aristocracy) does not make one an historicist. In fact, the remarks against general laws which Hadari uses to establish Tocqueville's anti-absolutism are, in context, antidemocratic. Tocqueville is an anti-absolutist in this sense: he appreciated that no mode of what is accepted as social science or philosophy in the modern world can demonstrate the necessity or even the reasonableness of the desire for liberty. And the only way to establish as a truth the possibility and desirability of liberty is for human beings to act in such a way as to make it so. It is in this substantial sense that Tocqueville finds theory in practice and only in practice. Whether any other conceivable norm to which one might be committed would serve to bring the kind of coherence claimed by Hadari for Tocqueville's theory is a question he should have addressed, but did not.

Jean-Claude Lamberti's *Tocqueville and the Two Democracies* is the intellectual history of a book. From it we learn what views Tocqueville shared with his predecessors and contemporaries and where he differed from them; we learn how he changed his views while writing *Democracy in America*, and how *Democracy* is related to his other writings; and we learn something of Tocqueville's political ambitions. There is much useful information and some astute observation in this book, but little sense of Tocqueville's thought as a whole.

Lamberti's thesis is as follows: Tocqueville's intention in writing *Democracy* was to distinguish between democratic politics and revolutionary politics and their consequences. Tocqueville was a democrat because he was, above all, a liberal, and he believed that in his times liberalism could be secured, if at all, only on a foundation of equality. He had no "doubts" about liberal democracy if it was up to the standard set by what he found in New England and under the U.S. Constitution (p. 5). Yet he abhorred the consequences of the revolution that had brought a semblance of democracy to France. The question that preoccupied him through his life was whether "there [was] not an inherent tendency in democratic society to create, if nothing is done to prevent it, situations as dangerous to liberty as revolution is" (p. 4). All of Tocqueville's major published works are devoted to this question of democracy and revolution.

It is in the second volume of *Democracy* that Tocqueville makes the distinction between democracy and revolution thematic, having "inherited" this project from his "master" Pierre-Paul Royer-Collard (pp. 198, 130, 137). The project would seem to have been completed in the famous chapter (II, III, 21) on "Why Great Revolutions Will Become Rare." In mid-1838, however, before writing Part IV of Volume II (and making other substantial revisions), Tocqueville concluded that no such distinction between democracy and revolution could be made. Because of ever-increasing centralization, democracy and "the revolutionary spirit" would long continue to coexist, as would alternations between anarchy and despotism. These two conclusions, seemingly contradictory, are not in fact: in III, 21 Tocqueville speaks of a perfect democracy, at some indefinite point in the future; in Part IV he speaks of the immediate and nearer future. To the extent that Tocqueville makes his point unclearly it is because his argument in III, 21 is weak, because he really believed until about 1844 that there

would be no new revolution in France, because the politically ambitious Tocqueville disagreed with Guizot's retention of the restrictive laws of 1835 and decided to turn the soon to be published chapter III, 21 into the "speech that he would have liked to make in parliament in response to Guizot" (p. 202), and because he thought it necessary to exaggerate the mildness of egalitarian passions in order that his contemporaries who undervalued liberty and overvalued tranquility not shy away from enacting reforms Tocqueville thought necessary to secure liberalism.

Lamberti wants to show that the significance on the second volume of *Democracy* is unclear without knowledge of earlier drafts of the book, of Tocqueville's correspondence, and of his ambitions for a political career. Even the future deputy censored the author. Yet he concedes that "Tocqueville's undeniable fluctuations and imprecisions . . . affect the presentation of his ideas rather than their content" (p. 237), leaving us to wonder how much we have learned from Lamberti's meticulous researches.

Lamberti has Tocqueville distorting his book for the sake of his immediate political goals, but also suppressing politically important details for the sake of giving his book an appearance of timelessness. True, Tocqueville did say that he undertook his 1838 revisions because his political experience had changed or deepened his views. From this, however, it does not necessarily follow that the revisions were intended to further his political career. More importantly, Tocqueville found in political action a respite from reflection, a practical corrective to his theoretical despair. Such a man is unlikely to confuse political theory and practice in the way Lamberti suggests.

