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# TOCQUEVILLE'S THEOLOGICO-POLITICAL PREDICAMENT: LEO STRAUSS, RELIGION AND *DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA*

**Abstract**

This paper analyzes Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* in a new light. When viewed through Leo Strauss' conception of the theologico-political problem, a novel reading of Tocqueville is presented. This interpretation argues that one of *Democracy's* major themes concerns reason versus revelation. Within such a reading, it contends that Tocqueville's seminal contribution to the history of political philosophy contained within it his reluctant announcement that religion may not be able to cure the social ills liberal democracy brings with it. Mainly, this is because Tocqueville fears democracy will contribute to the decline of religion itself. Tocqueville subtlety reveals his concerns over religion's possible inadequacy, offers explanations thereof, and postulates another concept as a mitigating tool that has similar moderating effects on democratic defects: self-interest well understood.

**Keywords**: Alexis de Tocqueville, Church and State, Democracy, Straussian Hermeneutics

## Introduction

It is common to suggest that Tocqueville was a new kind of liberal who altered the course of modernity by suggesting a return to religion. The traditional argument suggests that Tocqueville understood American democracy so well that he could predict its ills and therefore wrote *Democracy* as a way to correct them. Tocqueville articulated a return to religious piety in American democracy because if these ills could not be cured, tyranny was likely to manifest.It is thought that Tocqueville argues that Christianity, particularly Catholicism, would cure democratic defects. While some argue that this return to religion was a sincere belief Tocqueville expressed, others view it as a form of civil religion where

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collective morality and restraint is used by a regime to effect political security and stability. However, a more nuanced reading of Tocqueville with careful attention to the hermeneutics and his emphasis on the theologico-political problem, *Democracy in America* presents a fascinating, yet altered, return to the tradition of Spinoza, Hobbes, and Machiavelli.

Tocqueville *is* a new kind of liberal. He views religion's decline as devastating for liberal democracy. Because of France's experience with democracy in 1789 and the Reign of Terror, Tocqueville fears that the death of religion will come with the advancement of the Enlightenment and liberal democracy. Tocqueville's fears stem from his belief that religion is both the most ardent opponent of, and the cure for democratic ills. Thus he is faced with the predicament of how to save religion in a regime that denigrates it. With this in mind, *Democracy* sets out to either save religion by indicating why it is best situated to mitigate the ills of the new regime: or to further develop an emerging concept that could either complement or replace Christianity in case Tocqueville's predictions reach fruition. This emerging concept is "self-interest well understood". Tocqueville seeks to save democracy from itself by saving religion. If that endeavor fails, he seeks to develop a concept to serve as a suitable replacement.

For Tocqueville, a natural state of condition for a democratic regime is the decline of religion. As Hebert acknowledges, "Tocqueville saw several tendencies instilled in citizens by the democratic social state as fostering an atmosphere skeptical of claims based on the extraordinary or supernatural, and therefore corrosive over time of religion and morality grounded in religion."[2] Democratic man, Tocqueville argues, no longer feels the same attachment to religion, which is necessary to constrain passions. Something else must therefore be developed that has the same moderating effect as religion if the new regime is to avoid slipping into "soft despotism". Tocqueville intends to demonstrate how effects of religion, such as virtue, can be made in its absence.

To that purpose, Tocqueville offers self-interest well understood as a democratic regime's possible replacement for the curative effects of religion. Tocqueville believes that religion is the best cure of democracy's defects, especially individualism, materialism, and mediocrity, all which lead men towards the soft-despotism Tocqueville feared.[3] I demonstrate how, rather than a reconciliation between Athens and Jerusalem as Strauss suggests, Tocqueville fears a world where Athens inevitably wins. Tocqueville's is a new kind of political science because *Democracy* instructs us on how to live in this philosophical regime.

Tocqueville notes that traditional morality has declined in America,[4] and that something new has been created and represented to the population at large.

2 Joseph Herbert L., Response to Gary Glenn and Kenneth Grasso: Tocqueville, Catholicism, and the Art of Being Free, *The Catholic Social Science Review*, Vol. 19, 2014, p. 49.

3 Alan S. Kahan., *Tocqueville, Democracy, & Religion: Checks & Balances for Democratic Souls*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015, p. 53.

4 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 2000, p. 501.

This new doctrine is *self-interest well understood*. Tocqueville describes this concept as "whether the individual advantage of citizens would not be to work for the happiness of all, and when… particular interests happens to meet the general interest."[5] Self-interest well understood coincides with societal interests; when providing for the interest of all, one understands it as benefiting oneself. Tocqueville argues that this doctrine is not new, "but among Americans of our day it has been universally accepted; it has become popular there: one finds it at the foundation of all actions; it pierces into all discussions."[6] Self-interest well understood acts as counterfeit virtue, but virtue nonetheless[7].

Self-interest well understood is so popular in America that citizens constantly seek to demonstrate how their enlightened self-love brings them toward the good of the state.[8] It is a new, modern morality based upon self-love and calculated self-interest. Although it is not morality proper, it has all the effects of morality, including regulating citizens, making them temperate, moderate, farsighted, self-mastering, and "if it does not lead directly to virtue through the will, it brings them near to it insensibly through habits."[9]Tocqueville believes self-interest well understood to be "of all philosophic theories the most appropriate to the needs of men in our time, and that I see in it the most powerful guarantee against themselves".[10] He notes that no other power on earth or in heaven can temper modern man in such a way as can this self-interest. Therefore, Tocqueville instructs the leaders of democracy, the legislator, to enlighten the public at any cost, "for the century of blind devotions and instinctive virtues is already fleeing far from us, and I see the time approaching when freedom, public peace, and social order itself will not be able to do without enlightenment".[11] Tocqueville predicts either the decline of religious appetite in liberal democracies or a collapse severe enough that religion no longer constrains man's passions.

As Kahan notes, "In places where religion, for one reason or another, cannot function properly, self-interest well understood is the only way to encourage people to think of the long term, an attitude essential for both material and spiritual reasons".[12] Kahan further notes that much of Tocqueville's concern over democracy's future concentrated on how poor the relationship was between religion and freedom in France.[13] His ultimate goal would be for all liberal democracies to reserve a place within the regime for religion in order to combat democratic flaws, or for legislators to cultivate self-interest well understood in the case

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid, p. 502.

