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## Editorial

It's a great pleasure for me to release the 5<sup>th</sup> Volume (Year 5), No. 1 of *The Canberra Chronicles*, which will be followed by another two volumes in August and December this year. I do apologise for the delay in releasing it, which was a consequence of the family's unpredictable health issues early this year.

You may observe the change of the journal's appearance, including information on copyright, open access, and a potential International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) on the top, right-hand corner of its cover as we are in the process of an ISSN application. I wish to thank Dr James Page, ACU Sessional Academic and our group's member, for his advice and encouragement; Professor Dermot Nestor, former Executive Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, and Associate Professor Darius von Guttner, Campus Dean, ACU Canberra Campus, along with his Executive Officer, Kathleen Beattie, for their unending support; Francesca Higgins, Senior Library Coordinator, Library Academic and Research Services (LARS) and Vanessa Tuckfield, Copyright Manager, at ACU Canberra Campus, for their assistance in the ISSN application process. Once finalised successfully, this template is to be used for the journal published online since its inception in October 2019.

This volume comprises two articles as follows:

- Dr Nicholas Coleman, 'The invisible Golden Thread: on the oneness of Being and all beings,' submitted on 15 June 2023; and
- Dr Rapin Quinn, '*The Man Who Understood Democracy: The Life of Alexis de Tocqueville*: Review of the Book by Olivier Zunz, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022,' submitted on 10 May 2023.

The first article derives from Dr Coleman's presentation on 12 June to the Research Seminar Group, convened monthly via Zoom from ACU Canberra Campus. It is part of a series from his research on 'the oneness of Being' published online in previous volumes of this journal.

He strongly argues that he does not 'accept any suggestion that human reason is our sole source of knowledge' (p. 5). Following Nietzsche's idea of 'a mystic intuition,' he believes that one could discover 'the ultimate unity of the many beings in God the One alone... even if it is beyond what reason can grasp' (p. 5). He adds that, 'There are countless ways of getting from the manifold world of human experience to the unity of reality' (p. 6). However, if one aims to reach 'God the One alone,' Dr Coleman insists one must go 'through the oneness of Being itself' (p. 6). This is because, 'the oneness of Being [or] universal consciousness of existence... is present within us' (p. 6); or in a word, one must have an insight into the true divine nature of all things and a willingness to free 'the self' from any bondage so as to reach 'God the One beyond Being' (p. 8). Hence, human reason augmented by mystic intuition becomes a source of lucid knowledge of the self, an insight into the unity of reality, and a launching-point to the highest level of spirituality in this Platonic/Perennial belief system.

By citing Ralph Waldo Trine, Phillip Brown and others, Dr Coleman argues that there appears to be an invisible 'golden thread' running 'through every religion in the world' (p. 11). It acts as a 'spiritual lifeline,' guiding individuals to a deeper and more sustained abiding in their 'Real Nature' (p. 12). Interestingly, this idea of levels of reality seems to coincide with the idea of the 'Axial Age,' which occurred in the first millennium BCE, proposed by Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), a German-Swiss psychiatrist and philosopher.<sup>1</sup> If relevant, this coincidence might be worth exploring in further research.

The second article is a review of the book by Olivier Zunz on the life of Alexis de Tocqueville released last year. Unlike other biographies, the book offers a blow-by-blow account of how the French political theorist and statesman was gradually developing his understanding of democracy, based on his judiciously critical thinking coupled with trial-and-error approaches throughout his lifetime. By investigating the terms and conditions of the birth and growth of democracy in America, Tocqueville proclaimed that in America he saw more than America as he firmly gains insights into the nature of democracy itself (pp. 18 & 20). Through his insights, he was wary of 'the danger of excessive popular sovereignty,' arguing that it 'could entail calamitously unintended consequences to the nation as a whole,' if the 'Madisonian system of checks and balances' failed to moderate its excessive power (p. 20).

Over nine months' journey in America with a close friend in 1831-1832, Tocqueville witnessed 'a widespread religious practice' perceived to be a significant factor helping elevate, moderate the people's mind, and gradually form the 'habit of the heart,' which is the most 'robust and durable power' capable of establishing and sustaining democracy (p. 22). Hence, he concludes that democracy in America and elsewhere is to be drawn from within, and this is where his outstanding theory of 'self-interest properly understood' is pronounced. Being motivated by this concept, citizens are to 'sacrifice a portion of their time and wealth' to advance the common good in the community and society at large. The art of association driven by self-interest properly understood is argued to be 'the fundamental science' and 'the source of education' whereby social relations based on 'fraternity' emerges within and across all social classes are formed, intermingled, and flourish in a democratic society.

Outstandingly, the book provides the connection of Tocqueville's main theses, arguing that his work *The Ancien Régime and the French Revolution* is 'a fundamental counterpart' for *Democracy in America* (p. 29). This argument demonstrates Tocqueville's profound understanding of democracy relating to not only the concepts of 'liberty' and 'equality of conditions,' but also social transformation and change between the 'old' and 'new' regimes. By claiming his book *Democracy in America* to be '[a] new science of politics [that] is indispensable to a new world' (p. 30), Tocqueville envisaged that his key concepts and findings would be applicable to developed and developing democracies across time and

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<sup>1</sup> See Andrew Smith, 2015, 'Between Facts and Myth: Karl Jaspers and the Actuality of the Axial Age,' *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, Vol. 76, No. 4, pp. 315-334.

place, provided they are modified 'suitably for the particular political culture, social state, and actors of a nation' (p. 31).

This year, ACU Signadou/Canberra Campus is celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary since its establishment in 1963. I would like to invite its members, both past and present, to send a contribution, e.g., the history of the campus, or your experience and impression while teaching and/or working at this institution. Any contribution as such is most welcome.

Besides the generous assistance and unending support received as mentioned above, this journal would not be finalised without the dedication of contributors and the editing team. I would like to express my grateful thanks to Professor Raymond Canning, Dr Mary Sheather, Dr Nicholas Coleman and Dr Peter Quinn for assisting me with editing tasks. Without their solid backing, it would be difficult to publish a high-quality work and distribute it to the group's members and the public at large. Any mistakes and/or shortcomings are entirely mine.

**The Editor**



So, in regard to the endeavour at hand, let us find encouragement in Robert Browning's rhetorical view that 'a man's reach should exceed his grasp, Or what's a heaven for?'<sup>6</sup>

This paper, then, aims to contribute to the tradition of philosophy that tries to articulate the insight that Reality is One. To that end, it offers a Perennialist perspective on the problem of Unity and gives an intuitive solution in the form of guided meditations on the 'oneness of Being,' which (if I were to venture a definition) is the universal consciousness of existence.

The arc of this paper is from the multiplicity of everyday life via the unity of reality and oneness of Being, to the oneness of God beyond Being. There are countless ways of getting from the manifold world of human experience to the unity of reality; but the only launching-point to God the One alone, so this paper argues, is through the oneness of Being itself.

On our search of the Divine, Plotinus (*En. VI. 5. 12*) says: 'We seek without finding; for looking elsewhere, we do not see what stands there before us. True existence is present within us, when we are not distracted from it by other things. It does not come near us to make us enjoy its presence. It is we who withdraw from it, when it is not present with us.'

Similarly, Benjamin Whichcote says: 'We are not absent from God by being other where than God is, who is everywhere, but by being otherwise than God,' rather than likewise.<sup>7</sup> While Pascal has God say to the soul: 'You would not seek me unless you had already found me.'<sup>8</sup> Clearly, while the spiritual search for God is well documented, it has a subtle dimension to it.

The sacred texts of philosophy and religion hide their secrets in plain sight. It is not that the authors purposely obfuscate their writings; rather, the poetry of the language and the depth of the ideas simply appear to defy what we like to think of as reason and common sense.<sup>9</sup> In that way, our preconceptions can prevent us from looking beyond what we already know.

Mark Rothko's art, for example, is spiritual if not religious. It reminds me of transcendence, and that 'speech is not my first language.'<sup>10</sup> Rothko says of his work: 'The people who weep before my pictures are having the same religious experience I had when I painted them. And

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/68397/robert-browning-fra-lippo-lippi> – accessed 12 June 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Benjamin Whichcote's Aphorism #39, in C. A. Patrides, ed., 1980, *The Cambridge Platonists*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>8</sup> Blaise Pascal, 1670, *Pensées* – <http://www.leaderu.com/cyber/books/pensees/pensees-SECTION-7>, 553 – accessed 7 June 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Franz Rosenthal, 1988, "Ibn 'Arabī between "Philosophy" and "Mysticism": Sūfism and Philosophy Are Neighbours and Visit Each Other, *fa-inna at-taṣawwuf wa-t-tafalsuf yatajāwarāni wayatazāwarāni*,' *Oriens*, Vol. 31, footnote, p. 1 – [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1580724.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Acbccfc3ecd0c3544b2d4b8dd91297c92&ab\\_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1580724.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Acbccfc3ecd0c3544b2d4b8dd91297c92&ab_segments=&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1) – accessed 21 May 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Rob Schackne, in private correspondence with the author.

if you, as you say, are moved only by their colour relationship, then you miss the point.<sup>11</sup> Of course, we can make our own meanings, but that can obscure what more there is to find.

Every sacred text is a *vesica piscis*,<sup>12</sup> or portal of transcendence to divine reality that extends far beyond the horizon of what is evident to human reason and the bodily senses. If we stay chained to conventional thinking, then we are barred entry to the deep regions of the texts.

