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LIBERALISM AND ARISTOCRACY IN THE FRENCH RESTORATION

By George A. Kelly

Critical of both the ancient and the revolutionary pasts, the Liberals of the Restoration are, nevertheless, prepared to find in them the germs and seedlings of liberty. Conserving gains, thrusting back reaction, they are dimly hopeful of a future that can extend the boons of progress and security, even if it cannot promise the millenium. As Stanley Mellon observes in his description of the political uses of history in the Restoration,[1] the Liberals have three main tasks: to preserve the civil acquisitions of 1789, to cleanse themselves of the guilt of violence, and to prepare for the possession of power. This they do with the pen and the printing press, and they compel the Ultras to accept these weapons of choice, since terror and *arbitraire* are passing out of style. There are Liberals and Liberals, going under the labels of "doctrinaires" and "indépendants." Several sharp distinctions divide the two groups, even though in total theory and tactics the groups do not differ widely. The "indépendants"—Constant, Lafayette, Manuel, Sebastiani, Foy, *et al.*—are children of opposition, not so much setting the rules of government as establishing boundaries which governments should not transgress. The "doctrinaires," on the other hand, are enduring an apprenticeship of opposition and preparing for their own day of dominance, which will come in the July Monarchy.[2]

One of the hallmarks of a Restoration Liberal is that he sees the progress of liberty sanctioned and insured by a certain social order, neither too egalitarian nor too tolerant of privilege, constructed according to Montesquieu's famous formula of "mixed government." It is fairly clear that for François Guizot and his *doctrinaire* tribe, fervently middle-class in spirit, the restored aristocracy becomes a kind of trophy of their splendid victory and a testimony to their reasonableness. The Chamber of Peers is a warrant of the fulfilled revolution and a reward for new "capacities"; but there is no doubt that 1789 and 1814 have installed the bourgeoisie in the driver's seat:

[1] S. Mellon, *The Political Uses of History: A Study of Historians in the French Restoration* (Stanford, 1958), esp. 1–57, 193–5.

[2] The Revolution of 1830 was, to be sure, a coalition effort of the bourgeoisie, Liberal in attitude, and some radicals and republicans emerged from underground. But the prize of power went to the Guizots, de Broglies, and Casimir-Périers. As for the independents, Constant remained in the opposition until his death in December. The *doctrinaires* and *indépendants,* aside from their organization in separate cliques and salons, are best distinguished by their respective interpretations of sovereignty and of the organization of the "liberal" state.

The people formerly conquered had become conquerors. In their turn they conquered France. By 1814 they controlled it beyond dispute. The Charter recognized their possession, proclaimed this fact to be law, and provided representative government as its guarantee. . . .[3]

By this historical procedure they manage to "nationalize" the Revolution, representing it as the culmination of a millenial social struggle engendered in the very origins of the French race.[4]

With Constant and other "indépendants," the notion of class movement and ascendancy is not so visceral. As generally hostile to the abuses of the *ancienne noblesse* as are the "doctrinaires" and indeed more libertarian in principle, they are not as concerned to legitimize a new social basis for government. Guizot and his party are no doubt erudite, but the erudition of the independent Liberals is more aristocratic, more abstract, more cosmopolitan. They are the grandchildren of Montesquieu and they share his appetites, if not some of his individual preferences.[5]

We need not go back as far as Montesquieu and his critics to see precisely what the Liberals had in mind. Both their hopes and fears were concentrated and exposed in the closing days of the Old Regime and in the ideologies of the Constituent Assembly. An honor roll of moderate constitutionalism adorns all their historical and political writings: Turgot, Malesherbes, Mounier, Malouet, Clermont-Tonnerre, Necker; above all, Jacques Necker, Anglophile, *créancier d'Etat,* patriot, and literal grandfather of Restoration Liberalism. Against these heroes stands a host of bloody names, but there is one, guilty of no blood in particular, yet seen as the inventor of twenty years of anarchy and tyranny: it is the oracular Sieyès, whose explosive pamphlet *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers Etat?* in 1788 had set a spark to the long fuse of turbulence.[6]

[3] François Guizot, *Du gouvernement de la France* (Paris, 1820), 3. Quoted by Mellon, 50.

[4] The history of the French race was charged with revolutionary significance in the XVIIIth century. Aristocratic writers like Boulainvilliers and Montesquieu tended to praise the Frankish conquest and legitimize the feudal order: Dubos, Voltaire, Mably, and others attacked the foundations of French nobility as a usurpation. The complicated question is well treated by Jacques Barzun, in *The French Race* (New York, 1932). As pointed out ahead, Sieyès resumed these arguments in 1788, equating the Tiers Etat with the Gallo-Roman elements of the French population. Guizot expanded this theory in his Sorbonne lectures of 1820, and it received added emphasis in the historical writings of Augustin Thierry.

[5] See *De l'Esprit des lois,* II, iii–iv; III, vii; V, vii–xi; VIII, ix, xvi; XI, vi-vii; XIX, i–iv; XXVIII–XXXIII, *passim.*

[6] The *Tiers Etat* was by far the most resonant of Sieyès's three revolutionary pamphlets of 1788. It sold 30,000 copies in three weeks, and, in the words of Malouet, "perverted the public." For background, see Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *Sieyès: His Life and His Nationalism* (New York, 1932), 33–34.

Sieyès and Necker are our two basic poles within the spectrum of constitutional government. Solutions lying outside this range are either arbitrary despotism or simple mass fury. But, in the opinion of the Liberals, the one man's system leads to freedom and security while the other's degenerates into chaos and fear.

Essentially the doctrine of Sieyès was a bowdlerized Rousseau, plus representative government. Two of his points deserve our particular attention. The first is that the institution of hereditary nobility is excess and worthless baggage for the French nation to carry; the Tiers, in fact, is the Nation:

> It is not enough to have shown that the Privileged Class, far from being useful to the Nation, can only weaken and harm it; we must further prove that the noble order has no part in the social organization; that it may well be a burden for the Nation since it cannot be part of it.[7]

The only hope for the nobility in France, in the eyes of Sieyès, is "their rehabilitation in the order of the Tiers Etat." [8] All special corporations of citizens must be abolished so that "the common interest is assured of dominating the particular interests"; the duty of the Nation is to see that it does not "degenerate into aristocracy." [9] As a corollary to the thesis of Sieyès, all "mixed government" becomes literally impossible: the monarch is no more than a symbol of the people's power, and all conceivable aristocracies are abolished. This leads Sieyès to attack the much vaunted freedom of England. The English constitution, perhaps of some merit in 1688, is gothic and arbitrary by the standards of a hundred years later. It is the "product of chance and circumstances much more than of enlightenment." [10]

