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Tocqueville and Gobineau On Liberty
A Study of the Tocqueville-Gobineau Correspondence
1843 - 1859

by

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Focqueville On Liberty

PREFACE

Since the 1903 publication of the Tocqueville-Gobineau Correspondence by Schemann, curator of the Gobineau Library in Strasbourg, the text has been recognized as being incomplete. J.P. Mayer, editor of the Complete Works of Alexis de Tocqueville was able to find missing letters and the important Gobineau Morality Studies in files at the Chateau de Tocqueville. Consequently the 1959 definitive edition of the letters exchanged between the authors of L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution and L'Essai Sur L'Inégalité des Races Humaines has been published as volume nine of a projected thirteen volume series. The excellent annotations of Maurice Degros and the thoughtful introduction by Jean-Jacques Chevallier demonstrate the interest of French scholars in the reviving intellectual reputation of one of their great nineteenth century thinkers.

John A. Lukacs, an American historian who has characterized Tocqueville as the "greatest historical thinker of the past four or five centuries" made the first English translation of selected letters exchanged during the sixteen years from 1843 to 1859. The text, published in 1959 by Doubleday Anchor Books provides an informative essay on Arthur de Gobineau and Lukacs seeks to emphasize the unique value of the Correspondence as a debate between a Christian Conservative and a representative of the social and political thought which has now become known as radical conservatism.

These two sources have been used exclusively for material on an intellectual portrait of two distinguished reflective thinkers. Both men were most prolific

writers, and in their correspondence they expressed themselves with a vigor and frankness that illuminates their scholarly works. Books not available, but which might have shed further light on the Correspondence are Tocqueville's letters to Kergorlay and Rémusat, and Gobineau's correspondence with the Austrian orientalist and diplomat, Count Prokesch-Osten, and the German Professor von Keller, the former being mutual friends and the latter being supporters of Gobineau's racism.

ABSTRACT

The significant role of liberty in the social and political thought of Alexis de Tocqueville is generally recognized. Only recently has attention been brought to the religious foundation of this idea. The discovery of important unpublished Tocqueville letters in the Gobineau Correspondence confirm this interpretation and provide the best source for an exploration of Tocqueville's philosophy of history. They clearly show Tocqueville's belief that a rational conception alone of liberty gives an inadequate moral base to politics, and that anti-religious attitudes lead only to nihilism and materialistic fanaticism which enslave the mind and remove man's dignity.

These eighty-two letters exchanged between 1843 and 1859 are of mounting interest as an intellectual portrait of two aristocratic, perceptive Frenchmen, linked by common experiences and sentiments but separated by age, by tastes and political prejudices. Tocqueville, the more mature and renowned as a political theorist of democracy, is confronted by Arthur de Gobineau's audacious thesis that the scientific study of history proves that all change and direction is caused by racial inequality. Against the pessimism and materialistic arguments of his skeptical yet romantically artistic young friend, Tocqueville is led to reappraise his personal faith and to defend his classic liberal philosophy of Man.

The purpose of this study is to examine Tocqueville's personality as a historian and to contrast his view of history with that of his protégé, through statements from letters and representative historical works. The theme of liberty and man's moral responsibilities runs through their discussion, ranging over the relation of politics

and morality, the anti-Christian nature of Gobineau's racism, and their argument on the inevitability of Europe's decline under the spreading wave of social democracy.

Tocqueville's conception of history, expressed in his imaginative original interpretation, L'Ancien Régime et La Révolution is on history not only as an area of knowledge, but as a liberating mode of thought. In contrast, Gobineau's hatred and distrust of democracy, manifest in his anti-egalitarian, racialist interpretation of history, intended as scientific writing, reveals instead a polemic attack of a radical conservative against political and intellectual liberty. Gobineau's materialism is early evidence of the complex nineteenth century revolt against Europe's traditional Christian heritage to be given direction in 1859 by Marx and Darwin.

These letters, displaying Tocqueville's response to Gobineau as both a friend and historian symptomatic of the age have this value. They show Tocqueville firmly placed in the intellectual heritage of European liberalism. They also show the fullness of a committed life, and the dangers of an intellectual unable to consider the consequences of his thought. Tocqueville's dedication to liberty colors his work and serves as an insight into the functions and obligations of a historian.

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CHAPTER I

"Do not thank me for the interest I show in you", Alexis de Tocqueville wrote to a flattered twenty-seven year old Arthur de Gobineau. "You possess precisely that in which one should be interested ... you have wide knowledge, great intelligence, the best of manners - something one cannot fail to observe however democratic one might be".

But Tocqueville continued his friendly remarks with this frank comment. "You are interesting for what you could be, and also for what one fears you might become". To Tocqueville, an acute observer of the aftermath of the Revolution, the disenchantment, the fatigue, the bored indifference to assemblies and to liberty that marked France's spiritual state was all too clearly reflected in the minds and hearts of men of his own generation. Would the young Gobineau, with his splendid qualities of intellect and character bring a fire and passion which might reanimate France's politics and literature? Or would his new friend, like so many of his contemporaries, be swept by the maladies already typical of the century, the contagious mechanistic philosophies and greedy materialism? Would the moral apathy and fatalism of the period render all these fine qualities useless?

So Tocqueville asked, in his first letter early in August 1843 as he outlined to Gobineau a project study of the new moral concepts and social habits developing in Europe during the dissolution of the old aristocratic order and the rise of democracy. Alexis de Tocqueville, eleven years senior was well known in French politi-

1. Alexis de Tocqueville, Oeuvres Complètes, IX, p.43.

cal and intellectual circles. Honored in 1833 and 1841 by memberships in Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques and the Académie Française for his masterful account of democracy in the modern world, Tocqueville's view that democracy was inevitable because of the passion of men for equality, "ardent, insatiable, incessant, incurable", had been acclaimed by Royer-Collard, the eloquent spokesman of the Doctrinaires, a political group opposed to Bourbon reactionary policies. Like Royer-Collard and Benjamin Constant, Tocqueville's contributions to French liberal thought developed out of conviction and his own political experiences prior to the July Revolution. Like them, he believed that individual liberty, protected by an independent judiciary and free press as set out in the Charter, might best establish the Revolutionary tradition of freedom. Mainly through the habit of lawfulness and love of constitutional form, man could become free. His training as a lawyer and judge, his aristocratic temperament and his contemplative analytical mind led him to question and to survey the rapid social change and the decline of traditional ideals and ethical principles. He looked to his friends for confirmation of his conclusions, and sought in his correspondence to clarify his generalizations.

In Gobineau, Tocqueville saw both a friend and a symptom of the times. His concern and affection for the high-spirited young philosopher was mixed throughout their sixteen years of correspondence. In Socratic dialogue with query and argument, Tocqueville maintained his role of mentor and friend as Gobineau turned from an impetuous critic to the role of a frustrated but unyielding historian. For this reason, the fervor and abrupt confrontation of ideas in the Correspondence presents us with

exciting details of opinions and inclinations that marked the spiritual climate of France during 1840 and the following decade. In this relationship, one may sense something of the conflicting moods in France, where the eighteenth century ideas of Man's greatness, and of the omnipotence of his reason had been submerged by a new contempt for the times and a belief in Man's limited powers. Tocqueville's mistrust of the philosophers for their contribution to this state of mind was alien to the young Gobineau who delighted in the use of reason and saw no sacred subjects but only the pleasure of attack.

It is likely that Tocqueville met Gobineau prior to 1843, probably through mutual royalist friends, Louis de Kergorlay and Comte de Rémusat, with whom Gobineau had cooperated on a short lived provincial revue championing decentralized government. Arthur de Gobineau, having failed exams at St. Cyr in 1835, had stayed on in Paris with his wealthy but erratic uncle, Thibaut-Joseph, who later was to leave him a small legacy and chateau. With high hopes for literary success, the young nineteen year old threw himself into the world of journalism progressing from book reviews to travel accounts and stories. Eight years of work, while bringing some recognition however gave little security. For this reason he gladly accepted Tocqueville's offer of two thousand francs for a year's research beginning in the spring of 1843. Later when the July monarchy fell and the citizen-King was replaced by the Prince-President of the Second Republic, Tocqueville, as Foreign Minister, was to rescue Gobineau again. In choosing his protégé as "chef de cabinet" Tocqueville affirmed his high admiration for Gobineau's literary and analytical skills.

He safeguarded Gobineau's future with the promise of a posting in the diplomatic
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corps.

Their contacts were not confined to the political sphere. Gobineau was a frequent guest and participant in discussions at the Tocqueville home. And yet with common friends, and shared aristocratic sentiments, with similar repugnance for bourgeois tastes, Gobineau's aggressive temperament and outlook on the world contrasted sharply with that of Tocqueville. The key to this lies in their respective families.

Small, sensitive, dignified and intense, Alexis Charles Henri Cléral de Tocqueville was distinguished among his contemporaries by his great idealism and an extraordinary sense of responsibility. Born in Paris, July 29, 1805, the third son of an old Norman family, Tocqueville took pride in his heritage. His admiration for British government led him to recall frequently that an ancestor, Cléral de Tocqueville had invaded England with William the Conqueror. His father served as mayor in the rich area of Verneuil near Paris under Napoleon. With the return of the Bourbons, he received appointments as prefect in various departments. When Tocqueville became judge auditeur at Versailles in 1827, he did not share his father's conservative legitimist views but nevertheless he remained a respectful loyal son. Throughout his political career from 1839 to 1849 as Deputy for Valognes in the Chamber, as Member of the Constitutional Committee and as Foreign Minister of France, he exemplified the same able and dedicated public service that had characterized his father's career.

Of all the influences molding his mind and character, the earliest and deepest

1. Ibid., p. 10.

on Gobineau was undoubtedly his family tradition. But he regarded it in a far different way. Born on the anniversary of Bastille Day, 1816, it has been remarked that Arthur de Gobineau's whole life was spent in reaction to the ideals of July 14. His reactionary, irresponsible father, from an undistinguished royalist family did little to encourage his son. More frequently he ridiculed his adolescent aspirations to be a poet, and an artist. Gobineau's early life spent in the environs of Paris was tinged with tension and insecurity. After ugly quarrels, the Comtesse Gobineau separated from her husband taking the thirteen year old Arthur with his older sister Caroline to Switzerland. There at the Castle of Inzlingen, he studied German with a Heidelberg tutor soon to become his mother's lover. Affected by the scorn and loneliness of this family life, Arthur de Gobineau developed into a coldly self-sufficient critic of people. Denied affection, uncertain of his status, undecided in his vocation, being penniless and dependant on his wit until late in life, Gobineau reflected this insecurity in his almost pathetic dependence on illustrious friends and his overwhelming need to justify himself publicly as a scholar and an aristocrat.

Tocqueville's evident modesty and sympathetic interest in others is a contrast to Gobineau's often expressed conceit and personal ambition. From his mild loving mother, granddaughter of Malherbes, and the learned Abbé Lésieur, Tocqueville had been introduced to tales of the sufferings of relatives and friends during the violence of the Revolution. From them he was to gain his vast respect for the Christian religion and his awareness of the particular Christian heritage of Europe. His marriage to Mary Motley, an older devoutly Catholic English woman was to reflect the same ten-

derness and devotion of his parents' marriage. And from letters written after retirement to Tocqueville, the family chateau in Normandy, the generous, fatherly Christian concern for his tenants, his young friends and relatives is quite apparent. His death at Cannes, April 16, 1859, was mourned widely. For Gobineau, it meant the loss of his most sincere yet critical friend and the closing of a relationship of warmth and acceptance.

A few years before Gobineau's own lonely death in Turin in October 1872, he wrote his sister Caroline, a Benedictine nun at the Abbey de Solesmes "I alone of all my contemporaries deserve to be honored, and yet I have been repeatedly denied honor". Like many of his self-pitying comments this remark concealed the more attractive and appealing qualities of the personality we see revealed in his letters to the childless Tocqueville. But it does suggest the bitter depths of an acutely intelligent and sensitive man thirsting for recognition. His marriage was disappointing, culminating in the eventual abandonment of his two unresponsive daughters and his wife in Paris, as he went off to serve as Minister of France to Greece, Brazil and Sweden in the twenty years following Tocqueville's death. Each of these assignments, however, brought compensations. His correspondence with Mérimée, two Athenian girl friends, and with the Brazilian Emperor Dom Pedro I provided him with the opportunity to discuss literature, write poetry and to speculate on the politics of the future. And though finally he went to Italy to pursue his avocation of sculpture with the widowed Comtesse de la Tour and her daughter after retirement, he indulged his resentment against his early difficulties by the stubborn writing of the

history of Otto Jarl, a Norwegian pirate. This rather fantastic account of the descendants of Jarl, Ernst Cassirer has characterized as the total negation of all Gobineau's vaunted scientific aims, as he systematically attempted to prove the dubious Gobineau title to nobility.

The turning point in the Tocqueville-Gobineau correspondence occurs with the 1848 Revolution and Gobineau's promised assignment as Secretary to the Embassy at Berne, bringing his career into sharper definition. Their political differences, hitherto confined to conversations became more apparent. Gobineau's open support of Louis Napoleon, and his anti-republican views produced reactions of impatience from Tocqueville. Yet while castigating the bourgeois government that placed private and personal enjoyment over the interests of France, Tocqueville refused to despair of the possibilities of democracy. Between the two men, this was to develop into an open debate on the values of liberty and the prospects of democracy. Tocqueville's attitude cooled.