Familiar writings can be frequently read with little recognition of the treasures they contain. To give just one example, take the opening line in the book of *Genesis* (1:1): 'In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth.' A sustained excavation of those 10 words uncovers 20 beliefs, and that score of ideas provides a cosmological vision of divine reality that points the way towards the eschatological salvation of knowing our true selves and finding God.

The 20 individual beliefs are listed below (see Endnote A on p. 16). Sufficient here is to expand the 10 words in this way: God the One alone creates the perfect divine reality that the physical world imitates.

The cosmological secret hidden in that first line of *Genesis* is that Creation is a two-stage process: from God to the divine reality of Heaven, and from Heaven to the physical world of Earth. The implication for salvation is that the way of returning to God is by reversing that very process. Since we do not get here directly from God, the soteriological insight is that we cannot return directly to God. From here in the manifold physical realm, the journey back to the ultimate unity of God the One is only through the divine domain. There is no direct path from the Many to the One, other than by passing through the intermediate divine reality.

That intuitive reading of *Genesis* finds support in John's *Gospel*, which starts with the same phrase and explicitly describes the same movement of creation and salvation via the divine reality of a middle Being John personifies as the *Logos*. He says: 'In the beginning was the *Logos*' (1: 1) and 'All things came into being through the *Logos*, and apart from the *Logos* not even one thing came into being that has come into being' (1:3); then later, Jesus (the *Logos* incarnate) says: 'No one comes to the Father except through me' (14:6). Thus, the *Logos* is the only way the Many beings come from and return to their source in God beyond Being.

Once we think to look into the World's spiritual traditions for a two-stage process of creation and salvation, it is not difficult to recognise the movement. The outward development from ultimate Unity through an intermediate divine reality to the manifold world is most obvious in Creation stories. In the Hindu *Rig Veda*, for example, Purusha the primal Person creates the invisible world, which unfolds into the many visible things of the

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<sup>11</sup> Rothko – [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark\\_Rothko](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Rothko) – accessed 5 June 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Latin, 'vessel of a fish'; the visual shape is the outline of a lemon, viz. (); in sacred geometry, formed by two overlapping circles of equal size, their centres on each other's edges. I'm grateful to Deidre Aitken for bringing the *vesica piscis* to my notice. Also, there is neither the definite nor an indefinite article in Latin grammar.

ordinary universe.<sup>13</sup> In Plato's *Timaeus* (30 BC), the creator God acts through the oneness of mind and soul to infuse spiritual order into physical chaos. In Plotinus' cosmogony, the One alone emanates *Nous*, the infinite divine Mind, which creates all the many finite things. Even the Big Bang creation story has the Primordial Singularity (or First One) explosively expand into the quantum wave field, about 10 per cent of which compounds into the detectable things of our baryonic universe.

The recurring pattern is of an original 'One' producing the universe as a whole, from which arises the multitude of individual parts. The unity of the One is the source of the whole and the substance of the parts which means the One is present as a whole in each of the parts, including the part of the whole that is each one of us. As Paul says of the Logos: 'the first-born over all creation' (*Colossians* 1:15) 'is before all things, and in Him all things consist' (1.17) and 'this mystery ... is Christ in you' (1.27). It follows that knowing the divine Oneness in ourselves is to know the oneness of Being in reality itself, since there is only one Oneness.

The theory of the oneness of Being is a philosophically defensible response to questions about the nature of the relation between the many created beings and God the One who is beyond Being. The doctrine offers an intuitive solution to the logically unsolvable problem of the Many and the One. Yet, understanding 'the oneness of Being is based primarily on an experiential unveiling of truth'<sup>14</sup> that we must realise for ourselves, in ourselves. If we do not find the *Logos* within our own true nature, then we cannot recognise it anywhere else. Only by connecting with our own universality can we access the universality of everything else. And only via the universal Being of the *Logos* can we approach God the One beyond Being.

An Islamic *hadith* affirms: 'Whosoever knows himself knows his Lord.'<sup>15</sup> Self-knowledge is the only way to God-realisation because God is more real than we are. As the 14<sup>th</sup> century spiritual director Walter Hilton says: 'A soul that desires to attain knowledge of spiritual things must first know itself, for it cannot acquire knowledge of a higher kind until it first knows itself.'<sup>16</sup>

The intuitive insight into the intrinsic unity of ourselves and everything else is not available to discursive reason and cannot be verified by the physical senses. Reason and sensation are predicated on plurality and so cannot grasp the metaphysical unity that is prior to plurality.

Conventional thinking operates in space and time, first to distance the subject from its objects and then to separate those objects from each other. When we see the world

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<sup>13</sup> *Rig Veda* X, 90, 1-3, 9-12 – see: <https://studylib.net/doc/7794387/the-hindu-creation-story-of--purusha-the-primal-man> – accessed 18 August 2022.

<sup>14</sup> See Rosabel Ansari, 2020, 'The Oneness of Being' – <https://renovatio.zaytuna.edu/article/the-oneness-of-being> – accessed 10 August 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Hadith – <https://islam.stackexchange.com/questions/46436/where-is-this-hadith-attested-he-who-knows-himself-knows-his-lord> – accessed 2 February 2023.

<sup>16</sup> Walter Hilton, in F. C. Happold, 1963, *Mysticism: A Study and an Anthology*, London: Penguin Books, p. 287.



through such a differentiating lens, the unity of divine reality vanishes into a kaleidoscope of different visible objects. Because discursive thinking perpetuates the Many, it cannot engage with the undivided oneness of divine reality that underwrites the surface appearances of multiplicity.

Marshal Davis declares the distinction between subject and object as the illusion that prevents recognition of 'what simply is.'<sup>17</sup> To look beyond the horizon of the subject/object distinction and secure insight into the ontologically prior unity, or oneness of Being, we need a unitary way of seeing. Percy Shelley offers us such in his *Defence of Poetry*, where he notes the difference between rational perception and imaginative vision is that 'reason respects the differences, and imagination the similitudes of things.'<sup>18</sup> It is in the nature of intuition for subject and object to occupy the same comprehension, so that knower and known are one in the actual experience, before they are separated by our discursive thinking about them. Intuition thereby accesses a unitary level of reality that is unknown to discursive thinking.

In his anthology on mysticism, F. C. Happold says the unitive quality of intuitive knowing gives 'knowledge of the "real" ... which could not be gained through rational consciousness.'<sup>19</sup> While Ibn 'Arabi describes how 'the believer (who is also a mystic) realises his essential oneness with the Real, a state in which the knower and the known become one. This is beyond the reach of the [rational] philosopher altogether.'<sup>20</sup> And Blaise Pascal makes the same point more poetically: 'The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing.'<sup>21</sup>

A way to advance on the spiritual journey of self-knowledge and God-realisation is by the exercise of intuitive imagining.<sup>22</sup> To find the one reality beneath the many appearances, says Plotinus, 'We must close our eyes and invoke a new manner of seeing – a wakefulness that is the birth-right of us all, though few put it to use.'<sup>23</sup> What would we see by looking that way?

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<sup>17</sup> Marshall Davis, 2021, *Biblical Nonduality*, p. 35 – cited in Christopher L. Schelin, 'Baptist Gnosis: Enlightenment and Its Legitimation in the Works of Paul Smith and Marshall Davis,' p. 9 – pre-print for NABPR Annual Meeting, Gardner-Webb University, Boiling Springs, North Carolina, p. 3 – in private communication with the author – 23 May 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Shelley – <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69388/a-defence-of-poetry> – accessed 2 February 2023.

<sup>19</sup> Happold, 1963, *Mysticism*, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> A. E. Affifi, 1979, *The Mystical Philosophy of Ibn 'Arabi*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 111.

<sup>21</sup> Pascal – [https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Talk:Blaise\\_Pascal](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Talk:Blaise_Pascal) – accessed 25 May 2023.

<sup>22</sup> The following three imaginative exercises owe much to Anthony de Mello, 1985, *Sadhana: A Way to God*, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash: Anand, India. See also Gerald O'Collins SJ AC, 2023, *The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola: A Lived Experience*; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press – order at Amazon, Book Depository, or direct from publisher at: <https://www.paulistpress.com/Pages/Center/contact.aspx>.

<sup>23</sup> Plotinus, *Enneads* I. 6. 9.

To put these ideas in a familiar context, recall the *Genesis* story of ‘Jacob’s Ladder’ (28:12), where Jacob ‘dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!’ We may question the historicity of Jacob’s dream, but we can also view it as an invitation to transcendence by contemplating the idea of everything everywhere altogether in the One. A thought-experiment would be to envision Jacob’s Ladder of angels traveling up and down a stairway that links Heaven and Earth. Such an imaginal Ladder need not be confined by physical dimensions or location in space; it can be everywhere and connecting everything. By surrendering our imagination to participate in such an imaginal experience of transcendence from all around, we may catch a glimpse of the oneness of Being in all things.

By thinking objectively about such an image, we habitually separate ourselves as the subject from its content. That separation isolates the ‘Ladder’ as an abstract concept and suffocates the idea before it has a chance to enliven our direct experience. Yet, if we were to actually entertain such an idea, subject and object would be distinct but would not be separate. We would find ourselves included in the living continuity of this world and the next. In that way, dreams, imagination and contemplation also, can give intuitive experiences of unitary reality.

Christopher Schelin says that direct experience of the unity of divine knowing, which he calls spiritual *gnosis*, is ‘salvific knowledge transcending discursive language to reveal a deeper level of reality that is “identical with the seeker’s own essential nature.”’<sup>24</sup> By means of visualisation exercises and other meditative practices, our awareness can shift to *gnosis*.