The second line of argument is more complicated and more interesting. Here the customarily abstract Sieyès turns to history—the history of Dubos and Voltaire—for his most crushing indictment of the nobility. By this thesis, the opposite of that of Boulainvilliers and Montesquieu, the "noble Germans" are usurpers who have held the French people in illicit bondage ever since late Roman times. The Gauls are the Tiers Etat:

> Why should [the Tiers] not send back to the Franconian forests all those families who preserve the mad pretension of descent from the Conquerors and inheritance of their rights?
>
> Thus purged, the Nation will, I think, take consolation in being left to believe that it is composed only of the descendants of the Gauls and the Romans. . . . Why not? Turn about is fair play; the Tiers will once again be Noble in becoming the Conquering Race in its turn! [11]

[7] Emmanuel Joseph Sièyes, *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers Etat?* (2nd edition, Paris, 1789), 8. [8] *Ibid.*, 14. [9] *Ibid.*, 118.
[10] *Ibid.*, 68. [11] *Ibid.*, 12–13.

Curiously enough, the conservative *doctrinaires* led by Guizot will pick up and expand the radical historical arguments of Sieyès, altering the Tiers Etat to fit the bourgeoisie of their heart's desire; whereas the independent Liberals will at least waveringly credit their Montesquieu.

Jacques Necker, the man of a thousand virtues and pieties, loved with a fierce filial devotion by Madame de Staël, lauded by Constant, hailed by almost all the moderates, was above all an admirer of the English constitution and of the biases of that freedom-loving and commercial island. His system had consisted in making the customs, politics, and constitution of France as much like those of England as possible, while time remained. This meant, in sum, the antithesis of the Sieyesian doctrine: cultivation of a responsible aristocracy, primogeniture, a bicameral legislature, and mixed government *à la Montesquieu,* decentralization of administrative responsibility in the provinces and a constitutional monarch who would not be without power. The Anglomania of the Neckers leaves no doubt.[12] But the Neckers' fancy did not of itself create the total *idée fixe* of Restoration Liberalism. It was the violent elimination of all other constitutional solutions—except the English, which had never been tried—that gave the "beau système" of Montesquieu [13] an air of finality and perfection in the eyes of the *amis de la liberté.*

According to the Liberals, 1791 had taught that no king could survive without the support of hereditary aristocracy. In 1814 France had both a king and a nobility which, despite its countless duplicities and stupidities, had been redeemed by force. The extraordinary Liberal attempt will be to find a place for this institution within the system of liberty, treating it not merely as a necessary evil but as an additional barrier to arbitrary power. It is not without some inconvenience that the Liberals make the gesture; but the idea is, in the words of Dominique Bagge, to create a "libéralisme assez hérédi-

[12] To take a non-political instance: Madame Necker languished hopelessly in love with a wayward Edward Gibbon for a number of years before accepting Jacques; it was seriously proposed that Germaine should marry William Pitt the Younger; and, even unto the third generation, Albertine (later Duchesse de Broglie, daughter of the great blue-stocking and, conceivably, of Benjamin Constant) appears to have been intended at one moment for Lord Byron. For a full account of Neckerian Anglophilia, see Robert Escarpit, *L'Angleterre dans l'oeuvre de Madame de Staël* (Paris, 1954).

[13] Montesquieu, basing his judgment on the histories of Caesar and Tacitus, notes the early propensity of the Germanic tribes for mixed government. This, for him, is the source of the English system and serves as a link between the experiences of England and the continental peoples. His famous *mot:* "Ce beau système a été trouvé dans les bois." *De l'Esprit des lois,* XI, vi.

taire" [14] and, in the phrase of Constant himself, to leave some insulation between the sheer power of men and the scaffold.[15] In the remainder of this essay we shall examine three exhibits of this form of virtuosity.

Madame De Staël: Aristocracy Without Tears

Germaine de Staël, who is both proto-doctrinaire and proto-independent, inherits her father's predilection for England and "mixed government" and makes it her own without significant alteration. Though Père Necker and daughter may battle *à outrance* at the whist table, they are absolutely harmonious in questions of politics. For Germaine, and for Benjamin Constant too, Necker is the dishonored Cassandra of the French Revolution. More important still, perhaps, is the cultural triad of Madame de Staël's life: France-England-Germany. This means not only that she is a "European" and cosmopolitan intellectual of the *Aufklärung,* but that she drinks at the source of Montesquieu's "beau système," which, found in the German forests, has become historically accessible to all Western Europe.

First of all, let us set her mood, which is not without astonishment given the fact that she is the first-seeded blue-stocking of Europe, leading the major intrigues of the Directoire, bearding the terrified Goethe in his den, chatting with Alexander I on the eve of the burning of Moscow. "Chivalry is for the moderns what the heroic ages were for the ancients: all noble memories of the European nations are connected to it." [16] England is "the cavalier armed for the defense of the social order." [17] " [M. Necker] believed in the need for distinctions in society, so as to soften the harshness of power. . . . The aristocracy should, in his conception, be designed to rouse the emulation of all men of merit." [18] "Social distinctions . . . should have no other goal than the utility of all [Madame de Staël is an admiring but not very rigorous Benthamite] . . . men are born free and remain free and equal before the law: but there is a great deal of room for sophisms in such a wide field. . . ." [19]

Madame de Staël's major message may be summarized as *freedom,* yes (especially for the Germaines and Benjamins of this world, except from each other); *equality,* but. . . . It is a very large, but

[14] Dominique Bagge, *Le Conflit des idées politiques en France sous la Restauration* (Paris, 1952), 77.

[15] Benjamin Constant, "Du pouvoir royal" in *Oeuvres politiques* (ed. Louandre, Paris, 1874), 24.

[16] *De l'Allemagne* (5 Vols., Paris, 1958), I, 72–73. [17] *Ibid.,* I, 8.

[18] *Considérations sur la Révolution française* (Paris, 1862), II, 75. [19] *Ibid.,* I, 217.

still a mixed, *but*. Chivalry, yes; merit, yes: there is no place for poor pardonable stupidity, only for fallible brilliance. Fortunately, French liberalism at its best moments will have more to show than intellectual snobbery.

