

Supervisor's review of Nikola Stojisavljevic bachelor thesis *Democratic Forms: Matching the Social and Political in Tocqueville*

Mr. Stojisavljevic focuses on Tocqueville's multilayered description of democracy, particularly on the relation of the social sphere and political institutions. Democracy is according to his reading not just a set of rules, laws, and institutions but it includes a set of mores, habits which are both the result and conditions of the "forms". Although the thesis and its arguments of Mr. Stojisavljevic are persuasive, I suggest considering another factor besides mores and habits which Tocqueville briefly mentions at the beginning of his book. The first is the natural conditions which affect the habits and mores of a society (and this should not be overlooked, particularly not in the era of massive environmental changes); the other is the shared experience of religious oppression or to put it differently, a shared and common origin. I appreciate that Mr. Stojisavljevic treats Tocqueville very cautiously and thoughtfully, although I think he could have been a little bit more cautious towards the author's contradicting claims. Thus Mr. Stojisavljevic considers Tocqueville a rather descriptive social scientist (a founder of political sociology, as it were) who did not get biased by a preceding notion of human nature and let the knowledge emanate from his observations. Although this might generally true, a more thorough consideration would reveal flaws in his stance and limits of such consideration. Firstly, let us consider his remarks on women in book II, part 3, chapters VIII and XII which are reproducing the patterns of the Western Christian-Aristotelian notion of the so-called „nature of women“ who are to be deprived of political rights and equality. The movement of equality and democratization somehow affects women too but it should not destroy the traditional family hierarchy. His claims about the issue are not only descriptive but eminently prescriptive and are critical towards the emancipatory claims appearing in Europe at the time. Consider that it was written a many decades after Mary Wollstonecraft published her *Vindication of the rights of Women* and Olympe de Gauges was sentenced to death for her political engagements and advocating the rights of female citizens. Consider that Tocqueville praises the traditional patriarchal hierarchy in families and non-involvement of women into public affairs, culture and business just in the era of George Sand who was of the same age as him. I wonder why Mr. Stojisavljevic did not pay attention to such issues and did not offer a more nuanced and critical description of Tocqueville's method and argument on equality.

Secondly, Mr. Stojisavljevic did not pay attention to the Tocqueville bias towards the native Americans. Despite all his praise of equality and democracy, he considered native Americans inferior and thus not being politically equal and justly excluded from the political body (see I, 2). Are not these claims revealing limits of Tocqueville's observation?

Last but not least there is another question. How would Mr. Stojisavljevic put in accordance his characteristics of Tocqueville as a descriptive observer with Tocqueville's metaphysical belief in Providence? Or to put it differently, I would prefer Mr. Stojisavljevic to explain the role Providence (and thus a certain philosophy or theology of history) played in his conception of democracy.

I have not many complaints regarding the formal requirements and language. I can only wish Mr. Stojisavljevic writing style was less abstract and more abundant on concrete examples. It would make the text more readable and accessible. Some sentences are by its structure and word use very difficult to read or even almost incomprehensible. Who has enough patience and reason to follow and understand sentences like this: *Therefore these 'mores' or cultures are the basis for studying any society and its political and legal institutions because they define a person's self-perception in relation to abstract phenomena and others while determining his reactions and its outcomes.*

Facit. I appreciate very much the intellectual progress Nikola Stojisavljevic did during his writing process. His argument relating to the mutual conditioning of the social and political sphere is persuasive and the method he uses proper. He has used the highly relevant secondary literature and interpreted Tocqueville generally flawless although a bit too sympathetic. I suggest a grade very good or even excellent depending on the quality of his presentation and defense.

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