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Tocqueville on the Modern Moral Situation: Democracy and the Decline of Devotion

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Most scholarship on the moral dimensions of Tocqueville's analysis of democracy focuses on the doctrine of enlightened self-interest. Surprisingly little has been written about his account of the underlying moral shift that makes this doctrine necessary. Drawing principally on Volume II of DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA, but also on Tocqueville's letters and notes, I unearth his fascinating and compelling account of why modern democratic man loses his admiration for devotion and embraces self-interest. That account begins from individualism, but also includes democratic man's intellectual and aesthetic tastes, his low estimation of his moral capacities, and weakening religious belief. After examining what Tocqueville saw as the causes of the new moral outlook, I consider what he saw as its most profound implications. Departing from recent trends in Tocqueville scholarship, I argue that is in Tocqueville's account of the modern democratic condition as such that he has the most to offer us today.

A leading Tocqueville scholar observes in a recent essay that Tocqueville himself never uses the word "modernity," yet the notion lurks in all that he writes (Mitchell 2013, 134). This is especially true of the second volume of *Democracy in America*: In that work, we find a rich and compelling account of what one may call the modern moral situation. This account has not been the focus of scholarly attention, despite the intense interest that Tocqueville's thought continues to attract from political scientists on both sides of the Atlantic. Several excellent studies have taken up Tocqueville's view of the moral psychology of democracy in recent years, but most of them have done so in the context of meditations on specific themes, such as honor (Krause 2002) or courage (Avramenko 2011). All the recent studies that discuss Tocqueville's thought on moral matters focus on the ways in which he sought to influence the modern moral situation, chiefly by supplementing or refining the doctrine of enlightened self-interest.[1] They pass over a critical part of Tocqueville's analysis, namely, his account of the underlying moral shift that makes the doctrine of enlightened self-interest necessary.[2] In his famous chapter on enlightened self-interest in Volume Two of *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville describes a transformation that has taken place in the way that people think about moral virtue: The people of democracies have ceased to believe in the goodness of devotion. In contrast, people in earlier ages regarded moral duties as high and lofty calls to forget their own self-interest, and they focused on the beauty and glory of self-forgetting. "But as imagination soars less," Tocqueville writes, "and as each person concentrates on himself, moralists become afraid of this idea of sacrifice, and they no longer dare to offer it to the human mind" (919).[3] In his notes, he puts the point slightly differently: "As men are more equal and more detached from their fellows, the idea of devotion becomes more foreign" (919). He expresses this thought most succinctly a few lines later: "[D]emocracy destroys the *instinct* for devotion" (his emphasis, 919).

After noting the change in the modern moral outlook, Tocqueville moves quickly to the question of whether people understand their self-interest well or badly, or, as he sometimes put it, whether they practice *égoïsme intelligent* or *égoïsme imbecile* (for more on this distinction, see Schleifer 2000, 290–322). It does not fit his purpose in discussing enlightened self-interest to dwell on the moral shift itself, and he speaks only briefly about its causes. In passing quickly over the reasons for the shift, then, Tocqueville scholars are to some extent following the lead of Tocqueville himself.

In what Tocqueville *does* say about the reasons for the shift in the modern moral outlook, however, he points to themes that receive fuller treatments in other parts of the book. And if we look to those parts and to the work as a whole, we find an explanation for those reasons that is as fascinating as it is unexpected. One might attribute the shift in moral outlook to modern liberal philosophy, for example, with its emphasis on the primacy of self-interest, or to the frank expressions of a self-interested view of human nature by America's founders in prominent places such as the *Federalist Papers*. But Tocqueville mentions neither of these sources. Rather, his account of the loss of belief in devotion highlights its sociological and aesthetic causes. It begins with individualism, but it does not end there. It involves

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[1] Krause argues that Tocqueville sought to supplement self-interest rightly understood with qualities associated with aristocratic honor (Krause 2002, 78–85); Danoff, with religion and republicanism (2010, esp. 17–28). Jaume calls Tocqueville "a teacher, a moralist who sought to transform mores" and argues that he sought to promote the concept of *l'honnête* as a form of "socialized self-interest" (2013, 155, 158; see 147–158 for context).

[2] Treatments of enlightened self-interest that at least touch on the reasons for the turn to self-interest include Anastaplo (1991, 440), Avramenko (2011, 222), Boesche (1987), Danoff (2010, 13), Hebert (2010, 92, 181), Lawler (1993), Mansfield (2010), Mansfield and Winthrop (2000), Negro (1992), Villa (2005), Wolin (2001), and Zetterbaum (1967). Anastaplo confines his own examination to the chapter on enlightened self-interest, but he hazards a few suggestions, in the form of questions, about the reasons for the shift in moral outlook (1991, 440). Those suggestions and Zetterbaum's half-dozen lines on the subject (1967, 102) gesture in the direction taken by this article.

[3] Unless otherwise noted, all references are to the historical-critical edition of *Democracy in America*, translated by James T. Schleifer and edited by Eduardo Nolla (Tocqueville 2010).

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his understanding of the foundations of social norms and his assessments of democratic man's intellectual habits, artistic tastes, imagination, and self-estimation.

In his notes on *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville faults his own organizational strategy —dividing the work into chapters on individual subjects—for giving the false impression that the various aspects of modern democratic man are discrete and can be understood in isolation from one another. "I am talking about man," he writes, "and man is a simple being, whatever effort is made to split him up in order to know him better. It is always the same individual that you envisage in various lights" (794, <note>). In another note he remarks that "everything goes together in the constitution of the moral man as well as in his physical nature" (1072, note c). Examining Tocqueville's account of the shift in the modern moral outlook helps bring out the unity of his account of modern democratic man by illuminating important connections between seemingly unrelated sections of the second volume of *Democracy in America*. The account of the intellectual and aesthetic effects of democracy that Tocqueville offers in Part One of Volume Two helps explain the shift in the modern moral outlook described in Part Two; that shift, in turn, receives its fullest elaboration and illustration in the observations in Part Three on honor, masters and servants, family life, and revolutions.