Madame de Staël is Protestant in background, and so is Constant. This is incalculably important, not simply because it places her genetically in the tradition of modern revolution and "cosmopolitanizes" her rôle—attaching her to the Reformation in Germany, and above all, to the Glorious Revolution of 1688—but because it symbolizes her whole psychological position in the liberal movement. She is intelligent, wealthy, independent, and free—with the candle of the Lord in her soul, when she cares to light it, and money in the bank. Furthermore, her God (and Benjamin's) can become at whim an immanent conscience *à la Rousseau,* a rationalist teleological deity, or a Kantian metaphor that makes liberty immortal; none of the dark, secularized Calvinism of Guizot in her politics, none of the Catholic subordination or dogmatism, either. Instead, a sense that Protestantism, free of consistency and free of priestcraft, taken up or put down at will like a book of poetry, might be a good state religion for France; a sense that Protestantism is ancient and Catholicism modern.

Then there is class. Necker, despite his thousand generosities, is, by dint of birth, an exceedingly rich bourgeois, and his daughter has made a noble "marriage." Consequently, the civil rights of the aristocracy becomes the more tender as Revolutionary France explodes. The *émigrés* in London think Madame de Staël a Jacobin; the Jacobins in Paris, perceiving her adroit underground railway to Coppet which snatches selected aristocratic friends from the hunger of the guillotine, think her a reactionary. No matter: she is true to herself and to a politics that despises the *arbitraire* of death and the pain of exile, that "tomb where the mail continues to arrive."

An unimpeachable member of the aristocracy of merit, denied the aristocracy of birth but consoled through marriage, Germaine has no thought of being neutralized by quaint Republican institutions. It is all right to be a republican, if you can make sure you are a leading one, but you renounce nothing; rather, you adapt. After Terror and banishment, who could fail to discover in the nervous but gay and intrigue-laden Directoire the very atmosphere of liberty? Who could fail to identify in the preposterous Constitution of the Year III the superior virtues—bicameralism, for example[20]—denied in

[20] "Mixed government" was not the only reason why the Directoire appealed to the Liberals. The main sources of their affection were obviously psychological, involving (1) return from exile or concealment; and (2) participation in power and freedom of expression. They were in no way immune to the gush of pseudo-Romanism that burst forth after the austere and violent republicanism of the Terror.

1791 and condemned by the Convention and the Comité de Salut Public? "Should not property and enlightenment form a natural aristocracy, exceedingly favorable to the prosperity of the country and to the very increase of enlightenment?" [21] Here is the *doctrinaire* and *bourgeoise* Germaine speaking: she has even invented *doctrinaire* sovereignty long before Royer-Collard turned his mind to philosophical questions: "Is not the single authority that one can establish that which measures up to the definition of Reason?" [22]

Madame de Staël felt the vicarious gusts of "negative" liberty, but she had a positive malaise whenever she was in the vicinity of the *peuple*. Her equality is therefore very abstract, and her aristocracy extremely physical. Let us overtake her in the mood of description: "Twenty thousand men of the lowest class . . . forced their entry into the King's palace; their physiognomies were stamped with that moral and physical coarseness which can turn anyone to disgust, no matter how philanthropic he may be." [23] Again, one sees emerging from their holes "the crudest classes of society, like vapors rising from the pestilential swamps." [24] The lower classes, Madame de Staël explains, have "almost no gradations in their feelings or their ideas. . . . Nothing is more pleasing to men of that class than small talk [*plaisanterie*]: for, in the excess of their fury against the nobles, they take pleasure in being treated by them as equals." [25]

These passages should be sufficient to display the De Staëlian psychology; it remains to see how it worked on politics. Here the caricature is somewhat softened: first, because the practical question of governing France in the early XIXth century has little logical rapport with any form of egalitarian sympathy; secondly, because there is a kind of liberty felt by Madame de Staël and all the Liberals which, demanding creation of the security for being free, surmounts the fact of its obvious class connections. Let us see how the notion of aristocracy contributes to this system of liberty.

First of all, political liberty is resolutely anchored in mixed government. Abstractly at least, the species of government is immaterial: "The form of government, aristocratic or democratic, monarchical or republican, is only an organization of powers; and the powers themselves are only a guarantee of liberty. . . . But human wisdom has up to this time found nothing more conducive to the advantages of the social order for a great State [than the tripartite separation of powers]." [26] Montesquieu reveals himself here and also in the observa-

[21] "Réflexions sur la paix intérieure," *Oeuvres* (Brussels, 1830), II, 92–93. [22] *Ibid.*
[23] *Considérations*, I, 377. [24] *Ibid.*, I, 379. [25] *Ibid.*, I, 391–2.
[26] *Ibid.*, I, 249. See also, 154: "There are in the social as in the natural order certain principles the neglect of which brings disorder. The three powers are in the nature of things."

tion that once monarchy is the chosen form it will require a hereditary support: "In France one must abandon royalty or bring back with it a great part of the political institution of nobility." [27] Circumstance or preference? There is little question that the Germaines and Benjamins were adroit in adapting themselves to a certain range of circumstance—republican and monarchical—but we must probably extract a preference for monarchy and its trappings as well. The French Republic was a mistake in the first place, as Madame de Staël points out in her comparison with the American experiment. The reason is history:

> People in France flattered themselves on being able to base themselves on the principles of government which a new people had been right to adopt; but, in the midst of Europe and with a privileged class whose pretensions required appeasement, such a scheme was impractical. . . . The English constitution offered the only example for solving this problem.[28]

So far we have seen that hereditary aristocracy is an obligatory accompaniment to constitutional monarchy, and that this is the free type of European government *par excellence,* with England, graced by "a hundred and twenty years of social perfectioning," [29] as the warrant for its success. "What especially characterizes England is the mixture of the chivalric spirit with enthusiasm for liberty, the two most noble feelings of which the human heart is capable." [30] Moreover, "the principal reason for liberty in England is that deliberation took place in two chambers, and not in three." [31] In England, happily, the mass is "bien réglée." [32] The English aristocracy is responsible and progressive and even participates wholeheartedly in those charitable associations in which Tocqueville, writing of America, will later perceive a substitute for aristocracy itself.[33] English liberty is not just a passing accident, good in its time, but the cornerstone for all reasonable advance: ". . . after a century of lasting institutions which have formed the most religious, moral, and enlightened nation of which Europe can boast, I could not conceive how the prosperity of the country, that is to say, its liberty, could ever be menaced." [34]

The trick, and for Madame de Staël the whole trick, is to make this work in France, which, "of all modern monarchies . . . is certainly the one whose political institutions have been the most arbitrary and variable." [35] The peerage will be for her the laboratory of *éclat,* character-building, and example.

