

**BRATISLAVA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS**

***One-Dimensional Despotism: Contemplating the Totalitarian Potential  
of Liberal Democracy***

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## **Declaration of Originality**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis, that none of its parts have previously been published, in part or in whole, and that where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed.

Bratislava, April 30, 2014

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### **Abstract**

This thesis proposes to explore the totalitarian potential of modern liberal-democratic administration, employing Herbert Marcuse's critical theory of society, abstracted and synthesised from *An Essay on Liberation* (1991), *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (1992), *One-Dimensional Man* (2002), *Essential Marcuse* (2007), and *A Study on Authority* (2008), to substantiate Alexis de Tocqueville's forecasts concerning the possible subversion of democratic governance presented in the Frenchman's magnum opus, *Democracy in America* (2006).

The first chapter presents Tocqueville's account of democracy in America, examining the guiding principles of social practice, then identifies the propensities conducive to the advent of commercial society, and, finally, outlines the conditions permitting the onset of 'soft despotism'.

The second chapter comprises Marcuse's reflections on the socio-political trends in advanced industrial society. It provides a functionalist analysis of one-dimensionality—a mode of thought and behaviour aroused and sustained by a positive rationalisation of the established reality—and traces its development to the bourgeois

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‘ethic of acquisitive self-interest’, which Tocqueville feared predisposed democratic peoples to despotic subjection.

The third chapter discusses *Soft Despotism, Democracy’s Drift* (2008), a cautionary indictment of contemporary socio-political trends, penned by American political historian Paul A. Rahe. It collates the judicious observations and surmises made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Tocqueville – the ‘new liberal’, with the critical analyses of democratic society made in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Marcuse – the radical, and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by Rahe – the conservative. Its purpose is hence to identify where the authors’ political perspectives concur and where they diverge.

The fourth and final chapter invokes Hannah Arendt’s seminal work, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1958), and explores, within the framework of prior analyses, the extent to which modern liberal democracy reproduces ‘isolation’ and ‘loneliness’, the latter of which Arendt found to be ‘the basic experience which finds its expression in totalitarian domination’.

## **Jednorozmerný despotizmus: Úvaha o totalitnom potenciáli liberálnej demokracie**

**Názov:** Jednorozmerný despotizmus: Úvaha o totalitnom potenciáli liberálnej demokracie

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**Kľúčové slová:** demokratický despotizmus, totalitarizmus, teória demokracie, jednorozmernosť, kritická teória demokracie

### **Abstrakt**

Táto práca skúma totalitný potenciál moderných liberálno-demokratických zriadení, pričom sa opiera o Marcuseho kritickú teóriu spoločnosti, abstrahovanú a syntetizovanú z diel *An Essay on Liberation* (Esej o oslobodení, 1991), *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Kontrarevolúcia a revolta, 1992), *One-Dimensional Man* (Jednorozmerný človek, 2002), *A Study on Authority* (Štúdia autority, 2008), a *Essential Marcuse* (Marcuseho základné state, 2007). Prostredníctvom spomínanej teórie naša práca analyzuje politické predpovede Alexisa de Tocquevilla, ktorý vo svojom vrcholnom diele *Democracy in America* (Demokracia v Amerike, 2006) hovorí o možnom rozvrate demokratického zriadenia.

Prvá kapitola sa venuje Tocquevillovmu chápaniu demokracie, skúma základné princípy spoločenskej praxe, pomenúva javy vedúce k nástupu komerčnej/buržoáznej spoločnosti a načrtáva podmienky, ktoré umožňujú prechod k “demokratickému despotizmu”.

Druhá kapitola obsahuje Marcuseho úvahy o sociálno-politických trendoch v rozvinutej industriálnej spoločnosti. Prináša funkcionalistickú analýzu jednorozmernosti - spôsobu myslenia a správania sa, ktorý vznikol a prežíva vďaka pozitívnej racionalizácii fungujúcej spoločnosti - a sleduje jej prerastanie do

buržoáznej “etiky prospechárstva a vlastného záujmu”, ktorá podľa Tocquevilla predurčuje demokratické spoločnosti k tomu, aby boli náchylné k despotizmu.

Tretia kapitola rozoberá *Soft Despotism, Democracy's Drift* (Demokratický despotizmus, Smerovanie demokracie, 2008), dielo amerického politického historika Paula A. Raheho, ktoré je ostrou obžalobou súčasných spoločensko-politických trendov. V kapitole porovnávame kritické úvahy a pozorovania, s ktorými prišiel v 19. storočí „liberálny“ Tocqueville s kritickou analýzou spoločnosti 20. storočia od radikála Marcuseho a s názormi, ktoré v 21. storočí vyslovil konzervatívny Rahe.

Naším cieľom je určiť, v čom sa politické pozorovania týchto autorov zhodujú a v čom sa líšia. Štvrtá, záverečná kapitola sa venuje Hannah Arendtovej a dielu, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (Pôvod totalitarizmu, 1958). Vo svetle prechádzajúcich analýz skúmame rozsah pocitov “izolácie“ a “osamelosti”, ktoré sa reprodukovujú v modernej liberálnej demokracii. Práve “osamelosť“ totiž Arendtová považovala za “základnú skúsenosť, ktorá nachádza svoje vyjadrenie v dominancii totalitarizmu”.

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Last but not least, my gratitude belongs to Matthew Post, with whom I have had some of the longest, most fascinating and most exhausting conversations on the issues discussed herein.

This thesis has indeed been the most rewarding, as well as the most enfeebling enterprise that I have thus far undertaken. I must concede with some regret that I wish I could have written more extensively on this subject. However, every conclusion that I have arrived at has directed me down a path riddled with progressively more exacting intellectual challenges. If I had resolved to address them all in this thesis, it would never see the light of day.

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## Introduction

‘Liberal democracy is the face of the propertied classes when they are not afraid, fascism when they are afraid’. – Leo Giuliani

The above citation appeared in a trenchant opinion piece entitled *The Revolutionaries are Alone* [*Les révolutionnaires sont seuls*], published in *Le Monde* on July 23, 1971. It was bitter, decidedly censorious, and certainly suggestive of the socio-political Zeitgeist of the early 1970's. Marxian scholarship had recently inspired a socialist renaissance, and in consequence, the Western world saw a groundswell of popular activism. American troops were still, by and large, pouring into Southeast Asia, and across the United States, attitudes on the Vietnam War polarised the society. While a fair number of Americans aligned themselves with the emergent New Left or with the radical social movements affiliated therewith, a great many others rallied in support of the campaign. Protests were escalating; many a commons throughout America became a base of operations for the local demonstrators.

Several confrontations occurred between the protesters and law enforcement, some of which sparked significant controversy. To mention but the most ill-famed examples – the shootings at Kent State and Jackson State Universities in May 1970 left four protesters dead and 21 more injured<sup>1</sup>, while the May Day Protests, which occurred between May 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 1971 in Washington D.C., resulted in the apprehension of a staggering 12,614 people<sup>2</sup>. One should enquire, in keeping with Giuliani's protestation, whether it was fear that incited the establishment to resort to drastic measures, and whether indeed the propertied classes had turned the 'the fascist face'. These questions permit of several answers.

Herbert Marcuse, whom many of the dissenters regarded as their intellectual father, would have likely argued that, as the demonstrations mounted, the protesters threatened to transcend the 'established universe of action' (Marcuse, 2002, p. 14), thereby

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<sup>1</sup> For further reference, see Hayden (2013, May 15).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Elbaum (2006, p. 29).

breaching the tacit agreement on ‘passive tolerance’<sup>3</sup> which had been imposed on them by the authorities (Marcuse, 1965, p. 1). Noam Chomsky, another representative of the contemporary radical intelligentsia, might have argued, in a manner similar to Marcuse<sup>4</sup> that the authorities were simply addressing excessive political participation, to which Samuel Huntington (1975) ascribed ‘the crisis of democracy’<sup>5</sup>, and which could have hindered the United States’ political ambitions<sup>6</sup>. Both Chomsky and Marcuse would likely have indicted ‘the establishment’ of having adopted, if not ‘fascist’, then certainly authoritarian measures. That, however, would have been more indicative of their political alignment, and less of the substance of the action the government had taken against the dissentients.

All things considered, the nature of the interventions is disputable. The socio-political uprisings of the late 1960’s and the early 1970’s were nonetheless salient enough to elicit a reactionary—some would even say a ‘counterrevolutionary’—response from the ‘propertied classes’. Domestic opposition to the United States’ involvement in the Vietnam War evidenced the capacity of democratic nations to mobilise and rally *en masse* for a common cause.

How then does one explain that when, in 2002, the U.S. embarked on another controversial war, this time with considerable support from the ‘international community’, however fallacious<sup>7</sup> that term might be, the demonstrations bore less of a social impact than did the ones in the 1970’s?

To answer to this question one might have to undertake a separate thesis. It is nonetheless reasonable to assume that civic society in America is less vibrant today than it was decades ago at the time of the Vietnam War. One might conjecture that this is

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<sup>3</sup> In *Repressive Tolerance*, Marcuse argued that ‘the *telos* of tolerance’ was ‘truth’. He maintained, however, that in modern democracies, tolerance no longer fulfilled its teleological purpose; it had become a mere means of containment. ‘The people tolerate the government, which in turn tolerates opposition within the framework established by the constituted authorities’. See Marcuse (1965, pp. 1-4).

<sup>4</sup> It is interesting that Chomsky should produce a ‘Marcusian’ assessment of the intervention, seeing as he found the German’s critical efforts somewhat artificial. See Barsky (1997, p. 134).

<sup>5</sup> For further reference, see Crozier, Huntington & Watanuki (1975, p. 113).

<sup>6</sup> Chomsky has, in fact, argued this point on several occasions. See, for example, Chomsky (1991, p. 139).

