

Summaries of articles

The Birth of a Paradigm: Tocqueville and his Voyage to America

F. FURET

This article attempts to reconstruct the intellectual development which led the young Tocqueville to decide on his voyage to America. It covers the years from 1825, the period of his early letters when he was still a law student, until his departure in 1831. His plan is mentioned neither in his correspondence nor in his other notes. Yet, from his very arrival to America, his travel diary bears witness to the existence of a well developed working hypothesis. This study tries to reconstitute the genealogy of Tocqueville's concept of America—an idea which preceded his trip and was pre-condition for it.

Like the Doctrinaires, Tocqueville sought to understand the nature of the French Revolution and the future which it implied. Like them, he started out with a comparison between France and England, the two prototypical histories of Europe. But as he did not believe in mixed systems of government, he soon substituted American democracy for English aristocracy as a term of comparison with French revolutionary democracy. July 1830 confirmed his pessimism concerning the durability of mixed systems of government and his belief in the necessity of an American point of comparison.

The Origin of the Reformation in Cévennes

A. MOLINIER

Wills and marriage certificates, which constitute one of the main sources of this survey, show that in 1560 the Reformation had brought about a radical change in the Cévennes, a poor and rugged region of Languedoc. Upon a closer analysis of the documents however, this transformation becomes less apparent. After the period 1530-1540, religious awareness wavered between undeclared, concealed heresy and an established confession searching for its identity. In this milieu where religiosity had always played an active part, one finds various causes for this evolution: the influence in the episcopalian reform that originated in the diocesan chief towns of Lower Languedoc, the micro-feudality's strong opposition to the "Universalist kingdom", the strong cohesion of a society where family organization was conglomerate in character and whose economic strength was horizontally structured. Besieged by the king and surrounded by the first elements of the Counter-Reformation stemming from the Council of Trent, the Cévennes remained impregnable and after 1570, together with the new churches founded by Geneva, was to become a shelter and refuge for the Reformation.

Towards a Semiotic Analysis of the Reformation

B. COTTRET

The aim of this study is twofold: the XVIth-century Reformation involved not only a shift in the outward expression of piety, and a growing dissatisfaction with Roman

rites—classified as idolatry—, but it also emphasized a change in perception. The Lord's Supper was a case in point, and Calvin's agreement with the other Swiss reformers—known as Consensus Tigurinus—showed the basic need for a redefinition of that sacrament. A sacrament is a sign... but what is a sign after all? Calvin's approach was linguistic: a sign should not be mixed up with its meaning. Using Saussure and Jakobson, this article demonstrates Calvin's seminal role in widening the gap between words and things.

Assumptions about the Sabbath

C. GINZBURG

The article interprets the witches' sabbath as a cultural compromise between a learned stereotype and a popular one. The former was centered on a mythical conspiracy against society, subsequently ascribed to different marginal groups (lepers, Jews, witches). The latter was centered on a much older myth: the journey into the world of the dead, performed in a state of ecstasy by various figures of European folklore (benandanti, táltos etc.), strongly reminiscent of Euroasiatic shamans. The two trends coalesced in the Western Alps, around 1350. Later on, the new stereotype was spread by demonologists, inquisitors, lay judges and preachers all around Europe.

Charity, Poverty and Household Structure: Florence in the Early 19th Century

S. J. WOOLF

Applications for assistance to the major charitable institution for outdoor relief at Florence, the Congregation of San Giovanni Battista (1810-1812) are analysed, first to examine the relationships between consumption needs and household structures, job skills and earnings. Household subsistence needs, calculated from many contemporary sources, are shown to be higher than income in over 70 % of the 1220 households, because of the structural constraints on income-generating capacities of sex- and age-differentiated levels of wages and the proportion of childearners. Family cycle and conjunctural poverty was transformed into a structural, generationally transmitted condition. Secondly, the applications are analysed in terms of strategies of charity of both applicants and donors. The assumptions of the donors—particularly that assistance need only be temporary and that protection of sexual mores be privileged—are shown to lead to an anachronistic relationship to the problems of the poor they assisted.

When Water was Scarce

D. ROCHE

The study of the various means of water consumption from the Middle Ages until the beginning of the Industrial Revolution enables the historian to establish a history of urban daily life. It demonstrates to what extent a redistribution of the components in the nature-culture cycle, such as equipment, means of water distribution and drainage had become an important issue in urban politics: for five centuries the technical systems changed little and the Vitruvian system and hydraulic machinery were to characterize this period. The choice of means of consumption was purely a social one, and depended largely on seasonal demands and the needs of the time. The real surge forward occurred at the end of the 18th century as the population explosion in the cities called for an complete change in the attitude towards the hygienic conditions of both the sick and the

healty, and control over the means of water consumption becomes an essential factor in acquiring political control over society. The cleanliness of the city was henceforth to reflect the personal hygienic habits of its inhabitants, and to represent a new reality.

Sociologist and the Penal System

Ph. ROBERT and R. LÉVY

The issue of the relationship of sociology to history, a recurrent one since the origins of social sciences, is today particularly relevant to the sociologist of the penal system. Several reasons lead to a reassessment of this sociology: the failure of classic paradigms, the difficulties of replacing them fruitfully, the sudden changes in the basic elements of the penal problem, the violence of public debate on this issue. Since the sociologists who tried to act as historians have not been successful, we must turn now towards a dialogue of history and sociology, and "interdisciplinary" reanalysis of the results of both in this field. At first, we must tackle some preliminary conceptual and methodological problems.

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