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Tocqueville's Political Economy, A Review by Leonard P. Liggio

I opened Richard Swedberg's [Tocqueville's Political Economy](#) (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2009) with much anticipation. Swedberg is professor of sociology at Cornell University and author of *Max Weber and the Idea of Economic Sociology*, and *Schumpeter: A Biography*. Sadly, Swedberg is not interested in Tocqueville's political economy, but in economic sociology. Swedberg acknowledges Tocqueville 's study of economics, with some useful pages; but he jumps to an assemblage of random remarks regarding sociology as the subject of his book. I was pleased to discover his reference to my article on page 321, footnote 63: Leonard P. Liggio, "Charles Dunoyer and French Classical Liberalism," *Journal of Libertarian Studies* I, no. 3 (1977), 153-78).

When I arrived at the Graduate School of Fordham University, the History faculty had already been involved in early Tocqueville studies. George Nash notes that with the publication of a new edition of *Democracy in America* (1945), there was a resurgence of interest in Tocqueville starting with "the publication later that year of a symposium on the book by a number of scholars at Fordham University" (George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945* (New York, Basic Books, 1976) page 63. ("William J. Schlaerth, S. J., ed, *A Symposium on Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy in America* (New York, 1945). This was the first symposium of Fordham's newly founded Burke Society (Nash, page 364, note 29).)

Two of my Fordham graduate professors, Ross J. S. Hoffman and A. Paul Levack, the editors of *Burke's Politics* (New York, Knopf, 1949) said: "we emerged from the Second World War as the champions of a conservative cause: the cause of conserving law and liberty against totalitarian despotism. It is the same cause Burke championed...." (Nash, page 68). *Burke's Politics* was reviewed in the Fordham journal, *Thought* (24, June, 1949, 199) by Paul Levack's Harvard University mentor, Crane Brinton.

The professor with whom I had four year-long seminars, Oskar Halecki, also taught East-Central European history at Columbia University and recommended I attend some lectures there by John Lukacs drawn from his new book: *A New History of the Cold War*. Lukacs' lectures were impressive and I became acquainted with John Lukacs's (editor), *Tocqueville*, (Garden City, New York, Doubleday Anchor, 1959). John Lukacs later contributed an essay on Alexis de Tocqueville to the journal I edited: *The European Revolution & Correspondence with Gobineau Literature of Liberty: A Review of Contemporary Liberal Thought*: John Lukacs, "Alexis de Tocqueville: A Historical Appreciation" (vol. 5, no.1 (Spring, 1982) in The Online Library of Liberty (Liberty Fund Inc.)

Tocqueville (1805-1859) early had studied the works of J. B. Say (1767-1832) and prepared for his travels in America by reading Say's *Cours complet d'economie politique pratique* (Paris, 1828) during his 1831 voyage. He had already studied Say's *Traite d'economie politique* (1803, 1814). Tocqueville became very well acquainted with John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) who was one of the first to single out the importance of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Mill was fluent in French having been sent by James Mill in 1820 to live in Paris with J. B. Say and then with Jeremy Bentham's brother in the south of France.

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