"I am for everyone a bit of the continuation of your reflection", Gobineau¹ exclaimed from Berne in 1851 after a lengthy and detailed observation of Swiss politics. Tocqueville's displeasure melted. "Your interesting letter", he replied, "proves to me more and more, just what I always believed, that the career into which you have been thrown by hazard, suits you more than any other, and it forms the theater in which you are called by nature to distinguish yourself the most"².

But notwithstanding his apparent competence and his support of the new govern-

1. Tocqueville, *Oeuvres Complètes*, IX, p.187.

2. Ibid., p. 175.

ment, Gobineau's career was chequered with controversies. "Remember every day that you don't have to prove your talents but your sociability", Tocqueville advised his impetuous friend. From Berne, where he stayed till 1854, to Hanover, where for five months he acted as Charge d'Affaires to Frankfurt, and finally to Teheran, where he was in charge of the Legation from July 1856 to January 1858, Gobineau wrote regularly to his older friend. These letters with vivid descriptions of travel, and original comments on the conditions of Asian people, their customs, their tendencies, their needs and their passions, provide a sketch of the contradictory attitudes held by Gobineau. They also provide an insight into qualities that hindered his diplomatic and academic advancement, namely his pride and his concern for scholarly recognition.

The same event plunging Gobineau into his diplomatic career brought Tocqueville's retirement and his search into French history. During the winter of 1850-51 in Sorrento on a vacation, the idea of a book on Napoleon first came to mind. What forces were furnished by the French, and what was Napoleon's peculiar genius, that led to the great suppression of liberty, the ensuing sterility of minds, the disappearance of great personalities, and the destruction of all social responsibility? "Violence mixed with philosophy and enlightenment. There we have Napoleon and the nineteenth century together". From this early sketch, came further questions on the nature of the French Revolution and its consequences. The first volume of L'Âncien Régime et la Révolution appeared June 1856, and was translated in the same year into English by his good friend Henry Reeve. The second volume, unfinished because of

1. Tocqueville, The European Revolution and Correspondence with Gobineau, p. 142.

his sudden death, contained substantial notes on the history of the Revolution, the coming of Napoleon and the Empire, and general reflections on the Revolution. The projected work stemmed from the same dedication that had prompted his earliest work, Democracy in America. The passion for liberty was the taste of only a few enlightened individuals, he wrote early in his career to Baron Stoffels. But his goal was to present this passion for liberty, his love of justice and order, and his attachment for morality, morality in such rational terms, that it might become an article of faith for those seeking to know what contributions liberty might make in assuring the dignity of men. ¹ Twenty years later in his correspondence with Gobineau he was to articulate this creed of liberty in his refutation of Gobineau's racism and in defense of his own historical work.

Gobineau's publication of the *Essay* in 1853 brought guarded criticism from his friend. Angered and saddened by the injustice and fear permeating society under Napoleon's paternalism, he discerned several new trends in France. The most terrifying was the evident powerlessness of individuals to fight government censorship of thought. The spreading power of bourgeois values, the sacrifice of frankness and sincerity for expediency, and the disappearing tradition of honor, dignity and loyalty he saw with new concern. For this he despised his fellow-historian-statesman Guizot who as Premier and spokesman for bourgeois liberalism had ruled the government in the interests of one class. And for this reason he preferred the company of the vanquished aristocracy, from whom he differed in interests and opinions, but who at least ² shared a language, and an awareness of when to talk and when to keep silent. But

1. J. P. Mayer, *Alexis de Tocqueville; A Political Biography*, p.18.

2. Tocqueville, *The Recollections of Alexis de Tocqueville*, p.202.

Gobineau's attack on the age's "infantile passion for equality" he saw as an unhealthy attack on these trends.

Gobineau's distaste for violence and disorder in the crowd was expressed in his aggressive proposals on the merits of force and absolute government. His youthful association with eight artistic aristocratic friends in a society vowed to imitate the Renaissance despots was prologue to his theories on the superiority of the bold adventurous man. His fascination for the Germans and the natural aristocracy has a certain consistency, J. J. Chevalier points out, as one considers Gobineau's unusual education and family background. But all these strains make up but one side of his personality.

It was Gobineau's absorption in science and philosophy that affected so profoundly his anti-Christian attitudes and that led him to a deep personal pessimism expressed in his anti-egalitarian tracts.

This theme of anti-egalitarianism was first exhibited to Tocqueville in Gobineau's 1844 study Sur La Morale. Here Gobineau pointed out that the success of Christianity lay in its breakdown of all social barriers. The poor and the weak seeking to eliminate all spiritual inequality proclaimed the abolition of all hierarchy and all distinctions, and the apostles preached only love of man and respect for God.² But, Gobineau continued, the promises of early Christianity were insufficient. It was only with the arrival of the barbarians, conquerors of the Roman Empire, that "the principles of pure liberty touched the principles of absolute despotism and reduced

1. Tocqueville, Oeuvres Complètes, IX, p.17.

2. Ibid., "Sur la Morale", p.311.

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 them to ash".

Feudal liberties brought by the barbarians' whip, alone brought strength to Europe's history, proposed Gobineau. From this it was a short step to Gobineau's anger against the Monarchy, which through its dealings with the jealous, egalitarian bourgeoisie had led to the oppressive centralization that destroyed the ancient liberties. But unlike Tocqueville's awareness that the aristocracy had itself furthered this centralization, Gobineau's hatred of the Revolution and of democracy distorted his vision. It led him to a perspective looking backward only at the more praiseworthy aspects of feudalism, and the least reputable moments of Christianity. In later years, his friend, Rémusat, was to call him a typical product of his age, an anti-Christian with feudalist ideas. Because his ideal society appeared to be unattainable, Gobineau's code was governed entirely by hatred of the Revolution and racism.

Scholars such as Jacques Barzun and Hannah Arendt have shown that Gobineau's admiration for feudal liberties and their Germanic origins, was but one aspect of a long history of controversies among French historians. Whether the French were predominantly influenced by the Celtic, Nordic or Latin traditions was a matter of debate even to 1870. The Comte de Boulainvilliers, writing at the end of the reign of Louis XIV pointed out that the nobles of France owed their personal independence to "Germanic liberties". Montesquieu and other intellectuals of the eighteenth century echoed similar thought. The sturdy independence of the Germanic nobles introduced a new concept, unknown in ancient times, and to the Christian Church, was

1. Ibid., p.313.

the claim, but what was really admired was the shunning of all public responsibilities.

Paralleling Gobineau's mysterious mixture of feudal, anti-Christian exaltation of force, was his extraordinary interest in languages. In Switzerland at the College de Bienne, Gobineau was first introduced to classical studies. Latin and Greek were taught by German professors, and it was here that he was to develop his disdain for all the classical heritage of Rome.

More to his liking were the exotic studies of Sanscrit and Arabic, Persian and Chinese. With enthusiasm he plunged into the examination of comparative grammars. This adolescent interest was to evolve into a major concern. Many years later in Persia he published several archeological works, including one on cuniform texts; two histories on Persia, and many travel books on the Asiatic countries he visited were an outgrowth of this same interest. Gobineau's identification as an Orientalist may be crowned by his role in bringing Europe's attention to the growth of Babism!

"It is impossible to imagine a more profoundly good and affectionate man", Gobineau once wrote his family. "I am thus completely dedicated to him".¹ This personal loyalty Tocqueville was always to recognize despite his distaste for Gobineau's ideas, and his concern for Gobineau's conceit. Throughout his life he displayed amazing sensitivity to the problems that others faced, and empathized with the nuances of mood that characterized their outlook on life. We are each logical in our system of thinking, he pointed out to Gobineau, but whereas you find men

1. Tocqueville, The European Revolution and Correspondence with Gobineau, p.16.

degenerate I only find them ignorant. Your approach toward men differs, he suggests, because of the terrible struggles of your youth. Tocqueville's wisdom, candour and good will shine forth in the reassuring supportive tone, not apparent in his other correspondence.

"As regards my love of freedom, I differ less from those who disagree with me than they may imagine ... Even despots do not deny the merits of freedom; only they wish to keep it for themselves, claiming no one else is worthy of it. Thus our quarrel is not about the value of freedom per se, but stems from our opinion of our fellow men, high or low as the case may be." So Tocqueville wrote three years prior to his death in the preface to his great history.

There are overtones here of his early dialogue with Gobineau. It is not the issue of the use of freedom, but the view of mankind that is involved.

CONCLUSION

Thus there are moral dimensions to the Tocqueville-Gobineau Correspondence. Tocqueville's lifelong study of the development of equality and the urge to freedom had revealed to him not only the complexity of their past, but also the precarious influence of their achievements. His research on the violent course of the Revolution, the nature of the new social order, and his speculations on the future with its possible gains and losses for individuals left him in no doubt that Liberty alone was capable of delivering western democratic nations from the evils of despotic government and materialistic goals. His lifework consisted in making this truth apparent. This moral commitment to an idea, is the important contrast. That a contemporary held in esteem and affection should continue to distrust humanity and retain a perspective on history which appeared to betray Tocqueville's personal commitment to the cause of freedom was painful.

"Strong hatreds, ardent passions, high hopes, and powerful convictions are, all, necessary to make human minds move. Right now nothing is strongly believed, nothing is loved, nothing is hated," Tocqueville wrote during his last year, "and people wish for nothing but a quick profit on the stock exchange." Gobineau's gloomy Germanic criticism of France had called forth Tocqueville's own tragic awareness of an apathetic uncreative nation." Yet", he added "France has never had a temper so permanently depressed as to be interested in nothing but material welfare, and I keep hoping that a new movement which will raise her will power will also reanimate her literature." This is an affirmation of the beneficial impact of French writers who during the

1. Tocqueville, The European Revolution and Correspondence with Gobineau, p.326

previous three centuries had powerfully stirred and moved the spirit of mankind. It is an acceptance of France's historic mission to liberate mankind from arbitrary power, a thesis Tocqueville was to present over and over.

"The character of our nation is so peculiar that to understand it the study of human nature in general will not be sufficient. It constantly surprises those who study it." Such was Tocqueville's fundamental commitment. And it was the combination of personal commitment and detachment that was to make him such a creative friend and historian.

CHAPTER II

Tocqueville's assignment "Sur l'état des doctrines morales au dix-neuvième siècle et sur leur applications à la politique et à l'administration" had been given to him by the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques in the spring of 1843. Turning to his young friend, he confessed "You are able to help pull me from my present torpor through my obligation to write to you." Three years after completing the second philosophical volume of Democracy in America, Tocqueville was still "seeking exclusively for those newer things which might directly influence the actions of our contemporaries." The purpose of the study, he proposed was to reflect what new concepts of morality existed, and in what ways these principles related to Christianity.

Gobineau's early replies revealed to the more mature Tocqueville, an attitude surprisingly hard on Christianity. His self-styled "rationalistic, atheistic, and Hegelian" criticisms provoked Tocqueville to a more precise statement of his personal Christian faith. Largely because of Gobineau's conflicting attitude towards religion, and Tocqueville's increased political responsibilities, work on the project was laid aside after a year. Despite the unsatisfactory development of ideas, here, much of the controversy to ensue ten years later with the publication of Essai appears in outline. Gobineau's youthful cynicism and agnostic attitudes color every comment on political, moral and religious problems and demonstrate his passionate feeling for the use of reason. He presages a development of modern historiography here in his effort to break away from a biblical-theological viewpoint.

Certainly, Gobineau believed there was a new morality which had emerged in Europe since the eighteenth century. This new morality no longer depended on the

sanctions of faith or of hope for salvation in another world. No! Modern society instead rejected the Christian myths of the holiness of suffering and the values of mildness, pity, and love by preferring open attack on social evils. The state now broadened its area of duties to provide equal rights of work, and it enlarged its scope to the whole range of human welfare. Humanitarianism, he pointed out, had replaced the Christian ideals of compassion and charity, which had been restricted previously to certain suffering individuals. Humanitarianism and the organic state are the new moral principles he sees. That they are incoherently expressed, ill-defined, and more visible in facts than in books, he admits, is a disadvantage. But, nevertheless, they exist. The success of Christianity was evidence, not of its originality, but the means of dominance it gave to the victims of force and violence, through the Christian obligations of love and gentleness.

Thus, Gobineau attacked, and rejected Tocqueville's two main premises: that modern society was evidencing only an extension of Christian principles, and that rationalism and new social theories still did not make Christianity out-moded. Tocqueville's admission that Christianity's weak point had been the failure to define social, patriotic and public duties Gobineau supported. But the reason for this, he claimed, was the inadequacy of religion, and the particular mediocrity of Christianity. Yet perhaps his comments are not so much a direct attack on Christianity as an affirmation of the role of reason at this stage. Ten years later in the Essai, Gobineau, professing his Catholicism, is still entirely anti-Christian.

In the spirit of Voltaire, he earnestly explains to Tocqueville that Christianity

no longer can contribute to European culture because it has set itself against the main intellectual currents by being based on irrational faith. Gobineau reflects two nineteenth century views: first, that man has reached his most advanced stage in history, thanks to his rational powers; religion being revealed as no longer necessary; secondly, the only satisfactory proof of moral knowledge must be sought through rationalism. It is Cassirer's contention that Gobineau's entire philosophy of history is the outgrowth of this Kantian position.