Both theoretical and practical considerations enter into her prefer-

[27] "Réflexions," 91. [28] *Considérations,* I, 213. [29] *Ibid.,* II, 283.
[30] *Ibid.,* II, 337. [31] *Ibid.,* I, 14. [32] *De l'Allemagne,* I, 170.
[33] *Considérations,* II, 313–315. [34] *Ibid.,* II, 413. [35] *Ibid.,* I, 105.

ence. In theory, the "hérédité modifiée" can become an agency of liberty, since without it no triple separation of powers is possible. In practice, the peerage can combine the "ancient souvenirs of chivalry" and the modern concerns of merit, and in so doing purge the wastrels and *parvenus* of the aristocracy who belong neither to the great families nor to the nobility of intelligence and achievement. Madame de Staël has an insatiable contempt for everything aristocratic that is not ancient or meritorious. We see this in her description of the Old Regime: "The nobility of the province was still more inflexible than the *grands seigneurs* . . . all these *gentilshommes,* whose titles were known only to themselves, perceived that they might lose distinctions for which no one any longer had any respect." [36] On the other hand, "a privileged body of any sort holds its patent only from history." [37] An institution like the peerage could not possibly injure "the dignity of the first families of France; on the contrary . . . they would be given guaranteed prerogatives and separated more distinctively from the rest of their order." [38] The idea is perfectly consistent with Madame de Staël's notion of constitutional evolution: "Each time that there exists in a country any principle of society, the legislator should draw benefit from it. . . . Most often one institution must be grafted on to another." [39]

Madame de Staël's raptures on her particular conception of the nobility are neither fortuitous nor insignificant, but a continuous *leitmotif:* we have tried to show this by diverse citations from the *Considérations* and other works. "The nobility loses its whole empire over the imagination if it cannot be traced back to the *nuit des temps":* [40] and Germaine de Staël sets no mean store by imagination. This attitude invites a particular contempt for the Bonapartist hereditary creations—a personal as well as historical bias: "What meaning has that *antechamber* of peers, in which are found all the court favorites of Bonaparte ? . . . What a group for founding the aristocracy of a free State, one which should entertain the respect of the monarch as well as of the people!" [41] She takes Benjamin to task for the Cent-Jours: "It was utter foolishness to mask such a man [Napoleon] as a constitutional monarch" [42] "Compared to this, even the Vendean nobles showed a character which makes free men. Give them real and undisputed liberty and they will rally to it." [43]

Finally, the de Staëlian scheme, in all its English grandeur, emerges: fixity and change will meet, tradition and merit will be wedded, the lion and the lamb will lie down together. "You may, I repeat, associate new names with ancient ones, but the color of the past must melt into the present." [44] There are abiding resources and

[36] *Ibid.*, I, 157. [37] *Ibid.*, I, 89. [38] *Ibid.*, I, 175. [39] *Ibid.*, I, 288.
[40] *Ibid.*, II, 208. [41] *Ibid.*, II, 265. [42] *Ibid.*, II, 262. [43] *Ibid.*, II, 279. [44] *Ibid.*, II, 265.

new forms of progress toward the light. Aristocracy-meritocracy: this is what Madame de Staël wanted to say. Instinctively she felt herself belonging to both. She wished for the aristocratization of the intellectual bourgeoisie and the refurbishing of old class distinctions in a modern, moderate, and constitutional state.

J.-D. Lanjuinais: Calm Sea, Prosperous Voyage—At Last?

Jean-Denis Lanjuinais is an *ami de la liberté* who has never been to England, never chatted with Goethe, never seen the inside of Coppet: he is a Liberal of the provinces, or rather of a province with a very special flavor—Brittany. Despite all this bourgeois insularity—which relieves us of the duty of rediscussing the psychology of de Staëlian prejudice—he is far from being one of those "men who knew nothing of the world beyond the bounds of an obscure village" [45] who seemed to Burke to be the moving spirits of French legislative bodies; he is an erudite who will translate the Bhagavad-Gītā from Sanskrit in 1826 shortly before his death. But chivalry is not for him "what the heroic ages were for the ancients"; he looks on the French hereditary nobility with a cold and accusing eye. Napoleonic Count of the Empire, Restoration Peer of France, he has one of the qualities Madame de Staël admired—merit—but his ancestors cannot be recovered in the *nuit des temps.*

Born to a comfortable but scarcely *éclatante* bourgeois family of Rennes, Lanjuinais is one of those confident and ardent young men thrown up by the great ferment of the Revolution and the gathering of the Estates. He wins his spurs among the Breton *Tiers* in 1779 by attacking the nobility's *droit des colombiers,* and by the fatal year of 1788 he is pamphleteering against privilege, albeit not quite in a Sieyesian way. The nobles feel his lash:

> Imprudent ones, shall we say to you that the nobility with its privileges was, in its origin and nature, nothing but a militia which too often took arms against the citizens; a parasitic body living off the labor of the people while despising it? . . . *In a word, the nobility is not a necessary evil.*[46]

But already he is of the tribe of Montesquieu, and this will not change amid the fortunes of war: "we cherish that mixed form [of government] so desired by the ancient political writers, so applauded by the moderns. . . ." [47]

Lanjuinais goes up to Paris with the Tiers. He will sit as a Moderate in the Constituent, and later be sent by his Breton neighbors

[45] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London, 1955), 43.

[46] "Préservatif contre l'avis à mes compatriotes," cited in *Oeuvres de Jean-Denis Lanjuinais* (4 vols., Paris, 1832), I, 9.

[47] *Ibid.*

to the Convention, where he will bravely vote against the death of the King and will join vociferously with the Girondins (of whom he is not one) to try to stem the fanaticism of the Montagne. Forced to flee from the wrath of the Comité de Salut Public, he will hole up for months in a garret in Rennes and will compel his wife to divorce him temporarily so that she may avoid proscription and possible execution. After Thermidor, he is in all the regimes: *Sénateur à vie* in 1800, Count in 1808, Peer of France in 1814. And by the testimony of his fellow Liberals he is constantly one of the focuses of resistance against all arbitrary despotism.