<sup>7</sup> The protests in Madrid, London, and other major European cities show that the international community was, in fact, opposed to the campaign.

largely due to the absence of a guiding reformist ideology, and of the insurrectionary zeal attendant thereto. It is one of the possible reasons behind this absence of revolutionary spirit that this thesis aims partly to explore.

Had Marcuse been alive in the 2000's, he might have argued that society had abandoned purposed opposition because its critical potential had been suffocated by capitalist administration. He would have likely deplored the aimlessness of modern dissent, arguing that desultory action was symptomatic of 'positive thinking' (Marcuse, 2002, pp. 9-10). Upon hearing the calm lamentations of present-day citizens, he should have declaimed with due frustration that 'one-dimensionality' had prevailed; that it had usurped the hearts and minds of democratic peoples (Marcuse, 2002, p. 14). The radical legacy which he had imparted on the New Left he would have likely deemed wasted.

Marcuse dedicated the greater part of his intellectual efforts to the examination of bourgeois materialism and the influence it exercised on the American body politic. Though he may not have been the most eloquent critic of modern democracy, he was certainly among the most authoritative, and his work is worth studying even now, long after his fame has faded. After all, to disregard his observations on the 'ideology of advanced industrial society' on account of their impracticality or obsolescence would be, as we shall later observe, to embrace the notion of operationalism which he had so acutely analysed.

Although Marcuse was a prominent diagnostician of democratic regimes, he was not by far the first intellectual to recognise the stultifying potential of bourgeois materialism, as perhaps the most comprehensive survey thereof was produced by Alexis de Tocqueville over a century before the Critical Theorist penned *One-Dimensional Man*. *Democracy in America* is arguably one of the most influential works ever produced in the field of political science. Its prophetic qualities are almost unparalleled. Tocqueville scholar Roger Boesche even went so far as to write that a quote of Tocqueville's, regardless of the context, 'apparently buttresses all arguments' (Boesche, 2008, p. xi). 'Tocqueville is like Orwell', he wrote, and he was indeed correct. No author, excluding perhaps Aldous Huxley and Yevgeni Zamyatin has ever prophesised a dystopian reality as indomitable and constrictive as those envisaged by George Orwell and Alexis de Tocqueville. And

what is more, no dystopian administration has ever appeared as familiar as 1984's IngSoc, and the *Democracy's* soft despotism.

Tocqueville was among the first political scientists to recognise the deleterious potential inherent in the bourgeois ethic. The advent of *soft despotism*, which he predicted near the conclusion of his magnum opus, largely depends on two factors: the democratic individual's love of material satisfaction, and his preference for equality of conditions over political liberty. Tocqueville argued that freedom came with a price: responsibility in political affairs. 'Freedom is not independence', Boesche argued (Boesche, 2008, p. 67), and indeed, in democratic societies where Hobbesian authorities are absent, every man, aware of the terms implicit in the social contract, must conduct himself in such a way as to promote social stability. Once, however, the middle-class introduces into a democratic society the 'acquisitive ethic of self-interest' (Boesche, 2008, p. 61), every individual is inclined to withdraw into himself; into the sphere of private well-being, where he can best savour the fruits of his commercial endeavours. Democratic societies are thus enticed to consecrate equality because each man appreciates that his peers are entitled to pursue happiness and material well-being according to their own inclinations. Every citizen thus commences to relinquish his political rights; men become individualistic and largely blind to the fates of one another.

Tocqueville laid the groundwork for modern democratic revisionism; his methodological acumen and unyielding vigilance in noetic matters have long inspired academics at different ends of the disciplinary spectrum. Marcuse, on the other hand, was a rare specimen of the intellectual species. By engaging with politics in both a scholarly and a practical fashion, he qualified, not only as a mentor to the dissentients, but also as a *democratic* citizen, as one should discern from reading this thesis.

At this point, two questions now thrust themselves into the limelight. First, why did Tocqueville write the *Democracy*? And second, why did Marcuse dedicate the better part of his life to subversive philosophy?

By his own admission, Tocqueville wrote *Democracy in America* with an eye to France or rather, to Europe in general. He observed American political trends, social habits, customs and the like with a comparative eye to his fatherland. Aware that 'the same

democracy which prevailed over societies' in the United States 'was advancing rapidly toward' the Old Continent, he set out to explore the facets of democratic administration and thus provide a rough guideline for European socio-political reform (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 9). Tocqueville's task was historical.

And so was, to a large extent, Marcuse's. The German observed the social and political trends prevalent in advanced industrial society with a keen eye, and his work comprises a strident attempt to call attention to 'democracy's drift' (Rahe, 2010). Marcuse labelled himself a Marxist, but unlike his philosophical progenitor, he viewed class conflict as an *impersonal* phenomenon. To be sure, Marcuse did at times call for a proletarian revolution (Marcuse, 1991), which, so far as Marx was concerned, entailed a *violent* replacement of the ruling class. However, upon examining the larger part of his work, one finds that Marcuse called for the emancipation of humankind in general<sup>8</sup>.

In the introduction to *Soft Despotism, Democracy's Drift*, Paul A. Rahe argued that in the 'throughout Eastern Europe', following the collapse of the Communist regimes, 'people were less inclined to speak of revolution than of transition; and in many a country, the old communists with a name change and a face-life were soon returned to power by a newly liberated electorate nostalgic for a past offering in predictability what it had denied in the way of opportunity' (Rahe, 2010, p. xi). This statement ought to give one pause. If 'the old communists' were 'returned to power', what 'transition' did the people 'throughout Eastern Europe' speak of? What 'predictability' were they nostalgic for? A predictability of mores, which ensued from a protracted powerlessness and effective servitude?

This thesis is, on the one hand, an attempt to address indirectly the issues faced by Eastern European democracies and, on the other, a more modest attempt to address the issues faced by modern liberal democracy in general. Tocqueville, Marcuse, and Rahe all identified a tendency in modern democratic societies – a tendency toward restlessness, isolation, and loneliness. And, as Hannah Arendt wrote in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 'loneliness is the basic experience which finds its expression in totalitarian domination' (Arendt, 1958, p. 461).

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<sup>8</sup> Compare *An Essay on Liberation* and *Counterrevolution and Revolt*.

## **Hypothesis**

This purpose of this thesis is therefore to show that *Tocqueville, Marcuse, and Rahe identified in modern liberal democracy a tendency to reproduce feelings of isolation and loneliness*, and that they hence prepared fertile ground for totalitarian domination. Rather than to produce a monochromatic assessment of the modern democratic paradigm, the thesis endeavours to collate seminal texts in different political philosophies, and to delineate some basic common ground for a liberal, a radical, and a conservative critique of democracy.

It deserves notice that the term 'liberal democracy' is used here in a very conventional sense, as it was by Rahe (2010, pp. 192, 269). It should by no means offend the tastes of genuine liberal democrats. It also deserves notice that terms like 'democracy' and 'republic', as well as their adjectival forms, are used with an eye to detail, that 'advanced industrial society' denotes only the oppressive society that Marcuse described in *One-Dimensional Man*.

## CHAPTER 1: Tocqueville's Democracy

### 1.1 Equality, the Generative Principle<sup>9</sup> of Democracy in America

An astute historian and comparative sociologist, an exceptional political theorist and educator, an elegant and prolific writer, Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) was the compleat intellectual, whose comprehensive scholarship has long exercised a most prodigious influence on social science. His authority has been invoked with notable consistency by academics and politicians alike, at times in flagrant disregard of his critical legacy<sup>10</sup>. He has been considered by some as a conservative<sup>11</sup>, by others as a liberal<sup>12</sup>, and by still others as falling somewhere in between<sup>13</sup>. While Tocqueville himself identified as a 'liberal of a new kind'<sup>14</sup>, equipped for a 'world itself quite new', his political philosophy eludes conventional categories by standards both historical and modern (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 12).

It is largely because Tocqueville was suspended precariously between two epochs that his socio-political perspective escapes classification. By the mid-1800's, when he produced *Democracy in America*, French society had supposedly dismissed aristocratic pretensions, and embarked on a path toward democratic republicanism. Tocqueville, like many intellectuals of his generation, was all too conscious of the insipidity of the transitional era. An aristocrat by birth and bearing, he had little appreciation for the commercial ethic which his compatriots had so willingly embraced. It would have seemed as though history itself had condemned Tocqueville to a life of *inconstance*, *ennui*, and *inquiétude*<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> In the introduction to the first volume of *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville labelled the 'general equality of conditions' *le fait premier* [the primary fact] and *le fait générateur* [the generative fact]. George Lawrence, whose 1966 translation of the *Democracy* is cited here, rendered these terms as 'the basic fact' and 'the creative element', mitigating their otherwise canonical tone. It is hence with the intention of keeping with Tocqueville's phraseology that this thesis employs the term 'generative principle'.

<sup>10</sup> In concluding the introduction to the *Democracy*, Tocqueville wrote: 'This book is not precisely suited to anybody's taste; in writing it I did not intend to serve or to combat any party' (p. 20).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Lukacs (1994, p. 321).

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Mansfield (2010, p. 3).

<sup>13</sup> Aron (1998) argued that Tocqueville was a 'liberal conservative' (p. 311), while, for instance, Mahoney (2004) maintained that Tocqueville was a 'conservative liberal' (p. 20).

<sup>14</sup> See Tocqueville's (1861, p. 402) letter to Eugène Stoffels from July 23, 1836.