An image that serves the purpose in the Hindu tradition of Kundalini yoga is the ‘*Kundali* Serpent,’ which is a symbol of the primordial energy of life and mind that coils asleep inside at the base of our spine. In the individual person, the Serpent energy is awoken by esoteric techniques for activating and integrating all one’s vital and psychic energy centres. Specific practices for full release of Kundalini include imagining the Serpent awakening and uncoiling and steadily rising up our own spine, to align the seven psychospiritual foci throughout our body, and radiate from our crown *chakra* in connecting to the primordial oneness of Being.<sup>25</sup>

While Jacob’s Ladder is nominally outside us and the *Kundali* Serpent nominally inside, neither imaginal image is actually limited to a physical location. A loose combination of the two is the thought-experiment or contemplative exercise I call the ‘invisible Golden Thread.’

Imagine a Golden Thread passes through your body. Down below your feet it reaches to the centre of the planet, and up above your head it reaches to the centre of the universe. The Thread is the energy of your being: it forms and powers your physical atoms and vital organs and mental activities. It is the constant substance of your consciousness and existence as an individual being; and in you, the ‘Thread’ connects the Earth below to the Heavens above.

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<sup>24</sup> Schelin, citing Wouter Hanegraaff, ‘Baptist *Gnosis*’, p. 3 – see footnote 17 above.

<sup>25</sup> See, Ishvara, 2002, *Oneness in Living: Kundalini Yoga, the Spiritual Path, and the Intentional Community* – <https://www.amazon.com/Oneness-Living-Kundalini-Spiritual-Intentional/dp/1556434138> – accessed 1 May 2023.

Imagine, if you will, that you are an invisible Golden Thread linking this world to the next.

The Golden Thread is not ours alone. It is present in everyone and everything; it is the divine reality that gives Being to all beings. Think of each atom of air and drop of water and wave of energy as having the same Thread passing through it. Imagine a single dimensionless Thread connects you and everything else, until the whole universe shines with the oneness of Being.

William Blake's poem 'The Golden String' describes such a unity of reality, or Oneness:<sup>26</sup>

*I give you the end of a golden string  
Only wind it into a ball  
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate  
Built in Jerusalem's wall.*

Benedictine monk and mystic Bede Griffith, who lived in the presence of the 'mystical intuition of being one with the divine reality,'<sup>27</sup> calls his autobiography *The Golden String*.<sup>28</sup>

To some, a Golden Thread creating and animating us compromises the dignity of human freedom by making us puppets on a string and victims of forces beyond our control. Yet even if that sceptical view were correct – indeed, especially if it were – to ignore the presence of the imaginal Thread would not give us freedom from it; rather, ignorance would condemn us to be forever trapped and strung along by it. As Carl Jung is often reputed to have declared: 'Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.'<sup>29</sup>

Ralph Waldo Trine says: 'There is a golden thread that runs through every religion in the world. There is a golden thread that runs through the lives and the teachings of all the prophets, seers, sages, and saviours in the world's history, through the lives of all men of truly great and lasting power. ... What one has done, all may do. This same golden thread must enter into the lives of all who today, in this busy work-a-day world of ours, would exchange impotence for power, weakness and suffering for abounding health and strength, pain and unrest for perfect peace, poverty of whatever nature for fullness and plenty.'<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Blake – [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/I\\_give\\_you\\_the\\_end\\_of\\_a\\_golden\\_string](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/I_give_you_the_end_of_a_golden_string) – accessed 11 May 2023.

<sup>27</sup> Ambrose Ih-Ren Mong – <https://www.theway.org.uk/back/551Mong.pdf> – accessed 16 May 2023.

<sup>28</sup> Griffith – [https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/535905.The\\_Golden\\_String](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/535905.The_Golden_String) – accessed 11 May 2023.

<sup>29</sup> <https://ryangottfredson.com/blog/2019/12/02/making-the-unconscious-conscious/> – accessed 01 May 2023. Quozio says: 'Dr. Jung never said: 'Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate,' which is why it is never found with a corresponding citation. Dr. Jung did say: The psychological rule says that when an inner situation is not made conscious, it happens outside, as fate,' in Carl Jung, *Aion, Christ: A Symbol of the Self*, pp. 70-71, para 126 – <https://quozio.com/quote/2xf8pstjnvz/1042-7b297/dr-jung-never-said-until-you-make-the-unconscious-conscious> – accessed 19 May 2023.

<sup>30</sup> Trine, 1897, *In Tune with the Infinite*, p. 1 – [0 Ralph Waldo Trine - In Tune with the Infinite.pdf](https://www.ralphwaldo.com/In-Tune-with-the-Infinite.pdf) – accessed 1 May 2023.

Phillip Brown also notes: 'In this context, the invisible Golden Thread is a "spiritual lifeline" in the form of the recollection of profound spiritual insight, like a beacon guiding some individuals back to a deeper and more sustained abiding in their Divine Nature, their Real Nature. As there is by definition only one Divine Nature, only one true Reality, this Golden Thread exists in all religious traditions, as it does in all things.'<sup>31</sup> I would add *all lives and minds* as well, whereby the Thread interconnects all beings into the oneness of Being itself.

Two of the most famous and least understood teachings in Perennial philosophy are the transcendent unity of religions and the mystical convergence of the Many into the One. The doctrines are often misunderstood because the adjectives 'transcendent' and 'mystical' are overlooked. Without those qualifiers, the claims seem to contradict the obvious facts that religions are quite different to one another and that the visible world is clearly manifold.

Yet, in the Perennial tradition, transcendence and mysticism have their own logic and their own ontology, both of which are based on the axiom that Reality is One. They explain how and why the Many arises from and returns to the One, and they revere the World's religions as treasure-houses of shared wisdom for the journey to find the One by knowing ourselves. Yet, to make that journey via transcendence to the Ultimate, we must 'die before we die.'<sup>32</sup>

Only by going beyond oneself does one truly come to oneself. 'For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life,' says Jesus (*Mark* 8: 35), 'shall save it.' Plato (*Phaedo* 64a) similarly teaches that philosophy is the practice of death.<sup>33</sup> Although 'death' in the context of the mystical ascent to the ultimate unity of the Divine is to be understood as profound psychological transformation rather than ordinary biological cessation.

The oneness of Being that is represented (above) by the invisible Golden Thread is often traditionally personified as 'universal Man.' According to Timothy Scott, the individual person – whether male or female – 'is but a particularized reflection in the synthesis of "Universal Man," where "Universal Man" is none other than Being Itself. The term "Universal Man" (*al-insân al-kamîl*) is here borrowed from the teachings of ibn 'Arabi and al-Jîlî. This idea of Man as Being or Universal Existence is also found with Adam Kadmon of Kabbalah, the "King" (*Wang*) of Taoist tradition, and the Adibuddha in Tibetan Buddhism.'<sup>34</sup>

On the Arabic, Mark Temple helpfully notes: 'The word *kamil* does have the sense of unrestricted, so the implication is that this kind of human being does not restrict God other

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<sup>31</sup> Phillip Brown, in private correspondence with the author.

<sup>32</sup> A Sufi saying is to 'die before you die' – <https://sufipathoflove.com/die-before-you-die/> – accessed 17 May 2020.

<sup>33</sup> Plato: 'those who engage properly in philosophy are themselves in pursuit of nothing except dying and being dead' – <https://www.platonicfoundation.org/phaedo/> – accessed 19 May 2023.

<sup>34</sup> Timothy Scott, 2007, 'Preliminary Remarks on Reclaiming the Meaning of "Religion,"' p. 3 – [https://www.academia.edu/21752149/Preliminary\\_Remarks\\_on\\_Reclaiming\\_the\\_Meaning\\_of\\_Religion\\_?email\\_work\\_card=title](https://www.academia.edu/21752149/Preliminary_Remarks_on_Reclaiming_the_Meaning_of_Religion_?email_work_card=title) – accessed 12 May 2023.

than in the way God restricts Himself; i.e., renders Himself into [form] for the sake of love.<sup>35</sup> Leonard Cohen might call it 'living in a state of grace.' Other personifications of the oneness of Being as the universal Person include Purusha the Primal Man of the Hindu *Vedas*, the Divine Man in the writings of Philo of Alexandria, and the cosmic Christ in *Romans 12: 5*.

The oneness of Being as imaged in universal Man is both a metaphysical reality and an existential experience. Paul Smith calls it 'a temporary merging of the Universal Mind with my mind.'<sup>36</sup> Similarly, following Marshall Davis who writes of joining 'human beings to God as expressions of a single, transpersonal mind, "I experience God as consciousness. ... I speculate that this consciousness is the inherent consciousness of the universe."' <sup>37</sup> Hence, universal Man is no one particular person; rather, all those who discover their universality inhabit the same *Logos*-experience, which is the divine-self-realisation of the oneness of Being and all beings.

Alan Watts describes such a universal experience in terms of cosmic Consciousness, saying:

it is usual for the individual to feel that the whole world has become his own body, and that whatever he is has not only become, but always has been, what everything else is. It is not that he loses his identity to the point of feeling that he actually looks out through all other eyes, becoming literally omniscient, but rather that his individual consciousness and existence is a point of view temporarily adopted by something immeasurably greater than himself.<sup>38</sup>

As noted above in Plotinus and Whichcote, the *Logos*-experience of cosmic Consciousness, or oneness of Being, is constantly present when we are not distracted from it. As the default state of our being, we constantly dip into it and yet forget to remember it afterwards (see Endnote B on pp. 15-16).

A key feature of the undivided oneness of Being is that it can be seen from two points of view: its own, and ours. Jacob Boehme says: 'The Being of all beings is but one only Being, but in its generation it separates itself into two principles.'<sup>39</sup> The *Logos* or universal Man sees Being from its own undivided viewpoint as the one whole of everything, and through the whole of Being looks back towards union in the enfolding realisation of God the One

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<sup>35</sup> Mark Temple, in private correspondence with the author.