7 Alan S. Kahan., *Tocqueville, Democracy, & Religion: Checks & Balances for Democratic Souls*… p. 24.

8 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*… p. 502.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid, p. 503.

11 Ibid.

12 Alan S. Kahan., *Tocqueville, Democracy, & Religion: Checks & Balances for Democratic Souls*… p. 61.

13 Ibid, p. 5.

that it is too late to save religion. Kahan notes that Tocqueville was quite fond of self-interest well understood, even when compared to the effects of religion, noting, "Tocqueville was quite willing to forego divine grace if he could get a Republic of Saints without it. Self-interest well understood and virtue could have the same political effects". [14]

To expand on this analysis, I will present an explanation of Strauss' conceptualization of the theologico-political problem, a review of the scholarly literature interpreting Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, and textual evidence of Tocqueville's belief that self-interest well understood could occupy religion's role. Finally, this paper concludes by putting Tocqueville firmly within Strauss' theologico-political problem.

## Leo Strauss and the Theologico-political Predicament[15]

Though infrequently mentioned by Strauss, the theologico-political predicament is always associated with him, and his scholarship was devoted to it throughout his career. The predicament refers to the unsolvable tensions between revelation and reason, or theology and philosophy. Strauss [16] articulates it best, writing,

> The fundamental question, therefore, is whether men can acquire that knowledge of the good without which they cannot guide their lives individually or collectively by the unaided efforts of their natural powers, or whether they are dependent for that knowledge on Divine Revelation. No alternative is more fundamental than this: human guidance or divine guidance. The first possibility is characteristic of philosophy or science in the original sense of the term, the second is presented in the Bible.

The theologico-political predicament asks how we know what we know. To accept revelation means to accept God's law as a fact. From the point of view of reason, this offers no room for logical thought or questioning.

To Strauss, classical political philosophy neither accepted revelation outright nor rejected it. The ancients thought truth comes from knowledge of the whole. Philosophy was seen as "the quest for the formless, necessary, unchanging, rarefied, eternal good or truth," as juxtaposed to "the dusty world of human concourse, the world of change, opinion, contingency, and fate".[17] Revelation, on the other hand, was based on faith, obedience to God, the unproven; that is,

14 Ibid, p. 25.

15 Along with the literature on the theologico-political predicament, this essay fit within the broader field of the Politology of Religion, especially concerning the interpretation of Tocquiville. For an excellent review of this field see: Miroljub Jevtic, Political Science and Religion, *Politics and Religin Journal,* Vol. 1, No. 1, 2007, pp. 59-69.

16 Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1965, p. 74.

17 Nancy Levene, Athens and Jerusalem: Myths and Mirrors in Strauss' Vision of the West, *Hebraic Political Studies*, Vol. III, No. 2, Jerusalem, 2008, p. 115.

contra logic, reason, and understanding.[18] Ultimately, by obeying God and his commandments, one receives the security of eternal salvation. Meier [19], however, helps us understand that security without contemplation is merely the illusion of security: "A world skillfully fabricated in the interest of security only feeds the illusion of security… Security can be attained in no other way than on the basis of truth." To understand Western Civilization and human affairs, one must understand that reason and revelation both have paved modernity's path; to truly know, one must "come to terms with both Jerusalem and Athens".[20] Thus, the theologico-political predicament argues that, by choosing revelation, one denies the independent use of reason. On the other hand, choosing reason denies any higher meaning. For Strauss, this most important question constitutes the history of political philosophy.

What exactly does this problem mean for the state or for political life? According to Batnitzky [21], there are serious consequences. One is diagnostic in nautre, or the "results of the early modern attempt to separate theology from politics." Here Strauss believes that early modern political philosophy can be described as an attempt to remove religion from the political sphere. He has in mind Spinoza (see Strauss 1965b), Machiavelli (see Strauss 1995b), and Hobbes (see Strauss 1936). Each of these thinkers relegated religion to the private sphere and away from the political. Strauss[22] writes, "Liberal democracy had originally defined itself as the opposite…of 'the Kingdom of Darkness'…According to liberal democracy, the bond of society is universal human morality, whereas religion is a private affair." Early thinkers thought that they were keeping philosophy free from religious influence. In fact, as Tanguay [23] explains, "The internal coherence of the modern Enlightenment therefore depends on its ability to refute completely the religious orthodoxy that keeps man in a state of dependence with regard to the Law and religious faith." Modern philosophers such as Spinoza, Machiavelli, and Hobbes thought that they had successfully refuted revelation, established philosophy's reign, and freed truth from the mythology religion provided. Thus, liberalism attempts to free politics from divine laws by arguing that they are impractical for the best regime. The only meaningful laws are those created through reason. As Guerra[24] writes, "To this end, they advanced rationalistic critiques of biblical faith and formulated arguments that were designed to show that modern reason

18 Ibid, p. 132.

19 Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, p. 22.

20 John Ranieri, Leo Strauss on Jerusalem and Athens: A Girardian Analysis, *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies,* Vol. XXII, No. 2, 2004, p. 87.

21 Leora Batnitzky, Leo Strauss and the 'Theologico-Political Predicament', in: *The Cambridge Companion to Leo Strauss*, Steven B. Smith (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011, p. 49.

22 Leo Strauss Leo, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* , University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989, p. 226.

23 Daniel Tanguay, *Leo Strauss: An Intellectual Biography,* Yale University Press, New Haven, 2007, p. 13.

24 Marc D. Guerra, Leo Strauss and the Recovery of the Theologico-Political Problem, *The Political Science Reviewer,* Vol. XXXVI, No. 1, Wisconsin, 2007, p. 49.

could provide the true grounds of civil society."