<sup>15</sup> Pascal (2004) defined the 'condition of man' [*condition de l'homme*] as 'inconstance', 'ennui', and 'inquiétude' (§127). *Inconstance*, he wrote, proceeds from one's 'consciousness of the falsity of present pleasures' (§110), and *ennui* from 'leaving pursuits to which we are attached' (§128) and being 'completely at rest, without passions . . . without diversion [*divertissement*]' (§131). Pascal's definition

The young aristocrat, however, refused to acquiesce in his sentence. Though apparently wistful at the prospect of bourgeois consolidation, he did not withdraw into the royalist ranks as did some of his reputable contemporaries – Balzac and Chateaubriand, to name but two. Instead, he resolved to explore the possibilities of republican socio-political organisation, largely because he acknowledged that the ‘democratic revolution’ was ‘the most permanent tendency known to history’, and that any efforts to stifle its progress would have eventually proved futile (Tocqueville, 2006, pp. 9, 12).

Although he maintained that democracy had emerged from a ‘social state<sup>16</sup> imposed by Providence’, Tocqueville himself was hardly a wayward democrat. Grieved by the relatively recent events of the French Revolution<sup>17</sup>, he recognised all too well the practical difficulties of self-government. Like John Stuart Mill<sup>18</sup>, his contemporary and frequent correspondent<sup>19</sup>, Tocqueville harboured serious concerns about humankind’s democratic dispositions. He found that, when left to their own devices, sovereign peoples often resorted to imposing oppressive socio-political precepts on dissentient minorities. Under such circumstances, the *volonté générale* [general will] surrendered to the *volonté particulière* [particular will], effecting a ‘tyranny of the majority’, whereby every individual had to submit, not to the moral and political demands of the common good, but rather to an arbitrary order established by a comparatively numerous segment of the public<sup>20</sup> (Tocqueville, 2006, pp. 12, 250).

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of *inquiétude* [unrest, restlessness] is very esoteric (§130). However, upon looking to Tocqueville (2006), one finds that ‘the restlessness [*inquiétude*] of Americans’ results from the consciousness of the absence of a desired good (pp. 535-538).

<sup>16</sup> The term ‘social state’ [état social] refers to the conditions and circumstances that shape ‘most of the laws, customs, and ideas which control [a] nation’s behaviour’ (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 50).

<sup>17</sup> Several members of Tocqueville’s family were executed during the Reign of Terror. His maternal great-grandfather, Malesherbes, a prominent French statesman and minister, had undertaken the defence of King Louis XVI before the Convention and was guillotined in 1794. Tocqueville’s own parents escaped execution only through the fall of Robespierre. See Graham (2005, p. 16).

<sup>18</sup> Mill wrote that ‘[democratic] society can and does execute its own mandates [...] if it issues wrong mandates instead of right [...] it practises a social tyranny more formidable than many kinds of political oppression’. Democracies, he argued, must therefore devise means of protection ‘against the tendency of society to impose [...] their ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them’. See Mill (2003, p. 91).

<sup>19</sup> Tocqueville and Mill exchanged a number of letters between 1835 and 1840. See Tocqueville (1986).

<sup>20</sup> Jean Jacques Rousseau explained in *The Social Contract* that ‘[t]here is often a difference between the will of everyone and the general will; the latter is concerned only with the common interest, while the former is concerned with private interests and is the sum total of individual wants’. Hence, ‘public opinion’ here denotes ‘the will of everyone’. ‘When [...] partial associations’, Rousseau argued, ‘arise at the expense of the greater one, the will of each of these associations becomes general in relation to

That a ‘tyranny of the majority’ could once again produce a violent reign of terror Tocqueville doubted (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 637). He nonetheless understood that there inhered in the democratic soul a propensity which permitted the subversion of republican government. In this propensity, Tocqueville recognised a ‘generative principle’<sup>21</sup> – a value so firmly embedded in the *état social* as to shape every aspect of the modern mind. It was to identifying this ambiguous passion, which encouraged ‘an exclusive interest in immediate delights’ and simultaneously imparted ‘a less dangerous character [to the] irregularity of [man’s] morals’, that he dedicated his magnum opus (Tocqueville, 2006, pp. 631, 599).

That Tocqueville chose to study democracy in America should take none by surprise. After all, it was ‘the only country’ in which he could ‘watch the natural quiet growth of society’ and be exact ‘about the influence’ which the ‘point of departure’ exercised ‘on the future of the state’ (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 32). While in his native France the *état social* mirrored centuries of social and political transformation, the ‘Anglo-Americans’, as he often termed them, inscribed the future of their country on a virtually blank slate. Hence, it was only in the United States that Tocqueville could come to recognise democracy in its unmitigated form (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 31).

In order to locate the ‘generative principle’ of democracy in America, Tocqueville set out to examine the whole of American society, as he found that its aspects stood in a ‘dynamic and interdependent relation to one another’. Indeed, in the interplay both between religion<sup>22</sup> and local government, and between *les moeurs* [mores] and commerce, the fundamental democratic propensity was equally manifest.

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its members and particular in relation to the state’. ‘Eventually, when one of the associations is big enough to triumph over all the others [...] there is no longer any general will, and the opinion that prevails is only a *particular opinion*’. See Rousseau (1999, pp. 66-67, emphasis added).

<sup>21</sup> For a more elaborate account of the ‘generative principle’, one may look to Tocqueville’s intellectual precursor, Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, who identified a similar concept – the ‘principle of government’. As opposed to the ‘nature of government’, which relates to the ‘particular structure’ of political life, the ‘principle of government’ describes the ‘human passions that set government in motion’ See Montesquieu (1989, p. 21).

<sup>22</sup> The principle of local government, or rather the civic disposition attendant thereto is a recurring theme in this thesis; religion less so. It therefore warrants mention that, in keeping with Tocqueville’s remarks concerning ‘the point of departure of the Anglo-Americans’—that ‘peoples always bear [...] marks of their origin’; that nations, like men are ‘whole’ already ‘in the cradle’—one could argue that Protestant Christianity, the religion of the first settlers, which, Tocqueville maintained, ‘orients men much less toward equality than toward independence’, imparted to Americans the habits of the heart conducive to local government (Tocqueville, 2006, pp. 31, 288).

Upon completing his epic survey of the New World, Tocqueville concluded that the ‘generative principle’ of democracy in America—and perhaps of the emergent democracies across the Old Continent—was *equality*. He declaimed with due reverence that ‘[equality] gives a particular turn to public opinion and a particular twist to the laws’; that it ‘suggests customs and modifies what it does not create’ (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 9). In equality, Tocqueville discovered the fount of American political culture and public morals; a propensity which both animated ‘the activity within [the democratic] *social structure*’ (Boesche, 2008, p. 119, emphasis added) and excited ‘the human passions that set *government* in motion’ (Montesquieu, 1989, p. 21, emphasis added).

It might at this point seem appropriate to produce an operational definition of equality. However, Tocqueville’s own account thereof is very ambiguous and ambivalent, and permits very little in the way of interpretation. While at times he praises the salutary effects of equality on public morality, at others he laments its impact on public virtue<sup>23</sup>. On most occasions, Tocqueville simply details the ramifications of equality without much of an emotional investment. After all, *Democracy in America* was intended, not as a work of normative political philosophy<sup>24</sup>, but rather, as a work of descriptive sociology.

Tocqueville observed that democratic peoples had ‘an ardent, insatiable, eternal, and invincible’ passion for equality; first, he argued, because it was almost indissolubly

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<sup>23</sup> Tocqueville argued, for instance, that as conditions became more equal, people became gentler and grew more sensible to ‘the miseries of the *human race*’. On the downside, however, men ceased to care for *one another* (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 562).

<sup>24</sup> Tocqueville, in fact, harboured a somewhat Burkean dislike for political philosophers. In Book III of *The Ancien Regime*, he wrote: ‘It was no accident that the philosophers of the eighteenth century all conceived of notions so incompatible with those that still served as a basis for their society’. ‘Confronted with so many bizarre and haphazard institutions – relics of another era that no one attempted to reconcile with one another or accommodate to new needs – [...] these philosophers quickly became disgusted with ancient things and traditions and naturally wanted to rebuild society according to an entirely new plan’. ‘The situation of these writers’, he continued, ‘fostered in them a taste for abstract, general theories of government, theories in which they trusted blindly. Living as they did almost totally removed from practical life, they had no experience that might have tempered their natural passions’. ‘They not only failed to grasp the world of affairs but actually failed to see it. They had nothing to do with that world and were incapable of recognising what others did within it’. The philosophers ‘therefore grew bolder in their innovations, much more enamoured of general ideas and systems, much more contemptuous of ancient wisdom, and much more confident of individual reason that one commonly sees in authors who write speculative works about politics. ‘A similar ignorance’, Tocqueville concluded, ‘led the crowd to lend them their ear and surrender their hearts to them’. See Tocqueville (2011, p. 129).

embedded in the social fabric – i.e. should a nation ‘ever succeed in destroying or even diminishing the equality prevailing in [the] body social [...] they would have to modify their social condition, repeal their laws, supersede their opinions, change their habits, and alter their mores’; second, he continued, because its fruits were immediately obvious to all – i.e. because ‘equality daily gives each man in the crowd a host of small enjoyments, [its] charms [...] are felt the whole time’; and third, he concluded, because equality ‘forms the distinctive characteristic of the age in which they live’ – i.e. democratic nations love equality partly because they cannot conceive of a body politic founded on anything *but* equality (Tocqueville, 2006, pp. 504-505).

Tocqueville finally contended that ‘in ages of equality, every man found his beliefs within himself’, for the ‘general equality of conditions’ lowered the esteem attributed to every deed, opinion, and pursuit (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 506). In this respect, he maintained, equality exercised a most decisive influence on democratic mores and jeopardised the virtues that make republican polities, not sustainable, but rather, authentic and substantial. The following sections attempt to reconstruct Tocqueville’s analyses of *democratic mores* and of *the bourgeois ethic*<sup>25</sup>, seeing as these aspects are the most relevant to further discussion.

