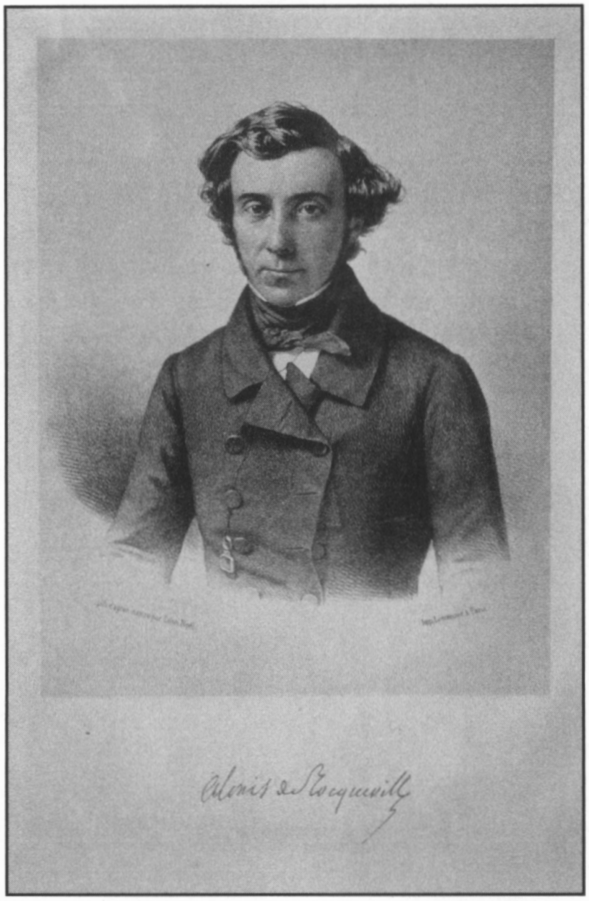
DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA



Alexis de Tocqueville

Alexis de Tocqueville

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

Edited by Eduardo Nolla

Translated from the French by James T. Schleifer

VOLUME I

LIBERTY FUND

Indianapolis

This book is published by Liberty Fund, Inc., a foundation established to encourage study of the ideal of a society of free and responsible individuals.

The cuneiform inscription that serves as our logo and as the design motif for our endpapers is the earliest-known written appearance of the word "freedom" (*amagi*), or "liberty." It is taken from a clay document written about 2300 B.C. in the Sumerian city-state of Lagash.

The French text on which this translation is based is *De la démocratie en Amérique,* première édition historico-critique revue et augmentée. Edited by Eduardo Nolla. Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin; 6, Place de la Sorbonne; Paris, 1990.

Frontispiece: Portrait of Alexis de Tocqueville by Léon Noël, reproduced with kind permission of the Beinecke Library, Yale University.

Map of the United States appearing in the first edition of *Democracy in America* (1835), reproduced with kind permission of the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Printed in the United States of America

P 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Tocqueville, Alexis de, 1805–1859
[De la démocratie en Amérique. English]
Democracy in America/Alexis de Tocqueville;
edited by Eduardo Nolla;
translated from the French by James T. Schleifer.—[Student ed.]
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-86597-840-9 (set: pbk.: alk. paper)
ISBN 978-0-86597-838-6 (v. 1: pbk.: alk. paper)
ISBN 978-0-86597-839-3 (v. 2: pbk.: alk. paper)
1. United States—Politics and government. 2. United States—Social conditions—To 1865. 3. Democracy—United States. I. Nolla, Eduardo. II. Schleifer, James T., 1942– III. Title.
JK216.T713 2012
320.973—dc23 2011041363

LIBERTY FUND, INC.
8335 Allison Pointe Trail, Suite 300
Indianapolis, Indiana 46250-1684

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

Contents

Part II

DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA
(1840)

VOLUME II

Part I: Influence of Democracy on the Intellectual Movement in the United States

Part II: Influence of Democracy on the Sentiments of the Americans

Part III: Influence of Democracy on Mores Properly So Called

Part IV: Of the Influence That Democratic Ideas and Sentiments Exercise on Political Society

Translator's Note

This new translation of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* is intended to be a close, faithful, and straightforward rendering of Tocqueville into contemporary American English. A second key goal is to present a smooth, readable version of Tocqueville's classic work. Part of my challenge has therefore been to maintain the right balance between closeness and felicity, between faithfulness and readability.

