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WORKSHOP IN POLITICAL THEORY
AND POLICY ANALYSIS
513 NORTH PARK
INDIANA UNIVERSITY
BLOOMINGTON, IN 47405-3025 U.S.A.
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Alexis de Tocqueville on Civic Virtue and Self-Interest Rightly Understood in American Democracy

Prepared for the 1998 Annual Meeting of the
American Political Science Association Meetings
Boston, September 2-6, 1998
Short Course
Teaching Civic Virtue: A Workshop on Citizenship

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Abstract

When Alexis de Tocqueville observed democratic life in America, he encountered a number of "strange paradoxes." Americans haphazardly employed a shallow, if admittedly pragmatic public philosophy, while also engaging themselves deeply in the civic demands of self-government. They imbued majority opinion with nearly religious significance, yet maintained institutions that depended on individual experimentation, innovation, and expression. The general teachings of revealed religion influenced their political habits to an unprecedented extent, while church and state remained separated in law. At first America appeared to Tocqueville as a series of contradictions. But gradually he saw that Americans were perpetually balancing liberty and obligation in greater and lesser acts that reflected self-sacrifice as much as self-interest. Their republican style of political virtue, he concluded, turned on a proper understanding of interest. "Self-interest rightly understood" represented a desire to serve the general good and understanding of the social dimension of private actions that was itself a complex balance of seemingly opposing sensibilities. This type of civic virtue combined a disinterested concern for others with calculations of private welfare. The federal frame of government encouraged people to balance public good and private interest, as did intermediate institutions such as voluntary associations and the structure of family life. Tocqueville attributed some of America's success with self-government to the gendered nature of citizenship. Women played a vital role in civic education, while they were prevented from taking part in such acts of citizenship as voting and military service. Tocqueville understood the civic contributions of men and women to be separate and complementary. His analysis raises its own paradoxes for us as we explore the nature of citizenship and civic virtue today.

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE ON CIVIC VIRTUE

Within days of his arrival in America, Tocqueville spoke of interest as the driving force in the new world. He wrote to Ernest de Chabrol from New York on June 9, 1831 asking his friend to "imagine ... a society formed of all the nations of the world: English, French, Germans ... people having different languages, beliefs, opinion: in a word, a society without roots, without memories, without prejudices, without routines, without common ideas, without a national character, yet a hundred times happier than our own; more Virtuous? I doubt it. That is the starting point: What serves as the link among such diverse elements? What makes all of this into one people? Interest. That is the secret."¹

Tocqueville associated interest in part with material gain; Americans, he said, sought the value of everything and evaluated every project by a single measure, "how much money will it bring in."² Tocqueville linked acquisitiveness with the social instability, mutable laws, and personal anxiety that threatened public life. These qualities represented the negative proclivities of a society motivated by interest, inclinations that must be tempered by other desires of the human heart and habits of thought. At first Tocqueville contrasted enlightened interest unfavorably with classical notions of virtue, yet he learned in his American encounters that enlightened self-interest encompassed more than a drive for material gain. In America a proper understanding of interest embraced an awareness of the public dimension of private right that reflected an enduring tradition of covenantal bonds that surpassed the ties produced by coordinating common material desires.

Federal designs, Tocqueville concluded, permitted private interest to be a sentinel of the public right. Interest provided citizens with a stake in society and federal institutions structured political participation such that individual interests were served through civic engagement. But Tocqueville would soon find that the doctrine of enlightened self-interest was a more complex matter than even these ideas of coordination and accommodation captured. "Men have sentiments and principles as well as interests," he found, and a polity could not subsist by accommodating interests alone.³ Humanity naturally put its greatest faculties to work searching "into the divine conception" and, seeing "that order is the purpose of God" a person "freely gives his own efforts to aid in prosecuting this great design."⁴ Material interests can be reoriented, even made the servant of another natural drive. Public institutions, Tocqueville thought, can assist the individual's inclination to "sacrifice his personal interests to this consummate order of all created things," a sacrifice taken with no expectation of recompense other than the pleasure of contemplating God's order.⁵

Tocqueville, thus, extracted a more subtle interpretation of enlightened interest in light of the moral sentiments expressed in America's founding and constitutional framing.⁶ As he recorded his first observations he set about joining "self-interest rightly understood" with religious sentiment and covenantal traditions as well as attaching this public philosophy to the "proper institutions" of federalism. He learned from his American hosts that a proper understanding of self-interest combined with common assent to general principles of revealed religion enabled the citizens of the new world to engage in the common enterprise of self-government.