In the first three sections of this article, I examine Tocqueville's understanding of the causes of the shift in the modern moral outlook as they come to light throughout Volume Two of *Democracy in America*. I then consider how Tocqueville thought the shift in the modern moral outlook manifested itself and what he judged to be its most significant ramifications. I argue that the shift is especially evident, on Tocqueville's account, in the attitudes and attachments that shape American political life and in the outlook of American women. I contend that his understanding of the implications of the shift comes to sight most clearly in his remarks about love, both in America and in the modern era more generally. Finally, I consider the biggest complication in Tocqueville's account of the modern moral situation: the continued influence of Christianity in modern democracy. I argue that Tocqueville saw religious belief weakening in the modern democratic era and that he understood that weakening to be an important factor contributing to the loss of belief in devotion in the modern age.

In undertaking this examination, I am resisting—and to some extent challenging—the two dominant trends in Tocqueville scholarship, both of which lead us away from the surface of his texts, albeit in very different directions. The first trend is to emphasize and to reach ever deeper into Tocqueville's French context, both historical and intellectual; the second is to apply his insights to contemporary politics, not only in France and the United States but also globally.[4] Although the context-driven, Franco-centric approach to Tocqueville has contributed much to our understanding of his thought, it is important to remember why Tocqueville's works remain of interest to us in the first place. *Democracy in America* is a work of nineteenth-century France, but it endures because it transcends its immediate context and speaks more broadly to the human situation in the modern democratic era. Tocqueville did remark, in a much-quoted line, that in writing about America, he was always thinking about France (Tocqueville 1985, 191). But that remark tells only part of Tocqueville's story. He begins *Democracy in America* with an account of a world-historical movement toward equality, and he says that his aim in the work is to write not about the next day, but about the future. In short, if *Democracy in America* is not simply about America, it is also not simply about France. Much as Tocqueville cared deeply about the future of his country, he also called for a new political science for "a *world* entirely new" (my emphasis, 16). Reading Tocqueville as primarily concerned with nineteenth-century France is thus not entirely in keeping with his self-understanding as an author, nor does it allow us to appreciate the full significance of Tocqueville's insights into the impact that modern democracy has on our lives.

With respect to the attempt to apply Tocqueville's wisdom to the contemporary world, I contend that it is in his meditations on the modern democratic condition as such that Tocqueville has the most to teach us in the twenty-first century. Much has changed in France and in the United States since the 1830s. It is difficult to know with any certainty what Tocqueville would think about specific issues facing these countries today, to say nothing of how his views might translate into lessons for modern-day India, for example, or for the Middle East, the subjects of Chatterjee and Katznelson (2012) and Mitchell (2013), respectively. But the observation that forms the core of Tocqueville's account of the modern moral situation—that the people of modern democracies are ceasing to believe in devotion—holds at least as true today as it did in Tocqueville's time, and possibly more so. And as places that once lay outside the scope of Tocqueville's thought come increasingly to resemble the West, his analysis of the moral psychology of modern democracy only becomes more broadly relevant. As they modernize, developing nations will see more of themselves, for better or for worse, or for both, in Tocqueville's portrait.

INDIVIDUALISM AND DEMOCRATIC HONOR

One might wonder whether it makes sense to look for a cause or causes of the loss of belief in devotion in the modern era; perhaps it is simply impossible to tease

[4] The first trend, initiated by Françoise Mélonio (1993), finds recent expression in *Reading Tocqueville: From Oracle to Actor* (Geenens and De Dijn 2007). See also Gannett (2003), Kahan (2013), and Rahe (2009). Jaume emphasizes Tocqueville's French context, but also points to the need to look beyond it (2013, 8). Recent works that attempt to bring Tocqueville's insights to bear on contemporary America and France include Barker (2011), Williamson (2011), and Siedentop (2007). Those who seek to extend Tocqueville's reach globally include Atanassow and Boyd (2013), Chatterjee and Katznelson (2012), and Mitchell (2013).

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causal relationships out of the complex web of passions and opinions that comprise the modern self. The business of isolating and identifying causal relationships in the psychological realm is tricky, to be sure. Causes may well overlap with one another or relate to each other in more than one way. In addition, as George Orwell points out, an effect may become a reinforcing cause (2009, 5). Yet if we seek to understand the second volume of *Democracy in America*, we must be willing to entertain the idea that gaining insight into causal connections is possible even in this realm. For the very purpose of the book, as Tocqueville describes it, is to examine the influence of equality on "our inclinations and ideas" (693).[5] He wants to understand how equality has changed us, and his broad examination of the effects of equality comprises scores of specific observations about how one aspect of modern democratic society affects or influences another.

The aspect of democratic society that seems most clearly responsible for the loss of belief in devotion is individualism. A familiar, even well-worn, concept for Tocqueville scholars, individualism is the tendency to withdraw into a narrow circle of family and friends and ignore the wider world (882). Tocqueville indicates its moral power when he writes that, although individualism is not selfishness, it can, in the end, bring people around to it (882; see also 883–884). In addition, in the chapter on enlightened self-interest, he cites individualism as one of the developments responsible for the change in the modern moral outlook (919, 923).[6] These are two separate points, and the latter one is deeper than the former. Individualism has the power not only to lead to vice but also to influence the way we think about or define vice. How does a withdrawn and insular way of life affect not only where people fall on the moral spectrum but also the way they see the spectrum itself? Tocqueville does not spell out the answer to that question, but it seems to be related to the diminished significance of duty in lives characterized by individualism. Every human association, ranging from the most intimate to the most distant, brings with it some measure of obligation. By eschewing a wider circle of association and limiting his connections to close friends and family, the individualist limits his own obligations: He minimizes the role that duty plays in his life.[7] It is true that the individualist retains his connection to his family, and family can be a powerful source of duty. But far fewer and weaker duties emanate from the democratic family than from the aristocratic one. Greatly diminished in social and economic significance, the democratic family is primarily an association of natural affection (1038–1040). Its burdens are lighter, and more of them are self-imposed. One might wonder whether this is true of women, because they seem to retain a considerable burden of familial duty in democracy on Tocqueville's account. I return to this question later in this article. For now, let me note that, the more isolated people are, the more immersed they are in connections mostly of their own choosing, the fewer the duties that can claim them. This means that self-sacrifice has less weight and even presence in an individualistic life; less necessary, it also begins to seem less consequential.

Yet individualism alone is not sufficient to explain the shift in the modern moral outlook.[8] Tocqueville presents individualism as a possible pitfall of modern democratic society, one that may be avoided through a range of things, including associations, newspapers, and free government, whereas he presents the primacy of self-interest as an unavoidable feature of modern democratic society. Most of the remedies Tocqueville sees for individualism presuppose the modern embrace of self-interest; indeed, they build on it. Even religion, the restraint on individualism that would seem to constitute the strongest bulwark against the pursuit of self-interest, is itself increasingly interpreted, by its adherents and others, as a function of self-concern (926–927). Tocqueville never suggests that the primacy of self-interest ought to be fought—refined, elevated, or supplemented perhaps, but never opposed or combated, not at its core. This tells us that the embrace of self-interest and the loss of belief in devotion are woven more tightly than individualism into the fabric of modern democratic life.

