

# FRENCH REVOLUTION 230 YEARS AFTER – A CRITICAL VIEW –

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



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There are few historical events that aspired to such a radical and comprehensive change of reality as the French Revolution. Simultaneously, despite its radicalism, there are only a few events in world history around which, at least on the continent, such firm consensus has been created. Not only has the Revolution itself been positively evaluated but also all of its (conceptual) consequences have been accepted without critical assessment. On the other hand, too often have the dark sides of the Revolution been interpreted simply as exaggerations and a deviation or as a deterioration of basically good ideas. In this context, the critics of the Revolution have often been pushed aside and marginalized, and—as in the time of the Revolution—labeled as “obscurants”.

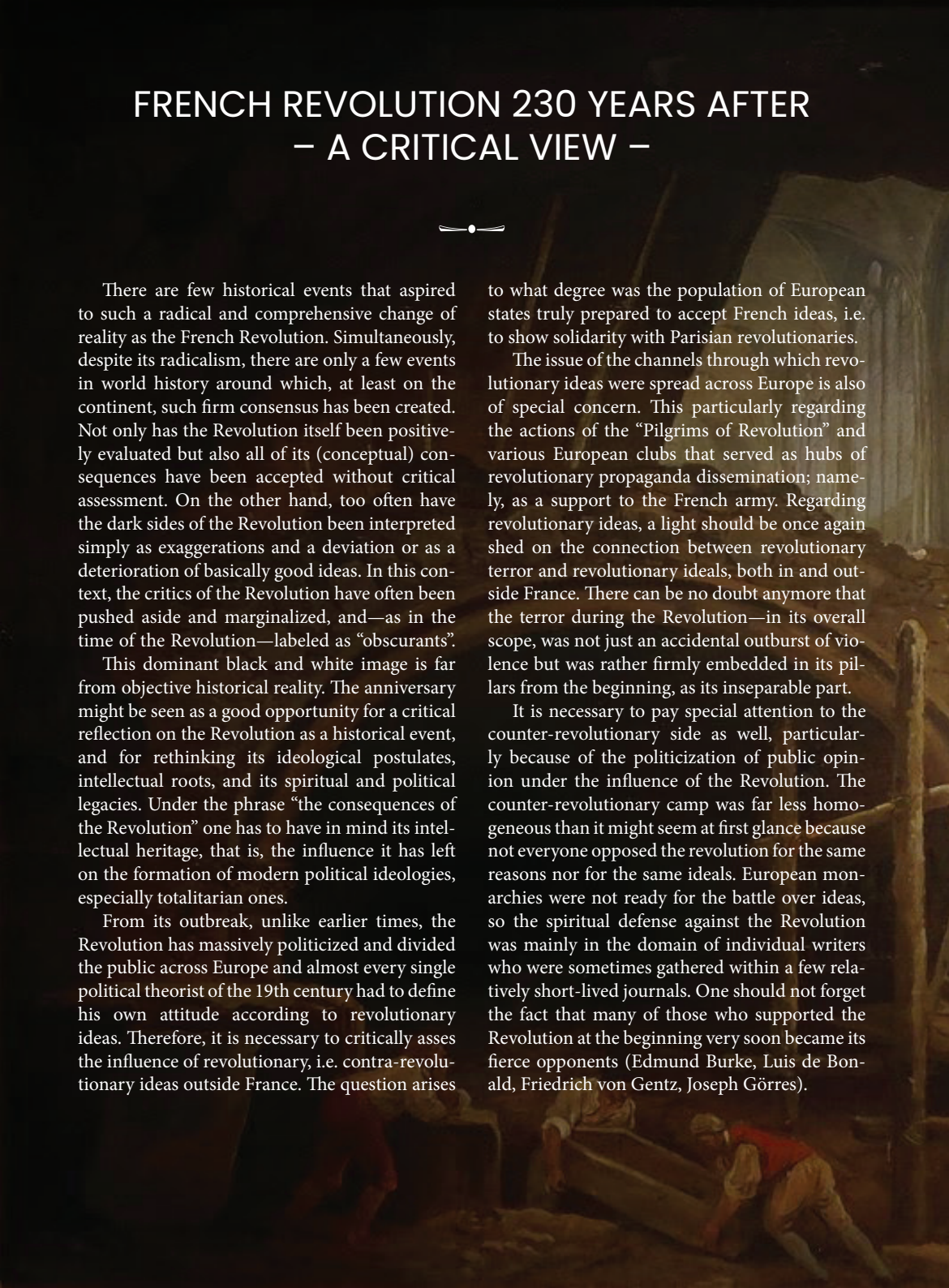
This dominant black and white image is far from objective historical reality. The anniversary might be seen as a good opportunity for a critical reflection on the Revolution as a historical event, and for rethinking its ideological postulates, intellectual roots, and its spiritual and political legacies. Under the phrase “the consequences of the Revolution” one has to have in mind its intellectual heritage, that is, the influence it has left on the formation of modern political ideologies, especially totalitarian ones.