He is, in fact, the prisoner of his judicious constituents, who rally to him whenever elections are about to take place. They capture him once more to serve in the legislature of the Cent-Jours, and the respect of his colleagues earns him the nomination of President of the Chamber. Napoleon, neo-Liberal in spite of himself, is vexed: Lanjuinais had led the passive resistance in the Imperial Senate. "Êtes-vous à moi?" demands the victor of Austerlitz. "Sire," replies Lanjuinais, "je n'ai jamais été à personne, je n'ai appartenu qu'à moi-même." [48] The Emperor's temper is somehow precariously restrained, and Carnot and St.-Jean d'Angely manage to persuade him to accept the wishes of the Assembly. Benjamin Constant, who is not for nothing in these events, describes the Liberal reassurance and undoubtedly his own personal pleasure at the effects of the "Benjamine" in recruiting talent:

> M. Lanjuinais's nomination was a proof of respect for morality, discernment, and independence. This respectable and respected citizen had, as senator, shown a constant opposition to the Imperial will, and he had earlier distinguished himself in still more dangerous circumstances by his inalterable courage and inflexible character. This choice was the object of a general approbation. . . .[49]

Within a few months, the Cossacks (horrible to Madame de Staël in much the same way as the *peuple*) are back in Paris and Lanjuinais is back in the Chamber of Peers, where he will find himself in that perpetual minority of seven or eight or fifteen until the end of his days.

But—after such knowledge, what forgiveness? One of the virtues of a moderate constitution and free government is that it allows you to forget what you cannot absolve, but to learn through memory and comparison the ways of action that lie within your power. "The past is no longer ours; but let us be permitted to draw from it the lessons

[48] *Ibid.*, I, 66. Constant repeats the anecdote or perhaps gives it its first published currency in *Mémoires sur les Cent-Jours*.

[49] *Mémoires sur les Cent-Jours* (Paris, 1961), 191.

needed against attempts at new injustices." [50] Lanjuinais has lived with and through all manner of injustices; for him, if the Restoration can be applied with balance and measure, it will represent a vast breathing space. So he goes to French history in order to breathe and to establish a stable present, in his survey of the *Constitutions de la Nation française*. The *mot-clef* is "reasonable liberty" and Lanjuinais finds the proper guarantees for this quality in the Charte, if it can be applied in the spirit of Montesquieu:

> We recognize there the measure of liberty reasonably desirable in an old civilization, after centuries of despotism and so many intervals of anarchy, after thirty years of public disturbance and so many crimes committed in the name of liberal doctrines but in the interest of servile doctrines.[51]

Does this, as with Madame de Staël, mean an intermittent praise of "great families" and the "spirit of chivalry"? Obviously not, given Lanjuinais's penchant: "The feudal government was only a chaos of anarchy and despotism." [52] Still, Lanjuinais assigns to hereditary aristocracy "special attributes" [53] and in a much muted way—because his cosmopolitanism is second-hand—he accepts the Anglophile critique of French institutions. In 1789 "without claiming to imitate North America, one envied the private and public liberties of the English, and one desired to acquire them as much as an old civilization could permit." [54] Lanjuinais, in short, is not impressed with the lineage, virtues, and *éclat* of the French hereditary institution—he believes it guilty of countless sins—but he is convinced that history has made it an overpowering national reality which cannot be ignored, and must therefore be transformed. The power of history to create habits, the compulsion of the abstract arguments for mixed government, the physical fact of the Bourbon Restoration—with the undoubted observation that a Chamber of Peers might be a barrier against future "chambres introuvables" [55]—his own merited possession of a new aristocratic title: these are the four criteria to which Lanjuinais repairs for the defense of aristocracy.

Let us see first of all what lessons he draws from his sketch of constitutional history. First of all, there is little or no "class argument" of Franks and Gauls *à la Guizot:* Lanjuinais will not assimilate "the chaos of centuries of ignorance and fanaticism" to a single mechanical synthesis. In fact, Lanjuinais's liberty is as ancient as Madame de Staël's and Montesquieu's: it has merely proceeded in a more interrupted and less optimistic fashion. The earliest Franks

[50] *Oeuvres*, IV, 363.
[51] *Ibid.*, II, 5.
[52] *Ibid.*, II, 15.
[53] *Ibid.*, II, 17.
[54] *Ibid.*, II, 37.
[55] *Ibid.*, II, 101.

were the real fathers of liberty because while ruling the peoples, they were representatives as well, ruling by consent: "The nobility, at the beginning of the kingdom, was only what it ought to be and what no one can prevent it from being—a symbol of the fulfillment of certain functions." [56] In the days of the *première race* "counts and dukes . . . were only magistrates elected for a term . . . and liable to be deposed just like the King and the *maire du palais*. . . . The last kings of the *seconde race* let slumber in forgetfulness the national assemblies that could have supported them . . . thus they lost the crown." [57] When representative monarchy and aristocracy are lost, liberty, too, is lost for Lanjuinais.

Such diverse authorities on liberty as the *abbé* Mably and Germaine de Staël had found a hero in Charlemagne; not so Lanjuinais. With the accession of this "grand roi, cruel vainqueur, convertisseur atroce" the game is over and the "deep shadows" close in.[58] Now comes the ascendancy of the "privileged nobility," which becomes "a nation within the nation," not by right of conquest but precisely because responsibility and election have lapsed. Revolutionary France had the alternative of getting rid of this "oppressive and absurd institution," but what it might also have done was to change it, giving it "nominal qualifications, without privileges and the license for destabilizing action." [59] This should now be the duty of government under the Charte.

In the meantime, there have been various forms of folly. The Constitution of the Year III was an improvement over that of 1791 (despite its radical and hopeless separation of powers) because it restored bicameralism. Napoleon brought back the hereditary institution with a chaotic mixing of old and new creations, which could not but be recognized by the Charte, and at least had the advantage of obscuring the legitimacy of "droits antérieurs," which had been annihilated by six later constitutions.[60] Now the debris of the turbulent past has to be separated and reorganized. The useful transformation of the French aristocracy can be accomplished only by giving it responsibility through a peerage, and by radically separating the notions of rank and heredity (guaranteed by the Charte) from those of nominal privilege and political right (the attributes of the peerage). Real inequalities undoubtedly form ranks of society; but if these ranks are recognized, protected, and created by law, then

[56] *Ibid.*, II, 25. [57] *Ibid.*, II, 27.

[58] For Madame de Staël, let us remember, the question of the feudal age was an open one. It was at least much better for the nobles than royal despotism *à la Richelieu*, and it may have been better for liberty. *Considérations*, I, 9.