<sup>36</sup> Paul Smith, cited in Schelin, p. 7; see footnote 17 above.

<sup>37</sup> Schelin quoting Marshall Davis, in Schelin, p. 9; see footnote 17 above.

<sup>38</sup> Alan Watts, cited in John White, ed., 1984, *What is Enlightenment: Exploring the Goal of Spiritual Path*, Bexley, Kent: Aquarian Press, Ltd., p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> Jacob Boehme, cited in Timothy Scott – [https://www.academia.edu/21798088/Notes\\_on\\_the\\_mystery\\_of\\_the\\_coincidentia\\_oppositorium](https://www.academia.edu/21798088/Notes_on_the_mystery_of_the_coincidentia_oppositorium) – accessed 5 February 2023.

beyond Being<sup>40</sup> – the ‘One without a second,’ as the *Chandogya Upanishad* succinctly puts it.<sup>41</sup>

With our ordinary view, through the kaleidoscope of reason and sensation, we look away from divine unity towards the unfolding realisation of multiplicity in the world; and there we see the Oneness as a ‘colour relationship’ of separate objects. Multiplicity<sup>42</sup> is the mental effect of removing ourselves from the oneness of Being and looking at it from the outside, as apart from it rather than as a part of it. Our own absence as the connection is what renders the Oneness incomplete, so we fail to realise the mystical convergence of the Many into the One. Yet, all that appears to be other than God is really made of, located in and dependent on God; for the physical world is what divine reality looks like when seen with human eyes.

Our individual being, like Being itself, is one and undivided, but it has an inside and outside. The two perspectives on the Oneness are different modes of realisation with different orders of unity and different configurations of subjective consciousness and objective existence. Universal Man is one with the Oneness and apprehends the full life of Being; the individual person is another beside the Oneness, and sees only the appearances of separate objects.

In Christopher Schelin’s view, regardless of how spiritual *gnosis*, or direct unveiling of divine knowledge, ‘may be judged by extrinsic normative standards, it is a living option for the interpretation and expression of Christian faith.’<sup>43</sup> Peter Stork is also on that mission to restore to the Christian worldview such a sacred vision of the divine reality of the Cosmos.<sup>44</sup>

The great secret in sacred texts is that the divine reality of the oneness of Being is already present in each individual being as the universality of that being. For we are the mind of the universe, and the universe is aware of itself in our awareness of it. The explanation of life, the universe and everything everywhere all at once, then, is in who we are, or it is not at all. Yet, we only realise the universal Being in our individual being when we are nothing other than ourselves, when we do not distract ourselves from being ourselves by believing we are other than who and what we really are and always have been all along. As all multiplicity arises from discursive thinking, when we ease into the space between thoughts, we find

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<sup>40</sup> Plotinus, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Meister Eckhart are examples of philosophers in the Western mystical tradition who locate God as the One beyond Being.

<sup>41</sup> *Chandogya Upanishad*, 6.2.1 – See, [http://yogananda.com.au/upa/Chandogya\\_Upanishad.html](http://yogananda.com.au/upa/Chandogya_Upanishad.html) – accessed 14 May 2023.

<sup>42</sup> The target I deny is not the psychological appearance of multiplicity but the ontological reality of separation.

<sup>43</sup> Schelin, see footnote 17 above.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Stork, 2021, *Cosmos and Revelation: Reimagining God’s Creation in the Age of Science*, Wipf & Stock, Eugene; see also Peter Stork’s ‘Cultural Alienation: The Challenge for Christianity in Western Culture.’

ourselves at rest in the oneness of Being – to remain there, at one with All – until we think we aren't. As Lao Tzu says: 'You cannot know it, but you can be it, at ease in your own life.'<sup>45</sup>

Knowing oneself as 'universal Being' is the only way of returning to God beyond Being. For, logically and ontologically, there is and can only be one whole of everything, only one oneness of Being; and we only know we have found it when we have found it.

And when God hears the news of our homecoming, God runs to the gate of Heaven in welcome – not because once we were prodigal, but because always we are God's own.

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#### ENDNOTES:

##### A.

Beliefs to be excavated from *Genesis* 1:1, in a hermeneutical spiral rather than a chronological order, include:

1. God exists
2. God exists before the beginning of the universe
3. God exists alone
4. The universe exists
5. God is the creative source of the universe
6. The universe has a beginning
7. The universe depends on God for its existence
8. The universe exists for a reason
9. The universe is comprised of spiritual heaven (divine reality) and physical Earth (apparent world)
10. The physical world is not all that exists
11. There is spiritual reality beyond the physical world
12. The Creation of spiritual Heaven and physical Earth is not all that exists
13. God is beyond the Creation of Heaven and Earth
14. Heaven and Earth are different from each other
15. Heaven is not beyond our imagination
16. Heaven and Earth are connected in dependence upon God
17. There is a way of getting from the earthly world to the ultimate source in God
18. The spiritual journey to God commences by looking past Earth to Heaven
19. Going through and beyond Heaven is the only way to God the One alone
20. Ultimately, nothing exists apart from the undivided oneness of God.

##### B.

The following short story, 'Living with God unseen,' illustrates how the finite human mind might constantly access the infinite Intelligence of the divine oneness of Being in everyday experience, without noticing it: Imagine, if you will, sitting on a bench in a city park in the warm afternoon sunshine. You're waiting for a friend who is due any time. The plan is to walk to the mall, have a coffee, check out bookstores, do whatever. The plan is all rather casual (*actually, there is no plan as such*).

Until then, you're on the bench and looking across the open space. A few people are performing an oriental fitness exercise and some kids are playing energetically together (*it's rather a pleasant scene*). In the mid-distance there's a small mound of dog droppings (*dark brown against the blades of bright green grass*). It's food for bugs (*compost for the soil*). It's all life on Earth (*but people should still pick up after their dogs*). On the far side of the park there is a wall of tall buildings (*some sort of office blocks*). The skyline is set against an azure blue canopy where little white clouds are hanging almost motionless in the atmosphere (*which wraps invisibly round the whole Earth*). Everything has an enduring stillness about it (*even though the sphere of the planet is actually rotating on its axis at a considerable speed, thousands of kilometres per hour*). It's wonderful

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<sup>45</sup> Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, verse 14, translated by Stephen Mitchell  
<http://www.stevengkharper.com/verse14taoteching.html> – accessed 27 July 2023.

to think of the biosphere as just a thin film of living things on the hardened surface crust of a globe of molten magma ten thousand kilometres in diameter (*with a huge spinning ball of molten metal at the planet's core*).

Beyond blue sky is the darkness of space, filled with countless stars (*they are invisible in the daytime*). Maybe there's bug-life out in space (*maybe it's doing T'ai Chi and playing tag in its own sunny park*). Maybe it's more intelligent than we are (*there's been enough time for smarter minds to have evolved*) – the universe is pretty old (*14 billion years*)!

Empty space is still a few degrees warm with cosmic microwave background radiation left over from when the universe was born in the 'Big Bang.' Nature has taken all that time to get from the original Creation event through the formation of the vast physical cosmos (*90 billion light-years across*) to life being here now. But here now, in an instant (*no time at all!*), one thought can imagine the Big Bang exploding into existence out of nowhere and the whole universe and everything in it made of stardust just suspended and sparkling in space.

Before that ancient event and beyond the present universe, however, there's just an empty void. Both our short bright moment of 50 or 100 years of individual human life and the existence for the very cosmos itself is bookended by infinite and eternal darkness, impenetrable to mammalian eyes that evolved for seeing finite things in space and time.

Perhaps the idea of God is an intuition of what (*or Who?!*) went 'Bang!' When the universe of physical things in space and time came into being, maybe its transcendent source didn't cease to exist. We might see the transcendence of 'God' all the time and not recognise that it's God we see. After all, things don't always appear to be the way they truly are. Solid matter is really energy. The lingering radiation from the Big Bang remains visible as the 'snow' on the TV screen in between channels. Indeed, all physical things are actually materialisations of energy released in the Big Bang. If that energy was the divine oneness of Being, then God might be the reality of all that exists. Maybe nothing exists apart from God!

The stars in the night sky, too, are deceptive. Their light takes so long to reach Earth, some stars we see no longer exist. They blew up long ago, but the novae won't be seen here for generations. We'll be long gone then. But future people will see them. If there is a future for people... what with global warming, habitat loss, species extinction, global pandemics, inequitable distribution of resources, a few fat and happy people, a lot of skinny and sad ones. But the rich aren't happier than the poor. Sure, we all have problems; yet we all have reasons to be cheerful as well. It all comes down to choosing how we think of ourselves.

Suddenly, your friend arrives and sits on the bench to ask, casually: 'What's on your mind?' You could rightly declare, 'Everything!' – but most probably you'll say, '...Nothing.'

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of Tocqueville,<sup>2</sup> Olivier Zunz, History Professor at University of Virginia, has tried to give a blow-by-blow account of how the French political theorist and statesman developed keys for the understanding of democracy throughout his lifetime. By using America as a case study, these keys include, for example, the foundations (e.g., geography and the vibrant 'social state') that gave rise to the birth of democracy, its quasi-liberal meaning and characteristics; or, in a word, his insights into the nature of democracy itself.<sup>3</sup> As the late Hugh Brogan (1936-2019), History Professor at the University of Essex commented, Tocqueville's life and work are inexhaustible topics and subjected to controversy and debate; hence a 'definitive biography is impossible.'<sup>4</sup> Whether the book under review will be the last in this genre remains to be seen.