The translation scrupulously follows Tocqueville's somewhat idiosyncratic paragraphing and attempts to reflect the varied sentence structure of the original. I have tried, where possible, to follow Tocqueville's sentence structure and word order. But in many cases this effort would be inappropriate and untenable. It would not work for constructing sentences in English and would obscure Tocqueville's meaning. So sometimes I have shifted Tocqueville's word order and rearranged, even totally recast, his sentences. At times, for example, Tocqueville's extraordinarily long sentences, built from accumulated phrases, had to be broken to fit English usage. Nonetheless, the translation tries to reflect Tocqueville's stylistic mix of long, complex sentences with short, emphatic ones. Occasionally Tocqueville's sentence fragments are retained; more often, I have turned them into complete (though still very brief) sentences by inserting a verb.

As part of the effort to achieve a contemporary American English text, I have avoided translating the French *on* as *one;* almost invariably, I have used *you* (sometimes *we* or another pronoun, depending on context), or have changed the sentence from active to passive. And with the goal of closeness in mind, I have also used cognates where they fit and are appropriate.

Another basic principle for this translation has been consistency, espe-

cially for key terms. But a rigid or narrow consistency can be a false and dangerous goal, even a trap. Words often have many meanings and therefore need to be translated differently depending on context. There are several good examples. *Objet* can mean object (the object of desire), subject (the subject under consideration), matter (the matter under discussion), or objective (the objective of a plan). *Biens* can mean property or goods, or the opposite of evil(s): good, good things, or even, on a few occasions, advantages. And *désert* can mean wilderness, uninhabited area, or desert. The reader will find other examples of such clusters of possible meanings in the translation. But for the key terms used by Tocqueville, the principle has been to be as consistent as possible. (See Key Terms.)

Finally, the translation follows these more specific principles: (1) words referring specifically to France, to French institutions and history, such as *commune, conseil d'état, parlement,* are usually left in French; (2) quotations presented by Tocqueville from Pascal, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Guizot, and many other French writers have been newly translated; (3) on a few occasions, specific translator's notes have been inserted; (4) the French *De* at the beginning of chapter or section titles has been retained and translated invariably as *Of* (eg. *Of the Point of Departure . . .*). The great exception, of course, is the name of the book itself, *Democracy in America,* a title simply too familiar in English to be altered; and (5) in cases where Tocqueville quotes directly and closely from an English-language source, the original English text has been provided; but in cases where Tocqueville has quoted an English-language source from a French translation, or has only paraphrased or followed an English text very loosely, Tocqueville has been translated.

The Nolla edition, on which this translation is based, presents an enormous amount and variety of materials from the drafts and manuscript variants of Tocqueville's work, as well as excerpts from closely related materials such as travel notes and correspondence, and several chapters or partial chapters never included in the published text.

Within this collection of drafts, variants, and other materials there exists an important, but not always clear, hierarchy of manuscript materials.

These layers largely reflect chronology, the development over time of Tocqueville's thinking from early notes and sketches, through successive draft versions, to final text (still often overlaid with last-minute thoughts, queries, and clarifications). But they also reflect the tangled paths of his musings, including intellectual trials, asides, and dead ends.

And from these diverse materials comes a major challenge for the translator: to reflect the stylistic and chronological shifts from early to late, from informal to formal, from rough to polished versions of Tocqueville's book. In some of the drafts, especially, the translation must try to reproduce Tocqueville's tentativeness and confusion, as reflected in incomplete, broken, or ambiguous sentences. Most important, the many layers of text need to be translated in a way that maintains parallel phrasing, but at the same time reflects key variations in wording as they occur in the unfolding development of Tocqueville's work. The various stages of manuscript variants and the final text need to match, to be harmonious where they are more or less the same, and to differ where Tocqueville has made significant changes in vocabulary or meaning.

The very act of translation teaches a great deal about the author being translated. Tocqueville, like all good writers, had certain stylistic characteristics and idiosyncrasies that a translator must grasp in order to render a faithful translation.

In general, Tocqueville's sentences are much more dense and compact in volume I of *Democracy* than in volume II, where they are more abstract and open. In the first volume, his sentences often seem stuffed with short, qualifying phrases. This difference results from the more abstract and reflective nature of the second volume, but it also arises from the more detailed, concrete, and historical subject matter that takes up much of volume I.

Tocqueville often painted verbal pictures to summarize and to express his ideas in a single image that he hoped would grab and even persuade his readers. To create these images, he repeatedly used certain clusters of related words. Among his favorite word pictures, for example, are images of light and darkness, of eyes and seeing, of shadows and fading light;