From its outbreak, unlike earlier times, the Revolution has massively politicized and divided the public across Europe and almost every single political theorist of the 19th century had to define his own attitude according to revolutionary ideas. Therefore, it is necessary to critically assess the influence of revolutionary, i.e. contra-revolutionary ideas outside France. The question arises

to what degree was the population of European states truly prepared to accept French ideas, i.e. to show solidarity with Parisian revolutionaries.

The issue of the channels through which revolutionary ideas were spread across Europe is also of special concern. This particularly regarding the actions of the “Pilgrims of Revolution” and various European clubs that served as hubs of revolutionary propaganda dissemination; namely, as a support to the French army. Regarding revolutionary ideas, a light should be once again shed on the connection between revolutionary terror and revolutionary ideals, both in and outside France. There can be no doubt anymore that the terror during the Revolution—in its overall scope, was not just an accidental outburst of violence but was rather firmly embedded in its pillars from the beginning, as its inseparable part.

It is necessary to pay special attention to the counter-revolutionary side as well, particularly because of the politicization of public opinion under the influence of the Revolution. The counter-revolutionary camp was far less homogeneous than it might seem at first glance because not everyone opposed the revolution for the same reasons nor for the same ideals. European monarchies were not ready for the battle over ideas, so the spiritual defense against the Revolution was mainly in the domain of individual writers who were sometimes gathered within a few relatively short-lived journals. One should not forget the fact that many of those who supported the Revolution at the beginning very soon became its fierce opponents (Edmund Burke, Luis de Bonald, Friedrich von Gentz, Joseph Görres).





# Who Would Conserve What?

Attila K. Molnar

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The French Revolution not only subverted the world of ancien régime, but it created the new political landscape where there are leftists and rightist, progressives—including numberless subtypes—and conservatives. In this paper, I focus on the habits of conservation and change as a dividing line between large groups of political and cultural actors.

The post-war American thinking has picked change and time as the cores of difference between progressives/leftist and conservatives, while there were countless efforts to collect the dogmas these political families' principles.

In this paper, I argue that both approaches are unsatisfactory concerning conservatives. First, conservatives cannot be defined by bold conservation of whatever at hand. In this way they would lose their history and identity, for example an old-fashioned communist of 1989 or a hard liner liberal today could be labeled as conservative. And conservatives, obviously, are not against change if it will hopefully solve some practical problems, but against change in fact, if it happens in the name of some ideological-utopian plan or legitimized by so-called historical inevitability, progress, etc.

Second, time—i.e. the speed of change—or the idea of golden mean seems to be unsatisfactory, as well, because this approach would shift the content of conservative politics in terms of its leftist/progressive opponents.

Finally, there is a rather permanent debate inside the conservative camp about the desirability of the list of values, principles or dogmas of conservatism. The habit of this dogmatization was started in the twentieth century, following the ideology fabricating the character of the leftist/progressive opponents. This debate can be easily found in the Conservatism vs. conservatives debate. The skeptical and practical, policy and governing—that is, action-oriented character of conservatives always turns

some of them against any dogmatism and towards a dispositional interpretation of conservative politics. On the other hand, the permanent shift of leftists further to the left created the problem of conservative identity. The dispositional conservatives could only slow down but not stop or turn back the results of leftist politics. That's the reason why one can see several efforts to find and summarize conservative principles.

Because of its practical, historical and deeply anti-dogmatic character and the permanent radicalization of its opponents, conservative thinking resists definition.

