2 Political disaffection as an outcome of institutional practices?

Some post-Tocquevillean speculations

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In this chapter I proceed as follows. Its first part provides a conceptual map by which we can locate the various symptoms of political *malaise* and disenchantment which beset, as it is widely perceived, political life and political developments even in established liberal democracies (and *a fortiori* in new ones). The second part proposes to invert the chain of causation that is widely used in empirical political science as a model of analysis. Rather than proceeding from opinions to behaviour to institutional viability, I propose here, in an admittedly speculative mode, to proceed in a top-down perspective from institutional patterns to the observable 'enactment' of institutions and the perceived opportunities, incentives, and expectations they inculcate in citizens and finally the opinions, habits, and attitudes people exhibit and which are in turn registered and analysed by the methods of survey research. In the third and final part of the chapter, I propose a taxonomy of the various sorts of 'failure of citizenship' (or deficient modes of its practice) that we encounter within established democracies of the OECD world. I conclude with a few remarks on the hypothetical impact of disaffection upon the liberal democratic regime form.

Dissatisfaction, illegitimacy, disaffection: towards a conceptual map

Eighteenth-century political philosophers believed that there are three forces in the nature of human beings that shape all of social and political life: people have *interests, reason,* and *'passions.* In other words, they pursue their *advantage* against others, are open to rational *argument* as well as capable of finding and giving comprehensible reasons for what they think and do, and they are emotionally or passionately *attached* to other people, communities, and shared values and life forms. The ('proper', though in

no way exclusive) institutional arenas in which these forces or capacities unfold are the market as the sphere of the rational pursuit of interests, the polity as the sphere of reasonable argument, and the community as the sphere of emotional or passionate attachment. But also *within* political life itself, all three of these capacities - the pursuit of interest, the ability to form and to accept rational argument, and the emotional attachment to the political community - all have their role to play.

It seems that this tripartite classification is still useful as a set of conceptual tools suitable for the analysis and understanding of present-day political realities and changes. One of today's central concerns of both political scientists and often also those actively involved in political life is - somewhat paradoxically, it might seem - the issue of the robustness and viability of the liberal democratic regime form. Numerous books and articles that appeared in the 1990s try to make sense of the coincidence in time of two things. First, the *triumph* of the liberal democratic regime form that is *the* major global political event of the fourth quarter of the twentieth century. And second, the democratic *malaise* or *desencanto* that seems to be creeping into many contemporary political and analytical discourses. A guiding question is: How certain can we be that the accomplishments of political modernization and civilization that we have achieved are of a durable nature after the end of state socialist and other authoritarian forms of governance, rather than being susceptible to deformation and decay? What do we make of the numerous symptoms of challenges, crises, malperformance, fragility, and perversions of nascent as well as established liberal democratic regimes and their widely perceived failure to redeem the promises of the liberal democratic regime form? The experience of victory is followed by a sense of deep crisis and uncertainty. Such complaints and concerns often seem to follow a spiral of decay: as the promises and options of the conduct of public policies and their alternatives become unappealing, citizens get bored, frustrated, and disaffected, if not outright cynical about the dealings of the 'political class'. And as citizens become disengaged in political institutions and their operation, there is ever less support and the potential for mobilization that political elites can rely upon. To quote just one prominent voice from the academic world:

Far from being secure in its foundations and practices, democracy will have to face unprecedented challenges. Its future … will be increasingly tumultuous, uncertain, and very eventful.... The ability [of democracies] … to accommodate the growing disaffection of their citizenries will determine the prospects of democracies worldwide.... All [citizens] experience in their daily lives are what Antonio Gramsci called 'morbid symptoms' - a lot of grumbling, dissatisfaction, and suboptimality.

(Schmitter 1995: 15-22)

I understand that the notion of 'disaffection'[1] is widely held to be a promising concept which, if developed into a sharp analytical tool, may help us to assess empirically the extent to which concerns of this sort can in fact be substantiated. It usefully highlights the 'affective' dimension of political life and involvement of citizens in it. 'Disaffection' is clearly the antonym of 'passion', and operationalized as such (Montero *et al.* 1997b: 141). It thus is a welcome component in an effort to 'reactivate', as it were, on the level of sophistication of modern social science the eighteenth-century conceptual triplet of interest-reason-passion into a set of three conceptual tools which, however, are framed in *negative* terms. That is to say and propose: if my interests are being violated, I am left with a sense of *dissatisfaction;* if the reasons given for the worthiness of the political order and its actual practice of governance are not supported and confirmed by autonomous insight, we speak of *illegitimacy,* as experienced as a lack of good and valid reasons in support of what we actually see happening at the level of public policies and the ways they affect 'us'; and if people dissociate themselves from a polity or political community that they experience as being strange, boring, incomprehensible, hostile, or inaccessible, we can speak of *disaffection.*

A similar conceptual structure emerges if we link the three types of political aversion to the three hierarchical levels of political identification and support that David Easton (1965) has famously distinguished. Citizens are tied to the policy outcomes of particular *governments* by their (material as well as ideal) interests and how they perceive them to be affected by a particular set of policies or a party in government; in the negative case, they are frustrated or dissatisfied. They are tied to - or can be rationally convinced to maintain there loyalty towards - the *political regime* such as liberal democracy; failing that, we speak of a condition of delegitimation or illegitimacy. Finally, they are attached by passions (e.g. through patriotism, nationalism, sense of identity, pride, but also chauvinist and xenophobic emotions) to some *political community* as a whole; in the absence of such attachment, we speak of disaffection.

Yet 'political disaffection' is still largely an under-conceptualized term. While the term does play a certain role in some diverse and highly specialized fields of the social sciences and humanities (such as urban studies, curriculum studies, organization studies, gender and race relations, as well as marriage and family therapy), it has been relatively rarely used until recently, beyond the everyday language and *ad hoc* semantics, in political analysis and the study of political behaviour. Here, it has much less of a standing as an established concept than related concepts such as political alienation, political apathy, *anomie,* sense of powerlessness, 'negative social capital', distrust, cynicism, perhaps also 'post-modernism', and the like. The Spanish word of *desencanto* or the German concept of *Politikverdrossenlieit* seem to be more widely used in these languages than are their English equivalents, though more often in journalistic accounts of current conditions and developments than in academic ones.[2]

If we speak of political disaffection, I take it to mean a group of phenomena that have to do with negative attitudes and behavioural patterns of people towards the universe, their fellow citizens, political life in general, political institutions (above all parties and party elites), and the practice of citizenship (such, as a minimum, voting). As in the use of 'disaffection' in the above fields of social and educational science studies, disaffection in politics also refers to the primarily emotional and passionate (rather than cognitive) condition of absence of a 'sense of belonging', not 'feeling-at home' in the political community, marginalization, perceived lack of representation, institutionally mediated lack of capability to make one's voice heard, deprivation of political resources, lack of horizontal and vertical trust, profound aversion to the political order, etc.