Tocqueville transcribed his interviews with Americans and noted his observations in several cross-referenced, alphabetical and chronologically arranged journals. I have extracted a portion of one such entry on his visit to Ohio (Appendix A) to illustrate how Tocqueville understood civic virtue in the old and new world. Tocqueville's notes on Ohio also demonstrate his method of interpreting empirical observations according to theoretical categories and predictions.

He started this entry, as he would later begin *Democracy*, with a discussion of the polity's physical environment, size, and history. These qualities influenced the political community's development; environmental and historical circumstances produced the social conditions that would shape the community's political character. The general trend of increasing social equality took a particular form in America and developed within the "nations" comprising the Confederation in specific ways. Ohio, like other states had been placed in its own "peculiar and accidental situation."⁷ These circumstances along with its laws, manners and customs, shaped its citizens habits of heart and mind.

Ohio was well situated, its lands were fertile, and its waterways provided invaluable access for trade and communication. But these qualities alone could not account for its development. Its social condition was "democratic," which for Tocqueville meant not only that its people enjoyed equality under the law, but also that a great degree of social leveling afforded each individual similar hopes and threatened each with similar obstacles to success.

Tocqueville's concerns for democracy are well known. The people in Ohio, like all democratic people could succumb to possessive individualism, extreme materialism, skepticism, and cynicism. If they did falter in these ways, society would not only become little more than a factory, as he says of Ohio, public life would descend into shallow displays of interest, avarice, and ego that ultimately led each individuals to capitulate liberty to the ministrations of a tutelary state. Democratic despotism, the tyranny of majority opinion, anxiety, and despair awaited the individual trapped in the political and social isolation caused by equality's sinister side.

But in Ohio, though it was the most democratic of states and, thus, the most vulnerable to democratic excesses, "*yet society prospered.*" The question was why, "because of democracy or despite of it?"

It is impossible to answer that question by judging the new world in terms of the categories of the old, a point that Tocqueville took up at length in the final chapter of the second volume of *Democracy*. A new world needed a new science of politics. If we study all of the ways in which Ohio's inhabitants failed to measure up to a more classical notions of civics and citizenship we begin to appreciate why Tocqueville sought new foundations for republican virtue.

Ohio, as Tocqueville described it, was heterogeneous; its people shared no particular spirit or way of life. The absence of ancient ties precluded the sort of patriotic sentiment that he likened to a religious instinct. This sort of patriotism "incites great transient exertions, but not continuity of effort," Tocqueville explained.⁸ Tocqueville would later argue in *Democracy* that without a patriotic spirit inherited from "traditional institutions whose legitimacy has never been contested," people like the citizens in Ohio would be forced to develop a type of public spirit more appropriate to self-government.⁹

Tocqueville described the species of attachment to country fit for self-government as rational and consensual. It was, he said, less generous and less ardent, perhaps, but more fruitful and more lasting. It "springs from knowledge; it is nurtured by laws; it grows by the exercise of civil rights; and, in the end, it is confounded with the personal interests of the citizen."¹⁰ This kind of public spirit was stimulated when citizens took part in government, participating in electoral politics, serving on juries and in public office.

In America, Tocqueville asserted, the law shaped the public arena and notions of rights not only by direct edicts, but also in less obvious, indirect ways. A specific legal framework for addressing any particular issue and the general frame of federalism encouraged the art and science of association. Voluntary associations, premised on principles of consent and self-reliance, were free schools of civic education. In Ohio civil law was developing not simply on the basis of English traditions, but also on the experience of the self-governing practice of ordinary life.