From Lamberti's book we learn that Tocqueville had begun to distinguish between revolutions and a revolutionary spirit. We also learn that among the rewritten elements of Volume II was much of Part I, on "The Influence of Democracy on Intellectual Movement." Had Lamberti reflected more on that part of the book, it would have been clearer to him that there is a deeper reason than centralization for Tocqueville's inability or unwillingness to distinguish fully between democracy and a revolutionary spirit. Great revolutions, that is, revolutions from democracy to aristocracy, will be rare in imperfect as well as perfect democracies, but a revolutionary spirit will always persist in democracy because perfect democracy is at best an unrealizable goal and at worst a horrifying possibility. The eradication of all human inequalities, conventional and natural, is democracy's goal. If, as Tocqueville insists, the most important human inequalities are natural, then democracy's revolution is unending, or it will end only with the destruction of liberty, dignity, and all other distinctive aspects of human beings as we have known them. Human sentiments and mores are likely to resist or recoil from democracy's logic for some time, but even the best of liberal democracy's institutions are endangered by it. Revolution is an "extreme" or "excess" of democracy, and Cartesianism (pp. 76, 140, 165, 240) as logical consistency is an excess of the seemingly reasonable human aspiration to rationalize politics. "True democracy" (p. 242) can appear as liberal democracy only when writers and statesmen like Tocqueville succeed in interesting democrats more in liberty than in democracy. Lam-

berti's author of *Democracy in America* is not only too political, but too much a democrat.

It is in reading Joan Landes's *Women and the Public Sphere* that we can best see the power and problematic character of democratic thinking as Tocqueville understood it. According to Landes, the "bourgeois public sphere" as it emerged in the years 1750–1850 was (and still is) "essentially masculinist"; it was meant to be not only without women, but against women. Despite, or rather because of, its claim to rationality and universality, eighteenth century liberalism opposed itself to the particularity of women. And the republicanism of the French Revolution found a new "proper" place for women in the home. Both female domesticity and modern feminism, as well as the difficulties that attend each, originated in liberal republicanism.

The lot of women, Landes contends, was worsened rather than improved by the French Revolution. She does not insist on a conspiracy of men against women, only on changes that had unfortunate effects on women and on thought about women and public life. Under the late monarchy women, or the richest and poorest among them, fared well: they had public persona, sometimes important ones. Poor women, of necessity, were expected to work in public and among men, be they fishmongers or artificial flower sellers. More importantly, in court society women often gained significant political influence when they engaged in pillow talk in the semipublic realm of the king's "household." Some, due to their aristocratic positions, even had the right to vote and to hold office—however "idiosyncratic" those rights (and however infrequent elections) might have been (p. 122). Moreover, the chief cultural institution to arise under and in opposition to the aristocratic monarchy was the *salon*, and it was there that women made their marks on late-eighteenth-century French history. Yet even as political and cultural forces brought women to the height of their influence, other political and cultural forces undermined their position. Literary and artistic modes changed to the detriment of the genres with which the salonnières had been associated. And because the revolutionaries sought to abolish not just the institutions of aristocracy and monarchy, but the mores of court society and the *salon*, attacked so effectively by Montesquieu and Rousseau respectively, the Revolution necessarily deprived the most visible participants in court and *salon* life of their respectability.

The first phase of the Revolution bode ill for women because liberalism claimed to bring a new order grounded in universal reason and rights. Where in this order is the place of the being who has long been identified with the figurative and stylistic in art and with passion and particularity in life? The second, radical or republican, phase bode even worse: new theories of republicanism urged the necessity of the family as nurturer of the virtues of citizens, and thus insisted on women's devotion exclusively to domestic duties. And the radical uprisings of 1793, in which women figured prominently, made women easy targets for whoever wanted to deny the popular classes a place in French political life. Where in this public order is the place of the being whose proper task is held to be that of "republican motherhood?" The revolution that began by declaring the rights of all in fact denied these rights to women both by law and by public opinion. Even

women—even feminists—came to believe that women's domesticity was natural, and it was there they came to seek their happiness.

As Tocqueville reminds us, the revolutionary intellectuals who first recognized or conceived of the rationality of the doctrine of universal and equal natural rights abhorred the manifest injustice of virtually all of the Old Regime's conventional and, by then, arbitrary privileges and inequalities. The women who benefitted from the Old Regime were those who benefitted from this arbitrariness. In practice the republican revolutionaries also found it necessary to make distinctions, arbitrary or not, between men and women, propertied and nonpropertied. Tocqueville, too, acknowledges the necessity of conventions for political life, even as he attempts to distinguish between conventional and natural differences and inequalities. He forces us to ask which differences and inequalities among human beings are natural, but also to ask whether and how differences and inequalities of any sort might be respected in politics and society. Landes assumes either that men and women do not have "natures" (always in quotation marks) or that their natures do not differ. True, the ubiquity of women's domesticity throughout history should not matter more than the possibility of their publicity under the Old Regime. The issue is neither what is customary nor what is possible, but what arrangement best meets the needs of both male and female human beings. This issue Landes does not raise.