Such a bold attack on Europe's spiritual heritage prompted Tocqueville to clarify his personal conviction on the nature of Christianity and its revolutionary aspects. Gobineau, he perceived, was challenging the reality of faith in transcendentals. Intuitively, he saw that Gobineau's attitude was not only non-Christian, but indeed anti-Christian.

"I am not a believer", he admitted, "but, all unbeliever that I am, I have never been able to prevent my profound emotion upon reading the Gospels." The Christianity of the Gospels gave men a concept of status, and an idea of their rights and duties as individuals. It showed that the world was a comprehensible place, that God intervened in its history and that men were free to determine their actions. Furthermore, Christianity created a human community that went far beyond the frontiers of nationality. It put into evidence the equality, the unity and the fraternity of all men. Finally because the sanction of moral laws for this community, lay not in this world but in the next, men held a purer higher moral goal than ever before.

This is Tocqueville the practical moralist speaking. That common goals and

1. For a discussion of Tocqueville's religious beliefs and causes of his unhappy doubts see Antoine Redier, *Comme disait M. de Tocqueville*, Paris, 1925, p.282. This standard view is being challenged today by Catholic historians such as Gargan who would place him fully in the Catholic tradition.

values were necessary to a creative dynamic society was a central point in Tocqueville's conception of history. Government held its sway over society not so much by rational voluntary decisions on the part of citizens as by "that instinctive and to a certain extent, voluntary agreement which results from similarity of feeling and resemblances of opinion." With every man seeking his own self-interest the stability of society would be threatened. Only faith provides the necessary sanction to moral law which allows men to submit willingly to its authority. Men's conduct is governed by the existence of this Christian moral freedom.

It is not Christian theology, the dogmas of the Incarnation or the Redemption that he is defending, for as he has pointed out, this identification with the Church he cannot make. But it is the attack on theology, leading to contemporary weakening of faith and great indulgence in material pleasures that will have such dire political consequences. Because of this he would forgive the intolerance, and narrowness of Christianity. Man's tendency, Tocqueville points out, is always too ready an acceptance of man's material nature, too eager a search for the rehabilitation of the flesh. Echoing Pascal's thought that man is incapable of certain knowledge but also incapable of absolute ignorance, Tocqueville questions whether Gobineau has ever sensed the spirit of inner freedom inherent in the Gospels.

Christianity is a religion and not a philosophy. Man's growing sense of conscience is a modern phenomenon, but the diminished importance of religion does not destroy the necessity of faith, nor the truth of the insufficiencies of works without faith. Christianity may have overemphasized the spirit, but without the conception of

1. Tocqueville, Democracy in America, II, Bradley, ed., p.403.

a divine order men would be lost in the anarchical pursuit of their own interests and their private voices of authority. "I would believe more in the coming of a new religion than in the growing grandeur and prosperity of our modern societies without religion." When men are deprived of the security of their vision of the next world they are led by their logical make up to submit entirely to those who can make doctrines to fit their goals. "Man must believe if he would not be a slave," Tocqueville declared.

After this vehement defense of his religious orientation, Tocqueville continued, "The only difference between you and me is that you have more ambition than I . . . I limit myself to finding new consequences where you wish to discover new principles. You want to change the face of the world, nothing less."

While Gobineau courteously excused his enthusiasm to see new points in the age, and while protesting the implication that he is a Voltairian and a skeptic, he refused to concede any points. All religions have as their goal, the perfection of man through the idea of duty, and the great willing of the Good. But why, he asks Tocqueville, are you not a believer? As a serious reflective man you know the consequences of faith. You are too practical and reasonable to respect this authority, for you see that Christianity has had its day. A new moral system is in the process of emerging, one which will be separate from religion. But unlike the arrival of Christianity to prevent the wild excesses of paganism, modern morality will deal with man's more complex needs, by being based on the enlightened psychology that permits any kind

1. Tocqueville, Oeuvres Complètes, IX, p. 68.

2. Ibid.

of reasonable satisfaction which involves no inconvenience to others. Religion is only a device for those incapable of thinking or fearful of discussion, analysis and questioning.

"An amiable, intelligent, and unorthodox adversary", Tocqueville calls Gobineau in his reply. Touched by the insinuation that he is more concerned with the political utility of religion than its absolute truth, Tocqueville's reserve permits him only to state that the two share antithetical positions on the social value of religions. The true purpose of laws, he observes, whether secular or religious, is to regulate matters of daily life and set the general tone of habits and ideas. But Gobineau's weakness for Islam "which has done such good" provokes a final comment. The fatalism of Islam has been the primary cause of Moslem decadence in its failure to provide progressive interests and attitudes. How, Tocqueville asks, can a faith with such purely negative social consequences be admired? The Revolution had at least furthered two Christian principles: the idea of equality and the idea of men's duty to help those who have less. Even if the question of a new moral standard is in dispute, surely this is one observable phenomenon of the age.

"I like you too much to be indifferent as to whether you share some of my beliefs," Tocqueville wrote. "Yet I console myself in the thought that in the realm of finer sentiments we are and shall remain on the same side."²

The problem in understanding contemporary history, Tocqueville knew was of finding evidence and interpreting it, not as a prophet but as a participant. Gobineau's

1. Ibid., p.69.

2. Ibid.

point on the emergence of humanitarianism and of the organic community, Tocqueville agreed, was important. That every individual must be socially useful and be respected for what he might contribute was a specific modern feeling. But where in writing or in speech had the idea been formulated? In what legislative efforts had the government specifically implemented the principles of universal education, and the equality of manual and intellectual labor? In what new ways was the dignity and power of the individual to be preserved?

The new problem as Tocqueville saw it, was not the question of deciding what aims the community should hold, but what means should be used to attain these aims. This same curiosity was to lead Tocqueville to a study of the social life of the Roman Empire in the third and fourth centuries as a means of comparison with the Revolution. The main intellectual phenomenon, of the decline of human worth and dignity that he observed in the Revolution, he also saw reflected in the social upheavals of the Greco-Roman civilization. The manner in which Roman public law affected the German ideas of status, the deliberate policy of the Administration to have the lower classes penetrate into the aristocracy, all gave him insight into the mechanism of social change.

His awareness of the changing search for a moral standard in history led him to distinguish clearly between values, rights and obligations. Tocqueville's own aristocratic nature led him to place duty as the standard for personal morality. But studies of Greek civilization, and later the Stoic-Christian synthesis of thought, brought to his mind that self-realization was the moral standard binding on all men. In the religious sanction of Christianity, the ideas of liberty and of equality are intertwined.

Only with the feudal period and the age of nobility did liberty become identified with a practical but essentially negative system of privileges which ensured the independence of the individual. The highest value was thus placed on freedom to act independently, and any attacks on these liberties were in terms of demands to share in the privileges. This period of liberty was one however, where obligations and rights were understood to be linked.²

The effect of the Reformation, Tocqueville had observed, was to reemphasize the importance of the individual and his individual rights. The concept of civil and political liberties, for religious toleration and social equality, Tocqueville saw was a new one, because individualism as expressed in the Revolution demanded a personal freedom that suggested that happiness was the only appropriate moral standard. The demands for individual rights thus might inhibit the equality and justice accorded to others. Tocqueville's interest then in this study on nineteenth century morality was to discover in what ways the state had joined the ideas of equality and liberty for social justice. And for this reason he welcomed Gobineau's studies on education, and savings banks more than the other expositions on the morality of Kant, Schelling, and Fichte. For Kant, Tocqueville observed, lay outside the Christian tradition, and consequently outside the field of study.

What we learn from these letters is Tocqueville's view of liberty as self-realization; not liberty as a particular program but as the antithesis to oppression and tyranny whatever its form might be. In this sense he acknowledges that the idea of

1. Harold Laski, "Liberty", Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, vol. 9.

liberty takes its particular content along with the limitations of time and place.

Christian liberty was the fountainhead for European thought. Tocqueville's comment that "Christianity to me ... is vastly different from what preceded it, and we are much less removed from it than you say" recalls the efforts of his uncle Chateaubriand, and others such as Lamartine, Hugo and Michelet who represented a tide of French political philosophy that J. P. Mayer calls a romantic reaction to the Revolutionary rationalism and irreligion.¹ But unlike Chateaubriand, Tocqueville could not make as direct a statement that for the improvement of society there was "no solution for the future except through Christianity, and that Catholic Christianity."²

In his dispute with Gobineau he did not move beyond the question of the social utility of religions, to the challenge of what reality there was in human liberty. "Liberty cannot be established without morality, and morality without faith," he wrote in the first volume of the Democracy. "To compel all men to follow the same course towards the same object is a human conception; to introduce infinite variety of action, but so combined that all these acts lead in a thousand different ways to the accomplishment of one great design is a divine conception."³ Therefore liberty as a philosophy could not be expressed in an absolute way.

The association of the idea of liberty with one's self interest had been the heritage of the Philosophes. Tocqueville's idea of liberty is associated with a way of thinking and acting as a human being. The largest and most valuable meaning he finds is that liberty is a condition of the whole world order, growing out of complexity

1. J. P. Mayer, Political Thought in France From Sièyes to Sorel, p.32.

2. Ibid., p.84.

3. Tocqueville, Democracy in America, II, Bradley ed., p.356

rather than simple causes. Essentially men seek to be respected as ends in themselves and seek to develop themselves through their work, their government and their private actions. That this idea gave Tocqueville confidence and satisfaction is a recurring theme in his correspondence.

Because the idea of liberty in itself provides no specific guides to action, Tocqueville is careful not to define it as a natural law - progressing in regular and continuous development in history. In the context of both France and America he had been able to trace the evolution of liberty, by reference to the Idea of Rights. No great men or nations had existed without this concept. Its cause and effect on human relations might be easily seen when applied to politics. It was this that enabled men to distinguish between tyranny and anarchy. To express liberty as a philosophy then, it must be related to laws.

Of the conflicting aims of liberty and equality Tocqueville was well aware. In his study on democracy he had observed that the desire for equality destroyed all the barriers which ought to restrain it, and paralyzed all the individual energies which ought to resist it. In times of great social change, the very instability of the community led to the denial of civil and political liberties and the desire for centralization. But this, Tocqueville saw was wrong. "I have but one opinion, an enthusiasm for liberty and the dignity of the human race," he wrote in March, 1837 to Henry Reeve and a major concern of his first volume of Democracy in America had been to show that religion alone safeguarded the security of society through its

1. Tocqueville, Democracy in America, II, Bradley, ed., p.255.

influence on laws, manners, and customs, and that it was religion that gave the divine sanction to liberty.

For liberty to have meaning in society, men should be taught to be virtuous and to respect the idea of rights in both the public and private sphere. In the experiencing of rights that concern his own interest, man comes to value political, civil and economic rights for he recognizes that this alone will bring him equality. Thus Tocqueville affirms his guide to moral and political liberty in pointing out his belief in the value of personality and the capacity of the individual to react upon his environment.

Gobineau's study La Morale, had covered the historical and scientific background of morality by illustrating its development from pure dogma to the modifications offered by religion and philosophy. His belief that religion no longer had the power to affect contemporary standards and values led him to reject the Christian values of the importance of moral effort and consciousness of personal responsibility.

This, Tocqueville refused to accept. During the month of October, 1843, John Stuart Mill sent Tocqueville a gift copy of his Logic. Praising the author for its originality, simplicity and clarity, he remarked particularly on Mill's application of logic to the study of liberty. Man's liberty was not the result of political machinery or laws, Tocqueville remarked. Mill had passed beyond his rigid Benthamite training by seeking a solution in both politics and morality. "Your distinction between necessity and irresistableness and fatalism," Tocqueville said, "provides a neutral territory for discussion between the two opposite schools."

1. Tocqueville, Oeuvres Complètes, VI, p. 345 et. seq.

"I myself regard this chapter (on human liberty) as the most important of the book... I do not wish to impose my own solution on those who are satisfied with their own," Mill replied. "But I believe there are many men, for whom it will be, as it was for me, a veritable anchor of salvation."¹

Tocqueville, the "non-believer" yet profoundly convinced Christian, saw in the spirit of Christian duty and personal responsibility the undergirding of European cultural history. Giving up these common spiritual goals and values for the "new" bourgeois morality of humanitarianism, self-interest and the doctrine of the larger value of the state over that of the dignity of the individual, he foresaw, would lead to spiritual bankruptcy. With liberty and human dignity thus abolished, all that might lie ahead would be pessimism and apathy, the same crisis known to antiquity. And that God should allow men to destroy themselves so, he refused to believe.²

1. *Ibid.*, p. 346.

2. For a similar statement of faith in Europe's Christian heritage, see Max Scheler, a contemporary German Protestant theologian in the address "Christian Love and the Twentieth Century" in On the Eternal in Man, p.362 ff.

CHAPTER III

When Gobineau's Essai Sur l'inégalité des races humaines was published in 1853, it neither created a shock nor provoked much comment from his friends. Tocqueville's initial reaction was guarded criticism. "You know that I am unable to reconcile myself to your system . . . and even the reasons that you give me to make it acceptable, strengthens my opposition which remains latent only because of my affection for you." Later he was to write to Henry Reeve, "Here on the Continent books are continually appearing which have for aim - or may have for effect - the restriction or total annihilation of the idea of liberty. The Germans notably are doing their very best to prove that men are like horses, and that it is enough to substitute one strain of blood for another, to give them different feelings and different ideas. There has recently appeared in France a big book in four volumes which imparts these fine discoveries." Despite his affection for Gobineau, Tocqueville recognized the materialistic implications of Gobineau's theory of racial inequality as the basis of cultural development in history. That this was a timely book bearing on the actual political problems he understood well.