Casting our net wider, then, within Tocqueville's account of modern democracy to seek the reasons for the shift in the modern moral outlook, we arrive first at his ideas on honor. Tocqueville argues that the social norms and values particular to each social group are rooted in their social utility. Groups praise and reward the qualities they need, not in the most direct or immediate sense, but in the broad sense of perpetuating their existence and maintaining their status in the world. Thus, the Romans honored and rewarded valor; feudal aristocracy, loyalty and courage (1102). Indeed, feudal honor, Tocqueville observes, "ordered self-forgetting" (1098, see also 1109). In his catalog of qualities that Americans praise and value, by contrast, devotion is nowhere to be found (1103–1104). This might seem like a descent. But the point Tocqueville gently makes by tying codes of honor to social utility is that aristocrats had *reasons* for honoring self-sacrifice. Holding themselves to a high moral standard helped them differentiate themselves from the rest of society and legitimize their privileged status. The fact that their ethic of self-forgetting provided a rationale

[5] Up until five months before its publication, the planned title for Volume Two of *Democracy in America* was *L'influence de l'égalité sur les idées et les sentiments des hommes*, or *The Influence of Equality on the Ideas and Sentiments of Men* (Schleifer 2000, 42–44).

[6] See also a key statement from 1840 in which Tocqueville identifies two effects of individualism: "1) the moral effects (hearts isolate themselves) and 2) the intellectual effects (minds isolate themselves)" (Schleifer 2000, 313).

[7] Here is the first instance of an effect becoming a reinforcing cause: Tocqueville writes that equality of conditions creates people who "owe nothing to anyone" and suggests that this contributes to individualism (884). On this formulation, equality changes the moral situation directly by removing social obligations, and the lack of moral obligations encourages individualism. But individualism, in turn, allows people to avoid obligations even more completely.

[8] Cf. Boesche (1987, 51), Mansfield and Winthrop (2000, lxvi), Wolin (2001, 216), all of whom equate the embrace of self-interest with individualism.

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for servants to devote themselves to their masters did not hurt either. Democratic societies, in contrast, have no such use for self-sacrifice. No group within democracy needs to legitimize its status by proving its moral superiority. Indeed, self-sacrifice even poses a problem for democracy in the sense that moral distinctions can complicate equality (Avramenko 2011, 197; Krause 2002, 19; Mansfield 2010, 69). One reason, then, that qualities involving or requiring devotion are strikingly absent from American honor is that an ethic of self-forgetting does not serve the needs of democratic societies. Devotion may be especially unnecessary in the lives of individualists, but it is also less necessary to democratic society as a whole.

Individualism, then, is one cause of the changes in the modern moral outlook, on Tocqueville's analysis, and the needs of modern democratic societies seem to be another. But what is perhaps most interesting are the constellation of *other* causes of the loss of belief in devotion that Tocqueville mentions in his chapter on enlightened self-interest. In addition to individualism, he cites democratic man's taste for the "useful," and the narrowing of man's imagination, as reasons for the shift (919, 923; see also 918, note c). These topics are central themes of his discussion of the intellectual and aesthetic effects of democracy in Part One of the work. By identifying them, in Part Two, as causes of the loss of belief in devotion, Tocqueville indicates a connection between the intellectual and aesthetic realms and the moral realm. To understand the moral shift that Tocqueville notes in Part Two of the second volume of *Democracy in America*, then, we turn our attention next to Part One.

IN PLACE OF THE IDEAL, THE REAL

The men of democracies are all in a position, as Tocqueville puts it, to "act" (780). Everyone in democracies has something to gain from acting. This gives men in democracies a powerful motivation to seek truths with readily practical applications (783). It even leads them to value approximations of the truth rather than the truth itself. "The world is not controlled by long, lengthy proofs," he writes. Thus, men in the democratic era "are generally led to attach an excessive value to the rapid flights and the superficial conceptions of mind" and to undervalue "its profound and slow work" (781). Men who seek practically applicable knowledge also acquire the mental habits associated with working quickly. They become impatient. The contemplation of abstract and theoretical knowledge requires meditation, Tocqueville writes, and "nothing is less appropriate to meditation than the interior of a democratic society" (779; see also 1147–1148). As men lose the taste for abstract and theoretical truths, then, they also lose the capacity to pursue them. These effects of democracy contrast markedly with the effects of aristocracy, which "facilitates the natural impulse of the mind toward the highest regions of thought and naturally disposes the mind to conceive of the sublime and nearly divine love of truth" (782). The observation that aristocracy encourages the "sublime and nearly divine love of truth" provides the first indication of a connection—or at least a parallel—between the changes Tocqueville sees occurring in the intellectual and moral realms. When men move from "a sublime idea of man's duties" (918) to a belief in enlightened self-interest—a doctrine that is "clear and sure," but not very "lofty" (921)—this change is part of a broader weakening of the hold that what Tocqueville calls "the sublime" has on men (cf. Manent 1996, 68; Rahe 2009, 177). If people no longer talk about the "beauties" of virtue, it is in part because they are no longer so interested in beauty itself (cf. Avramenko 2011, 221–222).

Tocqueville makes these observations on the intellectual effects of aristocracy and democracy in Chapter 10 of Part One, "Why the Americans Are More Attached to the Application of the Sciences than to the Theory" (775). In the next chapter, on the arts, he further develops the theme of the weakening power of the sublime. Here Tocqueville explains how the social and economic organization of aristocracy encouraged a taste for the well made and long lasting. The social and economic conditions of democracy produce the opposite effect. The market for goods is composed of a much larger class of men, of much lesser means. Nearly everyone is moving up or down the economic ladder. Those who are on their way down wish to cling to their former prosperity, while the desires of those who are on their way up grow even faster than their fortunes. Thus, there are always a great many people in democracies "whose needs are beyond their resources" and who would prefer an incomplete satisfaction of their desires to no satisfaction at all (791). The artisan, for his part, no longer belongs to a community of other artisans bound together by their fixed position in society and sharing a common interest in the reputation of their trade. He is left to take his bearings entirely by the demands of the customers who can make his trade worthwhile—that is, profitable. Those demands are for work produced cheaply and efficiently. The course of action for the artisan in this position is clear: In addition to innovating with a view to lowering costs and hastening production, the artisan must reduce the quality of his product (791).