The book comprises eleven chapters, excluding Prologue and Epilogue. It follows the chronological order of Tocqueville's life from his birth in 1805, his vocation as a junior lawyer at the Versailles court and then politician and statesman, his contributions as a political theorist and scholar, until his untimely death in 1859. It is packed with the fine details of historical background, especially identifying those who were involved directly and indirectly with Tocqueville, ranging from his family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances, to his extraordinary networks of contacts in America, Europe and beyond. It is astonishing for Tocquevillean scholars and students to find that a young and reserved elected member of the French Chamber of Deputies who declared his political position to be in the middle ground was able to cultivate and sustain his relationship with people from all walks of life and extend his network to include many of those whose political opinions were vastly different from his. This is an outstanding contribution of this book.

The author uses a major theme for each chapter of the book to reflect a gradual development, sometimes in retrospect, of Tocqueville's understanding of democracy. These include, for instance, 'Learning to Doubt' (Chapter 1), 'A Crash Course in Democracy' (Chapter 3), 'When Political Theory Becomes Politics' (Chapter 6), 'A Synthesis of Thought and Action' (Chapter 7), and 'Crushed at the Helm' (Chapter 9) when he ended his political life 'with the realisation that political science and the art of governing were two very different things after all.'<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the outstanding value of Tocqueville's work, in the view of John Stuart Mill (who appraised both volumes of *Democracy in America*, and published his review of the first volume in the *Westminster Review* in 1835, and of the

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<sup>2</sup> See James T. Schleifer, 2018, *Tocqueville*, Cambridge: Polity Press; Hugh Brogan, 2006, *Alexis de Tocqueville: A Life*, New Haven: Yale University Press; Larry Siedentop, 1994, *Tocqueville*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; and André Jardin, 1988, *Tocqueville*, London: Peter Halban Publishers Ltd.

<sup>3</sup> See also, Pierre Manent, 1996, *Tocqueville and the Nature of Democracy*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

<sup>4</sup> Brogan, 2006, *Alexis de Tocqueville: A Life*, p. 693.

<sup>5</sup> Olivier Zunz, 2022, *The Man Who Understood Democracy: The Life of Alexis de Tocqueville*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 286. This should not be taken to mean that he completely rejected the separation between political theory and practice. As appears throughout the book, he tried to test his political theory against political practice in various situations and circumstances in France and beyond, albeit having failed miserably in the case of Algeria (Chapter 8).

second in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1840,<sup>6</sup>) was ‘less in the conclusions than in the mode of arriving at them.’<sup>7</sup> To date, *Democracy in America* has been regarded by most scholars of democracy to be the best book ever written on the subject.<sup>8</sup>

The book’s introductory section points to the fact that although Alexis de Tocqueville was ‘a scion of the highest ranks of the French nobility’ in Normandy, he was ‘the only member of his family to choose democracy over aristocracy.’<sup>9</sup> Tocqueville’s enormous work was pursued in moderation; thus, filled with paradox and controversy as a consequence to date. His deep belief in democracy derived from a recognition that the citizens represented an energetic and powerful force, which demanded constant revitalisation through a balancing act of political reform and stable institutions. Social transformation in France during Tocqueville’s lifetime was manifested in the form of the growing middle class (*bourgeoisie*), the interplay between revolution and change, and the competition between constitutional monarchy and republicanism. It was this context of turmoil in an ‘old world’ that became his inspiration to go to America to study the birth of democracy in the ‘modern world.’

To fully understand Tocqueville’s ideas on democracy, one must read his books along with the numerous volumes of his diary and the correspondence with family, friends and networks in France, America, England and beyond, as their messages, written almost daily, reveal his inner thoughts, inspirations, doubts, and ‘restless mind.’<sup>10</sup> Soon after he joined the Versailles court as a junior lawyer, Tocqueville and his close friend, Gustave de Beaumont, took leave without pay from their office to go to America with high-level approval to study American prisons and the prison system, which were considered ‘progressive’ at that time. They spent over nine months from 9 May 1831 to 20 February 1832, travelling mainly in the eastern part of America and Lower Canada, from New Orleans

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<sup>6</sup> Terence H. Qualter, 1960, ‘John Stuart Mill, Disciple of de Tocqueville,’ *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 4, p. 882. However, Bruce L. Kinzer says that Mill’s review of the first volume of *Democracy in America* appears in *London Review* in 1835. See Bruce L. Kinzer, 1978, ‘Tocqueville and His English Interpreter, J.S. Mill and Henry Reeve,’ in John M. Robson and Michael Laine, editors, *The Mill Newsletter*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press in association with Victoria College, p. 2 - <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bentham-project/sites/bentham-project/files/Mill013-1.pdf> - accessed 17 May 2023. I thank Dr Nicholas Coleman for this reference. Please note that the last name of Henry Reeve is spelt without ‘s’ at the end. However, I have a hard copy of *Democracy in America* (1854) translated by Henry Reeves, Esq with his last name spelt with ‘s’ at the end. Hence, two spellings of his last name have appeared in many publishing sources without conclusion to date. See footnotes 71 & 73 below.

<sup>7</sup> Zunz, 2022, *The Man Who Understood Democracy*, p. 199.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Max Lerner (1902-1992), liberal professor and journalist, and Harvey Mansfield (1932- ), Emeritus Professor of Political Philosophy, Harvard University, who translated, along with his late wife Delba Winthrop (1945-2006), Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* from French into English and published it in 2000. See also footnote 73 below.

<sup>9</sup> Zunz, 2022, *The Man Who Understood Democracy*, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Peter A. Lawler, 1993, *The Restless Mind: Alexis de Tocqueville on the Origin and Perpetuation of Human Liberty*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group.

to Quebec. However, Tocqueville's hidden agenda for this travel was that he wanted to see 'what a great republic is like.'<sup>11</sup>

The study of the American prisons provided the opportunity for the French 'liberal' aristocrats to study how a democratic society was established and developed in the early 1830s when France was facing a turbulent decade of dichotomous struggle between constitutional monarchy on the one hand and republicanism on the other. Throughout their journey in America, they met people from all walks of life, ranging from statesmen, religious leaders, local governments, and administrators to citizens of various races and backgrounds.

With his exceptionally critical mind, Tocqueville proclaimed that in America he saw more than America, as he witnessed the image of democracy itself, its inclination, character, and prejudices. He made critical comments on 'democratic' ideas put in front of him. For instance, Jared Sparks, a Unitarian minister, argued for the power of the majority as the vital element of democracy. With the American Constitution based on the so-called Madisonian model of checks and balances, or Separation of Powers, he added that America's democratic success relied upon a system and procedure by 'the governor's veto and above all the power of judges to refuse to enforce unconstitutional laws.'<sup>12</sup> As a trained lawyer, Tocqueville was, nonetheless, wary of 'the danger of excessive popular sovereignty,'<sup>13</sup> arguing that laws and mores are separate matters and the former never change the latter.<sup>14</sup> Hence, faith in the wisdom of the crowd that forms the power of the majority could entail calamitously unintended consequences for the nation as a whole.<sup>15</sup> In this regard, Tocqueville's political theory of the tyranny of the majority is established and widely acknowledged.

Tocqueville paid particular attention to the political structure developed to govern America's new democratic society. In consultation with his father, who was prefect in several departments during 1814 and 1815, he insisted on the theoretical distinction and separation between government and administration.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, he condemned

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<sup>11</sup> See Richard F. Weingroff, n.d., 'Alexis de Tocqueville on Transportation in America' – <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/alexis.cfm> – accessed 18 April 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Zunz, 2022, *The Man Who Understood Democracy*, p. 73. See also George W. Carey, 1978, 'Separation of Powers and the Madisonian Model: A Reply to the Critics,' *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 72, No. 1, pp. 151-164; and John Zvesper, 1984, 'The Madisonian Systems,' *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 2, pp. 236-256.

<sup>13</sup> Zunz, 2022, *The Man Who Understood Democracy*, p. 129.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87. On p. 132, the author also emphasises that, 'Tocqueville placed mores over laws "the habit of thinking for oneself and governing oneself."'

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73 and 128-129. Tocqueville explained the notion of the tyranny of the majority as 'a deadening uniformity of thought... a crippling conformity of opinion... an extreme case of national pride that made self-criticism unlikely.' He added that, 'There are those who have made so bold as to insist that a people, insofar as it deals with matters of interest to itself alone, cannot overstep the bounds of justice and reason entirely, hence that there is no reason to be afraid of bestowing all power on the majority that represents that people. But to speak thus is to speak the language of a slave.' This quotation appears on p. 129.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74 and 124.

vehemently both 'excessive centralisation' and 'excessive decentralisation' carried out by a government, regardless of particular circumstances.<sup>17</sup> He considered that 'a central government must be strong but at the same time respect local authority.'<sup>18</sup> In America, he added, 'most administrative functions remained not only decentralised but also independent of the federal government.'<sup>19</sup> The author argues that Tocqueville's critique of Guizot's notion of 'idealised centralisation' has 'proved to be one of his most important contributions to political theory.'<sup>20</sup>

Prior to his journey to America, as the author reveals, Tocqueville felt uncertain about his religious belief and the issue concerning the separation between church and state. In America he encountered 'a widespread religious practice' which 'elevated the mind. All these qualities added up to "mores," or "habits of the heart," that were the most "robust and durable power" capable of sustaining democracy.'<sup>21</sup> His direct experience regarding the indispensable relationship between religion and democracy was earlier affirmed by his maternal great-grandfather (M. de Malesherbes, 1721-1794) and a relative also from his mother's side (Chateaubriand, 1768-1848), both of whom were liberal aristocrats who served under King Louis XVI and Emperor Napoleon, respectively.<sup>22</sup> Through his journey in America, he witnessed not only its decentralised administrative functions but also religion extensively practised in its local communities. Both factors of decentralisation and of religious freedom seen in America helped convince him that church and state could have a separate existence for France.