[59] Lanjuinais, II, 29. [60] *Ibid.*, II, 70–81, *passim*.

the law will always be able to regulate them.[61] What will be the legitimizing principle for this inequality? Like Madame de Staël and Constant, Lanjuinais sees it in the nature of society itself and its natural action over time:

> Nations that are the most jealous of social equality cannot do without ultimate instances of personal superiority [i.e., political]. . . . These may become hereditary; they tend toward heredity. Finally, without any doubt they constitute that foremost or principal superiority, a nobility which is either attached to the person or transmissible [to his heirs]. This in turn gives existence or protection to all other inequalities; all the others owe it at least the outward respects, the first honors, the first titles, the first ranks in the State, according to the degrees of what is called *hierarchy* or political subordination.[62]

Noble rank is then, according to Lanjuinais, a condition of political merit; proceeding from the monarch down, it is the source and guarantee of order, hierarchy, and mixed government: in paraphrase of Constant, it allows a free society to operate in the sphere which is neither the power of a single man nor of the scaffold. At the same time, by the definition of a peerage, its members represent the nation and not the nobility; the law is above them, ignoring their antecedent rights, and what the law has granted, the law can surely remove.

Benjamin Constant: Dédoublement Aristocratique

"His character," wrote Talleyrand to Bonaparte, "is firm and moderate, his views unhesitatingly Republican and liberal."[63] Sorry as we are to contradict the judgment of a *bel esprit,* contradict we must; and the last adjective alone will suffice, the others being not even controversial. Benjamin Constant, while incontrovertibly liberal, is really no more republican than is the "Republic of letters," and yet he has three forms of doubt about aristocracy which will pursue him, according to circumstances, to his grave. The first is a product of intellectual bias: abstract, metaphysical, and Protestant; it is often also a pose—the pose of a man who delights to celebrate the bucolic feasts of the Directoire among his peasants and play at being a fructidorian Roman. Constant calls this fanciful republicanism "common sense" (as opposed to experience), and we shall let it pass.

The second doubt is derived from Constant's view of French history. After all the notorious indiscretions of the hereditary nobles—history furnishes the catalogue—how is it possible for them to be reborn, like a tired Phoenix, when the Revolution is "won"? It is a wonder that they have the audacity to be there. He relents, however:

[61] "Notice sur Jacques Necker," *ibid.*, IV, 437. [62] *Ibid.*, II, 171.
[63] Quoted by E. W. Schermerhorn, *Benjamin Constant* (London, 1924), 168.

there may be a necessity for their being there. He will force a Chamber of Peers on Napoleon during the Cent-Jours.

Finally, there is doubt in the form of prediction. Constant sees a future, one which our other liberals dying earlier and fatigued by the labors of the past, have not speculated on. In England Madame de Staël has seen prosperity and the perpetuity of free institutions, with commerce entering the aristocracy at a proper rate. Constant, confining his gaze to France, notices industry (of infant proportions) and industrial property growing, a society transforming itself from its earlier roots in feudal and landed holdings—roots very much shaken, besides, by a Revolution that created 2,000,000 new property owners. Moreover, these very changes mean to him increased liberty—at moments they seem to guarantee the impossibility of usurpation (we now know better), the difficulty of *arbitraire* (one can send his property abroad in currency before the slow-footed despot can confiscate it), the disutility of aggressive war, which destroys more than it can ever seize.[64] The march of history has made these things inevitable: "Up to a certain point, the warlike aristocracy counterbalanced the power of the priests just as the despotism of kings later dethroned the military aristocracy and as today industry is upsetting the royal despotism." [65] Constant is proto-Comtean in somewhat the same way as Guizot is proto-Marxian.

Why, under such circumstances, an aristocracy at all, or what kind of an aristocracy? We shall show that, without entirely surmounting his reflexes, Constant will jumble the premises previously expressed and exceed these analyses. First of all, there is Coppet, that "Europe in miniature . . . that Noah's ark of civilization floating on the barbarism of the imperial wars . . . that *phalanstère* of the élite. . . ." [66] Secondly, there is the candid observation of vanished and emerging institutions. Out of this dialectic will come the Restoration Benjamin, the past-all-care Benjamin, the completed Benjamin. Constant did not really believe that men were equal, but he was too intelligent to believe that inequality could be measured and fixed by institutional arrangements. No one who has tried to pierce the history of religions or the pleasures of opium can return to mundane schemes of hierarchy. Madame de Staël's two poles of aristocracy—ancient heredity and merit—are retained in Constant. But the one becomes a mere contrivance of stability "since it is there"—as we saw in Lanjuinais—and the second is sanctioned because intelligence creates

[64] See *Cent-Jours*, 65.

[65] *De la religion, considérée dans sa source, ses formes et ses développements* (5 Vols., Paris, 1826–28), V, 175.

[66] Alfred Fabre-Luce, *Benjamin Constant* (Paris, 1938), 161.

and extends liberty—a liberty which, though its components may be separable (religion, press, property, justice, etc.), is basically indivisible and the work of the spirit. The absolute of liberty is guarded by a host of devices which, like property, are themselves less than absolute, "useful social conventions."

Constant's bitterest attacks on the French hereditary nobility are contained in the *Mémoires sur les Cent-Jours,* and his most sympathetic defense of this institution is in the *Principes de politique.* This suggests that he bears the nobles a heavy grudge when he is personally and emotionally involved, but that his wrath subsides when he withdraws to the Olympian calm of political theory. Let us, first of all, follow the diatribe of the *Cent-Jours.* In the extensive note entitled "De la haine contre la noblesse lors du retour de Bonaparte en 1815," Constant is engaged in showing that the unpopularity of the nobility in the country aided powerfully in making Napoleon's return popular.[67] He repairs to the *nuit des temps* to commence his argument. And, quite unlike Madame de Staël and Lanjuinais, he borrows, with generous acknowledgement, M. Guizot's millenial strife of Franks and Gauls. We seem about to hear Voltaire speaking in the following passage: "The least acquaintance with history is enough to convince us that the civilized peoples of the Roman Empire having been enslaved by the barbarian hordes of the North, the calamities of that subjugation and the memories of those calamities established a fundamental difference between the doctrines of ancient and modern political writers on the organization of societies." [68]

Constant's argument now becomes extremely subtle, however; for his purpose is not to prove that the Tiers is the Nation, like Sieyès, or to legitimize middle-class power, like Guizot, but rather to explain why the proper principles of aristocracy, praised by Aristotle, have never functioned in modern Europe. "Among the ancients the nobles were a class of compatriots who had gained wealth or a superior consideration because their ancestors had deserved well of the emerging society," but "among the moderns, inequality of rank had the most revolting origin of all, conquest." An exceedingly vigorous passage on the atrocities of the Middle Ages follows this observation.

Does all this then mean that the entire fabric of illegitimacy must be unwoven so that the nation can come into its kingdom, *à la Sieyès?*

[67] *Cent-Jours,* 184–189. Following citations, unless otherwise noted, are from this passage.