The big difference, then, between the arts in aristocratic and democratic eras is that perfection is abandoned in democratic eras in favor of the passable. Realizing the futility of striving for a perfection their customers do not want, sensible artisans discipline themselves to stay within "a skillful mediocrity" (792). Similar changes occur in the fine arts. "No longer able to aim at the great," Tocqueville writes, "you seek the elegant and the pretty" (794). In the imitative arts, the democratic taste for the useful and the passable engenders a preference for the real over the ideal (795). This taste for the "real" first emerges in Tocqueville's discussion of the democratic preference for the application of the sciences over theory (775). It shows up in the fine arts in the contrast between Jacques-Louis David and the Renaissance master Raphael. David and his students were students of human anatomy, and in their work, "they followed nature exactly." Raphael, in contrast,

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sought to surpass nature; he undertook to "embellish beauty itself" (795).

This change in taste—from a preference for the ideal to one for the real—becomes the central focus in Tocqueville's discussion of poetry, because he defines poetry at the outset as "the search for and the portrayal of the ideal" (832). The poetic impulse weakens in democracies, Tocqueville argues, and even those who feel it find fewer objects to idealize. It must be acknowledged, he writes, that equality causes many of the natural sources of poetry—those things that lend themselves to idealization—to "disappear from view" (832–835). What are these sources, and why does democracy cause them to "dry up" (833)? Tocqueville argues that, whereas aristocracy "naturally leads the human mind to the contemplation of the past and fixes it there," democracy gives men "an instinctive distaste" for what is ancient. This matters because "things ordinarily enlarge and become obscure as they become more distant" (834). In attempting to idealize an object, it helps if it is somewhat unfamiliar. This is why the painters of the Renaissance looked above themselves or into the past for great subjects (795). It is harder to idealize the present than the past. And yet aristocracy provides fertile ground for poetry even in the present, because the classes are always quite separate from one another. Equality, in contrast, makes everything familiar, especially other men. Thus, even if the customs and manners of men in democracies were not resistant to idealization—which, in Tocqueville's opinion, they are—they would still be difficult to idealize, because they are too well known (839). Gone is the figure of surpassing aristocratic grandeur onto whom it is easy to project superhuman qualities. Tocqueville concludes that "a subject with mediocre greatness, which you also see very clearly on all sides, will never lend itself to the ideal" (835).

Tocqueville's discussion of poetic idealization brings out the important role played in the process by imagination. The painters of the Renaissance looked for objects that "left a vast scope to their imagination" (795); the natural sources of poetry "lend themselves to the imagination of the ideal" (832); the classes' lack of familiarity with one another means that "imagination can always, while representing them, add something to or subtract from the real" (834). The imagination, for Tocqueville, is the faculty by which we construct and contemplate the ideal. In the text of his chapter on poetry, he suggests that the focus of imagination changes in democracy: "It devotes itself almost exclusively to imagining the useful and to representing the real" (833). To Royer-Collard, in whom he had a sympathetic listener, he offered a similar observation: In the modern era, in contrast to the world Plutarch presented in his works, "it seems that the imagination of grandeur is dying out" (Tocqueville 1970, 61, my translation). In his notes for *Democracy in America* he goes further, asserting that the imagination is not only changing its focus but disappearing altogether: "What makes the taste for the useful predominate" is "the lack of imagination . . . there is imagination in the ordinary sense of the word only in the upper and lower classes; the middle ones do not have it" (789; cf. Koritansky 1986, 106; Rahe 2009, 177). And so, when Tocqueville says, in connection with the turn away from devotion, that "the imagination soars less," we now understand the development to which he refers. And when he says, in a variant of the opening of the chapter on enlightened self-interest, that changes in the tastes of humanity "cannot fail to influence singularly the theoretical idea that men form of their duties and their rights," we understand more precisely which changes he is referring to: the abandonment of the sublime, the perfect, and the ideal in favor of the useful, the passable, and the real (918, note c).

To see how these changes lead to a loss of admiration for devotion, consider what devotion is and what it requires. Tocqueville refers to the aristocratic era as "the century of blind devotions and instinctive virtues" (923). This is a helpful phrase. Devotion is blind in the sense that the devotée does not look to any considerations that might counsel a course other than unswerving loyalty, be they considerations of his own interest or flaws in the object of his devotion. Blind devotion would seem to depend, then, on a degree of idealization. Such devotion needs a worthy object; it needs an object that is lofty and high. In a world in which the ideal is fading from view and far fewer objects present themselves to us in an idealized form, potential objects of selfless devotion are scarce. One reason that modern moralists are "afraid of the idea of self-sacrifice," then, is that in the modern era, nothing—and no one—seems worthy of our devotion. In the democratic era, "selfless devotion" sounds suspiciously like a false justification for inequality—that is, for obligating one person or group to serve another. Such a view is even suggested by Tocqueville's characterization of the admiration for noble self-sacrifice in the aristocratic era: He writes that "a few wealthy and powerful individuals were pleased to profess that it is glorious to forget oneself and that it is fitting to do good without self-interest like God himself" (918–919). The few wealthy and the powerful were pleased to profess this, Tocqueville implies, because they were in a position to *be* served rather than to serve (cf. Anastaplo 1991, 427). He also implies that one reason why such individuals were themselves eager to strive toward glorious self-forgetting was that their own needs were already quite well met.

In Tocqueville's description of the new relationship between masters and servants, we can see how the waning of the impulse to idealize discourages devotion. Tocqueville explains that servants in aristocracies often felt such a strong sense of connection and allegiance to the families or individuals they served that they began to identify wholeheartedly with them (1012). To an American, Tocqueville observes, such an attitude is wholly foreign and utterly unintelligible. In America, service is nothing more than the temporary and free agreement of two wills, with precise and fixed limits.[9] In whatever direction he turns, the servant of an aristocrat sees "the image of hierarchy" (1010),

[9] Tocqueville includes the important caveat that this chapter pertained only to the states in which slavery was not present (1016).