But how was the experience gained in the associational life of *res publica* to be interpreted and established as a part of the public philosophy that would guide lawmaking? The people of Ohio were not fond of philosophy; they had no leisure to speculate about the human predicament. Should they acknowledged an interior life of the mind and soul, they could expect to share their most heartfelt hopes and fears with no one. These were the most American of Americans; they were in

Ohio to make money. They lacked a homogeneous community of language or religion, they had no collective memory, and they voted for whomever and whatever flattered them or claimed to serve their private interests. And they apparently applied few constraints to their governors. Fortunes rose and fell as they hurried pell mell through an existence they scarcely had time to contemplate.

In the contrast between what Ohio lacked and what classical views of virtue said the good life required we find the form of civic virtue necessary, Tocqueville discovered, to a democratic people. For self-government to flourish individuals must be drawn out of their myopic, self-referential egoism into common enterprise. But not every collective action taught the right lessons. A self-governing polity needed citizens who could reflect publicly and privately on their common experiences and problems. This sort of conscientious deliberation and choice took place only under certain conditions.

Tocqueville showed that the rules of assembly found in the federal framework of American government were also put to use in non-governmental political organizations and voluntary associations. Federal designs included such institutional arrangements as a separation of powers and constitutionally limited authority. This design pertained not only to the "national" government, as Tocqueville called the union of states, but, more significantly applied to every relationship throughout a *compound*, as well as *extended* republic. The rules promoting public discourse and problem solving formed a matrix of relationships and a web of associational life that was so different from Tocqueville's expectations that he struggle to describe them.¹¹ As important as these institutional designs were, more important still was the mental stance required to put them into practice. The mentality that Tocqueville associated with American civic mindedness combined the *spirit of religion* with the *spirit of liberty*.¹²

Religion, Tocqueville maintained, was the first of America's *political* institutions.¹³ As a political institution, religion inspired moral sentiments that indirectly influence political activity. The effects of moral sentiments were, Tocqueville believed, as indispensable as they were profound. Considered only in terms of its practical contributions, religion's main advantage was to "furnish a clear, precise, intelligible and lasting answer" to the fundamental questions for most of humanity.¹⁴ Religion's principal contribution to self-government was to secure the individual's mind and soul morally, while leaving political opinions open to deliberation and experimentation. The actuality of belief and the absence of a state religion made possible the habits of self-restraint on which self-governing societies depend.¹⁵

"Most religions are only general, simple, and practical means" of teaching that the soul is immortal, Tocqueville subsequently wrote.¹⁶ Considered only in terms of its social utility, these simple ideas were "so indispensable to man's greatness," that democratic nations should take care not to disturb them once they had taken root in its citizens' hearts.¹⁷ Governments did not need to inculcate religious sentiments, the simple ideas Tocqueville discussed were natural responses of human hearts and minds.

Tocqueville characterized the natural simplicity of religious faith in this way:

Man alone, of all created beings, displays a natural contempt of existence, and yet a boundless desire to exist; he scorns life, but he dreads annihilation. These different feelings incessantly urge his soul to the contemplation of a future state, and religion directs his musings thither. Religion, then, is simply another form of hope, and it is no less natural to the human heart than hope itself. Men cannot abandon their religious faith without a kind of aberration of intellect and a sort of violent distortion of their true nature... Unbelief is an accident, and faith is the only permanent state of mankind.¹⁸

Tocqueville used the notion of a simple idea not only to express religion's uncomplicated nature, but also its elemental qualities. "Simple ideas" were foundational and universal and, because they represented unambiguous truths, were easy to understand. "Simple ideas" were plain truths. The meaning of a simple idea was distinct and unmistakable because it arose from the most natural, basic response of human intelligence to a given stimulus. A simple idea manifested the totality of experience unequivocally in the human mind. In practice, however, the meaning of "simple idea" is not so simple.

God could be manifest in every human heart, yet the representation of even a simple notion of hope was unlikely to be universal. How would human experience, a sense of God, translate itself into daily life? How did humanity claim knowledge of God's indelible laws? By what authority would God's simple truth be articulated in universal human terms? Near the end of the eighteenth century, God's revealed word was increasingly linked to the law of nature, but debate persisted about how that law manifested in everyday politics. The answers to these questions affected religion as much as it did politics. By the nineteenth century Tocqueville encountered religious populism, "natural" religion, and a romantic, sentimentalist portrayal of nature that he associated variably with "religious insanity," intolerance, and indifference.