If these preliminary semantic approximations can serve as a guideline, we can, it seems to me, usefully proceed to develop a typology of the range of phenomena we have in mind; try to assess the interaction between violations of interest, absence of compelling reasons, and negative emotions, also addressing the question of possible cumulative effects; look at trends and patterns of distribution across time, across societies, and across segments of the social structure; explore possible causal antecedents and effects of political disaffection; discuss the question on whether or not these dispositions might involve negative consequences for the robustness of liberal democratic regimes; and, if so, at which level of the social and political system these consequences can be observed and what might eventually be done about them. All that can of course not possibly be done within the limits of the present chapter.

On democratic legitimacy

'We regard legitimacy as citizens' positive attitudes towards democratic institutions' (Montero *et al.* 1997b: 126). I wish to argue that this is an overly 'thin', or insufficiently demanding, definition of what democratic legitimacy 'is'. It lacks, or at any rate de-emphasizes, one important *antecedent* and one relevant *consequence of the* condition of legitimacy. As to the antecedent, I wish to suggest that the sense of democratic legitimacy does not just depend upon a person's having a positive attitude, but depends (at least in the context of any 'modern' society) upon the arguments and *reasons* given for, and accepted as effectively supporting and validating, the democratic regime form and its institutions. For instance, a person could say that 'I hold a positive attitude towards democratic institutions because experience tells me that my interests are well served by the operation of these institutions; should this turn out to be no longer true, I will have to reconsider the case'. Or the person could say that, while liberal democracy is definitely not a desirable institutional arrangement of political life,, we'll have to stick to it for the time being as its alteration appears currently unfeasible. For this person, democracy is obviously not 'legitimate', but at best a contingently beneficial or useful arrangement, and at worst one that must be accepted for the sake of 'realism'. Similarly, an attitude derived from habituation such as this would positively *not* do as proof of legitimacy: 'I am in favour of democratic institutions because I am used to them and emotionally feel familiar with them'. In contrast, what would be a consistent proof of democratic legitimacy, as held as an attitude by citizens, would be a statement such as the following:

> I hold a positive attitude towards" democratic institutions because in societies such as ours there is simply no compelling case that could be made (or that I, at any rate, would be willing to accept from autonomous insight) in support of an *unequal* distribution of political and civil rights; all arguments in support of, say, a privileged right of dynastic, military, authoritarian, ethnocratic, theocratic, racist, or party-monopolistic rulers to make collectively binding decisions are clear non-starters (especially after what the world has seen in the course of the twentieth century). Hence the only argument in support of political authority I, as well as my fellow citizens, are likely to accept is the argument that all those who are supposed to obey the law must have an equal right to participate in the making of the law. And all members of the political elite must be held effectively accountable for what they are doing or fail to do. Furthermore, there is no conceiv-'able good reason permitting the political authorities to dictate or interfere with my freely chosen religious, economic, communicative, or associative preferences.

In short, a liberal democracy is reliably anchored in supportive attitudes of the citizenry only if these attitudes, in their turn, are in fact informed by the kind of arguments for individual liberty and popular sovereignty I have just alluded to.

I am perfectly aware of the fact that modern survey research measures *attitudes and opinions,* not the *modalities of arriving* at and holding fast to these attitudes, nor the reasons supporting opinions at the individual level. But it still seems worthwhile to highlight (for instance, through methods of discourse analysis) the *way* people arrive at (or the basis upon which they hold) attitudes, and what *reasons* they give in their defence. For this genetic aspect of attitudes and opinions is significant for the *function* of legitimacy beliefs (rather than an attitude of opportunistic or 'realist' acceptance). For it is invariably for the sake of the function, or consequences, of legitimacy that we are at all interested in the concept. Following Max Weber, the function of the belief in the legitimacy of a given political order consists in the beliefs capacity to *motivate obedience or compliance* on the part of those who hold the belief, even in cases when the decisions to be complied with are contrary to the manifest interests of those called upon to comply. The assumption here is that if my allegiance

to the liberal democratic regime form is based upon reasons and autonomous insight, such insight will condition my compliance *even if* such compliance is contrary to my interests (or, for that matter, my emotional attachment or aversion to certain communities and life forms). In other words: only reason- and insight-based, and certainly not to the same extent interest- and passion-based, 'positive attitudes towards democratic institutions' will generate what legitimacy is all about, namely compliance. Thus, legitimacy is not just any positive or supportive 'belief, but a belief specifically *rooted* in certain arguments and principles and, most importantly, a belief *resulting* in certain behavioural outcomes, namely voluntary compliance.[3]

Democracy's triumph

Let me venture the generalization that reasons-based legitimacy (as opposed to situationally contingent acceptance) of the liberal democratic regime form is more firmly entrenched and more widely shared in today's world than it has ever been in history. If this is so, it can be explained as the combined effect of two conjunctures. For one thing, non-democratic regimes which would be able to muster strong arguments in support of themselves have virtually vanished from the scene.[4] Dynastic, theocratic, fascist, state socialist, or military versions of political authoritarianism are clearly on the retreat, though unevenly so and with some transitions to democracy stagnating at the point of defective 'semi-democracy'. For another, the variability of the liberal democratic regime form and the diversity of its present-day incarnations is so great that all conceivable arguments for (and interests in the improvement of) a political order can be accommodated under the broad 'liberal democratic' roof. In short, nobody (not even, say, Mr Milosevic) has a presentable *argument* (as opposed to opposing interests and passions) why democracy (in any of the many versions it allows for) is 'bad' and to be feared in view of its consequences, or why any conceivable alternative regime form should be held to be preferable.[5] At the very least, this rule applies to 'old' democracies, while the argument in new, nascent, and semi-democracies is at best (or rather at worst) that 'our country is not yet quite ripe', given some looming ethnic, religious, or class conflict, for the introduction of a regime form; the long-term unavoidability, however, is conspicuously rarely at issue. With the exception of much of the Islamic world, the issue is when and how, not whether, democracy, including a regime of human and civil rights, is to be adopted, and a democratic transition to be made. When, in the course of the fourth quarter of the twentieth century, the percentage of democracies jumped up from less than 30 to more than 60 per cent of all states, intellectually minimally respectable arguments against the adoption of the democratic regime have virtually vanished.[6]