Through developing and strengthening the habits of the heart, democracy in America was drawn from within. The author reveals that Tocqueville envisaged the term *individualism* (italic as original)<sup>23</sup> in a positive light, arguing that each individual citizen has his/her own 'self-interest' in promoting and strengthening the community and society to which he/she belongs. He then conceptualised his theory as 'self-interest properly understood' whereby citizens 'sacrifice a portion of their time and wealth' to advance the common good. In so doing, the individual frees himself from 'the loneliness of his own heart' by coming together

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>22</sup> See Lucien Jaume, 2008, 'Tutelary Figures from Malesherbes to Chateaubriand,' *Tocqueville: The Aristocratic Sources of Liberty*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 291-318. Through his ancestors' influence on the idea of liberty underpinned by morality, Tocqueville's observation on the relationship between religion and democracy was based on his direct experience in America that religion plays a significant role in helping moderate political practice among citizens, hence stabilising political order and systems and resulting in making democracy in America possible and sustainable.

<sup>23</sup> Zunz, 2022, *The Man Who Understood Democracy*, p. 189, Zunz finds that Tocqueville's first use of this term appeared on 24 April 1837 in his manuscript note on philosophical method.

and ‘regrouping “into a multitude of small private societies”’ or formulating themselves into civic and/or political associations with a view to achieving their personal and collective goals. The art of association, Tocqueville argued, is ‘the fundamental science’ owing to the fact that an association plays a role and functions as ‘the source of education and base for action’ in a democratic society.<sup>24</sup> Here is one of the most important points in Tocqueville’s contribution to political theory which he claimed to be a ‘new political science for a world completely new.’<sup>25</sup>

Tocqueville’s political theory of self-interest properly understood, along with the art of association, derives from, as he argued, one’s consistent and committed practice of political liberty, a concept that was dear to his heart. He argued that liberty embodied ‘a civil and moral’ quality that helps both individuals and their group to recognise how their potential is equipped with integrity, while freeing them from bondage, physically and mentally.

As a Tocquevillean student, I am aware that the concept of liberty is one of the key components of Tocqueville’s political theory on democracy. The word ‘liberty’ refers to both the concept and its interpretations, and this appears in various places, sometimes ambiguously explained, throughout the book. It should also be noted that each concept is not only distinctively defined but also interpreted from different angles (e.g., the proportional parallel between liberty and equality, or the so-called ‘equality of conditions’ loosely referred to as democracy). I shall try my best to capture the essence of liberty in each context and then move on to address its related concepts, e.g., the parallel between liberty and soft despotism.

Liberty, one of the key components of democracy in Tocqueville’s view, does not refer to the way in which one can do whatever one would like. Rather it is endowed with a ‘refined taste for justice, honest love of order, and a profound and reasonable attachment to morals and religious belief.’<sup>26</sup> He wished to see ‘the taste for liberty developed in all the political institutions’ of the country, whereby each citizen develops ‘the habit of thinking for oneself and governing oneself’ or self-governance. This is because democracy rests upon ‘local self-rule practiced over a long period of time.’<sup>27</sup>

Against the negative liberty of privilege and rights, Tocqueville argued for positive liberty as a ‘sacred thing,’ as it was people’s ‘free choice of what is good,’ and he demanded ‘personal exertion to achieve great things.’<sup>28</sup> With his strong belief in the possibilities of human achievement, he argued that by embracing the idea of positive liberty one could help foster equality, which refers to access to opportunity for ‘free Americans.’<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172-173.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 112 and 121.

He called himself a 'liberal of a new kind' whose 'opinion had always been moderate and dynamic' against 'the two extremes: the partisans of 1793 and the regime of absolutism.'<sup>30</sup> He explained in a series of six articles published in January 1843 his intention to 'implement the liberal principles of 1789 without the revolutionary spirit of 1793.'<sup>31</sup> That is to say, he intended to de-radicalise the extreme left-wing movement in mid-nineteenth century France by separating 'the principle of the revolution from [its] revolutionary habits.'<sup>32</sup> In doing so, Tocqueville tried to defend the ideas of equality and liberty gained through the French Revolution from being degraded and ending up in despotism, as occurred during the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte, who ruled France from 1804-1814/15.

The way in which one could protect and sustain liberty, in Tocqueville's view, is to curb its negative aspects while promoting its positive side through statecraft and leadership skills.<sup>33</sup> As he suggested, 'one must work tirelessly to sustain the flight of ideas, to lift souls and to show that in the democratic age that is just beginning, political liberty is not only beautiful but also necessary for nations to become great and even to remain civilised.'<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, he was also concerned that liberty is too fragile to resist the driving temptation for equality to be expanded. As a result of this asymmetry, the full potential practice of liberty could be sacrificed for the sake of equality. A balance of these two factors is the equation on which Tocqueville constructed his theory of a new political science.<sup>35</sup>

Why is the concept of liberty embedded in the citizen's self-governance so critical for democracy to work effectively? Tocqueville argued that once the so-called democratic men submit to the authority of 'an immense tutelary power' above their own entitlement to democratic power, they allow the authority with 'good intention' and immense power to take sole responsibility for 'securing their pleasure and watching over their fate.' It would 'resemble parental authority if only its purpose were the same, namely, to prepare men for manhood.' However, in the democratic age, he added, such power could end up keeping 'them in childhood irrevocably.'<sup>36</sup> This phenomenon is what Tocqueville called 'soft despotism' which is characterised as 'absolute, meticulous, regular, provident, and mild.'<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 147, 172-173 and 204.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 342.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192; See also Paul A. Rahe, 2009, *Soft Despotism, Democracy's Drift: Montesquieu, Rousseau, Tocqueville, and the Modern Prospect*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

While working as a member of the Chamber of Deputies as the representative for Valognes<sup>38</sup> from 1839 to 1851, Tocqueville tried to synthesise his political thought and action in France's parliament.<sup>39</sup> The author reveals that in 1846, Tocqueville proposed his idea to Dufaure, a former minister of public works and later the leader of a party of the 'Left-Centre' faction, to create 'an association of a few men of talent and heart to stay out of political intrigue and crude electioneering and focus on the general and long-term interests of the country.'<sup>40</sup> He argued that, if successful, 'the group had the potential to blossom into "a party that would take upon itself the principal mission to actively and practically work for the moral and material wellbeing of the lower classes, without stroking their prejudices nor inflaming their passions, in order to play an entirely new and important role in public life.'"<sup>41</sup>

This proposal was built on Tocqueville's observation that the French political reforms during the time had been left to the 'unintelligent and egotistical contempt of the conservative majority,' on the one hand, and to the 'dreams and passions of the utopians,' on the other.<sup>42</sup> Tocqueville's insistence on his moderate position in both political ideas and action is highly praised by a Tocquevillean scholar as being endowed with the virtue of a 'courageous mind.'<sup>43</sup>

The author also confirms that Tocqueville positioned himself in the middle of the road between church and state, and between aristocracy and democracy. Furthermore, in one of his addresses to the Chamber of Deputies, Tocqueville argued that France was engaging in the new war between philosophy and religion.<sup>44</sup> He also observed that French society was being influenced by men of letters and divided by 'fantastic,' yet unrealistic, revolutionary ideas of two enemy classes, those of the worker and of capital, as he commented:

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<sup>38</sup> Valognes is an electoral district in the Manche department in Lower Normandy region, located in north-western France, about fifteen miles from and south-west of the Chateau de Tocqueville. See also footnote. 64 on p. 28 below.

<sup>39</sup> Zunz, 2022, *The Man Who Understood Democracy*, Chapter 7: A Synthesis of Thought and Action.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 223-224.

<sup>43</sup> See also, Aurelian Craiutu, 2005, 'Tocqueville's Paradoxical Moderation,' *Review of Politics*, Vol. 67, No. 4, pp. 599-629; and Aurelian Craiutu, 2012, *A Virtue for Courageous Minds: Moderation in French Political Thought, 1748-1830*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. However, the late Crane Brinton, American Professor of History thought otherwise. In studying four major revolutions of the English Revolution (1640s), the American Revolution (1775-1783); the French Revolution (1789); and the Russian Revolution (1917), Brinton argued that, 'There is, indeed, an almost organic weakness in the position of the moderates.' He then generalised that, '... after the moderates get thoroughly frightened about the threatening attitude of the extremists, they turn for help to the conservatives, and find there just aren't any on hand and available. ... This last turn of theirs toward the conservatives, however, finishes the moderates.' Crane Brinton, 1965, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, New York: Vintage Books, pp, 140 and 141.

<sup>44</sup> Zunz, 2022, *The Man Who Understood Democracy*, pp. 211-221 and 217.