Religious institutions, to the extent that they are humanly influenced and "political," navigate a difficult course in modern democracy. While the institutions of faith and those of government may have a symbiotic relationship, their interests, he maintained, remained distinct.¹⁹

If religion left the individual free to change temporal circumstances in the political world, it could be a source of foundational ideas of self-control, self-organization, and self-government. If, in contrast, a state church extinguished individual consent by imposing its brand of religious affiliation, genuine faith and the independent moral judgment it fosters would be threatened. Once linked to a particular political system, religious authority would ultimately be seen as human-made and, therefore, conditional. Corruption of civil government would then extend to the state church, and rejection of the former would require rejection of the latter, or at least a considerable lessening of its moral imperative. Religious principles must be removed from the manipulation of civil authority and that restriction applied equally to republican government. In democracy, religious principles must also be protected from incessant reappraisal.

The act of "harmonizing] earth with heaven" (as Tocqueville described this act of balancing liberty and moral restraint) would be the most complicated and important process a democratic people would negotiate. The polity's need to separate some judgments from ordinary discourse in order to maintain openness and experimentation in politics created a dilemma that was, in Tocqueville's words, unparalleled.²⁰ Regardless of the risks involved, Tocqueville argued that we have the most to gain and the least to lose by removing "general ideas regarding God and human nature." from "the habitual action of private judgment."²¹ The articles of faith drawn from Jewish and Christian traditions furnished the simple ideas democracy required; the list was short, comprised only of the idea of the immortality of the soul and the love of God and neighbor. The concept of eternal life increased the boundaries our temporal horizon, agape drew us to desire more than an instrumental understanding of others. Nothing, Tocqueville believed, should be incorporated into religious dogma that required specific civil corrections to the neighbor that we love; that content was left to politics, an arena from which religion is to remain clear.

To act as the first of America's political institutions, religion combined the basic orientation of democratic people, "interest," with these basic propositions common to all religions. Tocqueville found these general teachings of revealed religion, the "simple ideas," and "self-interest rightly understood" joined in the public philosophy of nineteenth century America. The fate of this public philosophy and its good or ill effects changed with the vitality of public life and its myriad voluntary associations. These deliberative forums enabled common beliefs to be informed by a public discourse concerning profound questions that are actualized in mundane affairs.

If common belief is based on simple ideas, the definitions (and words) attached to beliefs by common agreement must reflect some conventional view of the faith *experience*. Experience was

the basis for simple ideas, but God remained hidden, human beings imperfect, and Tocqueville, as much as any modern thinker, wrestled with the implications for church and civil authority in light of that fact. Tocqueville focused on the practical effects of drawing general principles from particular human responses. Although our conventions may be generalized from specific circumstances, conventions based on ideas *as they were experienced* might be evaluated in terms of a common method of normative inquiry such as the Golden Rule.²² Tocqueville viewed such concepts as the Golden Rule as a precept that employed "sympathetic understanding" to consider the probable motives, desires, and responses of others. Tocqueville identified the Golden Rule as a method for developing common norms of behavior and discussed the ideas common to religious experience as precepts that could be set aside from ordinary discourse by conscious agreement. Much like constitutional provisions were separated from other types of law and ordinary methods of making mundane collective and individual decisions, the authority establishing foundational beliefs encompassed, but differed from other types of judgment. If the simple, general ideas common to all religions were known, consciously considered, and found reasonably acceptable to most, human creation might pursue a general moral science that neither led "the mind of every man to untried thoughts," nor prohibited "him from thinking at all."²³

In the nineteenth century, Tocqueville found this nexus of religion and self-interest rightly understood combined disinterested concern for others with the desire to coordinate interests for shared material well being. Religious enlightenment, Tocqueville believed, provided disinterested concern, the basis for community when common interests are not easily recognized. A right understanding of interest offered practical reasons to reach consensus when religious differences would otherwise be impossible to negotiate.

This moral foundation addressed the problem of excessive materialism by using natural human desires for well being to promote an interest in others and concern for the transcendent. The transcendent nature of revealed religion combated an excessive concern for temporal existence. Material well being may motivate a host of important interactions in democracy and may even temper religious zealotry. By engaging in an activity undertaken for base motives — contracting to improve one's material state — Tocqueville suggested that individuals may learn more about others with whom they associate. If people learn more about those that they may actually hope to assist, they are less likely to be tyrants through sheer ignorance. That the cause for reducing oppressive, paternalistic intervention in the lives of others might be self-serving, and thus less virtuous than

pure altruism, matters less in this practical application of interest than do the effects of such a practice.