It is not only the institutional and ideological system of state socialism

(as the only 'really existing' alternative political order for a modern society) that has collapsed after 1989. Similarly collapsed have autocratic and military regimes. At any rate, they are in the process of doing so under the impact of international organization, the threat of intervention, policing, and the practices of 'conditionalism', and the international and supranational politics of 'promoting and protecting democracy', as well as the current and often dubious strategies of 'state building' or even 'nation building' from the outside. Where they still exist, non-democratic regimes are put under both internal and external pressure to liberalize. The international embeddedness of regimes has also helped in many cases to invalidate the 'pragmatic' reasons for the reluctance to democratize which is based on the pretext that if 'we' would allow the transition to a liberal democracy 'now', the result would be not liberal democracy, but the collapse or breakup of the state *tout court*. With all the supranational military, political, and economic resources in place, even the 'not yet'-objection (that has taken the place of any outright 'no'-argument) has lost much of its credibility. *

Moreover and second, liberal democracy is a regime form that allows for a considerable range of variation. It can be *ethnos-based* and *demos-based,* presidential and parliamentary, centralist or federal, majoritarian and proportional, direct and representative, bicameral or unicameral, with an extended or highly limited bill of rights, with or without a written constitution, with or without constitutional guarantees of social rights, with or without autonomous institutions (such as the central bank or a constitutional court), and so on. Moreover, democracy comes in degrees; it can be 'complete' or defective (or 'delegative'), and its installation can proceed through a revolutionary rupture or a negotiated transition. Thus both the components of 'liberalism' and of 'democracy' allow for a great deal of variation. Given these wide-ranging options, there are hardly any economic, cultural, ethnic, political, or social concerns which could not be suitably built into a specifically designed case of a liberal democratic polity-to-be built, arguably with the exception of religious concerns of a theocratic sort. Also, most conceivable committed anti-democrats would be dissuaded from pursuing (and even voicing) their hopeless ambitions owing to the fact that there is a very slim chance of success in advocating any such anti-democratic political initiative, both because such an initiative would fail to get much support from others and because it would be vigorously resisted by democratically elected authorities, domestically as well as internationally.

Hence the legitimacy of the democratic regime form as such simply does not seem to be the major problem, given the overwhelming weight of reasons supporting it. Virtually nobody has anything resembling a reasonable argument (i.e. having the chance of being endorsed by citizens on the basis of autonomous insight) proposing a political arrangement *other* than what passes for liberal democracy. This is in stark contrast to the

intellectual situation of the inter-War period. Liberal democracy has become, and not just in advanced societies, 'commonplace' - the 'only game in town'. This has given rise to the speculation that democratic legitimacy may be in the process of becoming a victim of its own success. The reasons why democracy is 'better' fade away with the evidence, provided on a daily basis, of the conditions prevailing in non-democracies. After its only 'modern' alternative, i.e. state socialism, having made its dramatic disappearance, democrats and political elites of democracies may be deprived of an arguably essential challenge to point out and validate, to themselves as well as to others, the reasons on which democratic legitimacy is based. Thus the absence of a (nearby, seriously 'comparable') synchronic alternative, as well as the fading of diachronic memories and recollections, might eventually contribute to the transformation of a reason-based legitimacy, or rationally motivated support of democracy, into habituation, banalization, and unthinking routine. But it is certainly too early to pursue such gloomy speculations any further here.

But perhaps we must consider high levels of support and enthusiasm and the ensuing strong involvement of citizens with the political process, such involvement being based on emotions, interests, or reasons, something that is an exceptional rather than normal condition of democratic citizenship and its practice. Could it be the case that 'consolidated' (i.e. well-established and no longer precarious) democracies in the course of their 'normal politics' are *generally* not good at engaging the hearts, minds, and interests of citizens? If so, it would follow that in times of normal politics it is to be expected that citizens would mentally withdraw from political life and turn into rather apathetic actors, coolly and selectively watching political events in an emotionally distanced, somewhat bored, and indeed disaffected manner, spending most of their energies on the pursuit of their private lives. Securely established democracies are not good at evoking strong sentiments, visions, and ambitions - and that may well be for the better. As it is formal procedures with uncertain outcomes that make up the essence of democratic political life, it arguably does not provide much opportunity for citizens to get engaged, particularly as in modern democracies individual citizens seem to have less and less a role to play relative to representative collective actors that populate the scenery of political life. In that sense, widespread apathy has been conceived of as a sign of *strength* of democracy, not of weakness, as withdrawal and non-participation is taken to be indicators of consent and diffuse support for the regime and its *modus operandi.*

de Tocqueville: how democratic institutions generated democratic citizens

In his two volumes on *Democracy in America,* Alexis de Tocqueville takes the opposite view. He consistently and repeatedly makes the three-step argu-

ment that (i) life in democratic societies does indeed generate disaffected, depoliticized citizens, that (ii) such degeneration is by no means a harmless development, as it facilitates the rise of despotic or tyrannical deformations of democracies and the loss of liberty, which is why he is (iii) intensely interested in the identification of spontaneous rebounds, or endogenous counter-tendencies, that are capable of overcoming and neutralizing such dangerous tendencies. Let me briefly reconstruct the dialectical chain of these three arguments that he develops in either of the two volumes.

Volume I of de Tocqueville's work on American democracy[7] is the account of a proponent of a 'new political science', as the author states in his introduction to volume I (lxxiii). (i) Democracy is defined by the presence of equal political rights of all citizens and the absence of an aristocratic status order, with collective decisions on laws etc. being made by majority rule. (ii) The bad news is that the power of the majority is so overwhelming that 'no sure barrier is established against tyrannical abuses' (307). This leads, at the elite level, to mediocrity and opportunism of people who try to please the majority, with the consequence of a 'singular paucity of distinguished political characters' which is to be explained by the 'ever-increasing activity of the despotism of the majority in the United States' (313). Similarly, at the mass level, this leads to pervasive conformism and a lack of freedom of opinion that is even worse, he claims, than that which prevailed under the Inquisition in Spain (312), with the minorities being urged to desperation (317) by the majoritarian force of opinion.

But then there are also (iii) 'good news',[8] summarily introduced as 'causes which mitigate the tyranny of the majority' (319). These causes include the four countervailing powers of the legal profession and its constitutional role and 'magisterial habits' (321), in particular the educational impact the practice of trial by jury has upon the 'judgment' and 'intelligence' of ordinary people (337); the *mores* which comprise 'the whole moral and intellectual life of a people'; religious institutions and their exclusion from political control, this exclusion being the reason why religion's 'influence is more lasting' (370) than it would be if it were permitted to exercise political control; and, perhaps most importantly for de Tocqueville, what he observes as a learning-on-the-job pattern of forming political culture through endogenous preference-building, rather than through 'book-learning' (377): 'The American learns to know the law by participating in the act of legislation; and he takes a lesson in the forms of government, from governing' (378). Political life itself will inspire the people, de Tocqueville believes, 'with the feelings which it requires in order to govern well' (391).