## **1.2 Democratic Mores, Freedom, and the Doctrine of Self-Interest Properly Understood**

Tocqueville held that mores were ‘the only tough and durable power in a nation’. Therefore, in order to appreciate the impact of equality on democratic societies, it is crucial that one first examine the customs and ‘habits of the heart’ that make up democratic mores. This might prove a rather exacting task, seeing as Tocqueville himself admitted that it was not his ‘aim to *describe* democratic mores’. He did not, however, fail to provide indications (Tocqueville, 2006, pp. 274, 287).

First and foremost, it deserves mention that ‘mores’ refer, not *merely* to customs and ‘habits of the heart’, but rather to the whole ‘moral and intellectual state of a people’,

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<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that Tocqueville rarely used the word ‘bourgeois’ in *De la démocratie en Amérique*. He was keener on using ‘*le classe moyenne*’ [the middle class]. This thesis borrows the term ‘bourgeois ethic’ from Boesche (2008, p. 61).

to ‘the sum of ideas that shape [the] mental habits’ as well as the manners of a given society (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 287). They are determined by the *état social*, but simultaneously have a significant reciprocal bearing thereon. Mores ‘are the only tough and durable power in a nation’ largely because ‘democratic manners’ reflect ‘an intimate connection between the form and the substance of behaviour’, and hence do not permit inconsistency (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 607). It should therefore take none by surprise that laws ‘are always unsteady when unsupported by mores’. Legislation – the ‘form of behaviour’ – can only be effective to the extent that it corresponds to the customs and ‘habits of the heart’ – the ‘substance of behaviour’ – the ‘moral and intellectual state’ of the concerned people (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 274).

Tocqueville maintained that mores were ‘one of the great general causes responsible for the maintenance of a democratic republic in the United States’ (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 287). There may be several reasons why this statement ought to give a man pause, but only two violently thrust themselves into the limelight. Firstly, assuming the pre-eminent importance of mores, one suspects that Tocqueville could have argued to the following effect: any *corps politique*, so long as it was grounded on an ‘intimate connection between the form and substance of behaviour’, could potentially rely on mores for the maintenance of its social and political structure. Secondly, Tocqueville’s wording seems to suggest that mores could not be responsible for the maintenance of democracy anywhere outside America.

The second supposition was disputed by Tocqueville himself. He maintained that the ‘social condition’ of the ‘Anglo-Americans’, providing it had ‘created habits and opinions’ different from those originating from the same social conditions in Europe’, would teach ‘nothing about what might happen in democracies elsewhere’. Nonetheless, he conceded that in the United States he had found ‘passions like those familiar in Europe’ (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 310). That is to say, although democracy in Europe could never perfectly replicate democracy in America, European mores could, given the right circumstances, come to resemble American mores to a considerable extent.

As regards the potential of mores to maintain *any* social structure based on a certain authenticity of manners -- it remains to be seen.

Tocqueville implied that in proto-democratic<sup>26</sup> societies the likes of which emerged in America shortly after the settlers had established the first colonies, mores were necessary for the maintenance of public spirit. Defined by the ‘doctrine of self-interest properly understood’, which inspired men to ‘combine their own advantage with that of their citizens’, proto-democracies derived their political rationale from a striking equality of conditions and from a practical justification of political liberty and of the communal solidarity which ensued therefrom. At the dawn of American society, equality dwelt in both the hearts and minds of men. Participation in *local government* was not a choice, but rather a necessity. While, on the one hand, Americans had themselves chosen to be equal, on the other, they had been rendered so by the harsh conditions imposed by their surroundings, which required that each man take interest in the welfare of others and thus secure his own welfare (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 525).

Communities in proto-democratic America thus married the doctrine of equality with the doctrine of political liberty, which here denotes the ability to ‘frame [one’s] purposes and take the initiative according to [one’s] inclinations’ (Malinowski, 1944, pp. 236-237). It should be noted that proto-democratic ‘freedom’ implied a host of societal responsibilities. It could even be argued that it was directly predicated upon one’s participation in public administration. Freedom and equality were inseparable; equal entitlements entailed equal contribution. Hence it should come as no surprise that in the United States of Tocqueville’s day it was ‘in each man’s interest to be good’ (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 526). The forefathers of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Americans had simply recognised that they could accomplish more as a collective entity than they could as individuals.

It deserves mention that both freedom and the ‘doctrine of self-interest properly understood’ are based on the utility, rather than on the beauty of virtue. Tocqueville clearly had no illusions as regards this fact. Like Montesquieu, he recognised that ‘political virtue is a renunciation of oneself, which is always a very painful thing’ (Montesquieu, 1989, p. 35). Nonetheless, even if the abovementioned democratic doctrines could not ‘make a man virtuous’, they certainly promoted a practical sense

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<sup>26</sup> ‘Proto-democracy’ here denotes an emergent *political structure* that affords to every individual the freedom to ‘frame his purposes, and take the initiative according to his inclinations’. It should be noted that, for the purposes of this thesis, a ‘proto-democratic’ society need not necessarily be ‘proto-cultural’. See Malinowski (1944, pp. 236-237).

of public fellowship – the linchpin of republican and democratic systems (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 527).

In conclusion, mores grounded on freedom, equality, and the ‘doctrine of self-interest properly understood’ promote republican democracy because they cultivate the kind of purposeful communal spirit essential to its maintenance. They reflect a *productive* socio-political dialectic which imparts to every individual a duty to civic engagement, and are hence greatly conducive to political participation and to democratic growth. As long as democratic mores, the whole ‘moral and intellectual state of a people’ which shapes their manners and ‘mental habits’, teach men to partake in the active management of their society, democratic principles can rest peacefully.

However, once societies have reached a certain stage of democratic development; once they have cultivated the means of protecting their constituents and sustaining their material welfare, political liberty and the ‘doctrine of self-interest properly understood’ are contested by a ‘bourgeois ethic’ which proceeds from the belief that civic engagement has been rendered obsolete by increasing material comfort, and from an exacerbated taste for equality and security. It is at this point that democracies often go awry (Boesche, 2008, p. 61).

### **1.3 Commerce, the Bourgeois Ethic, and Individualism**

Tocqueville maintained that commerce produced a very peculiar ethic of ‘moderation’ and ‘compromise’, which taught men independence and gave them ‘a high idea of their personal importance’. It made them inclined to freedom ‘but disinclined to revolution’ because the latter ‘almost always [brings about] the ruin of industrialists and traders’. As it were, Tocqueville thus found that commercial peoples were disposed to extol the ‘conservative’ virtue of self-reliance, and that they were keen to ‘manage their own affairs’ and fend solely for themselves (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 637).

It should be noted that commerce in and of itself is not at odds with the ‘doctrine of self-interest properly understood’, as long as the latter is conducive to the former (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 637). However, where conditions are relatively promising and

where the pool of available wealth is infinite<sup>27</sup>—or where it dissembles itself as such—no individual ‘[is] ever fully satisfied with [his] present fortune’, and in consequence, commercial societies are often ‘restless in the midst of their prosperity’. Under such circumstances, men are drawn to focus their attention on nothing but the pursuit of wealth. As long as the society in which they live provides for them basic security and thus the environment to conduct their affairs in relative peace and quiet, they can relinquish their right, and indeed, their duty to political engagement and revel in the ‘trivial pleasures’ which they derive from commercial activity (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 536).

Because equality has predisposed these men to prefer ‘uniform’ standards of behaviour, they acquire a distaste for even the most inconsiderable social and political disturbances which they believe might compromise their commercial endeavours (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 158). Consequently, individuals who in a commercial society resolve to make use of their political liberty are curbed by their fellow citizens, insofar as the initiative they intend to exercise does not align with the pecuniary interests of their society. The productive socio-political dialectic thereby assumes restrictive contours, and equality and security, now the principal democratic desiderata, come to constitute a permanent antithesis therein. The negative freedom from politics substitutes the positive freedom to engage in political action as the principal privilege of citizenship. The ‘bourgeois ethic’ thus creates a milieu from which emerges a new doctrine – the doctrine of individualism.

Tocqueville argued that individualism was ‘of democratic origin’ and described it as ‘a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself’ (Tocqueville, 2006, pp. 506-507). Insofar as it relaxes ‘the bonds of human affection’ and severs the sense of obligation toward future generations, individualism is largely the fruit of ‘the bourgeois ethic’, which, by reinforcing the importance of present pursuits, promotes the taste for ‘immediate delights’ (Tocqueville, 2006, pp. 507,

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<sup>27</sup> By all reasonable standards, the pool of available wealth in early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century America was infinite. Not long after Tocqueville had concluded his journey across the New World, prominent industrialists the likes of Cornelius Vanderbilt amassed nearly unfathomable fortunes. For further reference, see Cashman (1993).

631). Furthermore, individualism proceeds from a bourgeois reconstruction of the notion of democratic freedom, for by ‘isolating themselves from their fellows’ and ‘leaving the greater society to look after itself’, citizens divorce themselves from the duties imparted to them by the ‘doctrine of self-interest well understood’. It is true, Tocqueville argued that Americans combated individualism precisely by applying this principal democratic doctrine; however, he also held that ‘if citizens, attaining equality, were to remain ignorant and coarse, it would be difficult to foresee any limit to the stupid excesses into which their selfishness might lead them [...] Hence it is all-important for them to be educated, for [...] I see a time approaching in which freedom, public peace, and social stability will not be able to last without education’ (Tocqueville, 2006, pp. 527-528).

Tocqueville feared that, when married with *equality*, individualism would produce societies that offered the democratic man ‘no goal in life higher than ceaseless cupidity and an ultimately unsatisfying materialism’ (Boesche, 2008, p. 42). It might, at this point, be appropriate to elucidate the concept of ‘restlessness’, which Tocqueville said was so prevalent in the United States.