This is central to Strauss' theologico-political predicament. According to Batnitzky[25], Strauss believes that when philosophy assumed it destroyed revelation as a mode of truth, philosophy, in effect, destroyed itself. Guerra [26] explicates, "In its dogged pursuit of absolute certainty…modern rationalism sowed the theoretical seed for the self-destruction of reason." This is what Batnitzky[27] refers to as Strauss' reconstructive sense of the predicament. Strauss believes the Enlightenment's purpose was to reject religion without scientific evidence. However, rejecting revelation was actually an act of the will and was itself a belief or faith[28]. The result is that scientific reason is allowed to evolve into positivism, which in turn leads to historicism and relativism. Philosophy, proclaiming that it refuted revelation and fulfilled the search for truth, consequently eliminated the need for philosophy.[29]

However, philosophy cannot demonstrate that revelation has been refuted.[30] Indeed, Enlightenment thinkers never envisioned a philosophical system that legitimately disproved revelation.[31] Early modern thinkers merely operate on the assumption that revelation is false, but they can not substantiate this assumption. Strauss [32] explains,

> The genuine refutation of orthodoxy would require the proof that the world and human life are perfectly intelligible without the assumption of a mysterious God; it would require at least the success of the philosophic system; man has to show himself theoretically and practically as the master of the world and the master of his life; the merely given world must be replaced by the world created by man theoretically and practically.

Moreover, philosophy and politics need revelation to establish universal morality. If Society attempted to derive a universal order from philosophy and reason alone, it may only lead to relative laws based on positivism. According to Paskewich[33], Athens and Jerusalem represent this problem for Strauss. Paskewich[34] argues that in Athens, the laws are grounded in reason, tradition and ancestral customs and could have been alternately constructed. Where do these forms begin?

25 Leora Batnitzky, Leo Strauss and the 'Theologico-Political Predicament'. . ., p. 52.

26 Marc D. Guerra, Leo Strauss and the Recovery of the Theologico-Political Problem. . . p. 52.

27 Leora Batnitzky, Leo Strauss and the 'Theologico-Political Predicament'. . . p. 41.

28 Chiara Adorisio, Philosophy of Religion or Political Philosophy? The Debate between Leo Strauss and Julius Guttmann, *European Journal of Jewish Studies*, Vol. I, No. 1, 2007, p. 136.

29 Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History,* Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1965, p. 75.

30 Ibid.

31 Marc D. Guerra, Leo Strauss and the Recovery of the Theologico-Political Problem. . . p. 51.

32 Leo Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1989, p. 254.

33 Christopher J. Paskewich, Leo Strauss, Political Philosophy, and Modern Judaism, *Studies in Social and Political Thought,* Vol. XVII, 2010, p. 120.

34 Ibid.

To answer this, Athens relies on inquiry, and inquiry seeks "To obtain knowledge of 'first things'". [35] For Jerusalem, the answer to this question is God. Jerusalem represents God's law, which transcends time and space. As Smith[36] writes, "Biblical thought, by contrast, begins not from the experience of intellectual curiosity about all things but from a sense of awe of fear of the Lord." To question further is to question God: a serious problem for the believer.

If the problem between Athens and Jerusalem is the origin of laws, the predicament is both religious and political. The dichotomy between the two cities presents tension politically: which city provides the best way of life? Without revelation, philosophy can only establish particular justice, not justice for all humanity.[37] The lack of universality brings with it the possibility of "othering" from one walled city to the next, and introduces the likelihood of hedonism, war, and ultimately the destruction of the city-state. Considering this, Strauss wishes for a return of philosophy to philosophy: a return to doubt (in this case doubt of science and faith). Additionally Strauss, believes that the contradictions between these two cities actually give vitality and energy to the West.[38] The character of the problem helps define the West and adds to its greater glory. To end this apparent conflict, the purpose of the Enlightenment, presents Strauss'greatest problem: the "crisis of the West."

These concepts provide the lens with which to analyze Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* as it relates to religion and democracy. Furthermore, it provides the foundation to situate Tocqueville as a philosopher participating in this great debate—a context until now, overlooked by political theorists. I argue that Tocqueville does not wish religion's death or decline but acknowledges that it may not be capable of coexisting within democratic republics. Thus, he believes that if society is to be maintained without anarchy, something has to be capable of taking religion's place. *Self-interest well understood* is this replacement.

## On Religion and Enlightened Self-Interests in Tocqueville

Writing about Tocqueville's understanding of religion is not a new enterprise. However, few works situate Tocqueville's understanding of religion within Strauss' theologico-political predicament. It must be mentioned that the following analysis of the literature is conducted within the context of the theologico-political predicament and thus analysis stems from this framework in mind. The current work seeks to understand the extensive literature within the context of

35 John Ranieri, Leo Strauss on Jerusalem and Athens: A Girardian Analysis, *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, Vol. XXII, No. 2, 2004, p. 89.

36 Steven B. Smith, Leo Staruss: Between Athens and Jerusalem, *The Review of Politics,* Vol. LIII, No. 1, 1991, p. 79.

37 Leora Batnitzky, Leo Strauss and the 'Theologico-Political Predicament'. . . p. 57.

38 John Ranieri, Leo Strauss on Jerusalem and Athens: A Girardian Analysis. . . p. 88.

the predicament. In interpreting Tocqueville's thoughts on religion, Avramenko[39] argues that in a democracy, religion shapes *mores*—Tocqueville's habits of the heart—which produce representative laws and political order. A well-governed democracy needs religion to espouse a type of civic education to moderate citizens' passions. Avramenko[40] writes, "What matters for Tocqueville is not the truth of the religion…but instead that some sort of religious morality is taught." For Avramenko, Tocqueville does not prefer one religion to any other, but argues instead that each locality's specific religion is sufficient as long as each preaches eternal salvation.

Kessler portrays Tocqueville as an advocate of civil religion: a religion that serves secular purposes as opposed to the traditionally transcendental ends [41]. In other words, the regime uses religion to compel citizens to behave morally in order to maintain the regime's survival. More than any institution, religion is needed in a liberal democracy.[42] Kessler argues that Tocqueville corrects the Enlightenment's errors in discounting religion and further suggests that religion is necessary to curb the ills of democracy. In this vein, Sloat [43] also contends that Tocqueville creates a civil religion by separating religion from politics, ensuring the preservation of religion. Sloat[44] writes, "By limiting man's material desires and promoting a sense of community, religion saves democratic man…from his self-destructive tendencies." This preservation of religion, however, serves mainly as a way to promote the civic good.