But he, as other mutual friends, Beaumont, Rémusat, Thiers, and Mignet, were cautious in their arguments seeing that Gobineau's efforts were nearer the new generation than their own. Though Gobineau hoped for an upsetting "electric shock" in his monumental effort to turn history into a science, Tocqueville shrewdly pointed out that the community could not support such negativism, no matter how logically the

1. Tocqueville, Oeuvres Complètes, VIII, p.500.

book presented current materialistic beliefs. Between this fear and passivity, and the fatiguingly philosophical and erudite tone Gobineau's analysis of the crisis of European civilization stood little chance of attracting readers. But, he predicted, the Germans whose passion for abstract truths without thought for their practical consequences, or fanatics, seeking to justify their contempt for certain individuals might be the greatest utilizers of the work. Cassirer supports Tocqueville's insight in claiming that Gobineau's imaginative racial interpretation did the most of all nineteenth century doctrines to prepare the way for the ideology of the totalitarian state. Gobineau's selective admiration for Aryanism became popular through the circle of Richard Wagner in Bayreuth, and later was taken up by German nationalists opposed to the Third Republic. And though he personally was not anti-Semitic his theory became the weapon of anti-Semitism.

Gobineau's goal was to create a new science of historical writing taking the themes of races, societies and diverse civilizations, rather than individuals, nationalities or states. In the preface to the Essai, the author proposed a system that would unlock the mysteries of the past and future. The key was this: the ethnic differences of strong and weak races dominated all other problems of history and explained the destiny of mankind.² Like Tocqueville, his curiosity had been stimulated by the political and social consequences of the Revolution. The destruction of the aristocracy, and the uncontrolled spread of equality and centralized government were great, typical features of the age. But scientific evidence existed to show that these features were

1. Ernest Cassirer, The Myth of State, pp. 251 et. seq.

2. Gobineau, Essai Sur l'inégalité des races humaines, v. I, p.22.

but aspects of a predestined degeneration of mankind. He was convinced that all that was grand, or creative in science, art and in civilization at large, was the issue of one family whose different branches ruled throughout the world. His thesis, he claimed, was a system of thought about history, not an argument, and its propositions could be demonstrated to be "mathematically certain."

Though Gobineau approached his reflections on the Revolution in the spirit of a pathologist of the deadly disease of democracy, he saw his work as integrating and synthesizing all branches of knowledge in a comprehensive way. The new historical science must be one that one might see and touch, he claimed. The truths of scientific study of man should be known at large, no longer need the complexities of human behavior puzzle men. The science of ethnology gave a new tool to philosophy and history in showing that neither environment, climate, political institutions nor men's religious beliefs and actions had an effect on history. Thus by singling out the Aryan family of the white race, whose superior qualities of beauty, intelligence and strength were combined with the inferior yellow and black racial qualities, Gobineau predicted the future might be indeed far more terrible than the present, owing to the inevitable mechanism of blood mixture.

"Is it not true", his sister Caroline was to ask him years later, "that you see the history of humanity entirely from the special viewpoint of ethnology, a nice science, but limited, and certainly not cognizant of metaphysical truth." Gobineau's materialistic and monistic thesis of the sole factor of race in history reflects the spread of a

1. Op. cit., p.551.

2. The Correspondence with his sister contains an interesting discussion on the nature of religion, and the Catholic orthodoxy of the Essai. Mère Bénédicté's final assessment unlike Tocqueville's, was of Gobineau's essential conformity to Christian doctrine. See Correspondence Avec Mère Bénédicté, v. I, p.88 and p.126 ff.

scientific mentality which was to find more definite form in the writings of Marx and Engels and Darwin.

A characteristic of nineteenth century thought is to see a single idea totally determining the features of society. Gobineau's historical intentions are modern in these three respects: that he seeks to separate methods of systematic analysis from thought based on biblical-theological viewpoints; that he wishes to distinguish what is purely scientific in history without the prejudices of nationalism or caste affecting his analysis, and he wishes to discover the true nature of historical causality. But the irony is that in each of these goals he achieves the opposite effect because of his limiting of the field of history.

Like Marx's economic theory of history, where all events and changes are linked to the mode of production, Gobineau's thesis depends on the assumption of the total intelligibility of history through a single determining idea. His personal disdain and sense of removal from his contemporaries color his most elementary statements. But while his theory of history, like Marx's appears to be clear and simple and orderly in the reduction of all historical development to one cause, the range and future development of science has been entirely limited.

That this phenomenon of racial inequality might be only a myth or a symbolic expression in history does not appear to be one of Tocqueville's arguments. He does point out that racial differences are a fact in the domain of science. Gobineau's questioning of how and why the separation of the species occurred leads him only to the mysterious fact that racial differences seem permanent in both the physical and

moral aspects of man. The further scientific investigation of this mysterious idea of the original unity of man is secondary to the all inclusive argument of the permanent logic of racial inequality.

"I am making, in a word, a moral geology," he wrote proudly.¹ Like his good friend Comte de Rémusat, who in 1340 had proclaimed the Germanic origins of European aristocracy, Gobineau's feudal racial thought had its origins in eighteenth century class consciousness, and he saw no need to contradict the unscientific view of French history as a struggle of a "race" of aristocrats against a "nation" of citizens. His racial interpretation of history, and his "new" moral geology of man's development only reflect the existence of class struggle. Where Tocqueville, in the letter of December 20, 1853, accuses Gobineau of choosing the thesis which is most dangerous for the time (in addition to selecting a false premise on human nature) he foresees particular persuasive appeal of racism as an ideology, separate from class struggle, but just as destructive a weapon for the politician to use. Not till the end of the century, Hannah Arendt points out, did racism gain recognition as an important ideology, a part of the spiritual heritage of the Western world. What began as a theory of class consciousness and anti-nationalism, ended as a rationalization for imperialism and exploitation.³ Gobineau's share in this lies in his philosophy of history, summarized in his last two volumes of the Essai, rewritten and republished in the spring of 1855 as Gobineau travelled via Suez and the Persian Gulf to his new post in Teheran.

1. Op. cit., p.viii.

2. Boulainvilliers, (1717-1737) historian of the Germanic origins of French nobility is described by Barzun in The French Race, 1928, as founder of this stage of racial thought.

3. Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism, p. 153ff.

The old view of the historian's role, Gobineau pointed out was to describe or narrate the sequence of events. Science's advance, however, enriched the role of the historian and made it his duty to explain history. The logical conclusion of his thesis of the existence of racial mixture was that civilization had been on the decline since the time of the first century (B.C. and A.D.) when the white race ceased to be entirely pure. With the increasing mixture, racial prejudices disappeared, but so did liberty. The Stoics formulated the philosophy of equality, which under the Roman Empire had been interpreted in political form through the concept of citizenship. Early Christianity had contributed a religious fervor to the idea of equality, although the reality of racial inequality still held true. Throughout the history of Europe, equality and fraternity came to be linked in secularized form till finally democracy triumphed because of the widespread mediocrity and equality of physical and intellectual conditions in Europe.

Tocqueville's letters at this stage, while he was completing the second volume of his L'Ancien Régime (to be published in June of 1856) are significant not only because he rejects the theory as false, but in seeking to be both scientific and profitable to his friend, he demonstrates and refutes the entire doctrine by pointing out what truth it contains, and in what manner it is wholly untenable.

Gobineau's rejection of any forces other than race in the making of history means that neither luxury, corruption of manners, weakening faith, political fanaticism or men of conviction, talent and energy have any effect on the rise and fall of civilization. All the traditional values of individuality are subservient to the glorification

of race. Gobineau's "idée-mère" was wrong, Tocqueville pointed out, because it was contrary to Christian spirituality. Racism destroys the Christian conception of love and creates a great contempt for individuals. It suggests that effort and individual responsibility cannot lead to a sense of creative independence.

"There is an entire world between us", he concludes in his opening remarks in letters written between October and December, 1853. The book brought up unfamiliar details of human history but nonetheless it appeared to belong to the family of materialistic theories, the most dangerous because its fatalism applied not only to individuals but also to collections of individuals. Such a thesis could scarcely succeed in a society marked by the sterile ill-will of the defeated aristocracy, and the triumphant mediocrity of the bourgeoisie.

Gobineau, well aware that Tocqueville's philosophy of history expressed in Democracy in America was opposed to his views, nonetheless requested his support in furthering his academic advancement just as he had established his diplomatic advancement. Only Tocqueville's letters are available at this phase of the Correspondence, but a fatherly courteous and restrained tone dominates. In general, the book is the most remarkable of Gobineau's writing. His erudite allusions, and his research in geology, archeology, philology and anthropology shows talent. He refers to over fifty sources including such works as African travel diaries, Sanscrit, Hebrew, Persian and Arabic grammars, and even Von Hammer's Geschichte des Osmanischen Reich. The book is well constructed and leads directly to its conclusion. But despite

1. Tocqueville, Oeuvres Complètes, IX, p. 199 ff.

these praises, Tocqueville is unconvinced and unable to see either the truth or the utility of the racial doctrine.

Tocqueville, warming to his subject, and recalling earlier controversies with Gobineau on the relation of politics and morality, states, "what interest might one have persuading a lazy people who live in barbarism, weakness or servitude, that being so by the nature of their race, there is no means to ameliorate their condition by changing their customs or modifying their government? ... from your doctrine comes naturally all the evils of permanent infantile inequality, pride, violence, scorn, tyranny, and servitude in all its forms." The same moral truths operative in private morality hold true for nations. The destiny of man, whether as an individual or in collective form, depends on courage, energy, honesty, good sense and foresight. Gobineau's fatalism suggests that there is no human freedom, and its effect if believed would undoubtedly be pernicious.² Politely contradicting Gobineau, he begs to await Gobineau's spoken eloquence before continuing the discussion.

The beginning of the year 1854 Gobineau moved as First Secretary of the Legation in Frankfurt. "For a man like you who knows how to navigate in the ink bottle of German thought," Tocqueville wrote, "you will find yourself in proper deep water."³ Throughout the year, the controversy died down as Gobineau applied himself to his studies. Tocqueville's resistance was unnecessary as Gobineau found himself overwhelmed by widespread objections and criticism of his thesis and style. This was a manifestation of suffocating mediocre bourgeois taste and intellectual sterility, he

1. Op. cit., p.66

2. Op. cit., p.202.

3. Op. cit., p.211.

saw, and his answer to this enfeeblement of mind was to pursue his course as an independent thinker of the age.¹ Would not Tocqueville, and other admired friends come to see the truth of his "exclusively scientific" pessimism?

"I often am despairing of mankind. Who wouldn't even living so far from it as I do? But I do not despair of this century, which after all, may be marked as one of the great centuries of history, when man has so penetrated nature and achieved the conquest of the globe," Tocqueville answered Gobineau with the arrival of the rewritten conclusion to the first volume of the Essai.

From the oriental setting of Teheran, Gobineau continued to describe the decadence of the East, and the destined dominance of Europeans in Asia. While admitting the ability of Indians and Persians to industrialize and to become educated, he predicted "this is what we ourselves shall become tomorrow."² The contagious contact would only accelerate the decline of Europe. The dishonesty of Europeans in Egypt, the mistaken conception of the construction of a canal at Suez (inevitably to serve the interests of unfriendly nations, the ineffective British policies in Persia and India, all are set forth. His diagnosis of the Persian character as cowardly, lying and insincere recalls his racial criticism of the Eastern countries. But these remarks paled before the ensuing controversy with the appearance of Gobineau's last two volumes in 1856.

Accused of being an assassin of history, Gobineau remonstrated, pointing out his role of a doctor predicting "quite scientifically" the approaching end. Men are

1. Letters written by Flaubert at the same time express an anger similar to Gobineau's. Hugo's *Les Miserables*, he characterized as a device to flatter the populace "Catholic-Socialist rabble, philosophical-evangelical vermin." "Observation," he continued "is a secondary quality in literature, but a contemporary of Balzac and Dickens has no right to depict society so falsely. Posterity will not forgive him for trying to be a thinker - he represents the drift and body of the banal ideas of his time." G. Flaubert, Selected Letters, p.202

2. Op. cit., p.257.

incapable of infinite progress because of their constitutions. History itself shows no development for modern times have brought no new and profound truths about life and death, the origin of living creatures and basic principles of the universe. Neither vices nor virtues may affect the character of a people, because each civilization is less effective and increasingly degenerate. The morality of these "higher truths", Tocqueville sarcastically contested. These "facts" if true, eliminated any form of a religious conception of man's origin and his destiny.

Gobineau's whole system remained incompatible with Catholicism. What can be clearer, Tocqueville inquires than Genesis where the unity of the human races is asserted. How may Christianity's civilizing force be denied. "The Christian precepts are a great social vehicle in the sense that they ease customs, facilitate charity, condemn all violence . . . and reclaim for the soul an authority, which in thousands of applications are for the benefit of the body." In this sense Christianity can make men better mannered, but it does not apply the improvement of morality and intelligence towards perishable things. The identification of Christian law with the interests of this world, causing one to speak of Christian civilization, Gobineau rejects as a false modern doctrine. Christianity has adopted no civilization itself. The Christian Kingdom, one might say directly, is not of this world, because it has neither the intention nor the means to help men change their earthly condition.