As to volume II, originally published in 1840, we get the sociological version of the same three-step theory of how (i) 'democracy' causes (ii) damages that (iii) can be corrected. Here, the argument proceeds roughly

as follows. (i) The 'democratic age', as he observes it in the United States, is defined by the equality of conditions, i.e. of legal status of all citizens (115). Equality of legal status entails the desire, on the part of each citizen competing with every other citizen, for ever greater equality of outcomes, the 'ardent, insatiable, incessant, invincible' (117) desire for 'living in the same manner' (114). (ii) That concentration on competitive equalization of material gain seduces citizens to forget about their freedom (always understood in the republican sense as the opposite of tyranny). 'If they cannot obtain equality in freedom .. . they still call for equality in slavery' (117). Why this is so follows from de Tocqueville's subtle theory of the respective temporal structures of equality and freedom. The good that comes from equality is instantaneous and affects all, whereas the good that comes from freedom is long term and is appreciated only by some (116). As to the negative effects of each, the reverse holds true: equality is a long-term threat, resulting in a slow and imperceptible deformation, while the threat coming from, as it were, 'too much' freedom is perceived as short term of the calm and orderly conduct of business. Given the general human propensity to discount the future, the resulting preference order is obvious: equality > freedom. Yet the equalization drive breeds individualism, egotism, the inclination to dissociate from fellow citizens, which in turn 'saps the virtues of public life' (118), and 'the bond of human affection is relaxed' (119). People become 'indifferent and strangers to one another' (120), and this 'general indifference' (120) applies also to the temporal dimension, as the 'track of generations' is 'effaced' (119). People develop 'the habit of always considering themselves as standing alone', so that everyone ends up being 'entirely confined within the solitude of his own heart' (120). The author presents a long list of character-damaging socialization effects that result from living in an egalitarian and competitive society: their 'feverish ardor' (161) and constant 'anxiety to make a fortune' (167) puts the life of citizens in a mood of 'strange unrest', 'strange melancholy', and even 'disgust of life' (164). Above all, people are profoundly de-politicized: 'they lose sight of the close connexion that exists between the private fortune of each of them and the prosperity of all … The discharge of political duties appears to them to be a troublesome annoyance, which diverts them from their occupation and business' (167). Such a people will 'ask nothing from its government but the maintenance of order' and is by that token 'already a slave at heart' (168). This syndrome of negative, dissociating effects of egalitarian market society upon people's character invites despotism. 'A despot easily forgives his subjects for not loving him, provided they do not love each other' (123).

But now de Tocqueville points to the way out of this disaster and offers again (iii) a set of good news by claiming a spontaneously operative and experience-based mechanism of self-correction. The citizen 'begins to perceive that he is not so independent of his fellow-men as he had first imag-

ined, and, that in order to obtain their support, he must often lend them his cooperation' (124). This spontaneous solution of the problem of collective action relies on two causal mechanisms: equality leads to interdependence, and interdependence in turn to the widespread practice of 'the art of associating together' (133). The conditions which mediate the latter causal link are several: the 'local freedom' (126) of small communities, the absence of the 'governing power' of a state that 'stands in the way of associations' with the consequence that individuals will be 'losing the notion of combining together' (131), and, most importantly, the religiously inspired (150 ff.) alleged capacity of the Americans, based upon the Christian belief in the 'immortality of the soul' (175), to revise constantly their narrowly conceived notion of individual short-term interest according to the 'principle of interest rightly understood' (145 ff.), leading them to the pursuit of an 'enlightened' egotism (148) and the ultimate fusion of private interest and public virtue: 'It is held as a truth that... [man's] private interest is to do good' (145).

Democracy's crisis?

This short excursion into some of the work of, arguably,[9] the greatest political theorist of the nineteenth century should provide us, I believe, with a useful model with the help of which we can shed light on the mass phenomenon of contemporary political disaffection. I take it to be the essence of de Tocqueville's argument and mode of analysis that he puts the habits, *mores,* opinions, etc., in a top-down perspective, as he sees them as generated and inculcated by the practice of the political process itself and the constitutional rules by which it is governed.[10] The argument that I am about to pursue follows this logic of 'on-the-job learning'. It comes in two parts.

For one, I would claim that if we look at the contemporary scholarly literature on social foundations of liberal democracy, we hardly find any analogue to the type of optimistic arguments and evidence that de Tocqueville presented at stage (iii) of his analysis. De Tocqueville had claimed that 'the great privilege of the Americans [as the author's model case of a democratic society, C. O.] … consists … in their being able to repair the faults they may commit' (I, 268) by virtue of a continuous process of broad self-education through participatory politics. It does not seem easy to make and support a similar empirical claim today,[11] be it concerning the American or any other variant of today's liberal democracy.[12] After all, if it were, we would not be speaking of political disaffection.

The second part of my argument is more ambitious (and presumably more controversial), as it moves from the observation of an academic field just made to an attempt to explain phenomena in the real world. Boldly stated, and using de Tocqueville's core idea of 'inculcation' or 'habituation' as a mechanism of what might be called soft causation, the perspective I

wish to suggest is that everything we mean by disaffection is as much a 'fallout' of current institutional practices and experiences as were the civic-republican virtues that de Tocqueville found to be nurtured by the political process of American democracy he observed at his time. The only, though of course all-important, difference is that, in his time, de Tocqueville could see that democracy breeds competent and experienced democrats trained in the arts of self-government and cooperation, whereas we need to understand why today's practice of democracy breeds evidently growing numbers of consistently alienated, uninvolved, and disaffected cynics who get stuck, as it were, at level (ii) of de Tocqueville's analysis, without ever achieving the transition that he models as level (iii).

Following de Tocqueville, we can take it that political institutions (i.e. the branches and levels of government, the collective actors of territorial and functional representation, various autonomous or self-governing agencies such as central banks or social security funds, the mass media, the electoral system, the bill of rights) together make up the opportunity structure, or framework of action and orientation, of individual citizens as well as political elites. These institutional patterns define the 'possibility space' of citizenship and political action. They provide a learning environment which frames the citizens' points of access to the political process, shapes perceptions, defines incentives, allocates responsibilities, conditions the understanding of what the system is about and what the relevant alternatives are. These patterns function as a suggestive hidden curriculum of what the citizens can expect and hope for, what they can do, which of the citizens' competencies are needed, invited, discouraged, how to ascertain credibility, and in which way individuals can play a role in the shaping of public policies.