‘A man who has set his heart on nothing but the good things of this world’, Tocqueville argued, ‘is always in a hurry, for he has only a limited time in which to find them, get them, and enjoy them’ (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 536). In this rapid pursuit of pleasure, every man makes use of the isolation and independence which he embraced with the advent of ‘the bourgeois ethic’. ‘Men and women who are preoccupied with cannot [...] discuss serious political questions’ because they perceive the political realm as a foreign, self-adjusting entity, with which the interaction would keep them from ‘finding’, ‘getting’, and ‘enjoying’ the ‘good things of this world’ (Boesche, 2008, p. 64). It is crucial that one appreciate the gravity of this sentiment, for it constitutes the experiential foundation of democratic *inquiétude*, which, as we shall later see, reproduces a taste for comfort, for security, and consequently, for tutelage (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 637, 535).

In conclusion, the ‘bourgeois ethic’, coupled with equality and individualism induces individuals to surrender themselves to commercial pursuits, and thus yields a dramatic diminution of public fellowship. So as to remain capable of chasing after the ‘good

things of this world', democratic individuals collectively embrace new political maxims: they resolve to permit individual initiative only insofar as it does not pose a threat to the prevailing equality and conditions and to every person's entitlement to pursue their own well-being. Society constricts each man, while preserving for him a handful of basic rights, most of which are associated with his entitlement to engage in material pursuits. In the wake of this development, democratic societies embark on a transition to *post-democracy*.

#### **1.4 Post-Democracy, the Triumph of Equality over Liberty, and Helotry**

The term 'post-democracy' denotes a society 'that, in the name of democracy, emphasises the consensual practice of effacing the forms of democratic action' (Rancière, 1999, pp. 101-102). In other words, post-democratic societies sacrifice the freedom to political action – the principal entitlement of citizens in democratic states, which could afford every individual the opportunity to mobilise his capacities and channel his energy into the improvement of society – on the altar of commercial continuity, thereby thoroughly choking individual enterprise, which, so far as the majority is concerned, might imperil the established socio-economic order.

Tocqueville foresaw the emergence of post-democracy when he wrote of people's natural love of equality over freedom. 'There can [...] be a sort of equality in the world of politics without any political freedom', he argued (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 503). 'The ills which liberty brings may be immediate; all can see them and all, more or less, feel them' (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 505). 'The good things that freedom brings are seen only as time passes', and the passage of time is not something that democratic nations cope with too well, as was shown in the previous section.

It has already been mentioned that equality is the principal democratic desideratum largely because its fruits are immediately known to a large portion of the population, and because without it, no democratic citizen can imagine the functioning of his or her body social. It has also been established that liberty enters into democratic life with the 'doctrine of self-interest properly understood', but that with political liberty come political responsibilities. Freedom is not independence. It was never assumed in the United States 'that the citizen of a free country has a right to do whatever he

pleases; on the contrary, more social obligations were imposed upon him than anywhere else' (Boesche, 2008, p. 67). In post-democratic societies, however, freedom *does* equal independence and the kind of democratic freedom that would entail societal responsibilities; the kind of freedom that forms the basis of 'democratic action' is purposefully effaced.

Post-democratic nations hence begin to impose upon themselves a sort of helotic mentality. The Helots, according to Pollux, were a class in Sparta who, were 'between slaves and free men'<sup>28</sup>. Citizens in post-democratic countries resemble the Helots, insofar as, after they have succeeded in effacing most every political entitlement with which they had been initially endowed, mostly for the sake of commercial security and for the sake of freedom to engage in commercial action, they have preserved for themselves only fundamental 'economic' freedoms. The political realm they calmly deserted. In consequence, post-democratic societies are effectively acephalous and suspended between the polar domains of government and servitude.

### 1.5 Soft Despotism

In an effort to resolve their predicament, post-democratic societies elevate above themselves an 'immense, protective power', thereby completely relinquishing, not only their political, but also their social and economic authority (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 692). This 'provident' and 'gentle' power is centralised—it could not be otherwise, seeing as local government was rendered impractical by the individualistic ethic—and it is expected to guarantee universal observance of post-democratic desiderata, thereby relieving individuals of their civic responsibilities and granting them respite.

As the people recline, indulging in the 'trivial pleasures of their private lives' (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 540), this protective power works diligently to provide for their absolute comfort. It successfully supplies the means of satisfying their material and intellectual needs, and thus forestalls the necessity for social or political association, which, according to Tocqueville, was one of the means of foregoing the advent of democratic despotism. This power, although not initially oppressive, is certainly

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<sup>28</sup> For further reference, see Whitby (2001, p. 180).

stultifying, seeing as it ‘keeps men in perpetual childhood’ and thus neutralises their capacities for self-determination, critical reflection, and responsible agency (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 692). And once this ‘tutelary’ authority has educated men toward complete material and intellectual dependency, soft despotism can become coercive. And given the right constellation of circumstances, it can transform into *one-dimensional despotism*.

### 1.6 Summary

Before we move on to discuss one-dimensionality, we should briefly recapitulate the events that conduce to the emergence of soft despotism and then test our hypothesis against Tocqueville’s expository account of the nascent despotic society. Democracy in America emerged as a cooperative endeavour. At its heart lay two principal ‘dogmata’, equality and freedom, which stood in a mutually reinforcing relationship to one another. However, with increasing social wealth, people’s attention came more and more to be occupied by a taste for material satiation. Although engagement in commercial activity promoted self-reliance, it simultaneously set men at odds, severing communal ties and inducing citizens to withdraw into the privacy of their own pursuits. The greater part of society thus opted out of the social contract.

Prolonged involvement in the rough and tumble of trade ensued in the advancement of individualism which, in turn, sundered the citizens’ connections with their ancestors and with the generations still-to-come. Providing, at this point, that society had failed to supply a proper political education that should have fostered in the citizens a sense of obligation toward their fellows, democracy in America embarked on a post-democratic stage. Society had effaced all forms of republican action that could have potentially compromised individual commercial engagement. ‘Public interest’ thus came to serve as checkreins, keeping every man in a desired position. Equal in their very limited entitlements, men cultivated a helotic mentality. They were neither completely free nor completely bound. Their society was perfectly unified and, simultaneously, perfectly incapable of unitary action. Under such circumstances, matters of public policy would have become a complicated issue – an issue that only a ‘centralised’, ‘all-powerful’ government could undertake. The people therefore elected an ‘absolute’, authority to ‘provide for their security’, ‘facilitate their

pleasures', and 'manage their principal concerns'. They consoled 'themselves for being under schoolmasters by thinking' that they had chosen 'them themselves' (Tocqueville, 2006, pp. 692-693).

In soft despotism, Tocqueville wrote, the individual lived primarily 'in and for himself' (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 692). His 'obsession with wealth' had rendered him 'powerless', 'isolated', and 'incapable to organise politically' (Boesche, 2008, p. 143). Arendt distinguished between 'isolation' and 'loneliness', arguing that the former was defined 'by the fundamental inability to act'. She held that 'isolation' was 'characteristic of tyrannies', where 'political contacts between men [were] severed' and 'the human capacities for action and power' frustrated. She was convinced, however, that 'the whole sphere of private life with the capacities for experience, fabrication and thought' were, in a tyranny, 'left intact' (Arendt, 1958, p. 474).

'Loneliness', argued Arendt, proceeded from 'uprootedness' and 'superfluousness'. 'To be uprooted', she wrote, 'means to have no place in the world, recognised and guaranteed by others'. 'Superfluousness', on the other hand, rests on the experience of 'not belonging to the world at all' (Arendt, 1958, p. 475).

It has been shown that soft despotism indeed produces the experience of 'isolation'. It decidedly severs 'political contacts between men' and frustrates 'the human capacities for action and power'. It may even elicit in the individual a sense of 'uprootedness', which simply proceeds from the fact that he has divorced himself, not merely from the mass of his fellows, but also from his ancestry and posterity (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 508). That being said, soft despotism does leave 'the sphere of private life' quite intact. Although, as we shall observe later, this practice too can be easily effaced. The hypothesis, so far, holds. Tocqueville indeed recognises that democracy tends to reproduce isolation and lays the groundwork for loneliness.

## Chapter 2: One-Dimensional Democracy?

### 2.1 Marcuse's Advanced Industrial Society

Like Alexis de Tocqueville, Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) has borne many labels. The editors of *Essential Marcuse*, Andrew Feenberg and William Leiss, described their former professor<sup>29</sup> as 'a philosopher' and 'a social critic'. Thomas Wheatland, author of *The Frankfurt School in Exile*, regarded Marcuse primarily as a 'social theorist' (Wheatland, 2009, p. 297), while still other authors<sup>30</sup> have labelled the German thinker a 'political theorist'. Truth be told, Marcuse was equally deserving of each of the aforementioned titles. A representative of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, he was equally well-versed in a wide range of academic disciplines.

The sophistication of Marcuse's writing undoubtedly attests to his intellectual acumen. However, it was the spiritedness and penetration which he applied to his analyses that made him a peerless diagnostician of the politics and ideology of advanced industrial society. Granted, Marcuse may not have been so impartial an observer as Tocqueville. Nonetheless, his examination of modern liberal democracy in *One-Dimensional Man*, *An Essay on Liberation*, and *Counterrevolution and Revolt* boasts striking similarities to the Aristocrat's forecasts concerning the future of democracy in America.

It is unknown whether Marcuse ever studied Tocqueville. If he did, he never cared to mention him or *Democracy in America* in any of his works. Even so, it seems appropriate to compare their analyses, especially seeing as Marcuse spent several decades<sup>31</sup> living in the society which Tocqueville had once so thoroughly described. The forthcoming sections postulate that soft despotism emerged with the advent of advanced industrial production.