This blatant attack on Christianity, Tocqueville understood to be their major conflict. Tocqueville's conception of liberty rested on the cultural context of European Christianity. This he knew to be a creative tradition, one in which it was the right

1. Gobineau, op.cit., vol. 1, p.64.

2. Ibid., p.65.

and duty of the individual to change and one whose doctrines rested on the belief that men have the capacity to achieve character traits that will permit them to be morally self-directing. Gobineau's denial of the place of human will and intelligence as the core of personality was a repudiation of all liberal ideas.

By contrast, Gobineau's letters to the Austrian diplomat, Comte de Prokesch-Osten are illuminating. With this man, twenty years senior whom he had met in Frankfurt in 1854, Gobineau shared a community of feeling and of thought. As Tocqueville's letters became more sarcastic and morally indignant in tone, that summer of 1856, Gobineau turned to his admirer for support. How could liberty or equality be taken to be a natural law? The reality of democracy, the effect of the Revolution, the impossible dreams of the counter-revolutionaries seeking revenge, all these Gobineau attacked with his goal of a scientific history.

"What I worry about is losing myself in the details which erudition brings... or in the little pleasures of the orientalist." All these are but means to the grand end of showing "a hatred for democracy and her arm, the Revolution." In contrast to Maistre and Bonald, Gobineau claimed, it was necessary to recognize the source of historical disaster and accept its eventual end.¹ "But if some one asks me - for what use is this - frankly, I don't know."² Often despairing of his work, dubious about the outcome of the thesis, Gobineau confessed to his friend his need to see the end more clearly.

Prokesch's comment was "Never mind." Such a philosophical work captured

1. Tocqueville, *Oeuvres Complètes*, IX, p.30.

Unfortunately the Correspondence between Gobineau and Prokesch (1854-1876) published in Paris, 1933, is out of print and unavailable.

the spirit of the times. In this sense he echoed Tocqueville's assessment of the Essai. But in contrast to Tocqueville's practical moral and political concerns, Prokesch offered no thought to the uses of the thesis. "I never have become enough of a German . . . that the novelty or merit of an idea made me forget the moral and political effect that it might produce,"¹ Tocqueville wrote. Gobineau's book, by implying that men's blood, muscles and nerves always might be stronger than their will or virtue, even if true (and that he doubted) could never hold any use as a philosophy of life, and it was entirely anti-Christian.

Tocqueville here once more took up his theme of politics and Christian morality. From the 1830's to the 1850's he pointed to the change of religious opinion in France that would lead a man like Rémusat to declare of Gobineau's thesis, "I believe in what you say, but I prefer not to be the one to proclaim it." The sanctimonious support of the Church and its doctrines now had become the official policy of the Second Empire. Gobineau's attack on the Church consequently was ill-timed and twenty years too late for any success, when in all the pulpits, the emperor was being praised for his Christian virtues.

Tocqueville's skepticism of Gobineau's religious convictions brought a letter insisting on his orthodox Catholicism. With all his heart and mind, Gobineau aspired to become a good Catholic with no deficiencies in his conduct. If there was incompatibility, as Tocqueville believed, with his philosophy of history and his Catholic faith, he would abandon his pessimistic thesis immediately.

1. Ibid., p.205

His need for values had turned him from those empty doctrines of rationalism, Hegelianism and atheism, he said. Likewise Rémusat's criticism that Gobineau was a typical product of his age, being an anti-Christian with feudal views, had struck him as being ironically just. Rather than witness these contradictions within himself, he had remedied this gap between his political leanings and his ethical standards. Feuerbach's doctrines of religious illusion and all political doctrines following this, he had abandoned. His Catholicism was now consistent with his views on the values of feudal liberty.

Another factor bringing him back to the Church had been his arrival in Asia. Here, facing the daily dangers of life, he had rediscovered the value of prayer. The implication of withdrawal runs through this letter, and Tocqueville, unable to question and unwilling to doubt the sincerity of Gobineau's confession of faith, merely wondered to himself how Gobineau's racial theses could ever be compatible with the spirit and letter of Christianity.

Yet the Essai while demonstrating uncritical and unsatisfactory historical methods is not devoid of insight. And even though his hypothesis is at base, illogical (only the Aryan family has had the capacity for liberty because of their inherent vigor, beauty and intellect, expressed in a highly developed language) he throws out interesting insights. Since Gobineau's time, scientific anthropology has demonstrated that the Aryans possess no essential superiority over other groups, yet his view of their creative and selective energy has something to commend it.

His organization of only positive points, and his ignoring of contradictory facts,

to support his argument shows how circular his discussion of racial inequality became. To prove the inferiority of the black race, he selects Haiti and Santo Domingo for test cases of the inability of black men to understand Western (Aryan) culture, when it is presented to them .

Of the ten civilizations which have existed as complete societies, all have been derived from the impulse of the white race and all have favored aristocracy for this reason. While his idea of decadence may be misleading, yet Gobineau also valued racial mixture for its cultural necessity. The Aryans, he acknowledges lack imagination, the one trait necessary for the creation of art, possessed by the hybrids of the black and yellow races. This idea Gobineau was to pursue in novels and short stories in the contrast of the reflective reasoning European with the sensitive imaginative Mediterranean temperament.

Gobineau's idea of the decline of historical energy finds support among men like Toynbee and Spengler. But he also demonstrates his personal antipathies so strongly that he can cease to resort to logical or historical arguments. His feudal Germanic bias towards any sign of Aryan aristocracy distorts every view of the role of various people.

The Greeks for example, show their Aryan element in their military strategy and their literary genius. Above all, the Aryan Greek is an individual, "sovereign over himself, free in public life, a true feudal lord, dominating without restraint, his family, children, serfs and bourgeois." ¹ The Iranian concept of personal

1. Gobineau, op.cit., v. II, p.27.

liberty, at the base of Iranian monarchy, is similar, being limited only by the authority of family heads, and the traditions of the Aryans. This value of caste and proper birth is the only classification for liberty. Any hierarchy established according to men's virtues is a non-Aryan doctrine.

Patriotism, he points out is a false idea demanding obedience to law and the authority of public opinion. To these abstractions and legal fictions, the free noble is compelled to sacrifice his personal tastes customs and his greatest aristocratic virtue, that of loyalty to a person. From the Greeks came this false notion of the superiority of the individual who submits to no man but obeys the law. In point of fact, Gobineau claims, the individual has given up his liberty and become a slave of the state.

Gobineau's criticism of the "monstrous Canaanite fiction of patriotism" and the artificially created institution of Roman law to maintain peace, stability and binding equality, shows how far he is from Tocqueville's concept of liberty². What is evidenced in history in the customs of the Greco-Roman world, and the varying political institutions is not the progress of liberty, but its decline. Equality has no physical or historical reality. Liberty has meaning and reality only in the reality of inequality.

Different governments demanding increased tolerance and equality are signs of ethnic confusion and degeneration. The issue for Gobineau is not so much freedom from responsibility as freedom from involvement. Tyrants or great leaders who receive absolute power from their fellow citizens may be ambitious, but they are also men who are simply carrying out the methods endorsed by the nation-state. A revolution

1. Ibid., p.29.

2. Ibid., p. 63.

is a sign that an individual has failed to seize this collective will. Again here we find Tocqueville's great divergence, for to him religion and patriotism are the two forces capable of sustaining man's creative unity. That this collective spirit might submerge individual judgement, he recognized, but he did not doubt the value and existence of a true "political" nation.

When Tocqueville characterized Gobineau's historical philosophy as symptomatic of the materialistic and spiritually apathetic currents of the time, he was not criticizing Gobineau's motive to make a value judgement concerning the future. This motive for seeing history as a single continuous process is good, but it is useless when seeking to support this value judgement by an apparent empirical assumption, that only one law governs the whole of history. As a scientist, working with documents and facts Gobineau gives us specific empirical truths or principles which make us conscious of distinct social problems. As a historian, making certain hypotheses on the negligible role of individuals in social change and the innate racial characteristics affecting cultural history, he justifies and yet condemns his contemporaries by showing them to be working out their degenerate blood mixture. As a philosopher, he attempts to grasp the universal context, to find the ultimate meaning of history, which still must be expressed in concrete events and processes which will be the same for all men, at all times, and in all places. In his search for eternal verities, the philosopher-skeptic in Gobineau overcame the scientist. The conclusion came to be more significant than the method employed. This psychological removal

1. Maurice Mandelbaum, "Can there be a Philosophy of History?"
American Scholar, IX, 1939-40, p.74ff.

from the subject matter of history, as Dilthey calls it, suggests the basic error in Gobineau's work.

However Tocqueville's criticism is also valid. Gobineau's denial of human liberty through his racialist views is anti-Christian and destructive of men's dignity. The danger in the articulation of this thesis lay in its eventual penetration downward through society. This, Tocqueville saw, was the abdication of the role of an intellectual, and he grieved for Gobineau's action.

CHAPTER IV

"Have you read L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution of Tocqueville?" The Prince Consort inquired of Baron Stockmar late in 1856. "I am devouring this book, which I foresee will have the greatest influence on the future, for it shows how the bureaucratic administration was not the remedy for the evils of the great Revolution, but rather their direct cause."¹

Tocqueville's great history, appearing simultaneously in France and in England, under Henry Reeve's translation received general acclaim, tempered mainly by criticism from aristocrats who saw in the book the note of a vanquished aristocrat seeking to make peace with democracy. Despite the numerous popular studies of the Revolution, few had attempted so coherent a picture of the development of the Revolution as an Ideology. No one had so critically examined the manifestations of the spreading Revolution, and demonstrated its slow, but steady secular growth. Few historians had, with such psychological acumen, pointed out the discrepancies between people's actions and their theories. In these two volumes, Tocqueville's interpretation of the continuing Revolutionary tradition reveal the life-long consistency of his political views, and his conception of the ever progressing direction of history.

To Kergorlay he wrote of his original plans to indicate these facts and trace their sequence. "But my chief business will not be narration. I must above all make plain the principles, make visible the diverse causes which have arisen from it ... But the difficulties are immense. The one that troubles me most arises from the mingling of history proper with philosophy of history. I do not see yet how I can mix the

1. Tocqueville, Oeuvres Complètes, VI, p. 354.

two things (and it is most important that this be done, for one could put it that the former is the canvas, the latter the color, and both these are necessary to make a picture.)"¹

The elements of Tocqueville's philosophy of history are found in his prefaces and letters. Each century, Tocqueville proposed, finds focus around a single fact which gives birth to an "idée mère" or a major passion uniting various streams of thought. In America he had seen this dominant fact and passion to be the love of equality of conditions. "I wished to show in full light, the perils that equality brought to human independence, because I firmly believed that these perils are the most formidable as well as the least foreseen of all those affecting the future. But I do not believe them to be unsurmountable ... it depends on us today whether equality will lead to slavery or to liberty, to enlightenment or barbarism, to prosperity or misery."

In 1828 and 1829, Tocqueville had been a student at Guizot's lectures at the Sorbonne. Guizot's concept of the gradual, inevitable progress of society through the growth of the bourgeoisie was to become an idea dominating Tocqueville's historical consciousness. The question was raised: Would this same force that swept away feudal privilege and social inequality continue? Would all nations be forced into a more equal distribution of rights and privileges. This levelling process, Tocqueville and his close companion, Beaumont studied in America. Later Royer-Collard, a liberal of Tocqueville's father's generation exercised another influence on Tocqueville's exploration of Guizot's idea. Through his eyes Tocqueville was to observe the possibilities of tyranny by the majority in an egalitarian state and to be more concerned with the

1. J. P. Mayer, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

2. Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Bradley, ed., vol. II, p. 102.

political guarantees of freedom, free press, independent judiciary and parliamentary privileges.¹ The fact that people were demanding and gaining a larger share of control in government was evidence of the destination of mankind. With conditions becoming more and more equal, surely nothing less than the total transformation of society was involved. The unique nature of his own age was his first concern as a historian.

That history had a meaning and a direction he did not contest. Men needed, however, to be educated to their true interests, so that they might adapt and modify their actions to conditions of time and place. Like Burke, Tocqueville never could really feel that any society or government was a matter of human concern alone. Society was part of a divine and moral order; therefore the new equality in social, political and economic conditions was a providential fact. God, he believed, revealed himself through the order of nature. Man's duty was to seek understanding and self-awareness. The function of history, Tocqueville clearly saw, was not to isolate us from the past, but enable us to see into the future more clearly. The coming of Christ brought true spiritual equality into the world; the benefit of the Revolution was to restore the significance of this event in history, therefore there could be no looking backward. It is in the letters to Gobineau that Tocqueville comes to express his faith in the Christian culture of Europe which provides its spiritual unity and to point out the dangers which will result from the loss of this tradition.