[68] *Cf.* Voltaire, "Commentaire sur l'Esprit des lois," *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, 1880), XXX, 454: "Who were these Franks, whom Montesquieu of Bordeaux calls *our fathers?* Like all other barbarians of the North, they were fierce beasts seeking fodder, shelter, and a few garments against the snow."

Benjamin is more circumspect and draws back from what might seem his only logical conclusion. After all, abstract logic has its limits; has he not written in his *grand ouvrage* on religion: "We detest intolerant power, but we have also some fear of philosophical power"? [69] Time has interceded on behalf of the Northern barbarians, giving them manners, polish, and *éclat*. "Certainly, in recalling these facts, I am far from concluding [like Mably and Sieyès] that it is right to confuse the nobles of the eighteenth century with the conquerors of the fifth, or even with the feudal barons who, for eight hundred years, set thrones shaking and oppressed the peoples." In short, Constant is not intent on proving the iniquity of the nobility; he is rather illustrating why the people hate them. He comments more soberly in the *Principes de politique* that "of all our constitutional institutions, the hereditary peerage is perhaps the only one which opinion rejects with a persistence that nothing up to now has been able to conquer." [70]

Nota bene: it is therefore not the nobility of Louis XV and Louis XVI which is unpardonably guilty, but rather its distant ancestors of the *nuit des temps* so much admired by Germaine de Staël. "The national regeneration of 1789 offered the French nobility a means of expiation for the wrongs of its ancestors." But, of course, with "exceptions which I would like to believe numerous," this class muffed its chance, and would later pay dearly for its imprudence. They muffed it not once, but three times, rallying to the imperial frippery of Bonaparte in 1802 ("how could a man be supposed illegitimate when served by all the families that had served sixty-six kings?" [71]), and finally, having learned and forgotten nothing, comporting themselves with anachronistic cruelty and contempt at the first Restoration and later during the White Terror. The test of their third chance has been the Charte. Though to the Liberals this document "is by no means perfect; . . . it leaves us every faculty for setting up the guarantees necessary for modern peoples," [72] and the nobility, by accepting it "with franchise and without restriction . . . would have effaced wrongs buried in the times of trouble and tumult." [73]

The differing attitudes of Bonaparte and Constant toward the institutionalization of hereditary aristocracy in a peerage are instructive, if only because they illustrate splendidly the diverse motivations that fasten on an object. Constant, as we have seen, holds a low

[69] *De la religion,* I, 108.

[70] *Cours de politique constitutionnelle* (2 Vols., ed. Laboulaye, Paris, 1861), I, 308.

[71] *Cent-Jours,* 66. [72] *Ibid.,* 26. [73] *Ibid.,* 189.

opinion of the nobility's performance and accuses it of ignoring the nation's interests, but he wishes barriers and balance. "I saw in the hereditary magistracy one more barrier against the authority of a man, and I was seeking everywhere for barriers." [74] Bonaparte, on the other hand, wants no barriers whatever, but he is incurably enamored of all the traditional forms of legitimacy: "he contemplated with not a little joy, in his serving chambers, the brilliant bustle of the courtiers of sixty-six kings." [75] By creating his *pairie* in the Cent-Jours Napoleon hopes to win back, in a certain time, the enthusiasm of that nobility which has now returned to its original Bourbon fealty. He is vexed at their absence, and doubts the success of his project. As Constant reports his troubles: "Where do you expect me to find the kind of aristocracy demanded by a peerage? . . . It was the nobles who gave liberty to England [this is the neo-liberal Napoleon speaking]: the Magna Carta was their work, they grew with the Constitution and became a part of it; but thirty years from now my *champignons de pairs* will be nothing but soldiers or chamberlains." [76] Constant cannot but agree: "Heredity is introduced in the centuries of simplicity or conquest; but it cannot be set up in the midst of civilization. . . . Prestige institutions are never the effect of the will; they are the labor of circumstances." [77] Nevertheless, the two uneasy colleagues in constitutional architecture create their peerage.

With Louis XVIII it is a different story: the sixty-six kings are behind the man and since "the monarch is in some ways an abstract being; one sees in him not an individual, but an entire race of kings, a tradition of several centuries," [78] he deserves and requires all the trappings of his tradition, being "surrounded by *corps intermédiaires* which support and limit him at the same time." [79] Here we meet the theoretical Constant, who, since the days of Jacobinism, has been tracing an argument difficult to reconcile with his outbursts in the *Cent-Jours*. Even in his earlier tract on the Terror we discover him writing: "The chivalric spirit should have been surrounded by barriers that it could not cross, but it should have been left a noble *élan* in the career which nature grants commonly to all. . . ." [80] By the time of the Restoration the noble *élan* seems to have become almost a De Staëlian mania: "I believe that a class elegant in its forms, polished in its manners, rich in example is a precious acquisition for a free

[74] *Ibid.*, 157. [75] *Ibid.*, 187–188. [76] *Ibid.*, 155.
[77] "De l'usurpation," *Oeuvres politiques*, 51.
[78] *Cours*, II, 186. [79] *Ibid.*
[80] "De la terreur et de ses effets," *Oeuvres politiques*, 357.

government." [81] Benjamin shows himself to be a very able reconciler when he is not vexed by the memory of the Cent-Jours. Moreover, in a passage he has added to the fourth edition of *De l'Usurpation,* he bestows the blessing of political right:

> I admit two kinds of legitimacy: one positive, which derives from a free election, the other tacit, which reposes on heredity; and I add that heredity is legitimate, because the habits which it engenders and the advantages it procures make it the national wish.[82]

We begin here to get the glimmer of another Constantine subtlety. He has not gone over to the Ultras, but is merely indicating the premise: no heredity, no guarantee of property, no liberty. Ranks and titles are a form of property, too, and if they must be included in the bargain, so be it.

After all, there is still the beneficial *éclat,* i.e. if the heretofore irresponsible aristocrats can be taught to put nation above privilege. And the obvious way to teach them to put nation above privilege is to incorporate the best into a peerage. Enter, Anglia. Enter, Montesquieu. "In a hereditary monarchy, the heredity of a class is indispensable. . . . To give additional aid to the monarchy there must be a *corps intermédiaire.*" [83] "No Englishman would believe for an instant that his monarchy was stable if the House of Lords were abolished." [84] But the pre-Revolutionary nobles were not a *corps intermédiaire;* they were "the hazy memory of a system half-destroyed." By means of a peerage, France will have both a "magistracy" and a "dignity"; "monarchy and liberty will be reconciled." [85]

Constant's argument resolves itself into two major themes to which we have already become accustomed: (1) No constitutional system can be stable without a bicameral division of the legislative power; [86] (2) No hereditary monarchy can be stable without organized aristocratic support.[87] We have doubled back on Aristotle and Montesquieu after a good deal of thrashing about, and we have oscillated wildly between Sieyesian invective and De Staëlian admiration.