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whereas "at the bottom of their souls," the American master and servant, no matter how great the disparity in wealth between them, do not see themselves as essentially different (1015). Servants do not idealize their masters, and masters do not expect love or devotion (1017). Feeling no great connection to a family or an ancestral home, the servant considers himself a "passerby" in the house of his masters. "Why would he confuse his existence with theirs," Tocqueville asks, "and from where would this singular self-abandonment come" (1016)? Tocqueville blasts the irrationality of the master who does not acknowledge that circumstances have changed, who instead "wants his servant to devote himself to a man who can neither protect nor ruin him, and to become attached finally, by an eternal bond, to beings who resemble him and who do not last any longer than he does" (1018).

The same familiarity and similarity that prevent servants from devoting themselves to masters also discourage citizens from devoting themselves to political leaders. Explaining why Americans are not prone to being led into revolutions by charismatic leaders, Tocqueville writes that "since all see each other very close up, since together they have learned the same things and lead the same life, they are not naturally disposed to take one among them as a guide and follow him blindly" (1145–1146). Thus does the turn to self-interest and the weakening of the power of the sublime alter the character of hierarchical human relationships. Men no longer think that those who surpass them in power or status merit their devotion. They know them too well, and they see their imperfections too clearly.

DEMOCRATIC MAN'S DIMINISHED VIEW OF HIMSELF

Tocqueville's account of the modern psyche is not simply a story of ideals lost, because the democratic era has an ideal of its own: the indefinite perfectibility of man. According to Tocqueville, Americans ascribe to mankind an infinite ability to improve, and they are much enamored with the thought of limitless progress (760). They extend this hope to all mankind, but it is focused especially on their own nation. The life of an American is almost completely "anti-poetical," he says, but there is always one thought in him that is "full of poetry" and that is like a "hidden nerve" giving vigor to all the rest: the thought of his nation and what it can do. Americans dream about how wonderful the future of America and of mankind will be, and "their imagination has no limits in this direction" (836).

It is important to keep in mind that Tocqueville presents the belief in the indefinite perfectibility of mankind as a qualification, or complication, of his broader point that, in democracies, the poetic impulse wanes. He writes in his notes that he was originally of the view that "democracies could not fail to extinguish poetic genius and to substitute for the empire of imagination that of good sense." But he now concludes that "that is true, but to a lesser degree than I had believed at first" (837, note o). And he retains doubts about how lofty the content of American poetry really is; he says that it "aims for the gigantesque rather than for grandeur" and he fears "the sublime [in America] may be several times closer still to the ridiculous than anywhere else" (837, note o).

Moreover, although the perfectibility of man *is* an ideal, it is not an ideal that inspires devotion. To illustrate the American belief in this ideal, Tocqueville cites a sailor who, when asked why the vessels of his country are not built to last, answers that the art of navigation advances so rapidly that even "the most beautiful ship" would become obsolete if it were to last more than a few years (762). This example is telling in a number of ways. First, the importance of beauty is being eclipsed by considerations of usefulness. Second, the sailor is confident that mankind will advance by means of science and technology. He looks to these forces for progress, not to man's capacity for moral goodness or artistic greatness. Third, he believes the nation and even the whole human race will *inevitably* advance and improve by these means. The moral force of such a belief is to weaken moral responsibility, rather than to strengthen it. Far from calling democratic man to acts of moral grandeur, then, the belief in the indefinite perfectibility of man goes together with a new sense of the powerlessness of individual human beings (see also 843; cf. Koritansky 1986, 100). Indeed, it is the sentiment of his own weakness as an individual, Tocqueville says, that leads modern democratic man to exaggerate the power of the species (761). This brings us to another important feature of modern democratic man: In certain key respects, he takes a low view of himself.

Aristocracy, Tocqueville explains, kept certain men down, but it bolstered the self-image of man in general. It showed men what they could be when they had centuries of power, wealth, status, and education to elevate them (782). Beyond that, aristocracy projected an idealized image of man—not a vague thought of the human race in a perfect future state, but a portrait of present perfection. Tocqueville writes,

> If the manners of aristocracy did not bring about virtue, they sometimes ornamented virtue itself. It was not an ordinary spectacle to see a numerous and powerful class, in which all of the external actions of life seemed, at every instant, to reveal natural nobility of sentiments and thought, refinement and consistency of tastes, and urbanity of mores. (1078)

Aristocratic manners seem to have had a poetic function on a societal scale: They presented a class of human beings in an embellished form. As in the contemplation of any ideal, a good deal of imagination was involved. "The manners of aristocracy gave beautiful illusions about human nature," he writes, "and although the tableau was often false, you experienced a noble pleasure in looking at it" (1079). Tocqueville seems to say that taking pleasure in a falsely perfect portrait of nobility helped human beings have a higher opinion of themselves and of what they are capable of as moral beings.

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In the democratic era, all this scaffolding supporting man's belief in himself and his own moral capacities falls away. Images of perfection, real or imagined, fade into the past. In their place one sees a great many decent people. What is more, the path leading beyond decency, to some higher moral achievement, becomes much less well defined. Tocqueville reasons that the smaller a group is and the more exceptional its place in the world, the more specialized its code of honor becomes. Members of a privileged group feel a strong impetus to enforce a code of honor and see it perpetuated, and the fixity of social classes gives such codes time to develop in detail (1106). None of this is the case in America. Americans are busy, ever changing their positions in society. They do not have time or incentive to concern themselves with enforcing society's behavioral code (1107). The code of honor is therefore less detailed, less easily known, and, ultimately, weaker (1108; see also Krause 2002, 73–74). As one interpreter puts it, "in the midst of constant motion and sameness, honor cannot find a hold" (Taylor 2011, 114).

One might wonder whether the weakening of honor is more likely to lower a person's self-estimation or to raise it. Might not the lack of a detailed and demanding moral code make it easier to think well of oneself and to have faith in one's own character? In a lax moral environment, being a reasonably good person *is* enough to allow one a measure of self-acceptance. But a person who seeks not only self-acceptance but self-respect wants to think of himself as more than merely decent. As Krause puts it, "self-respect cannot simply be asserted or distributed; it must be won" (2002, 19). And so, ultimately, the weakening of honor does more to lower man's self-estimation than to raise it. On Tocqueville's account, the man of the modern democratic era can feel neither clarity nor certainty about what his society asks of him or about what it would mean to live up to his society's expectations. Beyond meeting the minimal requirements suggested by basic notions of good and evil, it is harder to know how to be good, and thus it becomes harder to think well of oneself for being good. In the absence of clear and demanding standards of behavior, men have no opportunity to acquire dignity and self-respect by meeting those standards.