It was not needs but ideas that caused the great upheaval – fantastic ideas concerning the relative condition of the worker and capital, exaggerated theories concerning the role that social power could play in relations between the worker and his master, and ultra-centralising doctrines that ultimately persuaded multitudes of men that it was within the power of the state not only to save them from misery but also to make them comfortable and prosperous.<sup>45</sup>

Tocqueville was of the view that all socialist schools of thought at that time aimed to stir material passions among French citizens<sup>46</sup> and that, ‘so long as poor farmers were not taken in by “what has been planted in the heads of urban workers, the social order and civilisation can save itself.”’<sup>47</sup>

He was tremendously frustrated by the 1848 Revolution in France, not because he supported the Legitimist faction but because it obstructed a peaceful social state, which would be relatively free from political interference and dominance, that would allow an embryonic democracy to be formed in France.<sup>48</sup> He was even more frustrated when Louis Napoleon staged a coup on 2 December 1851 and established himself as emperor, marking the end of France’s Second Republic (which lasted only three years from 24 February 1848 to 2 December 1851) and beginning its Second Empire (for almost eighteen years from 14 January 1852 to 27 October 1870). The coup was the last straw for Tocqueville who decided to quit his political career and resumed writing full-time at his residence in Normandy.

He now had sufficient time to pursue enquiries that had puzzled him for years. These included: the causes and consequences of the French Revolution of 1789, the reason why revolution broke out firstly in France rather than other countries in Europe, and the reason why the French Revolution had erupted in the name of liberty but ended up in the unchecked despotism of Napoleon in the First Empire (1804-1814/1815). These enquiries led him to investigate areas unexplored by his predecessors. According to a British historian, William Doyle, Tocqueville ‘was the first to analyse how *Ancien Régime* government actually worked outside the corridors of Versailles. He was the first to look behind the picture of French society and institutions drawn by the men of 1789 and ask how far it was accurate. He was the first, too, to draw attention to the economic character of the old order which, he argued, ended in a blaze of prosperity.’<sup>49</sup> He viewed the *Ancien Régime* as a subject to be understood rather than defended or attacked. Hence, he became one of a few scholars who made a fair judgement of the *Ancien Régime* and the worth of its attributes.

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 269-270.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 270 and 271. Tocqueville argued that real democracy and socialism were simply incompatible.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269.

<sup>48</sup> See Alexis de Tocqueville, 1970, *Recollections*, a new translation by George Lawrence, edited by J.P. Mayer and A.P. Kerr, and introduction by J.P. Mayer, London: Macdonald.

<sup>49</sup> William Doyle, 2001 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), *The Ancien Regime*, New York: Palgrave, p. 10. According to Doyle, the *Ancien Regime* refers to ‘a religious and spiritual as well as a political and social order,’ p. 4.

Using a political sociology approach, Tocqueville compared property maps drawn before and after the 1789 Revolution in the commune of Saint-Pierre-Eglise (in Lower Normandy, north-western France) as a case study. He discovered that although French people under the Absolute Monarchy or the *Ancien Régime* had suffered tremendous hardships economically and politically, there were an increasing number of small property holders who gained significant prosperity through its economic and social reform. With a detailed understanding through concrete evidence coupled with 'the spirit of his intellectual journey,' Tocqueville revealed that a profound social transformation in France 'occurred before rather than after the Revolution.'<sup>50</sup> Compared with other countries like England and Germany in the same period, France demonstrated a more advanced case of economic and social reform than those and many other countries in Europe.<sup>51</sup>

Years later, a French historian, Daresté (1820-1882), in his authoritative major work of nine volumes, *Histoire de France*, published between 1865 and 1879, shows a significant reduction in feudal obligations in eighteenth-century France. This helps confirm Tocqueville's key findings that 'the Revolution arose in a period of relaxation of feudal abuses, greater recognition of individual rights, and increase in peasants' property ownership. These developments made their remaining feudal burden even more unacceptable and kindled their hatred for the old regime.'<sup>52</sup>

If not the severe economic hardship the French peasants and workers endured during the *Ancien Régime*, what else could be the main cause of the Revolution? Besides what Doyle sums up above, Zunz gives a detailed explanation of Tocqueville's curiosity and pioneering investigation into the state of society in France before the 1789 Revolution. His investigation pointed to the fact that most French leaders and commoners were, by and large, seduced by some philosophers or men of letters who enjoyed the habit of thinking in the abstract while lacking real political experience. He also commented that these philosophers were 'entirely removed from public life who nonetheless planted in the minds of our leaders those seeds of novelty from which suddenly sprouted so many political institutions and civil laws that were unknown to their predecessors.'<sup>53</sup> He saw that these philosophers 'stood above action and provided the larger framework for political life,' as he explained, 'Political Science generates, or at least shapes, those general ideas that make up the intellectual atmosphere of a society.'<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Zunz, 2022, *The Man Who Understood Democracy*, p. 304. The author provides the reader with a good review of Tocqueville's work on *Ancient Régime* on pp. 304-305.

<sup>51</sup> See also, Alexis de Tocqueville, 2011, *The Ancien Régime and the French Revolution*, edited by Jon Elster, translated by Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>52</sup> Zunz, 2022, *The Man Who Understood Democracy*, p. 298.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294. This is the reason why Tocqueville called his book: *Democracy in America* to be a 'new political science for a world completely new.' See p. 22 and footnote 25.

As mentioned in the quotation above and elsewhere, Tocqueville's pioneering analysis of the role and corrupting influence of the 'philosophical revolution' was in line with Edmund Burke's argument, saying that the French were among the people who 'must have a strong hand like that of their former masters to coerce them.'<sup>55</sup> It is because they were short of what he called 'a certain fund of natural moderation to qualify them for freedom.' Because of this general attribute, they 'misused their newfound liberty to illiberal ends.'<sup>56</sup> The 1789 French Revolution turned out to be a failed attempt as it created 'a more powerful government than the *Ancien Régime* it overthrew.'<sup>57</sup>

There appear to have been unending arguments about Tocqueville's political position – whether he was a supporter of the monarchy or republican as mentioned on p. 19 above. The author reveals one of the critical circumstances in French history that after the Second Republic had failed as the result of Napoleon III's coup in December 1851, Tocqueville wrote a letter in mid-January 1852 to the Comte de Chambord who would have become Henri V, expressing 'his firm and definitive intention' to establish in France 'a constitutional and representative monarchy with its chief characteristics, namely: 1) The guarantee of individual freedom; 2) A sincere national representation; 3) Freedom and complete publicity of parliamentary discussions; 4) Real freedom of the press.'<sup>58</sup> These were the qualities of state he would deem necessary. Could we then interpret Tocqueville's political position as a supporter of the monarchy? It is a moot point to conclude that he was, as he had tried to convince Napoleon III to prolong the life of the Second Republic, arguing that the French constitution could be amended to allow the president to rule for a second term. The paradox of Tocqueville's thinking could point to the fact that his pragmatism lies in his belief that the social order and civilisation can save itself once any of the extreme factions, whether Legitimists or Socialist-led Republicans, calms down to allow political moderation and positive liberty underpinned by Christian morality to settle in.

The author not only explains Tocqueville's political and social thoughts but also describes the ways in which he put his thoughts into action, shown in Chapters 6-9. Chapter 7: Abolitionist, Nationalist, and Colonialist treats the great difficulties he faced and looks at the risks he ran of tarnishing his reputation as an advocate of democracy. Nonetheless, one could argue that unlike the many other men of letters whom he despised, Tocqueville's political theory derived from concrete evidence through his intensive research and experimentation. As he said:

I hate absolute systems that see all historical events as dependent on grand first causes linked together in ineluctable sequence, thus banishing individual human beings from the history of the human race. I find such theories narrow in their pretensions of grandeur and false beneath their air of mathematical truth.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 330. See also, Tocqueville, 2011, *Ancien Regime*, Book III.

<sup>58</sup> Zunz, 2022, *The Man Who Understood Democracy*, p. 285.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292. See also Tocqueville, 1970, *Recollections*, p. 62.

And he noted:

I also firmly believe that chance accomplishes nothing for which the groundwork has not been laid in advance. Prior facts, the nature of institutions, the cast of people's minds, and the state of mores are the materials out of which chance improvises the effects we find so surprising and terrible to behold.<sup>60</sup>

For those who study and work on social transformation between aristocracy, democracy and despotism, Tocqueville's insight and contributions of both social/political theory and research methods significantly provide a road map to guide their enquiries.<sup>61</sup>

The author concludes that Tocqueville's book on *The Ancien Régime and the French Revolution* provides a fundamental counterpart for *Democracy in America* although it was written years later. Both demonstrate the confluence where the concepts of liberty (underpinned by morality) and equality are mutually overlapping, thus allowing the chance for democracy to be formed and flourish.<sup>62</sup> He also emphasises Tocqueville's comment on those who followed blindly an American model as 'the worst imitators who had taken from the United States the abstract principles of their constitution without having understood the necessity of certain conservative application of these principles that had been made in America.'<sup>63</sup>

Besides explaining in detail Tocqueville's research methods and writing style, the author reveals Tocqueville's personal attributes as a democratic man of the Centre-Left. For instance, in 1837 when he ran for the parliamentary seat of Valognes,<sup>64</sup> he declared his position to be 'an advocate for gradual change, an enemy of revolution, and a defender of freedom of the press and of association, both freedoms being necessary for citizens to express themselves and to act in concert.'<sup>65</sup> Not being discouraged by the first failure, he ran again in 1839 as an independent, and without any party support he won the seat of Valognes.

Tocqueville's integrity is also shown through the consistency between his words and deeds. Richard Rush, an American minister in Paris, described Tocqueville and his commitment to his duty as a member of the National Guard, defending the provisional government against

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> See Roger Boesche, 2005, *Tocqueville's Road Map: Methodology, Liberalism, Revolution, and Despotism*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

<sup>62</sup> Zunz, 2022, *The Man Who Understood Democracy*, p. 319.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341.