Kessler claims that Tocqueville considered Christianity to be the answer to the theologico-political problem—at least in America. The only way American democracy could survive the evils of liberalism, such as excessive individualism, was through the moderating effects of American Christianity, which checked human passions by the promise of eternal salvation or damnation. For Kessler, Tocqueville moderated and stripped away some of religion's essence so that it could conform to liberalism but still check democracy's defects. Kessler also observes, however, that the doctrine of self-interest well understood is peculiar. He remarks that Tocqueville believes this virtue to be more important and essential for democratic self-governance than religion itself.[45]

Hinckley argues that Tocqueville understands that all humans are predisposed to religious belief as a part of nature.[46] Thus, Tocqueville sees organized re-

39 Richard Avramenko, Tocqueville and the Religion of Democracy, *Perspectives on Political Science,* Vol. XLI, No. 3, London, 2012.

40 Ibid, p. 132.

41 Sandford Kessler, Tocqueville on Civil Religion and Liberal Democracy, *The Journal of Politics,* Vol. XXXIX, No. 1, Chicago, 1977, p. 123.

42 Ibid.

43 James M. Sloat, The Subtle Significance of Sincere Belief: Tocqueville's Account of Religious Belief and Democratic Stability, *Journal of Church and State,* Vol. XLII. No. 4, Oxford, 2000, p. 760.

44 Ibid, p. 763.

45 Sandford Kessler, Tocqueville on Civil Religion and Liberal Democracy… p. 144.

46 Cynthia Hinkley, Tocqueville on Religious Truth and Political Necessity, *Polity,* Vol. XXIII, No. 1, Chicago, 1990, p. 40.

ligion as a derivation of truth. She argues that most commentators on Tocqueville mistakenly disregard his opinions on religion as truth, falsely creating the impression that Tocqueville is trying to create a civil religion.[47] She finds that Tocqueville thinks Christianity specifically—as opposed to Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, or pantheism, for instance—was responsible for the success of democracy in America.[48] Hinckley astutely observes that Tocqueville attributes the "permanence of Christianity in American mores to the religious nature of the American founding," and she points out that Tocqueville believes Christianity's permanence is due to its indirect role played in American democracy.[49] Hinckley is correct in her understanding that Tocqueville attributes Christianity's permanence in the Puritanical founding of America, but more importantly that Tocqueville acknowledges the indirect role of Christianity. Taken together, these two points demonstrate that for Tocqueville, Christianity may no longer be sufficient for democracy to survive but that it was necessary to create the original conditions for survival.

Now that other political and social institutions have been long established in the US—such as the jury system, local self-governance, and *mores* created from religion—America can survive without its reliance on religion and attach its stability to self-interest well understood. Tocqueville explains how America's free institutions help decrease selfishness and focus attention towards others. He writes, "When the public governs, there is no man who does not feel the value of public benevolence and who does not seek to capture it by attracting the esteem and affection of those in the midst of whom he must live." He later continues, "It then happens that through ambition one thinks of those like oneself, and that often one's interest is in a way found in forgetting oneself".[50] Thus, for Tocqueville self-interest well understood mitigates the perils of selfishness and individualism associated within democratic republics.

Johnston[51] recognizes that this doctrine of self-interest is one of Tocqueville's greatest contributions. He also realizes that the doctrine has the same effects as religion; it mitigates excessive individualism and materialism in the name of the common-good. This doctrine prevents these excesses by educating on how thinking of the greater good can benefit the individual. According to Johnston [52], "Self-interest properly understood is the mitigation of the diseases most incident to democratic society because it runs to its heart, private interest." Like religion, it inspires self-governance and self-control.

Johnston concentrates on the duality needed to control democracy: religion

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid, p. 41.

49 Ibid, p. 47.

50 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in Americ*. . . p. 486.

51 William E. Johnston, Finding the Common Good Amidst Democracy's Strange Melancholy: Tocqueville on Religion and the American's 'Disgust with Life', *The Journal of Religion,* Vol. LXXV, No. 1, Chicago, 1995.

52 Ibid, p. 59.

*and* self-interest properly understood. However, to take this argument a step further, the focus should be on religion. However, Tocqueville fears religion's collapse and therefore seeks to find its replacement. Tocqueville states that religion has taught citizens self-interest well understood: looking out for oneself by looking upward and outward. Tocqueville writes, "I therefore do not believe that the sole motive of religious men is interest; but I think that interest is the principal means religions themselves make use of to guide men, and I do not doubt that it is only from this side that they take hold of the crowd and become popular".[53] Tocqueville is clear throughout *Democracy* that religion is important because it constrains *through* eternal self-interest. Fearing religion's demise however, Tocqueville hedges his bets and focuses on self-interest well understood.

Graebner[54] understands that for religion to survive in America, it must adapt itself to liberalism and self-interest and not attempt to wholly excise individualism. Preachers must be cautious not to focus too much on other-worldliness and lose the population's interest. Graebner[55] writes, "Any religion which sought to destroy the American passion for well-being, to wean men from their material pursuits…would in the end destroy itself." Graebner though, partially misses the essential point that self-interest matters in a democracy. Tocqueville was clear that democracy must have spiritual overtones; but Graebner reflects that Tocqueville does not answer who would ensure this or how the process would actually work. He writes, "Tocqueville found no answer in a state religion or a politicized clergy. Enlightened citizens, he believed, would of necessity attempt to keep the souls of their fellowmen lifted up".[56]

Hidalgo[57] understands that one can place Tocqueville within the same genre as Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau but disparages this belief. Rather, he argues that Tocqueville suspects that liberalism has gone too far in destroying religion. Religion is needed to combat the excessive reason of the Enlightenment and to suppress the rise of a despotic ruler. Hidalgo[58] writes, "As the principle of the people's sovereignty is, in Tocqueville's opinion, indifferent to the liberal or despotic variant of democracy, metaphysical substantiation through religion is necessary." Zuckert[59] lays the foundation for this thinking by arguing that Tocqueville writes in the tradition of philosophers who believe morality is important for democracies. If people were to be self-governed, citizens "would have to be-

53 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*... p. 505.

54 Norman A. Graebner, Christianity and Democracy: Tocqueville's Views of Religion in America, *The Journal of Religion,* Vol. LVI, No. 3, Chicago, 1976.