• Political institutions and the observation of their actual functioning 'make' citizens in that they engender in them, as well as in elites, a perception of duties, opportunities, and meanings. The citizen is constituted and positioned as an agent in politics by the institutions in and through which politics takes place. We learn what 'we', the citizens, 'are' through the hidden curriculum of day-to-day politics and its formative impact.

The analytical perspective proposed and employed by de Tocqueville (as well as later by Max Weber) looks upon patterns of political behaviour and attitudes as constituted not so much by individual properties (such as education, income, wealth), nor by individuals' value and ideological orientation or 'political culture', and neither by structural background conditions (such as indicators of political and economic stability and the respective policy outcomes), but by institutional contexts in which citizens are embedded and which endows them with a 'possibility space' of familiar options, meanings, political resources, and responsibilities.

Needless to say, this 'institutionalist' top-down perspective makes sense only to the extent that we can come up with an account of what explains the variations of institutional settings across space and time. Two answers

to this question have been given. One focuses upon historical background conditions (such as size of a country, position within international trade and security relations, composition of its population by class, ethnicity, settlers vs. aborigines, the experience of civil and international war, etc.) and path-dependent institutional traditions. The other focuses on the strategic action of political elites and the ways in which they either comply with the letter and spirit of the institutional rules which the regime is made up of, or whether they, to the contrary, succumb to the temptation (or alleged 'necessity') to exploit, bend, pervert, and relate strategically and opportunistically to the institutional rules of the regime, thereby continuously redesigning it. Here, the question is whether decisions are being made 'under' the institutional rules that govern them or whether they are being made 'above' the rules and 'about' their particular mode of operation. Institutions are double-faced. On the one hand, they are 'inherited' and often show a great deal of tenacity. On the other, they are malleable and altered in the process of their day-to-day enactment by elites (and perhaps also non-elites).

Elites can interpret, alter, and revise in the interest of gaining or maintaining political control the institutional frame within which they operate. That does not imply that they regularly break the rules according to which they are supposed to operate, although sometimes of course they do. Yet while they remain perfectly within the bounds of the script of formal institutions, they invent styles and strategies for the conduct of office according to the problems they need to solve and the support they want to generate or maintain. The opportunities and incentives built into representative and competitive party and media politics lead them, given the kind of challenges that policy-makers must respond to in contemporary democratic polities, to choose opportunistic practices of governing which in turn cannot but generate disaffection. (The term 'opportunistic' does not stand for negative character features of the members of political elites, but for the dilemmas and tensions in their roles that necessitate a peculiar style of adaptive behaviour.) In line with this general hypothesis, I suggest that we look at the various symptoms of the liberal democratic *malaise* and discontent (such as dissatisfaction, distrust, illegitimacy, apathy, voter volatility, etc.) through the prism of the impact upon political institutions that results from opportunistic elite strategies and styles of conducting their office. To the extent this hypothesis holds true, 'disaffection' is less of a deviant or pathological response of those who exhibit it than a perfectly rational and easily understandable response to a drama of politics in which ordinal")' citizens are at the same time players and spectators.

What are the dilemmas and tensions of contemporary political systems to which the elite responses can be held responsible for provoking and inculcating the negative type of responses just mentioned? I will outline three types of answers to this question. First, in a time when policy-making

is constrained by market-liberal precepts leading to the fiscal starvation of the state, on the one hand, and issues of international exposure ('globalization'), on the other, democratically competing political elites face the difficulty of making constituencies believe that it actually makes a difference whether they are in government or not. They need to convince voters that they are at all 'in control' and able 'to make a difference' in questions that are even remotely related to a distinctive notion of the common good of the political community, however that good may be conceived. Pressing problems of economic change, labour market regulation, social security, fiscal deficits, international competitiveness, demographic imbalances, inadequacies of the education and health systems, and many others are typically at any given moment of 'normal politics' to be dealt with simultaneously and without any overarching set of normative principles being available that could create coherence or an order of priorities among these diverse challenges. Each of the issues is embedded in a dense policy network of representative actors among whom working agreements must be negotiated and coalitions formed. As a result, the overall process of governance becomes, from the point of view of the citizen, ideologically colourless and cognitively opaque. As 'good' policy-making always aims at complying with the dual imperative of (a) 'solving problems' and (b) winning support, policies must be advertised in terms of the *group-specific interests* and advantages it offers to specific constituencies. This explains why public communication about governance is cast in an entirely functionalist mould ('which interests are being served?') rather than a normative one ('what principles of social and political justice can provide reasons for or against policy *x?).* Yet consequentialist arguments concerning specific benefits, even provided that they can be objectively assessed, find the attention and support of ever smaller segments of a highly differentiated social structure. In contrast, encompassing collective benefits serving 'all of us' (economic growth is the standard example, an even better one being the prevention of climate change) are typically beyond the power of public policy makers to achieve. Adding to these dilemmas the phenomena of political corruption, or the blurring of the divide between private and public interests (in its dual form of either buying public decisions with private funds or feeding public funds into private pockets), we can appreciate why a great and apparently growing number of citizens look upon the 'political class' with a sense of distrust and animosity.

To illustrate the distinction between normative vs. functionalist frames in which policies are cast, let me use the issue of migration in German domestic politics. Like in many other countries, the issue is who should be granted asylum, residence, social, and citizenship rights. Any proposal concerning these questions can be argued for in terms of normative principles and obligations of justice, such as the obligation to care for refugees, the claim that an ethnic connotation of citizenship must be over-

come, or the egalitarian demand that all people who are permanent residents and work in the domestic labour market must also be allowed to enjoy voting and other political rights. In short, what does a reasonably just migration regime provide for? At the same time, such proposals can also be argued for or, for that matter, criticized in functionalist terms, i.e. in categories of costs, benefits, and interests affected. The basic distinction here is that between *duties* and *costs,* the difference being that the fulfilment of duties always involves some costs, the costs resulting from duties cannot (or rather, should not) be saved or economized in the same way as they can (and rationally ought to be, wherever feasible) in economic contexts. As to the German debate on migration policy, it has been framed in terms of the distinction between two categories of migrants: people 'whom we need' (i.e. as bearers of scarce human capital) vs. 'people who need us', the latter category referring to refugees and asylum-seekers. The policy implication has been framed to be this: the more we need to recruit of the former, the fewer we can afford to admit of the latter of these two categories. This calculus of costs and interests that has largely displaced the discourse of rights and obligations, in the field of migration policy as well as other fields, is also likely to have a depoliticizing implication: the calculus of how costly or beneficial the admission of certain categories of people will be transcends the competence of ordinary citizens and must thus be left to the decision of experts, whereas normative judgements on rights and obligations can be left to the ordinary citizen who is (by definition) capable of making and appreciating reasonable arguments. My speculation is that the underutilization of this capability is what leaves citizens disaffected.