<sup>64</sup> In Valognes, there was, in Tocqueville's view, a small group of electors who were 'enlightened and independent men.' He assured them that 'the gradual development of democratic institutions is the great event of our times.' See, *Ibid.*, p. 177. In 2006, my husband and I visited the Chateau de Tocqueville and then Valognes where we found a school still carries on Tocqueville's ideas in its curriculum. See fn. 38 on p. 24 above.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

the uprising propelled by the extreme Left movement. Rush further stated that he was a 'man of genius; independent in his circumstances; addicted to study; not robust in frame; yet off he goes for his musket at the first summons of the drum, to take his stand as a private in the ranks.'<sup>66</sup>

Another example demonstrates Tocqueville's intellectual quality. While staying behind the barricade, Tocqueville observed and analysed the political situation he encountered, noting that:

...many of the men who fought to overturn our sacred rights were guided by a distorted notion of a higher law. They sincerely believed that society had been founded on injustice, and they wanted to give it a new foundation. It is this kind of revolutionary religion that cannot be destroyed by cannons and bayonets. New dangers await us, and our problems are nowhere near over.<sup>67</sup>

He also commented on the 'bourgeois' movement of 1848 that it was 'emboldened only progressively as the struggle went on,' adding that, 'At the beginning, people spoke only of better balancing powers, better adjusting class relations'; 'soon they walked, they ran, they threw themselves into the idea of pure democracy.'<sup>68</sup> This inevitably led to the 1848 Revolution in France and spread across Europe afterwards.<sup>69</sup>

This book is of great value. It is packed with fine details of Tocqueville's life and the ways in which his understanding of democracy gradually emerged from his intensive study, field research in America, and direct participation in the Chamber of Deputies as an elected member of the French parliament where he maintained his independent position and political moderation. Beyond his family and friends, it reveals Tocqueville's extensive networks from both sides of the Atlantic; such a blessing derived from his integrity, search for democratic reform, sincere conviction and courtesy in debate; or in his own words, a 'liberal of a new kind.'

Throughout the book, the author emphasises Tocqueville's core concepts concerning democracy. Besides 'equality of conditions' as '*idée mère*' initially identified in *Democracy in America*, it is 'liberty' that he repeatedly emphasised; and, furthermore, calling himself a 'liberal of a new kind,'<sup>70</sup> a catchphrase that is vaguely defined. Surprisingly, the author has failed to mention Tocqueville's very important statement that, '... liberty cannot be

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339.

<sup>69</sup> See, Tocqueville, 1970, *Recollections*; Anthony Denholm, 1972, *France in Revolution: 1848*, Sydney: John Wiley & Sons Australasia Pty Ltd.; and Priscilla Robertson, 1960, *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History*, New York: Harper Torchbook.

<sup>70</sup> Zunz, 2022, *The Man Who Understood Democracy*, pp. 147, 172, 173,

established without morality, nor morality without faith...'<sup>71</sup> This is the positive liberty, endowed with religious virtues, which Tocqueville emphasised while arguing that negative liberty must be restrained in order to allow positive liberty to be formed and maintained. This statement significantly shows the close relationship between religion and democracy in Tocqueville's thought.

The author rightly notes Tocqueville's concern about the fragility of liberty that it is 'too easily sacrificed to the drive for equality,' and points out that it is 'the axiom on which he [Tocqueville] built his new political science.'<sup>72</sup> I would also like to add that '[a] new science of politics [that] is indispensable to a new world' in Tocqueville's view, as I understand it, is that he recognised a visible pattern of social change with reference to France's emerging democracy during his lifetime, concluding that a social revolution had advanced without guidance; hence:

The people have consequently been abandoned to its [sic] wild propensities, and it [sic] has grown up like those outcasts who receive their education in the public streets, and who are unacquainted with aught but the vices and wretchedness of society.<sup>73</sup>

He prudently argued that:

The existence of a democracy was seemingly unknown, when, on a sudden, it took possession of the supreme power. Everything was then submitted to its caprices; it was worshipped as the idol of strength; until, when it was enfeebled by its own excesses, the legislator conceived the rash project of annihilating its power, instead of instructing it and correcting its vices; no attempt was made to fit it to govern, but all were bent on excluding it from the government.<sup>74</sup>

Accordingly, his advice followed in this way:

The first duty which is at this time imposed upon those who direct our affairs is to educate the democracy; to warm its faith, if that be possible; to purify its morals; to direct its energies; to substitute a knowledge of business for its inexperience, and an

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<sup>71</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, 1854 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), *Democracy in America*, translated by Henry Reeves, Esq, New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., p. 11. The first edition was published in 1841 and read by Tocqueville, albeit not entirely approved due to some misinterpretation and/or other loss in translation of his ideas.

<sup>72</sup> Zunz, 2022, *The Man Who Understood Democracy*, p. 188.

<sup>73</sup> Tocqueville, 1854, *Democracy in America*, p. 6. Reeves' translation has been revised in later publications, for instance, the word 'the people' is replaced by 'democracy' to allow possessive adjective 'its' and pronoun 'it' to be used according to the original French book by Alexis de Tocqueville. In French, the word, '*le peuple*' is treated automatically as a singular whereas the word, 'the people' in English is nonetheless plural. For the change of wording from 'the people' to 'democracy,' see Alexis de Tocqueville, 2000, *Democracy in America*, translated, edited, and with an introduction by Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p. 13; and Alexis de Tocqueville, 2010, *Democracy in America*, translated by James T. Schleifer, edited by Eduardo Nolla, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, Inc., p. 18. Nevertheless, the meaning of the two words: 'the people' and 'democracy' is unlikely to be exactly the same! I would like to thank Dr Mary Sheather and Emeritus Professor Anthony Johns for their advice on this fine detail.

<sup>74</sup> Tocqueville, 1854, *Democracy in America*, p. 6.

acquaintance with its true interests for its blind propensities; to adapt its government to time and place, and to modify it in compliance with the occurrences and the actors of the age.<sup>75</sup>

The quotations above comprise the notions of social change/revolution and the response necessarily required to handle the change. These are the pivot points of Tocqueville's understanding of democracy from his aristocratic background and direct experience in French politics as a member of the Chamber of Deputies and the Minister of Foreign Affairs; albeit briefly. Besides, he encouraged political leaders, especially statesmen, to help educate, direct and somewhat moderate its energies, adapt its democratic government to time and place, and modify it suitably for the particular political culture, social state, and actors of a nation.

In summary, the book gives a detailed account of how Tocqueville gradually grasped and understood the notion of democracy via extensive study and social interactions with scholars and practitioners during his lifetime, especially his work experience as a political thinker and statesman. His interest in democracy derived from his grave concern about social change, especially carried out via revolutions in France, and the ideological and dichotomous struggle between aristocracy and democracy. The argument he addressed to the French and to concerned citizens elsewhere is that democracy is a 'providential fact'; referring to its unstoppable and inevitable force; thus his political theory aims at social change through peaceful means rather than a violent approach. Zunz is right to sum up that the book on *The Ancien Régime and the French Revolution*, albeit being published in 1856 or over a decade later, is the foundation for Tocqueville's first two-volume book on *Democracy in America* published in 1835 and 1840 respectively. It is because 'democracy' is presumably a sensible response to social transformation and change in France and elsewhere. Tocqueville's greatest contribution to America, in Zunz's view, is that, 'He taught Americans how to understand themselves anew.'<sup>76</sup> Hence, America needs to continue its 'democratic revolution' to revitalise its ideals and reform its democratic institutions. Furthermore, he also provided a roadmap for many other countries which share a similar context of social change to learn how they can avoid the traumatic crises of violence by creating and managing their social transformations in moderation so that democracy (with the balance between liberty and equality supported by fraternity) would be established peacefully and harmoniously. I highly recommend this book to be read carefully and intensively by those who are deeply concerned about the development and maintenance of a democratic society, regardless of whether in developed or developing nations.

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<sup>75</sup> Tocqueville, 1854, *Democracy in America*, p. 5.

<sup>76</sup> Zunz, 2022, *The Man Who Understood Democracy*, p. 126.

## Background and Objectives of the Journal

During the 2018 year-end gathering, the FTP Research Seminar Group's members suggested that we should have a newsletter/journal created and circulated to foster a closer link among us. Associate Professor Patrick McArdle, then Canberra Campus Dean, also suggested that academic papers presented by our group's members should be published and extended to wider audiences who are interested in what we have been doing. I have taken these suggestions into consideration and come up with a journal entitled: *The Canberra Chronicles: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research Seminar Group (JHSSRSG)*, or the so-called: *The Canberra Chronicles* which aims to:

- ❖ Foster a closer link among the FTP Research Seminar Group's members in addition to the monthly seminar organised all year round;
- ❖ Be a forum for the members to exchange ideas, to discuss further issues arising from the monthly seminar, and to make announcements on research projects and other activities relating to humanities and social sciences disciplines; and
- ❖ Provide an open space for young academics to 'test the water' and for veteran scholars to continue 'polishing their craft' among critical and supportive friends and colleagues.

Following the agreement reached by the group's members at the 10 May 2023 meeting (via Zoom), this triannual journal is to be published as detailed below:

- ❖ Year 5, Volume 1 – 30 April 2023;
- ❖ Year 5, Volume 2 – 30 August 2023; and
- ❖ Year 5, Volume 3 – 10 December 2023.

Accordingly, an original copy of a contribution (e.g., essay, lecture note, book review, or report) is to be submitted at least ten days prior to the release of the journal. Please consult the guidelines for the author's contribution so as to ensure the quality, writing style and consistency of your submission.

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Please note that the due date of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Volume is 20 August 2023. Could you please send your contribution copy to: [rapin.quinn@acu.edu.au](mailto:rapin.quinn@acu.edu.au) by the due date – Thank you!