55 Ibid, p. 271.

56 Ibid.

57 Oliver Hidalgo, America as a Delusive Model – Tocqueville on Religion, *Amerikastudien,* Vol. XXIII, No. 4, 2007.

58 Ibid, p. 565.

59 Catherine Zuckert, Not by Preaching: Tocqueville on the Role of Religion in American Democracy, *The Review of Politics,* Vol. LXXIV, No. 2, 1981, p. 262.

come masters of themselves".[60] To express self-mastery, religion must serve as a political function, producing habits, opinions, and *mores* that enable people to be proper citizens.[61] Strauss himself teaches that Tocqueville requires religion, writing, "In other words, what Tocqueville says, an a-religious or irreligious democracy is bound to perish. And he meant by this not that vague religion, but a specific dogma, the crucial point is the immortality of the soul" [62].

What Hidalgo, Zuckert and Strauss seem to miss, however, is how much Tocqueville relies on the American belief in the philosophical theory of indefinite perfectibility.[63] Tocqueville believes that the perfectibility of man collaborates with self-interest well understood to create virtue. He notes that as equality of conditions persist, "the image of an ideal and always fugitive perfection is presented to the human mind".[64] This self-interest fills the vacuum caused by irreligion and scientific reason. He continues, "Thus, always seeking, falling, righting himself, often disappointed, never discouraged, he tends ceaselessly toward the immense greatness that he glimpses confusedly at the end of the long course that humanity must still traverse".[65] Tocqueville argues that religion is the best medicine for the flaws democracy tends to have, but that if it is relinquished, self-interest well understood could serve the same function. In fact, Kahan states precisely this, "And then [Tocqueville] goes on to point out the necessity of appealing to self-interest well understood as a substitute for religion in democratic times, as if religion cannot actually be relied upon to persist".[66] Because of their belief in perfection, though imperfect, Americans will use self-interest well understood as a tool to reach perfection.

Hidalgo hints at this in arguing that self-interest well understood "unfolds its integrating effects only when it is laid down religiously" [67]. Zuckert explains that it is not religion but calculations of self-interest that cause self-restraint.[68] She argues, however, that religion indirectly supports self-interest well understood and that the two complement one another. Religion does inspire and foster self-restraint, but self-interest well understood could replace religion in the hearts of citizens. Tocqueville seeks to demonstrate this because he fears religion's collapse in democratic regimes.

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60 Ibid.

61 Catherine Zuckert, Not by Preaching: Tocqueville on the Role of Religion in American Democracy, *The Review of Politics*, Vol. LXXIV, No. 2, 1981, p. 263.

62 Leo Strauss, Notes on Tocqueville, *http://ia700408.us.archive.org/34/items/LeoStraussOnAlexisDeTocqueville/Strauss-OnTocqueville.pdf* (accessed 02.14.13)

63 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. . . p. 428,

64 Ibid, p. 427.

65 Ibid.

66 Alan S. Kahan, *Tocqueville, Democracy, & Religion: Checks & Balances for Democratic Souls*, Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 84.

67 Oliver Hidalgo, America as a Delusive Model – Tocqueville on Religion, *Amerikastudien*, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, 2007, p. 567.

68 Catherine Zuckert, Not by Preaching: Tocqueville on the Role of Religion in American Democracy, *The Review of Politics*, Vol. LXXIV, No. 2, 1981, p. 266.

Mitchell [69] comes closest to understanding Tocqueville's more subtle theses concerning democracy and religion. Contrary to both mainstream scholarship and my own thesis, Mitchell argues that Tocqueville does not predict the end of religion, nor its decline, but "the remarkable claim that religious experience changes form".[70] He argues that Tocqueville believes that the democratic age will offer new forms of the religious experience[71] and herald in a new fundamentalism that is singularly a "religious articulation of the democratic age".[72] Secondly, Mitchell notes that religion will become more personal, less attached to hierarchal forms and ceremonies of the Catholic Church, and that democratic man will have a direct, personal relationship with God. He writes, "…the affinities between religion and democracy leads us to expect that claims about direct divine illumination will become a cornerstone of religious experience in the democratic age". [73] Finally, Mitchell notes that Tocquevillian insights suggest a more radical understanding of original sin in America, that also suggest an altered form of religion, rather than a debilitated one. Here, Americans are thought to hold on to "radical doctrines of the depravity of humankind"[74] that tend to draw democratic man out of himself, and towards the divine.

When adding these three elements together, Mitchell's thesis is unassailable. Nevertheless, he notes himself the contradiction and angst Tocqueville has even with this religious theme. Mitchell includes Tocqueville's dualistic notion that, although there has always been—and will always be—those who try to break man's ties to religion, Tocqueville is "brought to believe that the number of these will be smaller in democratic than in other centuries and that our descendants will tend more and more to be divided into only two parts, those leaving Christianity entirely and others entering into the bosom of the Roman Church".[75] Although this passage is intended to support Mitchell's claim that religion will not dissipate but instead change forms, it could also prove the opposing viewpoint: that Tocqueville is concerned about men exiting Christianity altogether.

Although the secondary literature rightly argues that Tocqueville considers religion to be the surest variable that constrains democratic flaws, what it fails to see is that Tocqueville is also preparing democratic man, generally, for the likelihood of the decrease or total death of religion. He therefore proposes an acceptable replacement, self-interest well understood, should his fears come true. Thus, rather than lying in total contradiction to my thesis, Mitchell's inclusion of Tocqueville's dualistic quote provides complementary evidence. *Democracy in Amer-*

69 Joshua Mitchell, Tocqueville on Democratic Religious Experience, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville*, Cheryl Welch (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006.

70 Ibid, p. 277.

71 Ibid, p. 281.

72 Ibid, p. 285.

73 Ibid, p. 288.

74 Ibid.

75 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*… p. 425.

*ica* prepares democratic man for the need of religion, contrary to mainstream European thinking at the time, and precisely because of French experience with democracy. However, Tocqueville provides democratic man with an alternative in case religion, reformed as Mitchell suggests or not, dissipates.