Organized religious institutions should not attempt to end the desire for material goods with explicit prohibitions, Tocqueville concluded, but, using the general teachings of religious beliefs, they could help regulate and restrain an excessive taste for well being. Tocqueville explained that individuals could not be cured of their love for riches, but they can be guided to enrich themselves by only honest means.²⁴ To deny ambitions aimed at material fulfillment or negate the self totally would eliminate a primary junction at which individuals unite to act collectively and engage in the public discourse and normative inquiry so vital to self-government.

From this perspective Tocqueville argued that self-interest rightly understood is not the motive of religious people, but it can be the mode by which religion governs a people.²⁵ Religion's simple ideas could lead the individual to forego selfishness in the present life in hopes of attaining eternal life, but the individual's motivation is more than this expression of long-range self-interest.²⁶ Self-interest, Tocqueville contended, may be the initial motivation to accept religion, but the teachings of religion actually require something more of the individual. If a right understanding of self-interest directs individuals to adopt a religion in order to attain eternal life, Tocqueville points out that it "also teaches that men should benefit their fellow creatures for the love of God! A sublime expression!"²⁷

By applying a right understanding of self-interest to acts of political participation, individuals learned habits of tolerance and forbearance that tempered self-righteousness, promoting religious freedom, not religious faction. The public philosophy uniting simple ideas and self-interest rightly understood tempered individualism and vitiated majority dominance. Voluntary associations provided critical opportunities for citizens to reflect on the community's guiding principles and create its traditions and norms.

No feature of American society struck Tocqueville more forcibly than the proliferation of civil, commercial, and political voluntary associations. Five months into his journey Tocqueville gave this overall account of America's public life: "What is most striking to everyone who travels in this country,... is the spectacle of a society marching along all alone, without guide or support, by the sole fact of the cooperation of individual wills."²⁸ When individuals participated in the voluntary associations, he later wrote, they learned more of "the various notions and opinions current among" a people, notions that reflected the foundational ideas constituting their polity and experience with self-government. Participation in either constitutional or collective choice not only

renewed an individual's attachment to founding beliefs, but also tested those beliefs, permitting reflection and change as well as renewal. Participation in voluntary associations taught "the habits of the heart" for self-government - a mental stance that was secured by ideas developed through common assent and common action. In America, voluntary associations indicated that democracy "worked;" they were also the primary means by which democracy worked. Yet Tocqueville's analysis of voluntary associations cautions against oversimplifying the relationship between voluntary associations and democracy.

The general political consequences of increasing social equality were easily deduced: Equality would be established in the political world by giving rights to every citizen, or none at all to anyone.²⁹ The actual effect of equality in any particular situation was, however, not so easily predicted. The two orientations toward equality that Tocqueville identified with democracy produced two types of self-organized institutions: those with a democratic organizational structure and self-governing intentions and whose structure was hierarchical and whose purpose was domination. Voluntary associations played a vital role in America, but in other political circumstances self-organization was not advantageous in sustaining political life. Not all associations nurtured the understanding of self-interest proper to socially responsible public engagement. Private interests could be a sentinel of public right as James Madison intended, but self-interest could also promote factions, as he feared. If a faction of the people dominate, in effect making the public realm their possession, sovereignty becomes unitary and absolute; a faction embodies the public and rules the people.³⁰

The compound and extended republican framework - federalism - in part hindered the assent of faction. The rules of assembly put to use in most associations likewise encouraged the habits of belief and behavior that inhibited factious motives and actions. Religiously based mores also discouraged purely private gain sought at public expense. The longevity of these institutional and ideational barriers was insured in the private realm of civil society by the American family and the "superiority of [American] women.

