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Pierre Manent: Current Problems of European Democracy: Study Guide

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PIERRE MANENT: CURRENT PROBLEMS OF EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY: STUDY GUIDE, 2005
Steven Alan Samson

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0354/is_1_45/ai_99699586/

Study Questions

1. **1848 and 1968** What is significant about two dates: 1848 and 1968? What does the author mean by "the axial core of modern history" and "the social question?" (7-8)

2. **A New Inequality of Conditions** Identify the two axes of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* that define the Tocquevillian period (1776-1848)?

   _____/ _____, _____/_____
   How did the emergence of the **social question** refute Tocqueville's perspective that **democracy** (the American rather than the French "institutionalization of the sovereignty of the people") means "equality of conditions?" (8)

3. **Tocqueville's Revenge** How does 1968 represent Tocqueville's revenge? What experience required the re-posing of the Tocquevillian question? How did "the explosion of gentleness" reduce political and social differences in favor of resemblance (or lack of differentiation)? Identify some consequences of "the reign of democratic unanimity?' What defines the new period that began on September 11, 2001? What framework has democracy now called into question? Why are Europe and America growing more distant? (8-10)

4. **The Question of the Sovereign State** What was the founding conception of the modern state, according to Philippe Raynaud?

   _____ = _____
   Identify some consequences of the more recent exaltation of rights ("power of rights").. Historically, what is the necessary condition for the equality of conditions? What three reasons help explain why Europeans have turned against this precious safeguard, *i.e.,* the sovereign state? What is the most decisive indication of the **destitution of the state** (and its loss of transcendence)? (10-11)

5. **The Death Penalty and Political Justice** According to John Locke, what gives man (as the sovereign judge) the right to inflict death in the state of nature? Where (according to Hobbes) does this right lead? How does one escape this resulting state of war? What makes the death penalty "homeopathic," to use Michael Oakeshott's expression? What is the argument against the death penalty? What is the profound difficulty with this argument? How does the state betray us by renouncing the death penalty? What paradox results? (11-12)

6. **The Death Penalty and the Catholic Church** How has Roman Catholic doctrine changed with respect to the death penalty? What reason of "high policy" (with regard to secularization) might account for this change of attitude? (12-13)

7. **The Death Penalty in the United States** How can we explain the halt in the progress of "democratic gentleness" in the United States? What makes the United States different from European nation-states? (13-14)

8. **The Question of the Established People: The Nation** What two communities alone seem legitimate to Europeans today?

_____, _____

What reasons does the author give for the pressure on the nation-state from above and below by these two communities?

_____, _____

What are the consequences for the nation-state? What is offered in substitution? What then becomes of "Europe?" What paradox results from the effort to construct Europe? What then is the European problem? (14-15)

9. **The Reversal of the Transatlantic Dialectic** What has happened to the old version of this dialectic? What does the author mean by Europe's depoliticization? Why has Europe "drug(ged) itself with humanitarianism?" What challenge must the old European nations face? To summarize: What is the triple condition of our democratic life that has been threatened by the development of democracy? (15-16)

_____, _____, _____

Review

1848	1968	Tocqueville's perspective
social problem (inequality)	resemblance	(limited) modern state
rights vs. power	consequences of the sovereign state	
reasons why Europeans have turned against this safeguard		death penalty renounced
rivals to the nation-state	idea of a global civil society	"formative passions"
moralism or humanitarianism	triple condition of European democratic life	