**Tocqueville on Enlightened Self-interest and Religion**

Before delving into the subject at hand, it is important to note a few points. First, Tocqueville has a massive amount of published work including his letters. Although extremely enlightening, this current paper is focused only upon what is written in *Democracy in America*. It is concerned only with the relationship between religion, democracy and enlightened self-interest as expressed specifically in *Democracy*. It is limited to thoughts contained there. Additionally, it is worth noting that copious pages have been spent on Tocqueville's variables that will help to cure the ills of democracy: for instance, associations, the jury, lawyers, free press, etc. Although each of those are mentioned by Tocqueville, this current analysis seeks to only evaluate religion and self-interest while recognizing that Tocqueville describes multiple routes of curing democratic ills. This essay seeks only to analyze Tocqueville's writing concerning religion and democracy, self-interest well understood and the relationship between the three, as illustrated only through *Democracy in America*.

There is no doubt that Tocqueville emphasizes religion throughout *Democracy*. "America is . . . still the place in the world where the Christian religion has most preserved genuine powers over souls".[76] Though this could be taken to mean that Christianity is alive and well in America, when read through a Straussian lens, Tocqueville's *Democracy* suggests something else. He bemoans the lack of religion in Europe and especially France where reason and democracy prevailed and conveys that philosophers killed religion. He writes, "There is a certain European population whose disbelief is equaled only by their brutishness and ignorance…".[77] Further down he notes, "Among us [The French], I had seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom almost always move in contrary directions".[78] This serves as a cautionary tale for America.

Still further, he expresses the death of religion in Europe: "Of the barriers that formerly stopped tyranny, what remains to us today? Religion having lost its empire over souls, the most visible boundary that divided good and evil is overturned".[79] Thus, when he writes that religion reigns more in America than elsewhere, he means simply that religion has not completely died in America. This in itself is a useful notion to ponder. Why is it stronger than other places?

76 Ibid, p. 278.

77 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. . . p. 282.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid, p. 298.

What keeps it strong and will it continue to maintain that strength? Self-interest well understood is meant to be the concept that explains why religion has lasted so long in America and what is needed to replace religion in case of its decline. Tocqueville writes, "Disbelief is an accident; faith alone is the permanent state of humanity".[80] It is clear here that Tocqueville fears religion's declining importance and possibly ties this to all democratic-republics. He uses the strengths of American democracy to instruct the world on how to cope with this providentially ordained regime. His solutions are meant for the world, not just America or France.

Although there is a plethora of scholarship stating that Tocqueville believes that religion is alive and well, just as he seems to relish religion's influence, he contradicts himself. For instance, he writes, "You think that these men act solely in consideration of the other life, but you are mistaken: eternity is only one of their cares. If you interrogate these missionaries of Christian civilization, you will be altogether surprised to hear them speak so often of the goods of this world, and to find the political where you believe you will see only the religious".[81] He continues, insinuating the possibility of religion's demise, "but their error is clear: for, it is proven to me daily in a very learned manner that all is well in America except precisely the religious spirit that I admire".[82] Perhaps Tocqueville is warning Americans of the road they might go down if they do not check their negative tendencies. Europe was once religious, and as evinced above, no longer is. Tocqueville also writes that reason and revelation have battled throughout history, thus bringing him into Strauss' purview. In his *Introduction*, he states that democratic forces that favor equality and reason reject religion and are overpowering it.[83] Religious men wage war against freedom, and those in freedom's camp attack religion.[84] Although these are addressed to men of France, Tocqueville's remarks on religion must be taken seriously and more generally. Although he seems to be strongly in favor of religion, this does not mean that he believes religion will last. His comparisons on religion's demise in Europe serve to illustrate this point. It is reasonable to assume that not only is Tocqueville using America as a tool to instruct the French, but also, using the European experience to warn democratic regimes more generally about the importance of religion and against its premeditated collapse.

Perhaps the key to understanding Tocqueville's true intentions are found in his *Introduction* to Volume I. Here, Tocqueville first establishes what he means by enlightened self-interest, and he implies that it has the same effects as religion. In it, a passage exists that he intends as the backdrop against which the entire book

80 Ibid, p. 284.

81 Ibid, p. 281.

82 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. . . p. 281.

83 Ibid, p. 11.

84 Ibid, p. 12.

should be read. Tocqueville[85] writes,

> Christian peoples in our day appear to me to offer a frightening spectacle; the movement that carries them along is already strong enough that it cannot be suspended, and it is not yet rapid enough to despair of directing it: their fate is in their hands, but soon it will escape them.
>
> To instruct democracy, if possible to reanimate its beliefs, to purify its mores, to regulate its movements, to substitute little by little the science of affairs for its inexperience, and knowledge of its true interests for its blind instincts; to adapt its government to time and place; to modify it according to circumstances and men: such is the first duty imposed on those who direct society in our day.

The most important phrase here is, "if possible to reanimate its beliefs." Tocqueville clearly announces that religion's light is dimming, and he wishes to relight it, if possible. However, his doubt forces him to offer something else. Here there is a mention of self-interest well understood, noted as "true interests," yet he remains interestingly silent on religion.

In the tradition of Plato and those that would create perfect regimes in speech, Tocqueville continues to illustrate his perfect society. Again, there is no mention of religion as he writes,

> I conceive a society, then, which all, regarding the law as *their* work, would love and submit to without trouble; in which the authority of government is respected as necessary, *not divine*, and the love one would bear for a head of state would not be a passion, but a reasoned and tranquil sentiment. Each having rights and being assured of preserving his rights, a manly confidence and a sort of reciprocal condescension between the classes would be established, as far from haughtiness as from baseness..[86]

Although Tocqueville will write at length about how many of America's laws were created based upon Providence, nowhere in his conception of a best regime does he mention this. Instead, he writes very literally that all of society will regard the law as *theirs*—not god's nor commanded or inspired by god. Furthermore, he continues with the idea that one respects authority out of necessity and not out of any divine instructions or instincts.

Tocqueville continues to outline his perfect republic and demonstrates how reasoned people must be in it, and how this reason will show them that each individual must live for the common good, rather than for themselves. He states openly that reason may create the same type of morality that comes, as ordinarily believed, from religion. Yet again, there is no mention of religion whatsoever. Tocqueville contemplates,

85 Ibid, p. 7.

86 Ibid, p. 9.

> In the *absence* of enthusiasm and *ardent beliefs*, enlightenment and experience will sometimes obtain great sacrifices from citizens; each man, equally weak, will feel an equal need of those like him; and knowing that he can obtain their support only on condition of his lending them his co-operation, he will discover without difficulty that his particular interest merges with the general interest.[87]

Here is Tocqueville's construction of self-interest well understood. Unlike the previous passages, he writes that enlightenment and experience will replace ardent beliefs—referring to religion. He then states that this enlightenment will create self-interest well understood—where each person realizes that they benefit in cooperating and helping others. To help oneself, one must help others.