In order for soft despotism to evolve (devolve?) into one-dimensional despotism, society requires a significant situational impetus. Its immediate environment must

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<sup>29</sup> Leiss and Feenberg studied with Marcuse at the University of California, San Diego. See the introduction to *Essential Marcuse: Selected Writings of Philosopher and Social Critic Herbert Marcuse*.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Slane (2001, p. 273), or Held (1980, p. 224).

<sup>31</sup> To be exact, Marcuse lived in the United States for 45 years (1934-1979).

undergo a dramatic change that creates possibilities for social exploitation. As far as Marcuse was concerned, that situational impetus had been supplied by the transition to advanced industrial production. Indeed, a society that can generate a fantastic surplus of commodities is very likely to suffocate in the mire of its own making.

Advanced industrial society, as described by Marcuse, epitomises the imperative synthesis of the restrictive post-democratic dialectic, insofar as its longevity testifies to its remarkable efficiency. The *commodity reserve* which it produces constitutes a considerable supply of potential 'needs' which 'the Establishment' can 'implant' and 'manipulate' at will, thereby trapping the consumers in a constant and exhausting pursuit of material well-being (Marcuse, 2002, p. 6). If post-democracy granted the people the freedom to revel in worldly pleasures, then advanced industrial society made acting on this freedom into a pathological compulsion, thereby thoroughly obliterating the need for and the possibility of political engagement. Tocqueville identified this tendency when he observed that, in the wake of increased equality and intensified longing for 'permitted delights', 'a kind of decent materialism [might] come to be established on earth, which [would] not corrupt souls but [rather] soften and imperceptibly loosen the springs of action (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 532).

It should only seem logical that the consumers' interest in matters that do not pertain to the acquisition and the use of goods is reduced to naught. The variety of choice strengthens the post-democratic illusion that the consumer is free, that he has resolved autonomously to labour and toil for the sake of ephemeral amusement (Marcuse, 1991, p. 13). In fact, however, the consumer merely 'perpetuates' his debility and 'fortifies' the established system (Marcuse, 2007, p. 27). In advanced industrial society, men are no longer helots; they have become slaves to commodities, of which the procurement has come to constitute a 'biological' need (Marcuse, 1991, p. 10). As such, consumers are liable to treat each other *instrumentally*, or worse, as *commodities*.

## 2.2 Commodification and Instrumentalisation

*Commodification* and *Instrumentalisation* are closely related, but they are not the same. Instrumentalisation refers to one's treatment of nature, and of other sentient beings, as means of advancing one's ends—that is, as *objects*—while still recognising oneself as the 'appropriating subject' (Marcuse, 1972, pp. 65-67). Commodification refers to the complete *objectification* and *depersonalification* of man. It impels the individual to identify, not as a self-governing agent harbouring unique creative potentialities, but as a sum of marketable qualities. As such, the individual is always at the mercy of economic contingencies, and if he is to maintain even a fundamental degree of solvency, he must continuously adapt his creative capacities according to necessity. This is perhaps the principal difference between post-democratic materialism and advanced industrial consumerism. Commodification proceeds from instrumental rationality but simultaneously produces a rationality of its own – a rationality which completely disconnects the agent, not merely from his fellows, but *from his own social faculties*, and which justifies reducing one's life to continuous requalification.

The greater the pace of technological progress, which generates new modes of productive self-realisation and simultaneously renders the previous modes obsolete, the more paralysing the need for requalification. Commodification thus fetters what little is left of human freedom and allows for the 'spontaneous reproduction of superimposed needs' (Marcuse, 2006, p. 10). Both Commodification and Instrumentalisation represent extreme variations of individualism, seeing as both presuppose a significant degree of alienation from one's fellows. But it is Commodification that, by reducing the worth of human beings to mere monetary value, and by eventually alienating man from his creative capacities, perpetuates servitude and facilitates the advent of one-dimensional despotism.

## 2.3 One-Dimensionality: The End of Critical / Political Thought

According to Marcuse, one-dimensionality proceeds largely from a revolution in human psychology. This revolution is epitomised in the transition 'from negative to positive thinking' (Marcuse, 2002, p. 147). Historically, *negative* thinking – the

ability to recognise the qualitative nature of the established society, to identify and isolate its objective defects, and to devise modes of their correction – has been the primary force for societal improvement (Marcuse, 2002, pp. 3-4). *Negative concepts*, that is, critical notions defined in opposition to the prevailing culture, animate the productive socio-political dialectic. In Tocqueville's democracy, the actualisation of such concepts was predicated on the willingness and the abilities of politically active individuals. However, advanced industrial society, with its meticulously cultivated means of restrictive control, poses a formidable challenge to negative thought.

Marcuse himself wrote that, as commodities 'become available to more individuals in more social classes, the indoctrination they carry [...] becomes a way of life. It is a good way of life—much better than before—and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change' (Marcuse, 2002, p. 14). In order to secure its longevity—in order to bind men in 'voluntary servitude' (Marcuse, 1991, p. 6)—advanced industrial society must completely disengage the individual from his *negative* capacities. It must isolate every person from the very *dimension* of critical reflection.

'Positive thinking' denotes the methodical rationalisation of the established state of affairs. As an integral component of the restrictive post-democratic dialectic, positive thinking uses 'operational logic' to demonstrate the impracticability of 'critical ideas', and thus perpetuates the prevailing socio-political order (Marcuse, 2002, p. 15). By 'denying the transcendent elements of Reason', operationalism – i.e. 'total empiricism in the treatment of concepts' – eliminates abstraction from the realm of creative discourse and 'provides the methodological justification for the debunking' of all negative notions (Marcuse, 2002, pp. 14-16). Unless a conceptual proposition can be developed into an empirically coherent sequence of mutually supporting 'operations', it must be inherently unsound.

Hence, if one cannot account for Decommodification in operational terms, Commodification must be an existential requisite. However, taking into consideration the astounding efficiency of the oppressive apparatus, it is impossible to imagine how the individual could experience a phenomenon so fundamentally different from everyday reality that its empirical occurrence would account for the feasibility of a given critical proposition. Marcuse is therefore right in asserting that 'the unrealistic

sound of [all negative notions] is indicative, not of their utopian character, but of the strength of the forces which prevent their realisation' (Marcuse, 2002, p. 6). Operationalism, therefore, serves only to 'coordinate ideas and goals with those exacted by the prevailing system', and 'repel those which are irreconcilable' therewith, artificially discarding them as inherently unworkable (Marcuse, 2002, p. 16).

Tocqueville recognised this tendency to assess the conceivability of critical notions in relation to the extant social and political conditions. 'It must', he argued, 'be rare in a democracy for a man suddenly to conceive a system of ideas far different from those accepted by his contemporaries [...] should such an innovator arise, he would have great difficulty in making himself heard to begin with, and even more in convincing people. When conditions are almost equal, one man is not easily to be persuaded by another' (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 641). It is most opportune at this point to recollect that, according to Tocqueville, democratic nations have an 'ardent' and 'invincible' passion for equality largely because it 'forms the distinctive characteristic of the age in which they live'. They recognise its integral role in the *état social* and hence believe that 'it will last forever' (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 504). By all reasonable standards, equality is an operational axiom.

One could argue, if one were so inclined, that Marcuse's description of operationalism is fallacious, seeing as the ability to conceive *qualitatively* different means of structuring society is a matter of man's epistemic capacities. That, however, is simply not the case and, if anything, such a line of reasoning would only attest to the validity of Marcuse's statements. First, it deserves repeated mention that equality in and of itself does not pose an imminent threat to democratic societies. On the contrary, it is a requisite for genuine democratic freedom (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 504). Second, operationalism would be in place *even if* one resolved to conceive a relatively inconsiderable adjustment in the functioning of the body politic based, and then dismissed it on account of its impracticability. Operational logic is defined, not by the *extent* of its ambition, but rather by its *content*.

## 2.4 One-Dimensional Despotism

It has been stated previously that in soft despotism the ‘protective power’ may assume something of a custodial role in that it systematically, yet in a very unobtrusive and unostentatious manner, prepares individuals for lives of childlike dependency. It has been stated further that this power does not explicitly intrude into people’s private affairs. In fact, because the longevity of soft despotism is largely predicated upon the sustained equality of conditions and individualism, which thrives when one is isolated from others, this power must ensure that people can withdraw into a private space, within whose confines they can enjoy the practice of their own activities. It is sufficient that they let themselves be tutored, and that they do not interfere with the political realm.

In advanced industrial society, all public and private affairs are being ‘administered’ (Marcuse, p. 1991, 66). ‘The Establishment’ thus need not concern itself with individuals interfering in political matters, seeing as it has positively eliminated every practical reason for public engagement. What ‘the Establishment’ has not eliminated is the residual *instinct* therefor – the instinct produced by proto-democratic liberty. In the final transition from soft to one-dimensional despotism, ‘the Establishment’ must thus intrude into the most intimate sphere of human agency – the sphere of ‘the inner person’ (Marcuse, 2002, p. 12).

The idea of ‘inner freedom’, Marcuse writes, ‘implies the existence of an inner dimension distinguished from and even antagonistic to the external exigencies—an individual consciousness and an individual unconscious *apart from* public opinion and behaviour’ (emphases original). This ‘inner dimension’ affords every individual the space for negative thinking which, although it may be practically inconsequential—seeing as constitutes the last source of personal sustenance for a wholly commodified being—poses a threat to the established *état social*. ‘The Establishment’ must therefore isolate the individual from this dimension by means of supplying the ideology of coercive productivism.

The result, Marcuse claimed, ‘is *mimesis*: an immediate identification of the individual with *his* society and, through it, with the society as a whole’. Because only

‘the society *as a whole*’ can work toward the ultimate end of productivism: ‘unbridled growth’ and infinite consumption (Marcuse, 2007, p. 5). And thus ‘emerges a pattern of *one dimensional thought and behaviour*, in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to the terms of this universe’ (Marcuse, 2006, p. 14, emphasizes original). Soft despotism has thus concluded its transition to one-dimensional despotism.