My second and (equally sweeping) generalization is this. The 'political class' is typically aware of the widening affective and cognitive distance that exists between the citizenry and itself, as well as of the ensuing risk of further losing support. In response, it tries to bridge the gap by *populist appeals to cultural values* and the emotions attached to them, such as the emotions of indignation or enthusiastic approval. One familiar pattern is politicians acting as 'anti-politician politicians', i.e. as ordinary people with common-sensical views and lifestyles and a heartfelt disgust for bureaucracy, taxes, and other negative features of 'the state' and 'big government'. Another one is the incitement and exploitation of fears (e.g. of terrorist acts or other kinds of crime) and hopes (e.g. for new wonder drugs) for political gain. Another familiar pattern of political elites' rhetorical self-presentation is the expression of concerns for community values, family values, religion, national identity, and patriotism. Politicians thereby frame themselves as decent and respectable personalities who are deeply concerned and committed to values that everyone shares. No doubt that may even be true, and they certainly can succeed with large parts of the audiences which these messages are intended to reach. But it is nevertheless a strategy of building a kind of counterfeit charisma by

which politicians overstep the bounds of their office and colonize the moral life of their constituencies. A local candidate showing up, without being invited, at a neighbourhood garden party (with a TV team happening to be nearby), or a spokesperson of the opposition party instrumentalizing the horror and sadness caused by the recent murder of a child for accusing the governing party for having been soft on crime, are instances of the purposive use of people's moral sentiments and emotions. For the mandate of elected politicians in a liberal democracy is not to provide moral guidance or emotional satisfaction to constituencies, but to conduct good legislation and public policies. While parts of these constituencies, and the media in particular, will be quite receptive to such manifestations of 'political kitsch', others will react with disgust and disaffection.

My third point is related to the key concept of any democratic theory, which is *accountability*. The necessary minimum of such accountability obviously consists in general elections. However, it is in the nature of elections that the electorate answers questions put before them by political elites'; it cannot address questions to the elites or question the alternatives party elites have posed. One problem with elections as the basic democratic accountability mechanism is that they occur relatively rarely. Even more serious is the problem that they are extremely modest and undemanding in terms of the thoughtfulness they require of the voter casting his or her vote. The choice of the yes/no/abstention alternatives may well be based upon well-considered reasons and a fully 'adequate understanding' (Dahl 1992: 47-48) of the issues at hand, but it can as well be guided by momeptary impulses or a misleading campaign trick of one of the competing candidates or parties. There is nothing in the solitude of the voting booth, as well as the anticipation of that solitude, that would activate the deliberative capacity of voters. Moreover, the yes/no/abstention code does not allow to ask questions, present arguments, substantiate objections, or transmit specific demands voters may want to bring to the attention of democratic rulers. To be sure, there are plenty of facts and arguments presented in the course of election campaigns, but these are always arguments being advanced not *for* a point of view, but *from* the strategic point of view, namely that of attracting votes. Nor can we rely on the print and electronic media performing the function of adequately educating and informing voters, as media organizations, and in particular the commercial ones, have their own agenda to pursue.

For all these reasons, it has been convincingly argued, for old and new democracies alike (see Rose-Ackerman 2005), that a merely 'electoral' democracy is deficient in terms of the extent to which it is actually able to hold governing elites accountable. Their institutionalized practices amount to a systematic underutilization of the intelligence and the moral resources of the citizenry and its capacity for making informed judgement (see Offe and Preuss 1991). As citizens have very limited autonomously organized opportunities to ask elites for arguments and information, to

evaluate both in terms of its accuracy and reasonableness, and to learn from each other in the process of doing so (which includes reflection and learning about their 'interests rightly understood'), a number of additional institutional mechanisms have been proposed that would enhance democratic elite accountability. These are not the subject of the present discussion. However, as long as democratic practice is stuck at the level of the electoral mechanism of accountability (plus the bargaining between governments and collective actors behind closed doors), it is not entirely unreasonable if the realities and outcomes of such impoverished kind of accountability test is met with a sense of disaffection and disenchantment.

These endogenously generated attitudes amount arguably to a moral crisis of the practice of democracy and an apparently growing disaffection, or affective distance, to the political life of liberal democracy. Charles Maier (1994: 59) speaks of 'a flight from politics, or what the Germans call *Politikverdrossenheit* a weariness with its debates, disbelief about its claims, skepticism about its results, cynicism about its practitioners'. The finding of a profound and pervasive distrust of political leaders in all parties is virtually ubiquitous and uncontested (see Nye *et al.* 1997). Not only for the US, the diagnosis is uncontroversial: 'Americans' direct engagement in politics and government has fallen steadily and sharply over the last, generation … Every year over the last decade or two, millions more have withdrawn from the affairs of their communities' (Putnam 1995a: 68). Indicators such as 'declines in voter turnout, trade union membership, prestige of politicians, citizen interest in public affairs, in the perceived role of legislatures, in the extent and intensity of party identification, and in the stability of electoral preferences' (Schmitter 1995: 18) all point in the same direction, as does the new popularity of the term 'the political class' with its dismissive and contemptuous undertones. As a consequence, political institutions do not encourage, absorb, and engage the interests, as well as the cognitive, moral, and emotional resources of citizens - who thereby somehow *cease* to be *citizens,* as opposed to subjects, spectators, semi-bored consumers of 'infotainment', voters obsessed by myths and resentment, or simply victims of disinformation campaigns. The phenomenon is so consistent and widespread that it appears dubious to trace it to external determinants of people's 'attitudes' and 'opinions', rather than to the institutional contexts which endogenously generate and reinforce these dispositions.

One important aspect of this institutionally induced political alienation is what might be called 'cognitive flooding'. Every new item that appears on the agenda of public policy, including items of great and universal political concern, seem to have an ever shorter initial phase when ordinary citizens can feel confident to know everything that is necessary to know in order to form competent judgement on preferred political responses. After this period (which, according' to my subjective estimate, may last about two weeks) there is already 'loo much" to know and to consider in

order for average citizens to avail themselves of what they would rely on as their own 'reasoned opinion'. As the gap between what we need to know and what we feel we actually know is rapidly widening, mass constituencies are reduced to political analphabetism, while the circle of the 'competent' shrinks to the tiny minority of those who have the time, opportunity, or professional mandate to immerse themselves into all the relevant complexities. In the meantime, political elites and media busy themselves with the task of feeding mass constituencies with those prefabricated views and basic (if distorted) pieces of information on which we all depend.