The low view that modern democratic man takes of himself comes out particularly clearly in Tocqueville's analysis of ambition in Part Three of the second volume of *Democracy in America*. Here two additional causes of the impoverished self-estimation of democratic man come to light. In revolutionary periods, Tocqueville writes, ambition takes on "an audacious and grandiose" character. It appears "sometimes disinterested, often sublime" (1118). By contrast, all Americans hope to rise, but none seem to "nourish very vast hopes or to aim very high" (1117). The difference is not a matter of degree so much as it is one of the *aims* of their ambition. He writes in his notes to the chapter that "ambition is *vulgar* rather than *small*. *Vulgar*, there is the true word of the chapter" (his emphasis, 1121). Tocqueville attributes this development first to petty materialism. Americans spend so much time and energy wanting and working toward "small objects" that they begin to think only of such goods. "They force their soul to use all its strength in order to do mediocre things, which cannot soon fail to limit its view and to circumscribe its power" (1121). This effort produces prudent, restrained habits that are difficult to reconcile with vast ambition. But equality itself is also implicated directly in the change in man's opinion of himself, because it makes every man weak and dependent on the cooperation of others to accomplish or achieve anything (895, 1196, 1265). Americans rightly perceive that, as a result of equality, any higher or different kind of achievement will be exceedingly difficult, time consuming, and maybe even beyond their reach (1121–1122). So they "renounce these distant and doubtful hopes, in order to seek less elevated and easier enjoyments" (1123). The man of the modern democratic era, Tocqueville concludes, "despises himself to the point that he believes himself made only for appreciating vulgar pleasures" (1126).

One can already begin to see, in Tocqueville's description of what happens to ambition in modern democracies, how men's diminished view of themselves turns them away from devotion. Men who think little of themselves take a narrow view of what they can accomplish and, in particular, of the kinds of things that they can accomplish. Devotion is, in its own way, a bold and demanding path to choose in life—an "audacious and grandiose" effort. In the unfinished second volume of the *Old Regime*, Tocqueville describes the early days of the French Revolution as a moment of brilliant self-forgetting (1959, 84, 86). He calls it a spectacle of "incomparable grandeur" (1959, 86). What strikes him about those who took part in the Revolution, in addition to their capacity for self-forgetting, is their pride. The perils of revolutions have so humbled the men of his own day, he writes, that "it is difficult to conceive of the degree of pride in these forefathers of ours" (1959, 84). One is amazed, he writes, at the "superb self-confidence" possessed at the time by Frenchmen of all ranks. The great sight of the French Revolution "gripped and enraptured the imagination" of the whole French people in "its magnitude, its beauty, and its risks" (1959, 85). It was because they believed in themselves, Tocqueville suggests, that they were able to forget themselves.

By contrast, he who believes himself born for appreciating only vulgar pleasures eschews the lofty joys of self-forgetting as beyond his reach. Thus, men in democracies not only lose sight of ideals of perfection to which they might devote themselves but they also have a harder time seeing themselves acting selflessly. If modern moralists fear that there is nothing to which they can legitimately call men to devote themselves, and if they fear coming under suspicion as would-be manipulators and exploiters, they may also fear that true devotion does not lie within their listeners' reach—that modern men do not have the capacity for such devotion. The abandonment of devotion and man's diminished view of himself thus become mutually reinforcing. Not being called to acts of self-sacrifice, modern man has less reason to respect himself. Respecting himself less, he loses the ability to rouse himself to such a call.

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MANIFESTATIONS AND RAMIFICATIONS OF THE MODERN MORAL OUTLOOK

From Tocqueville's description of the role that moral self-confidence played in the French Revolution, we can begin to see the political consequences of the loss of belief in devotion. People who do not believe in devotion, who find devotion hard to admire, and who doubt their own capacity for it do not undertake grand political struggles. The political parties Tocqueville observes in the America he visits are not "elevated and sustained by great objectives" (280). They are chiefly parties of interest, and in the new moral climate, they agitate for their interests unfettered by the need to veil self-concern (280). The issues and disputes of American political life take place within a narrow framework, the confines of which are set by Americans' vehement attachment to their property. Americans care so deeply for their property that they subordinate all other concerns to it and suppress any political measures that threaten it (1136–1140, 1150). This materialism, which Tocqueville sees as such a powerful determinant of the character of American political life, has a moral foundation. For the man who seeks material prosperity seeks it for himself and his family untroubled by the thought that it is a species of self-concern. The shift in the modern moral outlook is thus a powerful reason why American political life almost always operates within the confines of egoistic materialism.

The shift in the modern moral perspective expresses itself differently, but equally powerfully, in the outlook of American women. This might seem surprising, because Tocqueville ascribes to American women impressive moral qualities, such as "vigor of will' and "internal strength" (1051), and he suggests that they often display these qualities in resigning themselves to their husbands' relentless pursuits of gain (1050). He seems to see American women sacrificing themselves for their husbands and families, and he seems to accord their sacrifices great significance. Indeed, in some parts of Tocqueville's description of American women, their role in the house and home assumes a decidedly tragic air (1048–1050).

On closer inspection, however, we see that the impressive qualities Tocqueville sees in American women are not rooted in the blind devotion of centuries past and that the tragic nature of their situation stems from their acquiescence to necessity, which is made all the more admirable by the fact that the necessities they perceive are genuine ones. The virtue of American women, as described by Tocqueville, is emphatically interest based (cf. Kessler 1989; Morton 1984, 314–315; Zuckert 1976, 44–45). It has its beginnings in the education of the young girl, which exposes her early on to the harsh realities of the world. The aim of this exposure is to teach the girl to see, as early as possible, the consequences of failing in "virtue." He describes what the girl comes to know in this way: "She cannot escape for one moment from the customs of her contemporaries without immediately endangering her tranquility, her honor, and even her social existence" (1049). Similar lessons are impressed on adult women with respect to married life. Here, too, Tocqueville speaks of what American women come to know in terms of learned necessities. Married women quickly perceive that "the amusement of the young girl cannot become the diversions of the wife, and that for the woman the sources of happiness are in the conjugal home" (1050). The wisdom of American girls and women, then, consists in their seeing clearly that they must be virtuous if they are to be happy (1044, 1045, 1049–1050). Seeing that their interests depend on their virtue, they cling to it. The "virtue" that American women possess, in Tocqueville's account, is a restraint of the passions, a self-control rather than selfless devotion. It illustrates perfectly the doctrine of enlightened self-interest, which Tocqueville says "cannot make a man virtuous" but "forms a multitude of steady, temperate, moderate, far-sighted citizens who have self-control" (922).

