

## Tocqueville, Democracy in America Tyranny of the Majority

### DA Introduction, Summary

1. DA is the first work of political theory to take democracy as its subject.
2. DA examines democracy in its totality: political and cultural.
3. Tocqueville claims that democracy creates a new type of human being, with new virtues and vices.
4. Tocqueville sees spread of equality as inevitable.
5. Purpose of DA is the political education of the Old World by an account of the New World.

### The Pilgrims

- He starts his book with an anthropology on Pilgrims
- What he does in opening pages through description is insist how important social state to political state
- They are a middle class immigrant group which is almost unheard of as immigrants at the time were always poor or rich
- They immigrate not for material reasons but idealistic ones
- They are deeply religious (puritans)
- They are not just idealist in nature but arrive to America with already democratic culture
  - As their religious self-understanding is for Tocqueville eminently democratic
- Deeply egalitarian faith
  - Radically individualistic
- Their way of life shows the priority of a social state to democracy

### Locke & Tocqueville: compare and contrast

- They agree that consent is necessary
- T is deeply critical of Locke's approach to critical analysis
  - Locke is presupposing /taking for granted what Tocqueville thinks is most important moment in consent namely how to generate a subject that is able to consent
  - Tocqueville thinks you need a substructure to intelligently raise a subject who intelligently consents
  - Locke brings to attention the relationship between the government and the subject
  - Tocqueville brings to attention the constitution of a democratic social state
- Presupposition of political democracy: Tocqueville's (tacit) critique of Locke
  - Democratic government, which is founded on an idea so simple and natural, nevertheless always supposes the existence of a very civilized and very learned society. At first one would believe it to be contemporaneous with the very first ages of the world; looking at it closely, one easily discovers that it could only have come last. 199
  - Tocqueville wants to show that democracy can't just be declared into existence it needs a cultural and educational substructure for it to function adequately
  - You cannot eliminate the social state but you can make it properly organised and managed
  - The subject is always going to give or withhold their consent but if you do not have the substructure they are going to do this really badly (Tocqueville sees the French as this)

### Equality: democracy or despotism?

- Now I know only two manners of making equality reign in the political world: rights must be given to each citizen or to no one. For peoples who have reached the same social state as the Anglo-Americans it is therefore very difficult to perceive a middle term between the sovereignty of all and the absolute power of one alone. One must not dissimulate the fact that the social state I have just described lends itself almost as readily to the one as to the other of its two consequences (52).