Types of disenchantment with the practice of liberal democracy

1 wish to conclude this exercise in conceptual clarification and hypothesis-building with a *tableau* of 'disenchanted' responses. In order to specify all the deficiencies that we try to address with the concepts of disaffection, dissatisfaction, frustration, apathy, etc., we need to contrast these conditions (just as 'illness' is understood as the deviation from 'health') to the notion of the 'good' or fully competent citizen. Here is a sketch of what (the civic-republican version of) such a citizen looks like:

. The good democratic citizen is a political agent who takes part regularly in politics locally and nationally, not just on primary and election day. Active citizens keep informed and speak out against public measures that they regard as unjust, unwise, or just too expensive. They also openly support politics that they regard as just and prudent. Although they do not refrain from pursuing their own and their reference group's interests, they try to weigh the claims of other people impartially and listen to their arguments. They are public meeting-goers and joiners of voluntary organizations who discuss and deliberate with others about the politics that will affect them all, and who serve their country not only as taxpayers and occasional soldiers, but by having a considered notion of the public good that they genuinely take to heart. The good citizen is a patriot.

(Shklar 1991:5)

This ideal type of a democratic citizen is, to reduce this rich description to a schematic construct, someone who combines two sets of characteristics. For one thing, he or she has some *'cause* ('considered notion of the public good') that is believed to be capable of being promoted in political life. This is some value, interest, group, or concern that - ultimately in the name of some notion of justice - should be served by the makers of public policy. For the other, the democratic citizen is reasonably confident that the institutional resources and mechanisms ('public meetings, voluntary organizations, elections, paying taxes') that the political community has at

its collective disposal are capable of *actually processing* and promoting those 'causes', and that the citizens wishing to promote some cause can confidently and effectively rely on these institutional mechanisms to do so. These two variables - let us call them 'political engagement' and 'sense of political efficacy' - relate to the substantive *content* and institutional *forms* of political life, or to its *ends* and *means,* or the *specific* and the *general.* Either of theses variables can be dichotomized and combined to yield four groups of cases. To complicate things, I propose to add the elite/mass distinction to some of the cells of the resulting two-by-two matrix.

As in all such routines of conceptual exploration, the plus/minus combinations are of greatest interest. The plus/plus combination represents the *ideal democratic citizen* at the mass level and, at the elite level, the committed politician who 'stands for' some programmatic cause and, following Max Weber, lives 'for', rather than 'off, politics and a distinctive vision of the public good. In extreme contrast, the minus/minus combination *('privatism')* represents the apathetic, perhaps cynical, and at any rate disenchanted citizen who does not perceive any meaningful place or role being provided to him or her by political institutions. At the same time, not much is seen to be missed by this fact, as the person in question sees *private* (family, occupational, religious, associational, consumption) and not *political* life as the scene or appropriate context where his or her important concerns and interests can be pursued. Politics is not held to be 'worth the effort', because what counts is seen to be outside of politics anyway, and political institutions (including the notion of 'the country') are at best dubious as to their worthiness of the citizens' confidence; this is the essence of post-modernist and neo-liberal dispositions towards political life. The 'privatism' type shies away from the complexity of politics and policies and the cognitive opaqueness of decision processes, which have made reasonably competent political participation more demanding in cognitive terms, while fiscal and other constraints imposed upon an essentially post-interventionist (as well as post-Cold War and, in Europe, post-national) political life have diminished both the interest-based and passion-based modes of involvement of citizens. As a consequence, politics itself has changed in ways which makes it both more difficult to understand and follow and less consequential (or more boring) in terms of the material benefits and emotional appeals it has to offer. Moreover, the remaining emotional appeals (on which both competitive strategies of media reporting and populist elite politics relies) are often of a negative, scandalizing, and implicitly 'anti-political' nature. They are designed to stir up audiences' sense of indignation (with politics as a 'dirty business') and thus to undermine the reputation and respectability of the 'political class', its authority and activities. Both the perceived realities of political life and the strategies of media converge on suggesting to the citizenry that politics is rarely 'worth the effort'. While rational and well-focused distrust is arguably healthy for the viability of democratic political life, the

opposite may be said for the framing of politics in terms of a generalized anti-political suspicion and a detachment from issues of justice.

Perhaps more interesting than privatism is the combination of strong loyalty with political institutions and low intensity of political causes. Citizens belonging in this category, call them *conventionalist,* do follow the political process with attention and without a sense of being left out, but they do so without providing any input or even substantively adequate and relevant judgement of their own. They relate to politics in terms of spectator sports or personality show, without being able to (or finding it worth the effort to) evaluate, take sides, or pass independent judgement on issues and programmes. If mobilization of this kind of citizen occurs at all, it follows the 'populist' logic: both the issues over which the mobilization occurs and the standards and values applied to them are unreflective evaluative intuitions invoked by political leaders. There is also an elite-level equivalent to this 'a-political' conduct of politics: the all-purpose politician specializing in the brokerage of power without a sense of purpose and values, prudence, and justice of his own. The absence of authentic causes and programmatic visions can take the form of careerism, opportunism, or the ritualistic defence of agencies, parties, and budgets. This is the syndrome that Richard von Weizsäcker (1992), the former German president, had in mind when he criticized leaders of political parties for their routines of maximizing and monopolizing power without having any idea, or sense of purpose, for which causes and objectives to deploy that power.

The inverse combination is that of strong causes with low confidence as to the capacity of established political institutional procedures to respond to and process the issues making up these causes. This disposition may result in a number of behavioural and attitudinal outcomes. One of them is involvement in *'non-conventional' politics,* such as the politics of new social movements. The pattern of movement politics is to develop and practise new (and mostly perfectly legal) channels of political representation and communication in addition to existing routines and mechanisms of association and representation. A more radical outcome of the combination of strong causes with weak confidence is the turn to *violent militancy,* terrorism, and other illegal forms of political action, including the separatist denial of the validity of some established political authority and political community. The type of disaffection we encounter here amounts to the negation, typically fuelled by passionate emotions of resentment, fear, and hatred, not just of the institutional order of political life, but of the underlying political community to which actors no longer wish to belong (secessionist movements and separatism) or from which they want to exclude others (xenophobic violence).

This disposition can manifest itself in overt and active forms, but it can also take the latent and passive form of rejection of authority, non-identification, and the virtual dissociation from the political community over which this authority is established. In this passive version, we may

speak of *political cynicism,* or a sense of futility of politics and the pervasive incompetence of political elites. For instance, almost half of all those asked in a German survey a question on 'Which party is best capable of solving the problems of Germany?' answered by choosing the answer 'none of them' *{Die Woche,* July 21, 2000). Withdrawal from political life that is the result of accumulated frustrations (which may be also due to a lack of trust in the cooperation of a significant number of others) is, at the surface of it and in behavioural terms, hard to distinguish from the syndrome of 'privatism'.