### 2.5 Summary

Once more, before we proceed to the following chapter, it is desirable that we briefly summarise the events that bring about one-dimensional despotism. Marcuse argued that advanced industrial society made ‘the entire human being [...] into an object of administration geared to produce and reproduce not only the goals but also the values and promises of the system’ (Marcuse, 1992, p. 14). While soft despotism relied on the ‘economic’ freedom of its subjects, advanced industrial society, thanks to its immense productive capacities, introduced into the social dynamic a new element – an element of ‘exploitation’ designed to perpetuate the ‘Establishment’ and hold the individual permanently at bay. The democratic individuals of Marcuse’s day were equally preoccupied with wealth as were those in Tocqueville’s century. However, the prospect of consumption, exacerbated by the sheer effectiveness of the productive apparatus, enhanced the people’s desire for material well-being and induced them to dedicate themselves fully to the pursuit thereof.

There are few notable differences between soft and one-dimensional despotism. The most pronounced and, at the same time, most crucial distinction rests in the operational logic which the latter system introduces into the socio-political dialectic. Thanks to operationalism, the ‘Establishment’ can invade and conquer the ‘inner freedom’ of each democratic individual. The capacity for negative and hence critical thought which people have hitherto had at their full disposal, and which, for some, presented a refuge, is eliminated. People are equal in advanced industrial society, perhaps more so than they were in soft despotism. They are, however, equal in their subjection to the productive apparatus, for they all ‘share the needs and satisfactions that serve the preservation of the Establishment’. The social inequalities prevalent in

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the given system by no means mitigate the wealthy people's servitude (Marcuse, 2002, p. 10)

Soft despotism may have produced in men a sense of 'uprootedness', but it was in one-dimensional society that 'superfluosity' came to be manifest. Through eliminating the human capacity for 'fabrication'—and fabrication, insofar as it is genuine, cannot yield products that affirm the ideology of the established state of affairs, for it rests on the ability to 'add something *of one's own* to the common world'—operationalism has rendered man's existence effectively *worthless* (Arendt, 1958, p. 463, emphasis added). Alienated from himself, one-dimensional man is not merely 'isolated'; he is 'lonely'. In conclusion, Marcuse therefore recognised in contemporary liberal democracy to reproduce feelings of both 'isolation' and 'loneliness'.

## Chapter 3: The Modern Prospect

### 3.1 The *French Disease*?

In *Soft Despotism, Democracy's Drift*, Rahe argued that soft despotism proceeded from 'the French Disease', which he attributed, first, to the suffocating bureaucracy<sup>32</sup> of modern democratic establishments, and second, to the abundant *inquiétude* of the citizens (Rahe, 2010, pp. 245-246). Rahe's definition of *inquiétude*, which is discussed briefly in the conclusion to this chapter, is supposedly borrowed in part from Pascal and Montesquieu, in part from Rousseau, and in part from Tocqueville.

According to Rahe, *inquiétude* originates in the uncertainty of having to fend for oneself (Rahe, 2010). This is admittedly a far cry from Tocqueville's account of 'restlessness' which emanated from the desire to 'find', 'get', and 'enjoy' the 'good things of this world' (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 536). Nonetheless, seeing as Rahe's intention was to diagnose 'democracy's drift' and outline 'the modern prospect', one can understand why he would choose to define *inquiétude* in such a manner as to address the conditions and circumstances prevalent in 21<sup>st</sup> century democracies.

The question is, however, whether Rahe indeed identified the true nature of democracy's drift – 'true' meaning in accord with Tocqueville's forecasts concerning the possible subversion of democratic government. After all, it was 'soft despotism' that he feared was taking shape in the United States, and not a random incarnation thereof. Unfortunately, Rahe's thoughts on 'social justice', and on the 'rights' of democratic citizens seem to indicate otherwise.

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<sup>32</sup> Tocqueville did in fact fear that soft despotism would 'cover the whole of social life with a network of petty, complicated rules that are both minute and uniform, through which even men of the greatest originality and vigorous temperament cannot force their heads above the crowd' See (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 692).

### 3.2 Democracy's Drift?

Rahe argued that in modern democracies, one must pay 'for one's talent, diligence, discipline, parsimony, and prudence, if one possesses these attributes', whereas for 'one's incompetence, laziness, self-indulgence, extravagance, and folly, if one exhibits these defects, one is entitled to receive compensation. In this fashion, that which in the past would have been called theft came [...] to be denominated *social justice*' (Rahe, 2010, p. 263). Admittedly, welfare programmes may be of significant concern to a number of individuals so inclined. They do, after all, constitute a disturbance in the prevalent equality of conditions.

However, are they really symptomatic of a tendency to establish a tutelary system whereby every individual was sundered from his fellow men and left to engage in a ceaseless, dissatisfying pursuit of material well-being? Certainly not. If anything, it could be argued that 'social justice' originates in a doctrine of responsibility for the maladies of one's peers. Do welfare programmes to the fact that post-democratic societies cultivate a 'brand of orderly, gentle, peaceful slavery' (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 692)? It does not seem so. Though charity may surely produce dependence on the part of the beneficiary, slavery is a qualitatively different phenomenon.

Therefore, while it may be true that 'with every passing year, in every sphere of life, uniformity becomes more pervasive, and individual Americans have less and less control over the decisions that shape their lives', this is not due to the United States' government embracing measures of enforcing 'social justice' (Rahe, 2010, p. 258).

A reasonable argument might be construed that welfare programmes arrest certain men and women in a state of 'perpetual childhood', thereby precluding them from ever learning to manage their own affairs (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 692). But even that could be a stretch, simply because the socio-economic conditions prevailing in 21<sup>st</sup> century America are incomparable to the general *état social* of Tocqueville's day. Besides, attributing destitution merely to 'incompetence, laziness, self-indulgence, extravagance, and folly' and consequently associating it with soft despotism is more indicative of Rahe's political ethics than it is of the trenchancy of his analysis.

Democracy is, quite undoubtedly, drifting. However, it is not due to 'social justice', but rather, due to individualism and the *inquiétude* and the rampant ethic of acquisitive self-interest to which the former gives rise. Indeed, citizens in modern democracies are quite likely to feel 'inquiet' upon learning that they are alone in their endeavours.

### 3.3 The Modern Disease

Tocqueville was indeed right to assert that democratic peoples could hardly imagine a society based on anything other than equality. Equality is *the* operational maxim, and the spirit of Rahe's objections to the state of democracy in contemporary America testifies to that fact. As has been said, Rahe complains that certain disadvantaged minorities in the United States are entitled to compensation for their 'incompetence', 'laziness', and 'self-indulgence' because he perceives welfare programmes as a breach against the prevailing equality of conditions. Tocqueville predicted that this kind of behaviour might in fact come to dominate 'democratic' discourse. He wrote that 'when all conditions are unequal, no inequality, however great, offends the eye. But amid general uniformity, the slightest dissimilarity seems shocking, and the completer the uniformity, the more unbearable it seems' (Tocqueville, 2006, p. 673).

The above statement could be interpreted both as saying that excellence among generally mediocre democratic individuals offends the eye—as Tocqueville indeed argued—and as saying that 'preferential' treatment of any individual or a segment of the population will be perceived as disturbing the uniformity which rests in the core of the body social. Marcuse argued that in advanced industrial society people were equal in their servitude, in their subjection to the productive apparatus. He did not, however, say that social conditions in advanced industrial society were equal – quite to the contrary (Marcuse, 2007, p. 14).

'Democracy's drift', therefore, is not to be blamed solely on the 'French Disease'. 'The Modern Disease', which we might define as a tendency to view attempts at the correction of inequality as a breach against the equality of conditions, is equally at fault.

### 3.4 Summary

Unfortunately, Rahe's account of soft despotism speaks most of all to the fact that he failed to take into consideration Tocqueville's empirical maxim and interpreted segments of the *Democracy* as supporting a particular political outlook, namely – the conservative outlook. Furthermore, his analysis of democracy's drift is symptomatic of the Modern Disease – a tendency to perceive attempts at the correction of inequality as a breach against the prevailing equality of conditions.

Rahe did not identify a tendency to loneliness in modern democracy. He did, however, attribute democracy's drift to *inquiétude* which, to a considerable extent, emanates from the realisation of 'isolation' – of desertion by one's fellow men, of being left solely to one's own devices.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

Why, since the 1960's, have we seen such a dramatic diminution of public spirit, of revolutionary vigour, and of dissentient determination? This thesis has argued that one may locate one of the reasons in soft despotism and one-dimensional thought and behaviour. Alexis de Tocqueville warned that excessive love of the equality of conditions and desire for material well-being would eventuate in the establishment of a new kind of despotism. He was all too aware of the fact that democratic peoples, when unchecked and unguided by a sovereign power, tended toward imposing oppressive precepts on minorities. At the 'end' of this cycle of oppression, the majority itself would have to become oppressed, seeing as, at different times, different *volontés particulières* determine the socio-political dialectic. Yet Tocqueville's calls have not been heeded.

Herbert Marcuse warned that advanced industrial society reproduced an ethic of production and consumption that diverted the attention of individuals from issues pertinent to the management not only of social but also of private affairs. He recognised in 'positive thinking' and 'operationalism' instruments of obliterating the human capacity to identify and isolate socio-political injustices and consequently work for their improvement. One-dimensional man, he held, was an instrument; a commodity for which one could bargain in a marketplace of *equally* depersonified commodities. Marcuse recognised that if one-dimensionality came to prevail over a democratic nation, the negative dimension of critical thought would concern only issues that were established and sanctioned by the powers that be. Yet Marcuse's calls have not been heeded.