Still, as impressive as Tocqueville thinks the self-control of American women is, in his view, it is not as high as self-sacrificing virtue. This is important because, in his view, the achievement of the former comes at the expense of the latter. Much as Tocqueville admires the education of girls in America and thinks it far superior to the sheltered existence of girls in France, he nevertheless calls it "cold and rational" and says that it "develops judgment at the expense of imagination" (1042, 1045). It seems that one drawback of the hard-headed education American girls receive is that they are less likely to give themselves over to love. But American women are not the only practitioners of interest well understood: Tocqueville sees a cold realism in American men as well. He writes that the "tumultuous and fretful" life of men in democracies "diverts them from love" by making them too busy for it. It also turns them away through its effects on their mental habits. In his explanation of how it does so, his earlier insights on the intellectual and artistic effects of democracy echo powerfully:

> Their minds take a serious, calculating and positive turn; they willingly turn away from the ideal in order to aim for some visible and immediate goal that presents itself as the natural and necessary object of desires. Equality does not in this way destroy the imagination, but it limits it and allows it to fly only by skimming over the earth. No one is less of a dreamer than the citizen of a democracy, and you hardly see any who want to give themselves to these idle and solitary contemplations that ordinarily precede and that produce the great agitations of the heart. (1058–59)

In context, these remarks are an odd sort of praise. They are part of Tocqueville's explanation of how equality contributes to good morals in America. His point is that Americans are not led by their passions into ill-advised illicit affairs. Rather than "run after the violent and capricious emotions" of such affairs, Americans value "the profound, regular and peaceful affection that makes the charm and the security of life" (1059).

In this realm, the lowering of the horizon of imagination serves public morals rather than undermining them. But, at the same time, the passage connects,

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perhaps more directly than any other in the work, the developments Tocqueville described in Part One—the abandonment of the ideal and the narrowing of the imagination—to the waning of devotion. We thus arrive, in Part Three, at a key part of the explanation of how the developments of Part One contribute to the moral shift described in Part Two. Love is not the only basis for devotion, but it is certainly a possible one. Tocqueville's account suggests that, in very real and powerful ways, democracy obstructs love itself. In Platonic terms, the lover gripped by Eros sees in his beloved something of the Beautiful. Democracy bars the lover's way onto the ladder of love, for as men and women see less of the ideal in the world around them, they also see less of it in one another.

In his discussion of war in democracies, Tocqueville speaks of the "coldness of reason that makes men hardly sensitive to the poetic and violent emotions which arise among arms" (1154). Love and war are similar in what they demand of the soul: self-abandonment or self-forgetting. The prudent, calculating spirit of democracy inoculates the men of democracies against such experiences. Tocqueville observed to his friend Ampère that the world around him seemed devoid of "true and lasting passions, influencing and directing the whole of life. We can no longer will, or love, or hate" (1861, 1868). He marveled at the self-sacrifice of the French soldiers in the Crimean War, as compared to the egoism that reigned in France (Tocqueville 1983, 263). And, in a passage that brings out the intimate significance of the new moral outlook for himself and those close to him, Tocqueville congratulated Kergorlay on the extraordinary love of Kergorlay's wife:

> I am infinitely grateful to her, not only for her tenderness for you, but for the true loftiness of soul with which she knows how to love you, for the way in which she has understood you, and the way in which she attached herself with your plans from the day she perceived and continues to see your destiny. These ways of thinking and feeling are unusual in any other society and in any time; but one no longer encounters them these days in the society in the midst of which Mathilde was raised, and she must have found in her soul a very real nobility in order to have raised herself this way above all the petty images others in her position ordinarily form in life. (Tocqueville 1985, 189–190)

Tocqueville reasons that Mathilde's ability to love selflessly must spring from a natural longing for the sublime. There must have been in her "an aspiration that was natural and perhaps unknown to herself toward something higher than she had before her" (1985, 190). For all his praise of American women, his admiration for Mathilde is of a different order. And as unexpected as Tocqueville thought it was to find such sentiments in a French woman, he seems to have thought that, in thoroughly democratic America, their emergence would be less likely still.

When Tocqueville discusses the doctrine of enlightened self-interest in *Democracy in America*, he treads lightly. Emphasizing its benefits, the nearest he ventures to a critique of the doctrine is to say that it is not lofty and that it is limited in the kinds of acts it can inspire (921–922). However, Tocqueville's account of the attitudes of American men and women in the romantic realm, taken together with the not always politic observations about the modern era in his letters, brings out a harsher truth. The doctrine of enlightened self-interest does not merely fail to provide a rationale for devotion; it opposes it and undermines it. The modern moral outlook has more than just limits. It has a profound cost.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE MODERN MORAL OUTLOOK

The issue of love and its place in modern democratic life calls to mind an important complication that we must consider in Tocqueville's portrait of the modern era as characterized by the loss of admiration for devotion: Christianity. The role of Christianity in American political life is one of the most written-about themes of *Democracy in America*.[10] I confine my consideration of Christianity here to this question: If Christianity—a religion whose first and highest dictate is to love—remains a significant part of Americans' moral outlook, how can it be right to say that devotion is becoming "foreign" to them? It is a beginning, but only a beginning, of an answer to this question to note that the chapter that follows the one on enlightened self-interest is titled "How Americans Apply the Doctrine of Interest Well Understood in the Matter of Religion" (926). In this chapter Tocqueville argues that American Christians make sense of their Christian faith by pointing to the benefits they will gain from faith in this life and in the next. But this does not provide a complete answer to the question, because Tocqueville also argues that the whole of Christian belief and practice cannot be comprehended solely in terms of interest (927). Insofar as people in modern democracies continue to hold this faith and to act on it, he implies, they do transcend their own self-interest, whether they realize it or not.