Although Tocqueville is clear that history is moving irresistably towards a goal,

1. Royer-Collard's Correspondence with Tocqueville as yet is unpublished but excerpts are given in R dier and J. P. Mayer's Tocqueville Biography.

despite the will of men, his second firm conviction is of Man's ability to control events. Christians might not be able to stop a crisis, but because of their beliefs they may direct it in two ways. In the private sphere, each could, through religious faith and observance, maintain his status as an individual, free and responsible for his actions. In the public sphere of action, men might choose to control events through educating and purifying the morals and aims of society. This role of the individual in maintaining good government preoccupied Tocqueville. In the second volume of the Democracy, he compared men ignoring the conditions and problems of the future age of social democracy to people who being swept away by a flood, kept their eyes on the distant shore rather than on the mighty abyss ahead. The problems and dangers of the new democratic order might not be easily solved, but men at least, could be exhorted to observe these conditions. In this way they could prepare a stronger philosophy

A third conviction had grown out of his own observations on the significance of ideas in precipitating social change. Even before his analysis of provincial records in Normandy had given the startling insight that the days of feudal hierarchy were gone and state centralization a fact, long before the Revolution, he had been absorbed with the ways an individual might fit into the new democracy. "I think" he predicted "that in the democratic centuries that are beginning, individual independence and local freedom will always be the product of art." Like Mill, Tocqueville saw that significant changes in history occurred as a result of new ideas and knowledge, thus placing the center of history directly on the individual element of consciousness. Only as men

become articulate about the general causes which appear to operate in the world can they seek to modify them. Gobineau's rejection of the Idea of Progress and his limiting of human consciousness by the racial factor prevented him from sharing this conception of man shaping his future.

Tocqueville's study of European history was consistent in its wide perspective. Every work of his shows his classical humanist education. He believed that just as pride and self-love alienate man from God, so they alienate man from fellow man. The universal political philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Montesquieu or Rousseau who set forth the ideas of virtue, honor, duty, and common responsibility, gave men the moral and spiritual tools which might mold the social order. The message of the Gospels reflected the complexities of the human condition, showing that the forces of generosity and love constantly transforming the world while disinterest and selfishness would constantly lead to its ruin. Man's capacity to learn and his need to be educated would remain the central factor in civilization. Indeed it was only the Barbarians who acted on impulse of the moment without recollection of the past or thought of the future.

Tocqueville's deep sense of obligation to society contrasts with Gobineau's scientific views. "I have chosen the one subject on which men are capable of being roused," he wrote. But as an intellectual historian he sought to avoid the errors of historians in democratic times who minimized the role of individuals and attributed great general causes to all small events. General causes are useful, but they bring the temptation to link various incidents into a comprehensive system. This process of

simplification not only fails to see what reasons are acting on the will of each member of the community, but emphasizes actions as obeying some unknown but superior force that prevents people from possessing the power to change their own conditions. Thus Tocqueville criticized his contemporaries for seeking to teach the ineffectiveness¹ of human will, in their enthusiasm to establish laws and systems in history.

His own principles were more clearly stated. In all ancient literature, Tocqueville observed, not one great historical system is contained in historical compositions, while the poorest modern literature abounds with general theories. "I have lived long enough among men of letters who have written history without mixing in affairs and among politicians who have been occupied with making things happen without ever troubling to write about them. I have noticed that the former see general causes on all sides, while the latter, living in the haphazard of daily events prefer to think that² everything that happens must be attributed to particular accidents." Both these views reveal a defect in their attempt to dispose of the paradoxical riddles of man's nature. Tocqueville's own experience as a statesman had brought home the truth that his training as a writer and philosopher had given him "habits of mind unfavorable to the conduct of affairs . . . subject to the logic of ideas where the mass obeys only that of its passions." For this very reason his suspicions of absolutist systems of history grew more vehement, and he foresaw the dangers of Gobineau's hatred when channeled into apparent philosophical form. His literary, philosophical and legal education demanded an objectivity towards persons, laws, constitutions and classes. "I have no traditions.

1. Tocqueville, *op. cit.*, Bradley ed., vol. I, p.90-93 et passim

2. Tocqueville, *Recollections*, p.88

3. J. P. Mayer, *op.cit.*, p. 88

I have no party, I have above all no cause save that of liberty and human dignity."¹

This perspective aided him in his recitation of the complex factors leading to the growth of the monarchy and the progress of centralization, and it enabled him to weigh both the vices and virtues of the aristocracy without passion.

Tocqueville's philosophy of history is founded on a prophetic vision of man, his duties and responsibilities. But his method of historical inquiry shows how profoundly attached he was to the experimental rationalism of the philosopher. His "Idée Mère"² is only a hypothesis, not an a priori concept, he pointed out to Gobineau. Before the final draft, he had worked in three stages. First by deep reflection, the broad sketch of questions and problems were laid out. Critical notes, and illustrations of the spirit of the age followed with reading directed towards these problems. Only out of the outlining and surveying of the details, could the "idee mere" or first principle emerge.

Consequently, Tocqueville's system is determined in several ways, but it is not determined in the same respect as Gobineau's simplification. Democracy may be doomed to disorder, Tocqueville agrees, but its causes are moral failure, rather than by blood mixture.

Tocqueville's highly intuitive sense, his understanding of changing attitudes, the sense of disgust for the times, and the need for violence all mark his description of the new ideology of the Revolution, formed by the intellectuals but carried out by the illiterate vulgar classes. As long as the middle classes maintained their selfish passions, the ignorance and poverty of the lower classes would lead to a continuing restlessness

1. Ibid., p. 67.

2. Tocqueville, L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution, v. II, p. 24.

Andre Jardin's essay on Tocqueville's methods of research demonstrates his painstaking thoroughness and artistic sensitivity in the writing of L'Ancien Régime.

and instability, and an inclination to fall back on revolutionary habits.

The unique philosophy of the new habits of European democracy Tocqueville saw derived from three sources. First, democracy or social equality had created a social power which attacked the authority and power of tradition and removed any respect for the individual and his rights. Without the familiar Christian morality there were no checks in society to stabilize the community's relation towards individuals.

Secondly, he saw, like Gobineau that the superficial interpretation of the origin of this power was that its acquisition lay through violence energy and recklessness.

Third, the spirit of the age, recognizing the significance of ideas, attempted to justify the use of violence by philosophy or appeals to science. In this sense he saw Gobineau as a particularly strong reflection of the passions of the time in his historical philosophy based on human inequality.

His basic ideas are simple then. He confirms the unity of European culture and the need for the binding elements of religion and customs. He believes that men have spiritual needs. This the course of the Revolution had shown him. It is the reason he so particularly feared the socialism of his day "founded on the false theories", with materialistic goals, and motivated by the democratic sickness of envy. The self-centered egotism of man he sees as the dominant feature of modern man, consequently his preference for a conflicting unstable equilibrium to a massive internal harmony. Tocqueville, though perceptive as Marx, on the economic and social features of the age, prefers to reiterate that man may always modify and mend the forces which appear to operate in the world. In this way, added to the passions born of self-interest, the

the aim to change the face of the world and to regenerate the human race, human history will evolve towards the ideal goals of liberty and equality.

Tocqueville's originality of approach on the Revolution has provoked varying comments. J. P. Mayer sees the L'Ancien Régime more as a sociological treatise in that his insight into the logical continuation of the monarchy's centralization is expressed in the characteristic succinct form of his first work. But historians such as Acton, Burckhardt, Huizuga, and Lefebvre pay tribute to his mastery of the historical discipline. Tocqueville expresses himself not with abstract formulas but with relevant quotations and texts. From works at the Bibliothèque Nationale and provincial archives, from diaries and books, he looked for the breadth and character of the Revolutionary spirit, for its symptoms and its innumerable impacts. This, George Gooch saw was the first of nineteenth century histories on the Revolution to substitute the long growth of secular causes as an explanation in place of the theory of the cataclysmic source. But it is not only the analysis but Tocqueville's philosophic propositions on the relation of equality and liberty which mark the real value of his history.

CHAPTER V

J. P. Mayer, J. J. Chevallier and Harold Laski, all perceptive commentators on the political thought of Tocqueville, are agreed that to him liberty was a political faith. His main objective was to prove that man's condition was one of freedom. His right to free choice, his duty and right to care for himself, his moral strength to go his own way, all these Tocqueville believed in as aspects of the glory and dignity of man. But Tocqueville's aim in writing on liberty was not so much definition as description of its effects. From his insights into British and American democracy, Tocqueville aimed towards establishing the disciplines of liberty which were expressed not only in political institutions but in attitudes towards them. Isaiah Berlin, in his definition of Tocqueville's idea of liberty places him among other liberal and conservative thinkers, Locke, Hobbes, Constant, Bentham, as exemplifying a "negative" concept of freedom. He cites the statements showing Tocqueville's views on the undesirability of restraint over the individual by the state and the community, and comments that this concept has rarely been a rallying cry for the great mass of mankind. At the most it is the mark of a high civilization of individuals, and the sense of privacy of an individual to do or be what ever he wants is no older than the Renaissance.

This definition sounds very much like Gobineau's delineation of feudal liberty in that it suggests that the state can only be an organ of interference and that liberty in such a laissez-faire state must be one of restricted equality in wealth and opportunity. Tocqueville's idea of personal and public liberty requires the joining of the ideas of

1. Isaiah Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, 1958, *passim*.

equality and liberty for social justice. Yet Isaiah Berlin's alternate definition of the "positive" concept of freedom, important in history since the French Revolution may not be applied to Tocqueville either. This "positive" freedom is described as being a collective experience, being a common part of human nature. Its philosophical roots are found in Rousseau, but politically it is difficult to see an example of Berlin's concept except in a totalitarian state. The state, or the central authority, not the individual is the possessor of this type of liberty.

Because Tocqueville based his political philosophy on the broad premise that politics, morality and religion are united in their purpose to liberate man from the purely material realm, his view of the entire revolutionary tradition in Europe is that it is a post-Christian phenomenon, expressed in a new social and political structure of equality. Gobineau's historical analysis, differing in purpose and direction, is psychologically removed from the moral ideals of Christian culture. His belief in the essential inequality of men removes the individual conscience from the heart of cultural change. This rejection of human will power and intelligence negates Tocqueville's whole understanding of human liberty as responsibility and an ultimate value for men to pursue.

Tocqueville's perspective, so entirely French, yet as a supporter of liberalism of a "new kind", was wide enough to include all Europe. The effect of the Revolution had been to destroy the past and to create uncertainty. The results could be seen in the great world movement towards social democracy, and the insatiable demand for equality in every aspect of life. Whether this was to continue towards a new despotism or a chronic state of anarchy for Europe, he failed to know. But as always, the author

of Democracy in America, could not but believe that God was leading men forward in this process. The influence of his religious beliefs is well apparent.

Stronger, firmer in his convictions, as the political and intellectual scene became gloomier, Tocqueville though scornful of the Second Empire, had come to terms with his countrymen. Despite ill health and nostalgia for the past, Tocqueville refused to despair. The writing task which had occupied long years of retirement had given him satisfaction, and the resulting conclusions had electrified him. By the mid-1850's he had mellowed towards his own modest political career, recognizing his taste for great actions, but aware of his limitations as a politician. In every way, his concerns as a private individual were expressed in a buoyant affirmative manner. The later letters to Gobineau, with their tone of moral indignation are an important record of this increased faith in Europe's spiritual heritage.

Europe's spreading political, economic and cultural power, Tocqueville foresaw and approved. Convinced that the strength of European culture lay in its ability to assimilate and to adapt, he agreed with Mill, that a future danger of democracy lay in its possible "Chinese stagnation." The monolithic state-civilization of the oriental world, he knew was alien to the European community. But he saw the seeds of a new kind of despotism in the political actions of his contemporaries, and he was curious when Gobineau predicted the eventual corruption of Europe by Asia. Europe's moral and intellectual tradition insisted on social responsibility in both the private and public level. If this was to be destroyed, Tocqueville sensed that the danger lay not without but within.

The beginning of this destruction in France had come with the thoughtless, continued centralization of the state, owing to the abdication of the aristocracy towards its duties and responsibilities. Napoleon, believed to be the preserver of the Revolution's political gains, furthered this destruction by suppressing free thought and social responsibility. With great political genius, Napoleon had exalted martial courage. Thus in the French liberal tradition, the nobles had destroyed their particular liberties, based on tradition, heredity and customs for an abstract ideal of liberty as equality before the law - an idea created by the middle classes seeking limitation of sovereignty by political guarantees. This concept of liberty, Tocqueville recognized as a passion for popular sovereignty. It certainly was not his concept of liberty. The former had been an outgrowth of the work of the philosophes, who by attacking every truth and historic European institution had proposed a negative type of freedom, that of independence from religion and tradition.

Tocqueville's harshness towards the philosophes, so mystifying to the rationalists, Mill and Gobineau, stemmed from his conviction that these men had succeeded in divorcing religion and culture. By using abstract concepts of reason and truth to deny the eternal truths of Christianity and the moral values of Europe's classical humanism, the philosophes had led men to the false and naive notion that it was possible to destroy tradition and to rebuild society on natural scientific principles. Gobineau's radical rationalism which condemned both the present and the past, yet in typically French fashion which supported the authoritarianism of Napoleon and the Second Empire, leads on to the destructive and irrational elements of totalitarian thought. Gobineau's

intense subjectivity and individualism, combined with his "modern scientific view" led him to the idealization of the Aryan race as the sole possessor of freedom, and the only creator of social, economic and political life. Private privileges, rather than universal and equal public rights were to be the foundation of perfect liberty. This contradiction in Gobineau's thought is characteristic of most nineteenth century conservatives.

