

The Reader's Opinion

BACHELOR THESIS

Democratic Forms: Matching the Social and Political in Tocqueville

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The goal of Nikola's thesis and its rationale is clearly and explicitly summarised in Abstract. There is stated that "thesis will attempt to summarise his concept of democracy and its constituents with the goal of clarifying his lengthy argument regarding the fulfilment of democratic principles. " It means he should make an attempt to "extract a concept of democracy encompassing the two ways of interpreting it, namely as a regime and as a "social state". It make good sense to shift focus "on the maintenance of principles and possibilities". Following move is directed to discussion of "Tocqueville's fears regarding a possible democratic despotism", and it constitutes relevant grounds for his attempt "to find a solution to it in the view that practice must resemble theory". Promising grand finale of thesis culminates in an attempt "to show that Tocqueville kept requesting a certain amount of responsibility from democracy's participants, and through this also answer multiple questions that can be raised after being inspired by Tocqueville."

The logic and approach ("methodology") adopted in this thesis is properly presented in Introduction and so far I can judge of maintained in full body of thesis. I found Nikola's approach both scholarly relevant, and revealing his intellectual capacity more than properly directed by his supervisor. Essential justification of my assessment of Nikola's thesis as "excellent" stems from his "methodological awareness" and consistency. Therefore, I feel allowed to quote at length a passage carrying evidence of this: "Because of the nature of Tocqueville's approach and goals, but also because of the context in which he writes, I will try to focus only on the mechanisms that he recognised. For this reason, I will not employ the abstracted and "classical" terms he used, but only the causal mechanisms and structures that underlie it. With respect to Tocqueville's brilliance compared to his contemporaries I will not employ any modern judgement or critique and I will try to understand his work and ideas as he intended them and as many authors interpreted them with respect to the context. I will therefore "pretend" that it is a modern and factual book, from which a great deal about individuals and societies can be learned." (p. 7)

I understand Nikola's approach is not say "intellectual history" or otherwise historically minded. I respect this but would like to address two questions for discussion, at least one on the border-line of conceptual and historical approach:

- 1) Why as a primary Tocqueville source is used just 2004 e-book edition of Chicago University Press and not 2010 historical – critical edition translated by James T. Schliefer and published by Liberty Fund?
- 2) Is fact of slavery inherent to American society described and analysed by Tocqueville in principle compatible, incompatible, or irrelevant to his treatment of democracy?

The reader's opinion is that presented thesis fulfil not only required standards of bachelor thesis but thanks to methodological relevance, clarity of presentation, and well justified conclusions allows to propose marking "excellent".

Prague, 5 September 2018


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