When Tocqueville applauds religion in the *Introduction*, in reality he demonstrates that democracy may make religion outdated. Tocqueville[88] writes, "One still encounters Christians among us, full of zeal, whose religious souls love to nourish themselves from the truths of the other life; doubtless they are going to be moved to favor human freedom, the source of all moral greatness." *Human freedom* is the source of all moral greatness, and humans are the source of all moral greatness. We must take Tocqueville at his word, rather than reading into what he states about religion. His writing and intention is certainly more complex and multi-layered than most have given him credit for. He does not seek merely a return to religion, but rather something to ameliorate the problems caused by its potential decline.

Tocqueville continues to explicate his doctrine of self-interest well understood when he writes on townships. Here Tocqueville starts to explain that the idea of god is not needed for citizens to obey authority or to be civic-minded. He writes:

> He obeys society not because he is inferior to those who direct it or less capable than another man of governing himself; he obeys society because union with those like him appears useful to him and because he knows that this union cannot exist without a regulating power. In all that concerns the duties of citizens among themselves, he has therefore become a subject. In all that regards only himself he has remained master: he is free and owes an account of his actions only to God. Hence this maxim: that the individual is the best as well as the only judge of his particular interest .[89]

Here Tocqueville makes it clear the importance of self-interest well understood. Society exists because man understands this doctrine. Where equality reigns, citizens obey willfully out of particular interest. One obeys laws and those that govern because it is useful to the individual and reasonably understood that

87 Ibid.

88 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. . . p. 11.

89 Ibid, p. 61.

laws and governance are needed for one's own security.

In a striking passage, Tocqueville contrasts two concepts to find which one is better to instruct citizens. These are laws of the state (here he calls it patriotism) versus religion. He chooses patriotism and illustrates its role while he remains silent on religion's role or chance of success. Tocqueville[90] writes, "One will never encounter, whatever one does, genuine power among men except in the free concurrence of wills. Now, there is nothing in the world but patriotism or religion that can make the universality of citizen's advance for long toward the same goal."

There is no mention of religion, only respect for the law out of love for country, which links to self-interest well understood. Laws and self-interest well understood can certainly have the same effect that revelation does, when combined with love of country and impressed upon citizens daily. As Kahan notes, "Governments could use political means to encourage patriotism among their citizens far more effectively than they could encourage religion".[91] Patriotism may even be more important than religion to Tocqueville, as Kahan states, "Patriotism, therefore, fulfilled the first condition for providing a true replacement for religion: it was universally accessible".[92] Tocqueville methodically demonstrates why religion may no longer be able to solve democracy's problems. Grasso has recently written, "In this context it's important to recognize that Tocqueville seems less than sanguine about religion's prospects in this new age. Indeed, he seems to suggest that democratic social conditions will act…to erode religious belief".[93]

It is important to bring out certain points that Tocqueville addresses in the following passage. The first is that religions are weakened and divine notions of rights are disappearing. The second is that once religion is demolished, if nothing replaces its effects, democracy will go wild with tyranny. Reason must attach itself to some notion of rights if tyranny in democracy is to be avoided. Tocqueville[94] writes,

> Do you not see that religions are weakening and that the divine notion of rights is disappearing? Do you not find that mores are being altered, and that with them the moral notion or firths is being effaced? Do you not perceive on all sides beliefs that give way to reasoning, and sentiments that give way to calculations? If in the midst of that universal disturbance you do not come to bind the idea of rights to the personal interests that offers itself as the only immobile point in the human heart, what will then remain to you to govern the world, except fear?

90 Ibid, p. 89.

91 Alan S. Kahan, *Tocqueville, Democracy, & Religion: Checks & Balances for Democratic Souls*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015, p. 106.

92 Ibid, p. 103.

93 Kenneth L. Grasso, Catholicism and 'the Great Political Problem of Our Time': Tocqueville, Vatican II, and the Problem of Limited Government in the Age of Democracy, *The Catholic Social Science Review*, Vol. XIX, 2014, p. 26.

94 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. . . p. 228.

This passage announces Tocqueville's fear of the inevitable marginalization of religion where reason and calculation replace religious sentiments in democratic man. To quell the tyranny that will form from this, Tocqueville does not solely suggest a return to religion, nor to the creation of a civic religion, but rather, to attach what were once divine notions of the heart to self-interest. As Jaume[95] writes, "[I]t is not revealed doctrine that counts but rather the heart, feelings spoken and sung in common. In other words, religion in Tocqueville's theory is the Public, which gives itself a body and observes itself as a spectacle." Tocqueville clarifies this point when he writes, "Enlighten them, therefore, at any price; for the century of blind devotions and instinctive virtues is already fleeing far from us, and I see the time approaching when freedom, public peace, and social order itself will not be able to do without enlightenment".[96]

Tocqueville announces the possible end of religion within democratic regimes. He wishes to save it, but fears he cannot. No new religions can be created, and no new prophets proclaimed: "One can foresee that democratic peoples will not readily believe in divine missions, that they will willingly laugh at new prophets, and that they will want to find the principal arbiter of their beliefs within the limits of humanity, not beyond it".[97] Thusly, Tocqueville seeks to replace religion's moderating effects with self-interest well understood. Where, then, does Tocqueville fit within the theologico-political predicament and how would Strauss respond?

**Contextualizing Tocqueville within the Predicament**

Tocqueville has created a new political science and a different form of liberalism, but not in the way that many have interpreted. He fears that revelation is no longer capable of preserving the stability of regimes because it has been—or soon will be—destroyed in the public realm. It is because of this inherent mass skepticism that a replacement for religion must be maintained. Whereas the Enlightenment founders evoked the idea of civic religion to control and monitor morality within republics, Tocqueville says that political science must be updated to circumstances in America, where self-interest has mirrored the effects of religion. He encourages France and democratic regimes more generally to follow suit so they might cure the defects of irreligious democracy. Tocqueville's applause for religion is for religion's original place within politics, and I believe he is sincere in applauding its earlier role as envisioned by Spinoza, Hobbes, and Machiavelli. As Jaume[98] writes, "This says it all: like Machiavelli, Tocqueville was interested in the political effects of religion." However, unlike in their era, Toc-

95 Lucien Jaume, *Tocqueville: The Aristocratic Sources of Liberty,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2013, p. 70 .