Paul A. Rahe argued that democracy was drifting; that, as a result of *inquiétude*, men and women were thrusting themselves into the tight embrace of the government, seeking from it comfort, protection, and consolation. The government, as Tocqueville had predicted would, of course, gladly watch over these individuals, reducing their intellectual capacities to naught and thereby cultivating a society of calm, obedient infants. Rahe's assessment of modern democracy, although it may not be that of a

despotic subject, is certainly indicative of his inability to conceive, as Marcuse said, a 'qualitatively different' society (Marcuse, 2002, p. 14).

Tocqueville and Marcuse recognised that post-democracy, soft despotism, and advanced industrial society produced tendencies to 'isolation' and 'loneliness'. Rahe, too, implied, albeit somewhat indirectly, that 'isolation' lay at the core of democratic servitude. The hypothesis postulated in the introduction has, to a considerable extent, held up to scrutiny.

Hannah Arendt argued that 'loneliness' was 'the basic experience' which found its 'political expression in totalitarian domination' (Arendt, 1958, p. 461). What, then, can we take from Tocqueville's and Marcuse's diagnoses of liberal democracy? Will the next historical work in theory of democracy deal with its having produced a new totalitarian regime? A regime that would have emerged in a society so perfectly equal in its inequalities that it would not have to designate enemies—the fuel of totalitarianism—it could simply pick them at random and en masse?

Perhaps not. The three authors whose works have been discussed herein do converge on one very important issue. While both Tocqueville and Rahe are avid proponents of local government, Marcuse advocates the liberation and emancipation of man, which he believed would produce 'the Desired Society' (Marcuse, 1991, p. 62). Local government and the 'Desired Society' have one thing in common. They allow every individual the 'freedom to frame his purposes and take the initiative according to his inclinations' insofar, of course, as he does not infringe on the freedom of others.

A functioning *democracy* cannot embrace the 'remoteness of government' caused by prolonged isolation from the political realm (Russell, 2009, p. 44). It might have to exact great efforts from the citizens, for political participation, even when it is grounded in the 'doctrine of self-interest properly understood', is a remarkably taxing affair. Some might perhaps argue that a political world be better off without the engagement of citizens in public affairs. But only one such political system has been conceived, and it is as far from democracy as it possibly could be.

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'Only despotism encourages strictly private, self-interested action; freedom promotes cooperation' (Boesche, 2008, p. 70). Cooperation might at times be unpleasant, but it is *the* requisite of democracies properly defined. Democratic peoples hence have a choice. Either they abandon, to some extent, their commercial pursuits and dedicate some time and effort to the management of their societies, or they risk being forever mediocre, toiling under the subjection of an unidentifiable socio-political behemoth that they cannot grasp, assail, or overthrow. Under such conditions, isolation and loneliness can very rapidly seize the whole of society. The rest is history. Let us hope that the rest is not also the future.

In the liberal-democratic countries of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we no longer see great revolutions take. But unless proper attention is paid to authors like Tocqueville, Marcuse, and Rahe, we might see them again. And this time, they might just assume very different contours than they ever have.

## Resumé

Táto práca analyzuje tri diela, v ktorých autori predostreli či už prognózu, alebo kritiku demokratického politického a spoločenského zriadeniu. Pokúša sa tak skúmať, či v modernom liberálno-demokratickom štáte existuje tendencia vedúca k nástupu totalitarizmu, ktorý má podľa Hannah Arendt korene v prežitku izolácie, teda neschopnosti angažovať sa vo veciach politických, a v osamelosti, teda pociťovaní *izolovanosti do sveta*. Úvodná časť práce sa zaoberá dielom *O Demokracii v Amerike* od francúzskeho sociológa, historika a politického teoretika Alexisa de Tocquevilla.

Prvá kapitola sa venuje Tocquevillej analýze kľúčových prvkov americkej spoločnosti, ktoré ovplyvňujú *stav* demokratickej *spoločnosti* (*état social*). Prvým z týchto prvkov je hodnota *rovnosti* (*equality*), ktorú Tocqueville považuje za generatívny princíp (*generative principle*) demokracie v Amerike a zrejme na celom svete. Rovnosť podľa Tocquevilla definuje tak návyky, ako i správanie a zákonodarstvo v demokratických spoločnostiach. Je teda hodnotou, ktorá vymedzuje vzťahy medzi jednotlivcami aj medzi jednotlivcami a inštitúciami. V protodemokratickej spoločnosti je rovnosť hodnotou slobody, predovšetkým slobody politickej. V podmienkach, ktoré panovali na americkom kontinente v čase, keď do Nového sveta priplávali prví osadníci z Británie, je práve komunitná solidarita a spolupatričnosť hodnotou, ktorá oprávňuje každého jednotlivca participovať na veciach spoločenských, a ktorá je predpokladom rovnosti.

Princípy rovnosti a politickej slobody sa dostávajú do konfliktu vtedy, keď demokratická spoločnosť získava buržoázne kontúry. Obchod, všeobecný komfort a pocit bezpečia totiž jednotlivcov inšpiruje k tomu, aby svoj život sústredili na nekonečnú honbu za materiálnym ziskom. Zároveň v nich pohodlné životné podmienky umocňujú individualizmus a presvedčenie, že politická sféra je čímsi cudzím, že jej kontúry už boli nastavené a nie je vhodné do nich zasahovať, keďže zmena spoločensko-politického poriadku by mohla významným spôsobom ovplyvniť schopnosť a možnosť jednotlivca odovzdať sa naplno honbe za svetskými statkami.

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Prevládajúca rovnosť v komerčnej spoločnosti zapríčiňuje, že väčšina obyvateľstva je schopná obmedziť politickú angažovanosť časti svojich spoluobčanov. V takom prípade dochádza v demokratických spoločnostiach k „tyranii väčšiny“ (tyranny of the majority), ktorá v spoločnosti umocňuje helótske a post-demokratické prejavy. Helóti boli v období starovekej Sparty triedou, ktorá nebola slobodná ani neslobodná. Post-demokracia je podľa Ranciéra režim, v ktorom v mene zachovania demokracie dochádza ku konsenzuálnemu vytlačaniu princípov demokratickej praxe. Demokratickí Helóti si teda ponechávajú len základné práva súvisiace s možnosťou komerčnej činnosti.

Takto konštituovaná spoločnosť je podľa Tocquevilla náchylná upadnúť do demokratického despotizmu. Tento proces prebieha nasledujúcim spôsobom: postdemokratická spoločnosť v mene rozšírenia vlastných privilégií, ktoré sa týkajú obchodu a sebaobohacovania, zvolí absolútnu autoritu, ktorá bude dozeráť na jej fungovanie, bude zabezpečovať jej bezpečnosť a zaisťovať jej materiálne potreby. Ľudia budú pod taktovkou takejto autority spokojní, keďže im umožní venovať sa ich vlastným, „triviálnym“ záujmom.

Druhá kapitola sa venuje Marcuseho analýze rozvinutej industriálnej spoločnosti. Vychádzajúc z predpokladu, že demokratický despotizmus je realitou, vykresľuje táto kapitola prerod demokratického despotizmu v despotizmus jednorozmerný. Ten je podľa Marcuseho umožnený nesmiernym priemyselným rozmachom, ktorý zvyšuje produktivitu. Prostredníctvom rezervy komodít, ktorú takto vytvára, zaväzuje si jednotlivcov k ešte väčšej oddanosti, konzumerizmu a k honbe za materiálnym pôžitkom. Jednorozmerný despotizmus z tohto hľadiska umocňuje materiálne potreby, ktoré vznikajú v postdemokracii, a pripravuje tak spoločnosť a jednotlivca na fázu vykorisťovania.

Jednotlivec v jednorozmernej spoločnosti je inštrumentalizovaný a komodifikovaný, teda vnímaný len ako prostriedok na dosiahnutie určitých materiálnych cieľov. Ku komodifikácii dochádza čiastočne samovoľne, pretože jednotlivec prestáva samého seba vnímať ako autonómnu entitu disponujúcu unikátnymi tvorivými schopnosťami, ale vidí sa len ako sumár kvalít, ktoré je možné zhodnotiť.

## Tlolka: One-Dimensional Despotism

Jednorozmerný despotizmus je výrazne umocňovaný *operacionalizmom*, ktorý v ponímaní Marcuseho filozofie bráni jednotlivcom v tom, aby považovali za uskutočniteľnú takú koncepciu, ktorú nie je možné na základe empirických skúseností začleniť do už existujúceho priestoru spoločenskej interakcie. Operacionalizmus teda zapríčini, že demokratická spoločnosť stratí schopnosť kritického a teda negatívneho premýšľania, a že si osvojí len myšlienky, ktoré sú v súlade s existujúcim spoločenským a politickým zriadením. Jednotlivci tak už nie sú len izolovaní, čiže neschopní angažovanosti v politickom svete; sú aj osamelí, keďže ich existencia sa stala bezobsažnou v dôsledku inštrumentalizácie a komodifikácie a zostáva takou navždy.

Tretia kapitola v skratke analyzuje Raheho štúdiu demokracie v Amerike v 21. storočí. Rozoberá niekoľko rozdielov medzi Raheho a Tocquevillovou definíciou demokratického despotizmu a dospieva k záveru, že Raheho analýza ako taká vychádza z operacionalizovanej predstavy demokracie.

Práca dospieva k názoru, že Tocqueville i Marcuse rozoznali v súdobých demokratických spoločnostiach náchylnosť k rozvoju pocitov izolácie a osamelosti. Či bude ďalším významným dielom v oblasti kritiky demokracie správa o tom, že demokracia sa zvrhla v totalitu novej podoby, to do značnej miery závisí od oživenia demokratických hodnôt a politického vzdelania.

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