**Keywords:** conservatism, change, conservative identity

## Italian Critique of the Revolution

Francesco Giubilei

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Counter-revolutionary thought has developed in Italy from the first years after the French revolution and actualized by a series of conservative authors, philosophers and thinkers, and through strong ties with the Catholic world. The reaction to the French revolution was actualized through the birth of movements and associations operating as counter-revolutionary think-tanks.

The traditional Catholic world has a primary role with the secret association “Christian Friendship”, born in Turin and led since 1798 by Father Pio Burnone Lanteri, author of some thirty texts of criticism of revolutionary ideas, while in 1815, the association “the Holy Union” was born in the Papal State to defend the temporal powers of the Roman state. Thanks to the influence of authors such as de Bonald, Lamennais and De Maistre, Italy developed critical thought against the revolution and Enlightenment, defending tradition. Among the main authors, we remember Antonio Capece Minuto, prince of Canosa and a reference point in the Restoration period, Clemente Solarodella Margherita, from Piedmont and among

the principal opposers of Cavour, Monaldo Leopardi, father of the most important Italian author Giacomo Leopardi, and author of various works such as his *Autobiography*, in which he summarizes his counterrevolutionary ideas, and Giacinto de' Sivo, high commissioner of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, Msgr. Giuseppe Baraldi and the political philosopher Emiliano Avogadro della Motta. Two other important figures, both founders of the magazine "Civiltà Cattolica" are Luigi Taparelli D'Azeglio and Antonio Bresciani. A notable influence also comes from the Spanish author Juan Donoso y Cortés and more recently from the book by Plinio Correa de Oliveira *Revolution and Counterrevolution*. Another important writer was Vincenzo Cuoco, author of the *Historical Essay on the Revolution in Naples*, in which he condemns Jacobins. In addition, the principal Italian conservative, Giuseppe Prezzolini, in his famous *Manifesto of Conservatives*, writes a chapter about the "conservation of history" opening with the theme of the counterrevolutionaries.

In more recent times, criticism of the French revolution continues on criticism of the movement of 1968, as in the case of the Catholic philosopher Augusto Del Noce, who criticizes the drift of contemporary society caused by the French revolution and the spirit of '68. A counterrevolutionary analysis is also found in the writing of Julius Evola and especially his book *Revolt Against the Modern World* where he identifies four moments of decadence in modern civilization (Renaissance, Protestantism, French revolution, Bolshevik revolution). Giovanni Cantoni, one of the main intellectuals studying the Counterrevolution, distinguishes two phases of the Counter-revolutionary school of thought: an initial one with a more apologetic background and a second one, more systematic. As well as the intellectual field, opposition to revolutionary ideas surfaces through so-called "insurgencies", popular insurgencies taking place between 1796 and 1799 against republican governments, which emerged after the French revolution. Proper Counterrevolutionary demonstrations from the people.

**Keywords:** Counter-revolution, Traditional Catholic Church, Restoration, Conservatism

## A Liberal's Strange Conversion: James Mackintosh's Counter-Revolutionary Turn Zoltán Pető

UDC 94(44)\*1789/1799:321.01 Mackintosh J.

James Mackintosh wrote a treatise with the title of *Vindiciae Gallicae* at the age of 25 to criticize Edmund Burke's antirevolutionary attitude and writings. Although he was the youngest member amongst the enemies of Burke, maybe he had the deepest and most profound understanding of Burke and of his age. His treatise was not written in a popular and journalistic manner as Thomas Paine's but he wrote to a studied audience. Later, the escalation of the revolutionary violence caused a change in his views, and from 1792 he started to distance himself from his own previous stance, in 1796 he met Burke personally to excuse himself. By that time, the optimism of radical writers was reduced following revolutionary violence, the stage of "great fear" and the bloody rule of the French Jacobins. William Blake and Wordsworth in England, just as Novalis and Schlegel in Germany, became skeptics although they had initially supported the revolution.

Mackintosh wrote to Burke on 22 December 1796, saying that "From the earliest moments of reflection your writings were my chief study and delight... The enthusiasm with which I then embraced them is now ripened into solid Conviction by the experience and meditation of more mature age. For a time indeed seduced by the love of what I thought liberty I ventured to oppose your Opinions without ever ceasing to venerate your character... I cannot say... that I can even now assent to all your opinions on the present politics of Europe. But I can with truth affirm that I subscribe to your general Principles; that I consider them as the only solid foundation both of political Science and of political prudence" (R. B. McDowell and John A. Woods (eds.), *The Correspondence*

of Edmund Burke. Volume IX: Part One May 1796-July 1797. Part Two: Additional and Undated Letters (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 193.)