96 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. . . p. 503.

97 Ibid, p. 408.

98 Lucien Jaume, *Tocqueville: The Aristocratic Sources of Liberty*. . . p. 80.

queville fears that religion is no longer fully capable of the job, mainly due to the tendencies in democratic man. He suggests that calculated interest guides morality more than religion.

Tocqueville's *Democracy* certainly fits within Strauss' history of political philosophy, which considers that early modern political philosophers offered "subversive criticism of revealed religion".[99] Even to the most cautious readers, Tocqueville might appear as though he presents a defense of revealed religion; he rather announces its impending destruction through liberalism. As Strauss [100] reads Maimonides, we should read Tocqueville. He teaches the public that conforming to the will of Providence is good and that religion helps accomplish this in several areas. However, he has a deeper meaning that displays the denigrated role of religion itself: self-interest. Tocqueville's analysis completes the Enlightenment's project. He demonstrates why religion is needed, therefore contradicting modernity, but completes the project by offering self-interest as a possible replacement if the Enlightenment succeeds.

In this sense, Tocqueville requests that for democratic regimes, the public must worship, at least during the point of departure, and they must worship the Christian God, and not the God of Islam or the god of nature, pantheism. Tocqueville insists that legislators and politicians, and all enlightened minds, preach religion in the public sphere. He writes, "Legislators of democracies and all honest and enlightened men who live in them must therefore apply themselves relentlessly to raising up souls and keeping them turned toward Heaven".[101] Tocqueville encourages non-believers who are in the public eye to "act every day as if they themselves believed it; and I think it is only in conforming scrupulously to religious morality in great affairs that they can flatter themselves they are teaching citizens to know it, love it, and respect it in small ones".[102]

For the attentive reader, it is possible to understand that the true god, or the true law-giver, is not Providence understood in the Christian sense, but Providence understood in the Machiavellian sense: one's own arms. Tocqueville is full of contradiction because he is addressing the adherents of both Athens and Jerusalem. Of course—and herein lies Tocqueville's most significant contribution to the history of political philosophy—he disputes Machiavelli, Hobbes and other early modern thinkers by arguing that the Church may no longer be sufficient for society. For liberal democracy, Tocqueville fears that The Church has outlived its sufficiency. Mansfield attests, "The Puritan usage of ancestral religion in their names and modes of speech disappears, and we are directed to conclude that in America, religion in the form of theocracy was the cradle of liberty, but that

99 Leora Batnitzky, Leo Strauss and the 'Theologico-Political Predicament', in: *The Cambridge Companion to Leo Strauss*, Steven B. Smith (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011, p. 46.

100 Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988.

101 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. . . p. 519.

102 Ibid, p. 521.

liberty grew up and out of its cradle"[103] Something more is needed. Self-interest well understood, is the "god" to which democracy must be subjected to control the passionate tyranny of the mob, in the absence of sincere religion. Yet, Tocqueville's self-interest well understood is Spinoza's Church, a Church free of god yet playing the same role.

Tocqueville is hesitant to state openly that religion may not be able to control the excesses of the democratic regime. Mansfield writes, "Not wishing to offend religion or praise its enemies, Tocqueville mentions the abolition of aristocratic entail at this time but not the disestablishment of religion. He only says that according to [the sovereignty of the people]—…as if somehow the people who are like God had replaced God".[104] According to Strauss, many modern writers understand that denigrating religion and suggesting that law is man-made could lead to dangers that no regime is equipped to handle. In *Democracy*, Tocqueville announces the potential death of religion. However, he is fearful of a liberalism that becomes more tyrannical than any regime before witnessed, without the morality and virtue that comes with religion. Herein lies his Straussian predicament: does one submit to the dictates of revealed religion and live completely dependent on Providence, or does one submit oneself to a liberalism that eventually enslaves humanity even more so than its enemy, religion? Tocqueville is not a proponent of either solution. Because he fears the loss of religion, he argues for a form of liberalism that produces the goods of religion, morality and virtue, without the necessary dependence upon Divine orders. Self-control and self-restraint, qualities religion teaches, once created, can be habituated without the further need of the creator. Tocqueville sides with Athens rather than Jerusalem on this manner, and he points out that the solution to democracy's evils rest in the philosophical understanding of self-interest well understood. Although he will lament the loss of religion, Tocqueville does not think it can last; he built up enlightened self-interest as a capable partner.

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103 Harvey Mansfield, Tocqueville on Religion and Liberty, *American Political Thought*, Vol. V, 2016, p. 255.

104 Ibid.

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**Крег Даглас Алберт**

# ТОКВИЛОВА ТЕОЛОШКО-ПОЛИТИЧКА НЕПРИЈАТНОСТ: ЛЕО ШТРАУС, РЕЛИГИЈА И *ДЕМОКРАТИЈА У АМЕРИЦИ*

**Сажетак**

Овај чланак нуди нови угао сагледавања Токвиловог дела Демократија у Америци. Уколико ово дело посматрамо кроз Штраусову концепцију теолошко-политичког проблема, добићемо нови угао читања. Ова интерпретација сматра да је једна од централних тема Демократије у Америци однос разума и откровења. Кроз такво читање, долазимо до закључка да се Токвилов суштински допринос историји политичке философије уствари заснива на његовој невољној објави да религија можда није способна да излечи друштвене болести које либерална демократија доноси. Главни разлог јесте Токвилов страх да ће демократија довести до нестанка религије. Токвил лукаво открива своје бриге о могућој неадекватности религије, нуди објашњења и поставља нови концепт који би се могао користити као средство за ублажавање дефекта демократије: исправно схваћен интерес појединца.

**Кључне речи:** Алексис де Токвил, црква и држава, демократија, Штраусова херменаутика

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