Gobineau's role as Cassandra of the democratic revolution was only a transitional one. As a pessimistic intellectual he failed to help men to solve their problems. But in time the anti-Christian implications of his Essai were utilized by the ideologists of Nazism. At this point the irony of his attack on liberal ideals appears. Like the nobles of the French Revolution he has been willing to destroy specific liberties for the sake of a historical abstraction on man's inability to determine his role or to rise above the necessities and bonds of his life by the training of his character.

Gobineau's philosophy of man, so revolutionary because it did remain so long in the realm of theory without substantiation, contrasts with the liberal valuation of man's moral character in three ways. His antagonism towards men is expressed in his theory of racial inequality, but as Cassirer and Arendt have demonstrated, this seemingly irrational stand was part of a long French aristocratic tradition. Feudal liberty to Gobineau, arose from a certain equality and security within a limited group, with liberty residing in the certain private rights of property, family and heredity. Not all men then, were equal in their ability to be free or to obey a moral law, because of the determining factor of "racial unequalities."

Secondly, the mass of men were incapable of educating themselves sufficiently to be a significant force in political and social affairs because they had no value to be recognized, no understanding of respect, no ability to arouse in themselves the demand that others share the same privileges. Here Gobineau reflects the spirit of total disenchantment with man's capacity to progress, and he totally divorces the identity of liberty with the use of the mind. He bears witness to the influence of Hegel's rationalistic conception of the state as objectifying the spirit of freedom, a conception resulting in the complete secularization of liberty. Although he confesses to Tocqueville that he has utterly rejected Feuerbach and systems of thought similar to St. Simon and Fourier, the focal thought of his Essai is to deny the use of reason as a force in social and political change. Man's freedom bears no relation to his moral behaviour or his will to become morally self-directing.

Gobineau's bitterness and defensive thought is based on practical experience, he claims. His third point against a liberal philosophy of man is that one may produce consent more effectively by force than by use of reason. Government based on a belief in the ability of the public to make intelligent decisions, or to be informed or critical about politics is impossible. The fact is that men have proved their inability to participate in the creation of their society. The experiences of 1848 were too vivid in his mind for objectivity.

Although Tocqueville is less clear and specific about the means of maintaining liberty than his support of it as an ideal, none the less he is original in his formulation of liberty as a moral truth. Laski and J. S. Schapiro are alike in seeing Tocqueville's

thought as the definite break from the negative bourgeois liberalism with its roots in eighteenth century thought. Being far more politically perceptive than Gobineau, he looked beyond the measures designed to protect individual freedoms from oppressive government to the self-directed personality. While specific rights and freedoms, and certain checks and balances were necessary to maintain civil and political liberty, reliance on this alone would fail to assure freedom.

Human beings, he recognized, were not like machines, operating for their own enlightened self interest. This was the weakness of contemporary liberalism. What he aimed to show was that the hindrances to freedom lay not in the branches of government policy nor on the ways in which people helped themselves, under the initiative of a leader or a dictator. The capacity to reason and to use intelligence, Tocqueville saw, required certain social antecedents. Morally, intellectually, and in material ways, individuals should be stimulated to commit themselves voluntarily to their obligations in society. Only with the free participation of each member, could a society become free.

The French Revolution, Tocqueville observed, gave to French liberalism an exalted but abstract view of human personality. However the aristocratic and spontaneous support of liberty, lacking the popular base of political experience came to be submerged in the more widespread demand for equality. French liberal ideas, he saw as being overly concerned with the task of criticism. What was at stake was the moral basis of government, for when this collapsed what technique might regenerate it? The spiritual values of the bourgeois humanistic culture were nothing more than humanitarian

sentiment and vague liberal idealism. Unless religion and traditional moral ideals were to become the real foundation of liberal ideas, men would find no spiritual purpose or moral value in liberty. For this reason he concerned himself with the problem of a new code of honor for a democratic society.

Just as the main concern of Democracy in America was to describe the future of democracy, that of L'Ancien Régime was to describe the future of France and of Europe. Tocqueville's repudiation of Gobineau's "idée mère" and the defense of his own historical thesis in the Correspondence, reflects that this concern for the future was well founded. He believed that Western Christian thought was under attack, and that the systematic destruction of Europe's spiritual heritage, would lead to new types of political despotism. It has been said that Tocqueville's chief dream remained to reconcile modern democracy with the Church. In this Correspondence, Tocqueville's convictions on the errors of anti-Christian views show that he was not a "progressive" Catholic, but rather an acute observer of the essential character of European civilization. And though he did not believe that the achievements of every nation, or the ideals of every civilization are of the same worth, he was convinced that each had something to contribute to mankind.

His admiration for France, unlike Gobineau's exaltation of Germany, did not allow him to believe in the right of any nation to impose her natural interests and ideas upon the rest of the world. Yet his study of the Revolution had shown him the religious aspects of the Revolution's ideas which went beyond the narrow concepts of national interests.

Gobineau, in assorted letters to Tocqueville, incorrectly predicted the defeat of Prussia by Austria, and the union of Austria and Switzerland. His hatred of the British led him to predict the ruin of England by India, and the inevitable collapse of America. His Essai is filled with statements, emotionally charged ("the negro looks like a monkey") and inaccurate (The population of Asia and Africa will decline because hybrid civilizations are less virile and fertile.) And yet his concept of German national destiny was not so strong, that his own proud views on Aryan natural nobility did not conflict with the bourgeois structure of the new Germany. Just as Tocqueville was able to condemn both the old Regime and the Revolution for their vices, Gobineau was able to condemn both the means and the end of Bismarck's policy. But unlike Tocqueville, Gobineau was unable to acknowledge the virtues as well as the vices of that which he despised.

A further difference lies in their self-criticism and judgment of their work. Tocqueville, more thorough and scholarly in his research, attempted no demonstration of a pure progressive synthesis of the ideas of equality and liberty. Rather he offered a description of what was new in the moral standards of his century. Because of his ambivalent feeling as an aristocrat, yet supporter of the new democracy, his reflections on social equality and political liberty are particularly valuable. His view is sympathetic and considers the complexity and interaction of forces which led to the Revolution. The strong reliance on the Christian heritage to provide his philosophy of history is shown more in occasional statements and aphorisms than in a clearly formed theory. It is this that permits him to regard history as being more than purely systematic analysis.

Gobineau's metaphysical views are seen also in his intellectual background, but his deification of Reason and Science is emotional rather than rational. Consequently the divergence between his personally moral and conscientious behavior, and his ambivalent support of authoritarian government shows that his concept of inequality is at base a reaction against men rather than against liberty. His own philosophy of life established his own absolute value, and allowed him to conceive of himself as a self directing power. His skeptical romantic nature defying authoritarianism in every field but politics reflects his sense of autonomy from customs, opinions and traditions.

At first calling Tocqueville's L'Ancien Régime an "administrative history", Gobineau was to provoke Tocqueville's wrath by his biased assessment. The result was a statement of his liberal creed.

"Your book has given me extreme pleasure," Gobineau wrote from Teheran in November 1856. The reasons he was to cite for this pleasure were scarcely flattering. Gobineau's remarks showed his tendency to distinguish and confirm his fanatical historical views. Although Tocqueville had not directly stated this, was it not true that he considered the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries as a period of decomposition? Gobineau's disgust for the "dirty revolutionaries of '1789" who opened the door to violence and thoughtless action, brought forth further references to Tocqueville's skill in showing that the revolution had invented nothing new, but only succeeded in destroying feudal liberty by substituting despotism. In his historical pessimism, Gobineau's main insight into the French Revolution was that of a frustrated feudal aristocrat. And

1. Tocqueville, Oeuvres Complètes, IX, p. 272.

out of the increasing confidence and intimacy of correspondence, he continued his attack on democratic societies, much to the horror of Tocqueville.

But what, he asks the author of L'Ancien Régime can be considered admirable and new in the Revolution and the Constitutional Assembly of 1789. They created an impractical constitution; they foresaw nothing of the future; their only role was to create evil. How could Tocqueville qualify these vile historical facts by calling them "generous errors"? The Assembly completed the destruction of free institutions begun by the embroidered clothed legalists of Philip le Bel and assured the despotism of the "shirrtails" of 1693.

A second point he questions of Tocqueville's Preface. Are free institutions (for which Tocqueville professes such love) really worthwhile. Have they not been out of existence for the past five hundred years? Feudal liberty being destroyed, and local administration also gone, the French have reverted to their immoderate love for absolute government. The French prefer simplicity and practicality in their government; therefore why complicate politics by giving free institutions, not understood, and by parliamentary forms professing collective responsibility, when no men will assume individual responsibility. Free institutions, he points out, are just not applicable to the French disposition, and if Tocqueville thinks otherwise, it is clearly because he esteems his fellow citizens while Gobineau can only scorn them.

However complex Tocqueville's instincts between his aristocratic sentiments and his restless, rationally conceived liberal philosophy, his reply to the aggressive feudalism of Gobineau is distinctively affirmative. In six pages written January 24,

1857, Tocqueville sums up his political and moral faith, beginning with the request to discuss the matter no longer. Gobineau's bitter and destructive historical philosophy he refutes not by logic but by sarcasm.

"I believed you to be one of those . . . who are filled with a veneration and a sort of filial tenderness for the Christian religion, without unhappily, being through this, an absolutely convinced Christian." ¹ Otherwise how is it possible to reconcile your learned theory with the letter and spirit of Christianity, surely one of the greatest instruments of morality and civilization ever devised by God. Could the historical doctrine of racism, limiting the capacities and ultimate perfectability of men ever find favor with the vast majority of Christians? No, the reading of the Essai only leads one to doubt the firmness of the author's faith, and suggests an unintentional but truly hypocritical stand.

"No longer having liberty as it existed five hundred years ago, you prefer to have none at all . . . From fear of submitting to the despotism of parties, under which one is able to defend one's dignity and independence by speech and by press, you find it good to be oppressed in a single manner by a single person at a time." So let it be, Tocqueville declared. Why dispute tastes. But what did satisfy this eternal critic of democracy? Was the present simple government of the Second Empire the answer? Each of us is logical, but we belong to two diametrically opposed schools with little hope of convincing the other, he stated. But even if government by sword is necessary to maintain order among the mob, would Gobineau himself willingly

1. Ibid., p. 276.

submit to force in personal homage to his principles?

Tocqueville's view of men and of their destiny differed entirely. His belief was not in the degeneracy of men but in their ignorance and need for education, the first cause of the world's misery and weakness. His confidence in men treated like men, through an appeal to their natural honesty and good sense is based on his confidence that better education will remedy the ills of bad education.

"In my eyes, human societies like individuals become something through the use of liberty. That liberty will be more difficult to found and to maintain in democratic societies like our own, I have always said. But that it will be impossible, I will never be bold enough to think. That one should despair of trying, I pray God¹ never to inspire me with this idea!" So Tocqueville, reaffirmed his faith in liberty as a moral force in history.

1. Ibid., p. 280.

CHAPTER VI

Tocqueville's ability to grasp the great, general, and current aspects of his age may be admired. But it is the combination of his descriptive talents and his moral interpretations that marks his distinctive contribution to European history. His study of democracy in its modern form in America set forth the conviction of the triumph of the principle of equality. From this, he moved to a new insight. His study on the Revolution convinced him that only through political liberty might one combat the evils of social equality. Future democracies, to be truly free, would need to rely on local liberties. Only a strong religion might assure those customs and morals which preserve liberty. Thus, Tocqueville's historical perceptiveness lies in his concern to show how the forces of the world relate to the providential will in the universe and his ability to show what values are to be gained through this understanding.

John Stuart Mill reading L'Ancien Régime declared, "Seen only as a chapter of universal history, it seems to me one of the best ever done; and if one would regard it as the principle goal of your philosophical life - that of characterizing the nature and tendencies of the period, in order to point out those tendencies in which there is good, and to correct as much as possible, those which are bad; I find you have made an important step in the explication of this actual state of things in showing its roots in the past." This, Mill wrote three years before his own publication On Liberty.

But Tocqueville's message and basic propositions (all of which appeared in 1859) have been long neglected, whereas Mill's essay, Darwin's Origin of the Species, and

1. Tocqueville, Oeuvres Complètes, VI, p. 349.

Marx's Critique of Political Economy, represent a pivot point in Europe's intellectual history. The question rises as to how extensive and how important has been the influence of Tocqueville and Gobineau's writings. It is evident that though L'Âncien Régime and the Essai are representative of opposing liberal and conservative schools of nineteenth century thought, their impact on the twentieth century has been greater than among their contemporaries. Just why these two histories have come to be widely quoted is evidence of the increasing curiosity men are showing for the future development of society. The Correspondence by mirroring various historical conflicts, is a good source for understanding the revaluation of these men as intellectual historians. Though the views originally expressed were unfashionable in the 1850's, a hundred years later they have new significance.

The letters are notable for their limited discussions on politics and morality as well as for their positive contrasts in their historical awareness. Tocqueville indirectly states to Gobineau, that the study of history ultimately brings one back to the study of how humans develop self-awareness. Each historian has his own sensitivity to continuity and change, but it is the goal of the historian to select or isolate certain themes or ideas in order to give his own perception of the values and responsibilities of man's use of reason. The origin and development of the idea of liberty, Tocqueville tried to express in accurate clear political statements. It was with the obvious, but unstated tendencies of equality, and its potential conflicts with liberty that he dealt. But it was not so much the definition, as the description of effects which concerned him. Gobineau's sense of the increasing mediocrity of social

democracy is expressed in his myth of racial inequality, and this thesis is clearly a rationalization of certain ideas undergoing distortion and vulgarization. Confusing the issues of men's equality in nature and capacity with men's equality in society before the law, Gobineau's thought becomes symbolic rather than analytical. So he, like Mill and Marx, succeeds in developing an idea that eventually is to inspire a governing elite. But this he does not see as the purpose of his work. Tocqueville, therefore, fails to discuss Gobineau's scientific concerns in his effort to demonstrate the relationship of politics and morality, which he sees as the governing motive for his work.