To the degree that Christianity remains a vibrant and thriving religion, it constitutes a major qualification of the assertion that in the modern era people are ceasing to believe in devotion. And so it is a fact of some importance that, at least in Tocqueville's eyes, religious belief is weakening (474–475; 757–758, 957–958; see also Tocqueville 1985, 47–52; Manent 1996, 90). To be sure, Tocqueville saw it withering much more quickly in some places than in others. Still, he observes it weakening in both America and Europe. We see this, for example, in his account of how poetry changes in the democratic era. What he identifies as the "natural sources of poetry"—ancient and mysterious objects that lend themselves to idealization—are not only the great men of the past but also the gods. In describing how such objects disappear from view in the democratic era, he is in part describing the spread of religious doubt. In the democratic era, he writes, "it sometimes

[10] Some of the major treatments include Cliteur (2007), Deneen (2005), Kessler (1994), Lawler (1993), Jaume (2011), Manent (1996), Mitchell (1995), Zetterbaum (1967), and Zuckert (1992).

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happens that beliefs go drifting away like the laws. Doubt then brings the imagination of poets back to earth and encloses them within the visible and the real world" (834). He sees the turn to nature in nineteenth-century poetry as an illustration of this development. "When doubt depopulated heaven, and the progress of equality reduced each man to better known and smaller proportions," Tocqueville writes, the poets turned to nature. "Losing gods and heroes from view, they undertook . . . to portray rivers and mountains" (835).

Belief in gods encourages poetry, Tocqueville argues, not only because it provides objects that lend themselves to idealization but also because "when the universe is populated with supernatural powers," the imagination "feels at ease" (833). Poets then have no trouble finding subject matter, and readers and listeners are ready to be transported, ready to believe. Poetic and artistic idealization sustains religious belief, in turn, by encouraging people to turn their thoughts toward heaven. The work of Raphael, which aimed at "surpassing nature" and portraying the ideal, gave us "a glimpse of divinity" (795). In a world with little such art or poetry, already weakening religious belief becomes still weaker (cf. Wolin 2001, 327). Thus does another effect become a reinforcing cause.

The weakening of belief in God, then, is an important part of Tocqueville's account of why modern democratic man loses his taste for the perfect, high, and sublime. In his letters, Tocqueville suggests a more direction connection between the weakening of religious belief and the decline of devotion. Speculating to Kergorlay about the future of religious belief in America, Tocqueville observes that natural religion is gaining currency among Protestants. Adherents of this view, he predicts, "will see in this natural religion only the absence of any belief in the afterlife and they will fall steadily into the single doctrine of self-interest" (Tocqueville 1985, 52). He thus implies that an embrace of self-interest is the natural consequence of a weakening belief in the afterlife. He says much the same thing to Gobineau. In their exchange on the character of modern morality, Gobineau argues that modern liberal philosophy has promoted a new morality that encourages selfishness. Tocqueville counters that "most of those symptoms in which you claim to recognize a new morality seem to me only symptoms that have always accompanied the weakening of religious faith" (1959, 206). When the afterlife falls out of sight, he suggests, people more readily pursue their earthly self-interest. One reason for the decline of devotion, then, lies in the growth of doubt that devotion finds eternal reward.

CONCLUSION

Tocqueville points out in *Democracy in America* that, despite the lack of belief in devotion, self-sacrifice persists in America. After laying out the doctrine of enlightened self-interest, Tocqueville remarks, "You sometimes see in the United States, as elsewhere, citizens give themselves to the disinterested and unconsidered impulses that are natural to man; but the Americans hardly ever admit that they yield to movements of this type" (921). This is true both in the realm of religion and in politics: Americans give an account of their motives as mercenary even when they are not (927). Americans are less selfish than they think they are (Danoff 2010, 17, 26; Lawler 1993; Mansfield 2010, 69–72; Villa 2005, 665–666). Human nature is not that elastic in Tocqueville's view. It has certain permanent features. Religious longing is one; interest is another (cf. Mansfield and Winthrop 2000, xxi). A capacity for devotion must also be counted among these permanent features of human nature (see also Tocqueville 1861, 44). In the democratic era, however, people do not *see* their capacity for devotion. If the people of earlier ages regarded themselves as more capable of self-sacrifice than they truly were, the men of democracies see themselves as less capable of it than they are. Thus must even Mathilde Kergorlay have had an aspiration that was "natural and perhaps *unknown to herself*" (my emphasis, Tocqueville 1985, 190). This is the characteristic blindness of the modern era. By pointing out that selflessness persists in America, Tocqueville plays the part of the democratic poet. He says of Byron, Lamartine, and Chateaubriand that they sought to "illuminate and enlarge certain still obscure aspects of the human heart" (842; cf. Mansfield and Winthrop 2000, lxvi). In highlighting the continued presence of devotion in a world that sees only interest, Tocqueville does something similar.

Even if devotion persists in the modern democratic era, then, the lack of belief in it—and the lack of awareness of our own impulse toward it—cannot but affect the frequency and the intensity with which it arises. As we see in Tocqueville's account of romantic love, disbelief in devotion surely discourages it and complicates it when it does occur. About this outcome, Tocqueville seems to be, as he is about so many of the effects of democracy, of two minds. He seems to think that, in some ways, the character of human relationships is better in the new era than in the old. In the new version of the relationship of masters and servants, for example, domestic service "has nothing degrading about it" (1018). Because this relationship is freely chosen and temporarily adopted, it requires no sacrifice of pride. This is surely a gain. And in the chapters on the relations between the sexes, Tocqueville emphasizes the political benefits of a well-ordered domestic sphere, and he praises the sanity and sobriety of interest based virtue (474, 1045).

But Tocqueville could not help but regard a situation in which man continually underestimates himself, and undermines one of his highest impulses, with some sadness. His letters contain many laments about the self-interested spirit that dominated the politics of his day (see, for example, Tocqueville 1861, 43; Tocqueville 1970, 20). Even if many of those laments could be understood to be directed at *égoïsme imbécile*, his encomium to the self-forgetting brilliance of the French Revolution's early days pulses with admiration and longing (Tocqueville 1959, 84–87). "How small, sad, and cold life would become," he wrote to Kergorlay, "if, beside this everyday world so full of egoism and

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cowardice, the human spirit could not construct another in which disinterestedness, courage, in a word, virtue, could breathe at ease! But the elements of that world can be found only at the heart of a few souls like yours" (Tocqueville 1985, 104). Tocqueville retained his vast aristocratic imagination, then, and he took solace in his like-minded friends. Nevertheless, in *Democracy in America*, he is resolute. While he points out that self-sacrifice does not disappear completely in the modern era, he leaves no doubt that the future belongs to self-interest. And he presents himself as reconciled to the new moral outlook, ready to accept its confines, and to work to bring out what is best in it. For the most part, then, he limited himself to private rebellion at what he regarded as an irreversible shift.

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