Landes points out that the legal exclusion of women as a class under liberal republicanism made the deprivation of rights all the more obnoxious. Yet the idiosyncratic rights held by a few women under the Old Regime would hardly satisfy contemporary liberal democrats, male or female. While Landes is surely correct in stressing the importance of informal political practices and cultural influences, she errs in failing to distinguish between mores and institutions. The founders of liberalism, for example, did not expect public opinion to be a realm of deliberation (p. 42); they devised representative political institutions precisely to circumscribe the irrationality of popular views. While Landes is right that representation is problematic for women, she fails to mention that French revolutionary politics were exquisitely complicated by the influence of Rousseau's notion of the general will and his attack on representation. Every citizen had to speak for the whole, and none could legitimately speak for himself, or for an interest that might be represented. This supposed requirement of republicanism is arguably even less reasonable than one that directs women's talents, energies, and concerns to domestic, rather than public, affairs. In any case, Landes never raises the question of whether or not there are any reasonable requirements of republicanism.

One can applaud the revolution of 1989 without being overly confident that its bicentennial will be a cause for celebration. Landes's critique of the thought of the Revolution of 1789 and of liberal republicanism amounts to a repudiation of it. Yet she cannot mean to defend the arbitrariness and authoritarianism of the Old Regime, for she still seems to want something like universal and equal freedom. She would concur in Tocqueville's observation that the ideas that undermined the Old Regime do not fully justify liberal democracy as we know it. Liberal democracy will never be

either liberal enough or democratic enough. Landes does not recognize or regret that her own argument partakes of the depoliticizing and dehumanizing character of democratic thought. What we have witnessed in 1989 may well be the triumph of love of liberty over modern democratic rationality. This much Tocqueville seems to have figured out for us. If he was right, it is no wonder that we liberal democrats are having trouble figuring out what all this means and where it will lead.

—DELBA WINTHROP

HAS MODERNITY LOST THE TRANSCENDENT?

Thomas Molnar: *Twin Powers: Politics and the Sacred*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1988. Pp. xi, 147. \$9.95, paper.)

This book summarizes an array of cultural studies by a variety of authors who point out some sacralization of political power in all times and places before the modern age. The book consequently argues that the on-going desacralization of power in the West, especially since the Enlightenment, is an alarming sign of decline. Though of a smaller scope Molnar's work is in the vein of cultural analysts such as Toynbee, Spengler, Eliade, and Dawson. This is a book about whether or not there is a future for Western civilization; it is a lament over the plight of a godless world, and a prophetic warning that humanity has lost contact with the sacred and hence with the good. "Civilization depends on humanity's connection with transcendent reality" (p. 142). Cut off from the transcendent source of community life, modernity has painted itself in a corner with no exit. The author asks: "Can a community exist without the sacred component, by the mere power of rational decisions and intellectual discourse?" (p. 137).

Molnar writes that the "thesis of this book" is "that power and all of Western civilization has been and continues to be desacralized" (p. 142). He argues that the restraints upon the abuse of political power stem from the connection of temple and palace to a divine order and a heavenly justice. Weaving examples taken from antiquity until modern times Molnar argues that "politics and religion are inseparable" (p. 34). Without the sacred, profane power has no check to its arbitrary exercise. As Ivan says in *Brothers Karamazov*: "If God is dead, everything is permitted." The "political problem of our times" is "whether power, now without a foundation in the sacred, will remain an ordering principle in society and state or whether it will become a source of disorder and anarchy" (p. xi). Without "moral imperatives guaranteed by a divine figure" (p. 41) humanity approaches the Hobbesian nightmare of *bellum omnium contra omnes*. What is "needed to be moral" is the "external support from institutional compulsion, religious imperatives, or the coercive apparatus of law and state — all of them performing only when sacralized" (p. 130). Tragically, that sacralization has been lost; "we cannot produce a new sacred, and we cannot revive the traditional one" (p. 135).