Tocqueville, though aware that all human cultures resemble each other to a point, and though conscious that main differences come from the ordering of different elements in social, political, economic and intellectual life, is not interested in the range of subjects which mark Gobineau's Essai. Because he knows that customs, thought and judgment are not innate in men, he is eager to explore why the principles and ideals of democracy call forth no great emotional response on the Continent in contrast to the experience of England and America. His approach to history is a committed one, and like Gobineau he attempts to use history persuasively to record the situations of the past as illustrative of the possibilities of the future. But unlike his skeptical friend, Tocqueville senses the paradoxical aspects of truth and observes the reasons for his particular passions. Only by reference to religion does Tocqueville attempt to refute Gobineau's complex feelings and emotional prejudices which convince him of

1. H. Stuart Hughes, Consciousness and Society - The Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890-1930 gives an excellent introduction to the problems of intellectual history. The limited nature of human freedom is the important insight of all historians, he concludes. But their dedication to this truth differs. Gobineau was typical of the age in using science to support his doctrine.

the "scientific truth" of racial inequality. This, Maxime Leroy, a socialist admirer of Tocqueville's honesty and fairness, sees as Tocqueville's major deficiency. In an age when so many intellectuals were using scientific explanations to justify their ideals, Tocqueville should have explored the possibilities of science.

But what did each see in the other's approach?

"Well, I have failed with you," Tocqueville declared. Gobineau, under the dictatorship of Louis Napoleon was now "satisfied with men and things," approving the use of force and compulsion, and seeing in the destruction of feudal liberty, the need to destroy all liberty. We differ in our tastes, he sarcastically commented.

But the difference here is far more profound. The two men differ in their ideas of God and man, in their theology and anthropology. Gobineau has a deep contempt for men whom he considers not only fallen but incapable of ever rising again. Tocqueville protests this view. Human societies, like individuals, he replies have no significance except as they use their freedom. These letters are evidence that Tocqueville could not conceive of a life worthy in any way, that did not recognize the integrating power of religion. No society could function well without religion and morality, for without these men would be unable to comprehend liberty.

Tocqueville's studies of America and France led him to conclude that in each religious doctrine there was an adjoining political doctrine. Material or economic considerations were an aspect of the political doctrines, thus two forces were at work in all societies to deflect religious tendencies. This is a point reiterated in his early

1. Maxime Leroy, *Histoire des Idées Sociales en France d'Auguste Comte à Proudhon*, v. 1, p. 219.

correspondence in his criticisms of Utopian theories of state socialism, when Gobineau attempts to justify the scientific superiority of modern political doctrines. These visions of a final, practical new state were lacking in the ways and means for acquiring such a state. Why not look to the past, Tocqueville suggested to understand the social utility of religion. He reaffirms the fact that in Europe the alliance between politics and religion has never really been dissolved because religion exerts its influence on men's manners and minds. The basic philosophical method of the Americans, he noted was to rely on oneself, to seek meaning behind the forms, and to try to escape from the rigid yoke of habit. This was so because of America's unique and observable origins. But in Europe, men failed to see this as a necessary moral and intellectual attitude, being trapped by the hatred and negativism aroused by traditions of the aristocracy. In the new democracies ahead, as political ties became more relaxed, men needed to strengthen their moral concerns or else they would ultimately destroy themselves and their society. This interaction of religion and society which is a characteristic Tocqueville concern, we see explored today by men like Max Weber, Niebuhr and Troeltsch.

The question of why human beings maintain their craving for guarantees of the eternal and secure nature of their values, absorbed Tocqueville. Few of his contemporaries expressed the fear that democratic institutions, suffrage, education and equality before the law could not permanently guarantee freedom. Tocqueville saw both the exalted and the more humble values of liberty were to be found in her

1. Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Bradley, ed., v.II, p.11.

effects of creating common passions, mutual wants, and occasions for compromise in daily affairs. Freedom based on a religious conviction of human dignity, and moral standards based on sense of duty to God produced strong virtues and great actions, he believed. To make sense of the variety of human experience and the mystery of human destiny, men had to make certain a priori statements as to the condition and direction of mankind. Men depend on certain constant antecedent perceptions to locate themselves in time, to comprehend a cause of an effect or to establish their values. Therefore a philosophy of history could never exclude a transcendental explanation. Gobineau's absolutist, dogmatic representation of all the events of history depending on a first great cause, linked by a chain of fatality, seemed narrow to Tocqueville, and false beneath its air of mathematical exactness. As Raymond Aron expressed it in his Introduction to a Philosophy of History, a historical philosophy is at once an introduction and a conclusion to mankind's experience. For Tocqueville this introduction was a religious conception of the dignity and worth of each man.

Hannah Arendt has suggested in the Human Condition, that the significance of the contemporary scientific age is our ability to do things without being able to understand, that is, to speak or to think of them. It is this aspect of the incomprehensible advance of scientific technology that is causing men to become tools rather than independent individuals. Of this development, Gobineau had no foresight. In his Essay on Man, Ernst Cassirer points out that history is not the knowledge of external facts or events, but the enriching and enlarging of our knowing and feeling self through the perception of the limits and the duration of time. Gobineau's "scientific" philosophy

of history succeeds neither as science or as history because he limits his field of study and his fatalistic chain of racial inequality is both anti-rational and anti-historical in nature. Gobineau's passion for science is genuine, but his awareness of it is expressed in philosophical propositions rather than in analytical, descriptive statements. In this way, Gobineau in the nineteenth century reflects a tendency of our age to use and support ideas without fully understanding their origins and consequences. In the name of scientific progress we accomplish things we fail to comprehend.

"We are each logical in our systems of thought," Tocqueville pointed out to Gobineau. But you find men degenerate where I only find them ignorant. Your approach towards man differs, he suggested, because of the terrible struggles of your youth which have brought you to scorn men and your country. But Tocqueville never pursues the dialogue to its ultimate conclusion for the very reason that he wishes to retain Gobineau's friendship. His wisdom, candour and good will shine forth in his most acid remarks. In true Socratic style he has attempted to find a larger meaning in Gobineau's life. He has appealed to Gobineau's capacity for analysis, his awareness of man's capacity for abstraction, man's command of nature, and the renewal of man's aim to aspire as evidence of a different sort of liberty. But when unable to win by frankness or persuasive logic, Tocqueville abandons the debate.

For the greater part of his life, Tocqueville had withdrawn from active participation in his chosen career of politics. His uncompromising stand on rigid moral and intellectual standards was applied mainly to himself, but inevitably appeared as tacit accusation against all who failed to live up to them. In earlier years this honorable

yet painfully difficult side is seen in his bitter assessment of contemporaries. The intelligent, good-natured, witty colleague, J. J. Ampère like Gobineau, is accused of carrying a literary spirit into politics. As a man of letters he seeks what is new, rather than what is true and worst of all, tends to judge by impressions rather than reasons.¹ Gobineau, like another mutual friend, Rémusat, was noted for his ability to see always so clearly what might be done, and so dimly, what should be done.² His own behavior was at least, consistent, though not always productive.

This moral tone is the underlying note of the academic dialogue with Gobineau. The Tocqueville-Gobineau contrast, John Lukacs proposes, is illustrative of a nineteenth century spiritual movement to the "Right", instinctively conservative at its best, but at its worst, manifested in the irrational support of totalitarianism and nationalist ideologies.³ Peter Viereck's distinction of the conservative and liberal approach as being whether or not the Christian doctrine of man's innate original sin is applied to politics, causes him to label Tocqueville as a conservative. By this definition both men, with their sensitive aristocratic natures, despising and fearing the mobs are conservative. But the pessimistic thesis that there is no future in history, and the attack on Europe's positive Christian conception of liberty, he refuses and rejects. Gobineau's conservatism is the more radical and dangerous form, which not only denies men the means of self-improvement, but refuses them the possibility of this goal. Against the irrational and pretentious argument of the Essai, Tocqueville's statements show him to be clearly placed in the intellectual heritage of European liberalism.

1. Tocqueville, Recollections, p. 88.

2. Ibid., p. 106.

3. Lukacs, ed., op.cit., p. 13/.

In 1925 Redier's pioneering study dedicated "to all who have been hitherto unaware of de Tocqueville", presented something of Tocqueville's stature as a man, stressing the origin of his thoughts on a psychological and biographical plane. Since then, Harold Laski, Guido Ruggiero, J. Schapiro, and J. P. Mayer have explored and evaluated Tocqueville's liberalism. Depending on their own religious commitment Tocqueville's insights into the spiritual crisis of Europe receive prominent concern.

Like Dilthey, Meinecke, Toynbee or Dawson, Tocqueville is engaged in examining the past, for the purposes of more fundamental statements on the present. His historical approach is relevant because he not only sees the dangers of extreme centralization, but because he affirms the pleasures and benefits of self-help and self-government. He is perceptive of the ancient and Christian truths of man's capacity for both good and evil, and his devotion to liberty and justice makes him continue to seek the ways in which public and private duties relate to public and private rights.

Only when rights were protected from degenerating into privileges, could men truly be free.

It was this total aspect of liberty, in its spiritual and moral forms, as well as its political and economic aspects, that made Tocqueville see that he was indeed a "liberal of a new kind."

But Tocqueville's ideas have tended to be influential in a more subterranean than open way. His colleagues at the Académie characterized him as "a virtuous and honorable liberal"¹. But more than a hundred years were to pass, until Tocqueville's

1. J. P. Mayer, op.cit., p. 105 ff.

liberal creed became widely known.

In the 1870's Karl Hillebrand's little known work on the history of France after Louis Philippe's accession contained this sentence on Tocqueville. "The times were not ready to listen to him, or only half understood him . . . (as he) posed the question as to how existing democracy might best be educated and organized for self rule, so that it should not, as so often in history, degenerate into despotism."¹

Now with the triumph of democracy, and the vision of both free and unfree societies which have appeared in twentieth century Europe, Tocqueville's dream of a strong political democracy buttressed by common spiritual and moral values seems more pertinent than ever. Faith, he believed, could keep men's passions and interests from turning into tyrannies. His genius, like that of many French writers lies in his ability to stir hearts and minds. In the Correspondence, Tocqueville's controversy on the value of Christianity and its impact on European history, makes us more conscious of our needs today. The pursuit of liberty is the only political goal that brings men dignity and worth. This theme glows throughout Tocqueville's writings. His conviction of the importance of valuing men's lives, and the sense of personal responsibility and moral effort which is the basis of true liberty, stems from a Christian setting. The Christian imperative to seek perfection is for Tocqueville the symbolic statement of moral freedom. In submitting to the will of God, man finds perfect freedom to serve others and to enjoy his rights.

Tocqueville's means for implementing the moral duties of the state towards its citizens are not clearly worked out. But his high ideals for both public and private

1. Tocqueville, Oeuvres Complètes VI, p. 294

morality are expressed in universal terms. For this reason, Tocqueville found himself more attune with English liberalism, where the necessary concern was "to put the majority of the citizens in a position to govern, and consequently render them capable of governing."¹ Among his contemporaries, bourgeois liberalism appeared to be concerned only with the interests of a certain class. "A French democrat," he wrote, "is in general, a man who wants to place the exclusive direction of society, not in the people but in a certain portion of the people, and who to arrive at this result, only understands the use of material force...."² Gobineau's radicalism, manifested in his anti-egalitarian racialist interpretation of history, denies the sovereignty and authority of the people and relies on force and propaganda to influence men. This, Tocqueville saw, was an attack not only on political liberty and civil equality, but it was a threat to intellectual liberty.

"I love liberty by taste, equality by instinct and by reason," Tocqueville said in 1835. More than twenty years later with the added insights of his studies on the Revolution and his deepened understanding of man's need for the security and limiting bonds to men's self interest that religion provided, Tocqueville could point to the sources of his taste for liberty without timidity. And the significance of these ideas in his own life as those of his contemporaries, he stated clearly.

"Whatever the force exerted by the state of society and by the political circumstances of a period on the ideas of its contemporaries, these ideas will not be able to prevail for long against that need of hope and belief which is one of the most

1. Tocqueville, Oeuvres Complètes VI, p. 294.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 293.

profound and powerful instincts of human nature."¹

Such a prophetic vision of the value of men, and of their beliefs is Tocqueville's legacy to us. Though not expressed in Catholic terms, Tocqueville's view of men is profoundly Christian. Gobineau's negation of the individual and his capacity for liberty, has been seen now to be both false and immoral as a doctrine. Gobineau's anti-Christian views, reflecting the spiritual emptiness and apathy of his time, are also representative of a personal emptiness. Tocqueville is self-aware and firmly committed to preserving the Christian spiritual heritage. From these differing vantage points, both men demonstrate the range of possibilities for the role of a historian. Tocqueville's example is necessarily the more significant to mankind.

1. Lukacs, ed., op.cit., p. 170.

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