As Tocqueville saw it, "no free communities ever existed without morals and ... are the work of woman."³¹ Tocqueville lauded the separate but complementary civic roles laid out for men and women in America. Self-government required the activities of each gender; the activities and ideas of women must be held in the same esteem as those of men. Both gender roles required education, courage, and moral rectitude. The family was the first institution of self-government and, as a consequence, the lessons learned here were the foundations of civic instruction. Women's

hearts and minds could respond scrupulously and carefully to the public issues. Women were as obligated as men to access political concerns and take political positions. That their opinions would be expressed primarily in the family and in civil associations that were deemed appropriate to their gender did not diminish their significance or merit.

The civic role for women that Tocqueville describes has been more recently called "Republican Motherhood" or "Republican Womanhood."³² As historian Linda Kerber explains

The Republican Mother's life was dedicated to the service of civic virtue: she educated her sons for it, she condemned and corrected her husband's lapses from it. If, according to Montesquieu's commonly accepted claim, the stability of the nation rested on the persistence of virtue among its citizens, then the creation of virtuous citizens was dependent on the presence of wives and mothers who were well informed, 'properly methodical,' and free of 'invidious and rancorous passions.'³³

As important as this role was for the republic, scholars like Kerber believe it was wrought at the cost of women's rights and other possible contributions to the commonweal. Scholars of women's estate from the colonial period through the Revolution and Federalist eras to the Jacksonian nineteenth century moment of Tocqueville's visit, document a general decline in the value of women's contributions in the sphere assigned to them and a deprecation of that sphere itself. The reality was apparently not what the ideal of complementary and interdependent arenas of life depicted long before women sought a public status and right on par with the male citizen's role.

Tocqueville's conception of civic virtue, thus, raises a number of difficult questions for us today. Equality had progressed as Tocqueville predicted. Some aspects of religion's role in republican life have changed as have our gendered notions of citizenship. If Tocqueville came to America today he might ask us if we believe that we persist as an engaged citizenry and prosper as a society (to the extent that we do) because of democracy or despite of it.

APPENDIX A: TOCQUEVILLE LOOKS AT OHIO

Alexis de Tocqueville. 1971 [1831]. *Journey to America*. J.P. Mayer ed., George Lawrence, trans. New York: Doubleday Anchor. Pp. 275-277.

Ohio

(2nd December 1831)

Ohio was admitted into the Confederation in 1802. It then had a population of 40 to 50 thousand souls. Today, it has a million. This population is composed of some Europeans, a certain number of people from the South and the East, and of many adventurers from New England, who are already beginning to emigrate towards the less peopled States. Ohio could, without becoming more densely populated than many provinces of Europe, have ten million inhabitants. The fertility of the country seems inexhaustible. It is wonderfully watered by three or four little streams, tributaries of the Ohio, which run back towards the great lakes.

As to one's general impression of the State of Ohio, one can say that morally as well as physically it is a being in growth which has not yet any decided character. Its population is composed of too heterogeneous elements for it to be possible up to now to identify any particular spirit in it or any special way of life. This is the country with the least national character. It is also the one with the fewest national prejudices; in these two respects it is both inferior and superior to the other parts of the Union. Its civil legislation shows how far it is free from precedents in criminal legislation; the State of Ohio has opened up a new line for itself. In civil law, it has amazingly simplified English legislation, and seems, as far as I can judge up to the present, to have freed itself pretty completely from the domination of tradition; I suppose it is the same in the world of *politics*. ...

More than any of the other parts of the Union, Ohio presents the spectacle of a society absolutely occupied with its affairs, and, in the matter of work, growing rapidly. It is there above all that one must go to have an idea of this social state, so different from our own; in Boston, in New York, in Philadelphia, in all the great towns of the coast, there is already a class which has acquired property and which has adopted sedentary habits and wants to enjoy wealth, not to make it. In Ohio everyone has come to make money. No one has been born there; no one wants to stay there; there is not a *single*, absolutely not a *single* man of leisure, not a single speculative mind. Everyone has his work, to which he devotes himself ardently. As yet people just don't know what upper classes are; the pell mell is complete. The whole of society is a factory! More than anywhere else, in Ohio there are no general ideas; ranks are mixed up there; even rules of behaviour still seem uncertain there; no one has had the time to gain a position, a political or social standing there; the people escape from all influences. Democracy there is without limits. Altogether, Ohio gives an impression of prosperity, but not of stability. It is a youthful being, strong and vigorous, but with whom the very speed of growth gives the impression of something transitory and temporary.