Still, despite the confidence of the *Principes de politique,* there is a dialectic and there are doubts. The dialectic again leads us toward the realm of Comte, the age of industry and peace: "The absence of civilization gives all individuals a virtually equal color. Civilization, in its progress, develops the differences: but with the excess of civili-

[81] "De la doctrine politique qui peut réunir les partis en France," *Cours,* II, 298.
[82] *Op. cit., Cours,* II, 275.
[83] "Principes de politique," *Cours,* I, 35.
[84] *Ibid.,* 36.
[85] *Ibid.,* 310.
[86] *Ibid.,* 311.
[87] *Ibid.,* 35; and *Cent-Jours,* 145.

zation these differences disappear again." [88] "In a century," muses Benjamin, "we will speak of [hereditary differences] the way we now speak of slavery." [89]

The doubt is trenchant when it appears:

> I confess that for a long time I doubted the possibility [of a monarchy without a peerage], and that, disposed by character to be content with what is tolerable, I was greatly taken with the example of the British Constitution, which to my way of thinking was supported by the authority of Montesquieu.
>
> Today my opinion, as a general thesis, is greatly shaken. . . . The peerage, when it exists, can get along—as you can see, because we have one; but if it did not exist, I would suggest that it was impossible.[90]

We imagine that the deepest answer to this ring-around must be sought in nothing so simple as an institution itself or its literal corrections and abuses. We refer instead to the nature of "modern liberty": "The danger of modern liberty is that, absorbed in the enjoyment of our private independence and in the pursuit of our particular interests, we might too easily renounce our right of participation in the political power." [91] Hedonism, for Constant, is no solid basis for politics or for liberty. Pleasure is a boon, not an end. The trick is to make the natural orders of society participate in a government of complex equilibrium, satisfying the condition which the ancients perceived as a right and a duty, and at the same time insuring that the social power will be so divided that it can transgress neither against the individual nor against any of its functioning parts. The institutionalized aristocracy is another guarantee of such a commitment.

We look in vain for rigorous consistency in Constant. He lived through his moods—a mood to each book—and through the violent tempers of history. The metaphor for the occasion is the ornate jacket of gold brocade which a Restoration deputy was obliged to wear whenever he mounted the rostrum. Constant had his on continually. Some thought he admired the costume excessively; but whether or not Constant found the gold coat sartorially compelling, he needed it to speak for liberty—and he spoke often and well.

Conclusion

We have seen how the French Liberals attempted to condition

[88] *De la religion,* III, 458. [89] "De l'arbitraire," *Oeuvres politiques,* 91.
[90] *Cent-Jours,* 156.
[91] "De la liberté des anciens comparée avec celle des modernes," *Oeuvres politiques,* 283.

their constitutional and social thought to the preservation of hereditary aristocracy, even on the far side of a cataclysmic event which had been, in great measure, a revolt against privilege. Though there is no single and universal Liberal argument for this procedure, we may extract four major emphases from our examination.

In the first place, the meaning and content of history had changed for French liberalism. The normative abstractness of most of the *philosophes,* often overemphasized but nonetheless real enough, had given way to a more profound feeling for the European and national past and a less obviously dualistic interpretation (ancients vs. barbarians) of European culture. In addition, the Revolution was now a part of this manifold historical experience. Change was an all too familiar and uneasy feeling, but there was no longer much confidence in the possibility of destroying aspects of the past by fiat. Rank and heredity survived this test, at least for the time being, for they helped to guarantee the institution of bourgeois property.

Secondly, the panacea of "mixed government" reigned supreme in constitutional theory. The bloodbath of the previous generation—with all its quaint political experiments—seemed, above all, to show that the single way which had not been tried—the "English system" —could provide the recipe for a free, stable, and prosperous France. The hotly debated question was: did 1814 resemble 1660 or 1688? As events interceded, other significant dates in the constitutional evolution of France and England would be compared. Except in Constant's moments of doubt, which we have recorded, the iron law of Liberal doctrine was: no mixed government, no freedom and security; no hereditary aristocracy, no monarch. As we have seen, the latter axiom was translated into the idea of domesticating the nobility by creation of a peerage in which talent and eminence would rub shoulders.

Thirdly, ancient lineage, both as leaven and example and as a historically formed institution, was held to possess positive merits of its own. It could transmit the monarchical spirit of honor so dear to Montesquieu and could function as a stabilizing *corps intermédiaire* between the pinnacle and the base of society. This action would not automatically take place if the caste were irresponsible, to be sure; but the benefits of aristocracy, if aristocracy was properly exploited, were inherent in its structure. To avoid wanton abuse this class would be placed precisely beneath the law and depend no longer on its mystical connection with "droits antérieurs."

Finally, the Liberals believed in the creative enterprise of the individual liberated from manual toil and confirmed in the independence of his proprietary enjoyment. The hereditary aristocracy was merely the capstone of this governing (and electing) class, no longer

separable from the rich *roturiers* by a nexus of feudal privilege but now their senior partners in power and responsibility. A much easier mobility between these classes was envisaged; the old caste would teach the new one "table manners" and the new would infuse the old with its ascendant vitality.

French Liberalism (of all kinds) failed to avoid the much-remarked contradiction between its universalistic principles of liberty —let alone equality—and its obvious class connections, a disparity that would produce the post-1848 conservative trauma of Tocqueville, Thiers, Montalembert, and others. In the Restoration it is clear that French Liberalism set out on the first of its persistent experiments to create a *gouvernement des meilleurs.*[92] Class definitions would shift—often with desultory speed—as democracy and industrialization, literacy and syndicalism advanced. But a pattern of politics had been created that became transmissible and, so to speak, hereditary. The search for a surrogate for bodily aristocracy and new *dépôts* for aristocratic values would frustrate the Liberals throughout the XIXth century.

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[92] The "liberal" idea of the *gouvernement des meilleurs* forms the chief and concluding thesis of the remarkable work by Georges Burdeau: *Traité de Science politique, V: L'Etat libéral et les Techniques politiques de la Démocratie gouvernée* (Paris, 1953). Of course, the penchant is as old as Plato's *Republic,* but it is the peculiar liberal contribution to have aspired to fuse limited aristocracy with representative government in the modern state.