Conclusions

In conclusion, let me briefly, reflect on the impact the various phenomena of disaffection, alienation, and dissatisfaction might have upon the viability and stability of the democratic regime form. Why is disaffection 'bad' — be it in itself or in terms of its consequences? To be sure, it is bad in terms of the normative ideals derived from the republican tradition, such as those evoked in the above quote from Judith Shklar. Assessments of the causal impact of disaffection, however, range from mildly benign to strongly alarmist. Distrust and even some measure of cynicism concerning the 'political class', its members, and its procedural routines may be considered a syndrome that positively *strengthens* democracy, as it helps to reduce participation and attention in 'normal politics' to tolerable levels, maintains a repertoire of capacity for mobilization for 'extraordinary' causes and critical conditions, and activates the search for additional and alternative modes of mobilization and representation, such as new social movements.

A less favourable assessment claims that the spread of disaffection creates space and opportunities that might be exploited by anti-liberal and/or anti-democratic political entrepreneurs and their populist projects. The danger of backlash into hyper-mobilization has been cited, as underutilized political 'slack resources' are available for the populist support of charismatic ideas and leaders who pro,mise to relieve people from their widely shared sense of frustration and powerlessness. Similarly, the fear has been voiced that disaffection breeds non-compliance and defection, with the law in general (and tax laws in particular) meeting with more or less passive obstruction and becoming ever more difficult to enforce, thus generating a *post-modernist* spiral of state impotence and mass cynicism. Third and finally, the gloomiest of visions concerning the consequences of political disaffection is the fear that the institutional order of liberal democracy and its principles might itself be challenged as a consequence, thereby giving rise to anti-democratic and authoritarian mobilization. It is hard to see what the intellectual resources could possibly be on which such radical and 'principled' challenge of liberal democracy could be based - except, arguably, a fundamentalist revival of *theocratic* theories of the political order and 'good' politics.

But, at least as far as the OECD world is concerned, liberal democracy as a regime form does not show any signs of being in danger because any non-democratic ideas or models have a chance to win mass support. To the idea it is in danger at all, it is so because the democratic political process itself, as it is perceived and experienced by the citizen, has the potential of undermining the loyalty, commitment, and confidence of citizens. While there is very little that speaks 'against' liberal democracy in theory, there is also very little that speaks 'for' its practice. This practice, instead, instils doubts concerning all three items: the *rules* and operative procedures of the conduct of public affairs; the *objectives* and actual accomplishments of governance; and the *reference unit* in terms of which the '(whose?) 'common' good is conceptualized.

The practices of political elites to which the deformation of citizenship must be attributed are, as I said, by no means arbitrarily chosen. They are rather necessitated and imposed upon elites by the nature and dynamics of a globalized political economy, the media, and the institutional logic of competitive party democracy itself. These contexts define strategies, constraints, and opportunities that elites have no choice but utilizing and exploiting. By doing so, they teach a hidden curriculum to ordinary citizens about the nature of democratic politics and the role of citizens in it. It is the corrosive impact of this curriculum and its suggestive lessons of disenchantment, cynicism, and withdrawal that even rational and committed citizens find it ever more difficult to withstand in our 'disaffected' democracies.

Notes

1 The term figures prominently in the title of a recent book edited by Pharr and Putnam (2000).
2 Recently the concept of 'disaffected groups' has been employed by the Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Anan, when he addressed the International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism, and Security on 11 March 2005. Outlining a UN strategy to combat terrorism, he stated as the first element of that strategy the need to 'dissuade disaffected groups from choosing terrorism as a tactic to achieve their goals'.
3 This conceptualization of legitimacy is quite commonplace in today's political analysis. 'Legitimacy is … here understood as a widely shared belief that it is my moral duty to comply with requirements imposed by state authorities even if these requirements violate my own preferences or interests, and even if I could evade them at low cost.… Democratic legitimacy is about good reasons that should persuade me to comply with policies that do not conform to my own wishes' (Scharpf 2000: 4, 13).
4 To this, it might rightly be objected that theocratic fundamentalist revivals advocating the 'will of God' as rightfully governing and taking precedence over the 'will of the people' are the only remaining instance of a principled anti-democratic political theory.
5 Note the stark contrast to the situation after the 'first wave' of democratization after the First World War and during the entire inter-War period. At that time,

not only large Segments of the middle class,, but also numerous members of the intellectual and literary elite felt attracted by and actually significantly supported the 'totalitarian' ideologies of fascism and Stalinism and their political ambitions. At least in consolidated democracies, no analogue for such potential for ideological defection from liberal democracy is evident (or indeed conceivable) today.
6 This is in stark contrast to the situation of the inter-War period in Europe and elsewhere, when theorists of both the far Right and far Left could in fact make influential, as well as most consequential, anti-democratic arguments.
7 Page numbers in brackets refer to the respective volume of de Tocqueville (1961).
8 For an account of these, see Maletz (2005).
9 See Elster (1993: 107 and 112 ff).
10 In modern political theory, the classical source from which de Tocqueville probably adopted his analytical model is Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des Lois* (and more particularly from book 11, ch. 6, 'On the Constitution of England'), where the author undertakes a 'proto-Tocquevillean' analysis of the British system of government. It is still not widely understood and appreciated to which considerable extent the political sociology of Max Weber, who wrote two generations after de Tocqueville, is a continuation and elaboration of the work of the latter. What Weber is concerned with is how certain institutional settings shape and cultivate the particular kind of 'modal personality' (*Menschenturri*, as he puts it), the moral and political qualities of which reflect the qualities of the institutions in question. For instance, he vehemently criticized the fact that the semi-authoritarian protectionism that characterized the political system of Imperial Germany would breed a kind of 'timid' and 'politically uneducated' bourgeoisie incapable of assuming a political role of responsible participation and leadership.
11 In fact, the rich contemporary literature on 'deliberative' democracy attempts to remedy this deficiency (which it thereby highlights) through normative models and institutional designs. For a recent and highly suggestive example, see Ackerman and Fishkin (2004).
12 In German political theory debates, one of the symptomatically most often-quoted theorems is condensed in a sentence from the constitutional lawyer Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde. It reads: 'Der freiheitliche, säkularisierte Staat lebt von Voraussetzungen, die er selbst nicht garantieren kann'. ('The liberal secular state depends upon premises that itself cannot guarantee by its own means.') This is the precise opposite of de Tocqueviüe's account of American democracy, which, in his view, induces the learning processes on the results of which it thrives.