One of the most interesting things in Ohio is to see democracy there carried to extreme limits such as it seldom reaches. In those same States of the Union where we saw it most extended, where neither nobility nor wealth dispose of patronage, there are still some local influences: here it is a name which revives some great historical memory and speaks to the people's imagination; there it is the prestige of some great ability; in yet another place, services rendered. In many places it is the moral power exercised over a people's spirit by the memory of a whole life spent before its eyes in doing good. The democracy of Ohio is free even from these feeble influences. The inhabitants of Ohio arrived only yesterday in the place where they live. They have come without knowing one another, and with different morals and conceptions. The greater part of them have come to stay. No common tie binds them together. There is not one among them who could talk about his life to people who would understand him. No one has had the time to establish a way of life, to win a reputation, or to establish an influence of any permanence on the strength of his services or his virtues. The result is that democracy in Ohio is even more chancy and capricious in its choices than any other that I know. The first comer flatters the people and often wins its vote which is controlled by nothing, *and yet society prospers*. But does it prosper because of democracy or despite of it? That is the point....

¹ Alexis de Tocqueville. 1985. "To Ernest de Chabrol New York, June 9, 1831," *Selected Letters on Politics and Society*. Roger Boesche and James Toupin trans. Roger Boesche, ed. Berkeley: University of California Press. P. 38.

² Tocqueville, *Letters*, 39.

³ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 1: 175-176.

⁴ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 2: 154.

⁵ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 2: 154.

⁶ Although figures such as Madison, Hamilton, and Jefferson disagreed in important ways about the relationship of religion and politics, they generally sought the separation of church and state but acknowledge a vital indirect role for religious teachings as a basis for the informing consciousness of self-government. While *Federalist #10* (Hamilton, Madison, and Jay, 1788) is instructive about the issues raised for political communities by intolerant religious views, other writings of Madison suggest not only the necessary separation of church and state, but also an important role for the teachings of revealed religion in public life (Madison 1910 and 1985). Jefferson (1943 a and 1943 b) offers a valuable alternative view of the relationship of religion and politics, stressing the mean-spirited hypocrisy of self-interest masquerading as religious feeling.

⁷ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 1: 48, 296.

⁸ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 1: 251.

⁹ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 1: 251.

¹⁰ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 1: 251.

¹¹ On the subject of rules of assembly and the compound republic see Vincent Ostrom. 1994. *The Meaning of American Federalism*. San Francisco: ICS Press, especially chapter five. On the matrix form of covenant-based polities of which America was, for Tocqueville, one example, see Daniel Elazar. 1995. *Covenant and Polity in Biblical Israel*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers. Pp. 35-42.

¹² Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 1: 45.

¹³ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 1: 318.

¹⁴ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 2: 22.

¹⁵ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 1:310-318)

¹⁶ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 2: 154.

¹⁷ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 2: 154-155.

¹⁸ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 1: 321.

¹⁹ Primarily, Tocqueville presents these views in his critique of the cooptation of faith by state interests in 18th century France (*Democracy*, 1: 321; and *Old Regime*, 155-157). In contrast, religion containing the seeds of political critique, yet, in his description, free from association with government, is a primary aid to minority Catholics in Ireland (1958, 57, 180-182).

²⁰ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 2: 22.

²¹ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 2:22.

²² See also Vincent Ostrom, *American Federalism*, pp. 62-67.

²³ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 2: 12

²⁴ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 2: 27.

²⁵ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 2: 134

²⁶ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 2: 154.

²⁷ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 2: 154.

²⁸ Alexis de Tocqueville. 1971. *Journey to America*. George Lawrence, trans. J. P. Mayer, ed. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, p. 55

²⁹ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 1: 48.

³⁰ Daniel Elazar (1996. *Covenant and Commonwealth*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers. Pp. 55-65.) makes a similar point, contrasting particularistic feudal contracts with more "public," that is universal covenants and compacts.

³¹ Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 2: 209.

³² Linda Kerber. 1986. *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*. New York: WW Norton and Company. See also Carol Berkin. 1996. *First Generations: Women in Colonial America*. New York: Hill and Wang.

³³ Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, p. 229.