Mackintosh called the French Revolution a “shameless thing,” and he wrote that he very much hated and despised it.

In my lecture, I would like to show how and why this change happened, and how it could perhaps affect our present view of the revolution. I would also like to present how this could affect the history of conservative thought.

**Keywords:** Scottish Enlightenment, Burke, Counter-Revolutionary, Regicide Peace

## Hegel’s “Egophanic Revolt” and Voegelin’s Critique

Christian Machek

UDC 94(44)1789/1799:1 Hegel+321.01 Voegelin E.

As the title indicates the thought of the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and its critique is the subject-matter of my paper. This implies that Hegel is understood to be at least a sympathizer of the French Revolution, rather than just a translator and even more a transformer of the revolutionary ideas. As an outstanding thinker of German Idealism, Hegel together with Immanuel Kant (1742-1805), where both should be understood as Protestants, had an enormous impact on German intellectual life and also the so-called “West” even today.

Even though neither Hegel nor Kant were political executors of their own ideas, both revolutionized German philosophy thus becoming part of the intellectual legacy of the Revolution. My paper will focus on the analyses and critique of the political theorist Eric Voegelin (1901-1985), who together with Leo Strauss (1899-1973) is known to be critical about modern thinking and to have had considerable academic influence in the US in the 20th century. Both had a clear foundation for formulating their critique of modern political ideologies, namely Platonic philosophy. According to them, modern ideologies are the cause of the disorder and the crises of Western civilization; its cure is to be found in the history of ideas, rooting in concepts

of revelation and genuine philosophy in particular with its teaching about the cosmos as a source of order.

Hegel was like most thinkers in that his thinking had many facets and layers, which also deserve acknowledgment, bearing in mind that he understood man as a *zoon politikon*. Yet, how is he to be understood properly? Can he be understood as a philosopher of Enlightenment, at least a Christian philosopher or even as a reactionary glorifier of the Prussian state? All these categorizations are of secondary importance considering that Hegel declared himself to be a philosopher of the French Revolution. Voegelin confirms this self-evaluation when he claims that Hegel’s ideas lead to an “egophanic revolt” of the mind. Voegelin explains this with the reduction of the logos of revelation to a system of absolute knowledge through a *libido dominandi* in Hegel’s thinking. In Hegelian ideology man does not live in an in-between (*metaxy*), in a participatory tension towards the “divine ground of existence”, rather he constructs a false consciousness which wants to give him power over reality.

Ultimately without God, Hegel’s constructed abstract System of Science puts the self-reflective consciousness (*Bewusstsein*) on the metastasis of reality. Hegel wants to accomplish this imaginative construction with words of sorcery (*Zauberworte*) in a dialectic process in order to create a new, second reality. The second reality is the source of social and political disorder, the “first” reality as an expression of spiritual substance, and source of order is thus eliminated. One aspect of this is the Hegelian understanding of an “absolute state,” which blends out the search for an ideal state (Strauss).

“The Idea is the absolute power that brings itself forth” (Hegel). Hegel considered Napoleon to be the Great Man, because he is the world-historic servant of the Idea as it comes to its fulfillment. The abstractness of the idea of freedom as part of a false, second reality, which degenerated into violence and terror, moved from France to Germany, Hegel wrote in 1814.

**Keywords:** Hegel, Voegelin egophanic revolt, freedom, philosophy of history, progress, German Idealism

## Similarities Between the Enlightenment and Progressivism in Terms of Reasoning and Psychology – How the Heads Roll *Julian Rochedy*

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It's an undeniable fact that without the Enlightenment the French Revolution would have never come about. It was by virtue of the new ideas introduced in the eighteenth century that mentalities were transformed enough to envisage and then accomplish a radical transformation of society. It's quite remarkable and even a bit counterintuitive to come to the realization that these new ideas were, to a great extent the product of, and, at the very least carried out by, the same group that would later become the very victim of these ideas: the aristocratic elite.

In order to become a victim, the aristocracy first had to yield to the reasons of its executioners. This phenomenon is common in even the most basic principles of psychology. Both conceived and supported by aristocrats, these so-called “*idéés des lumières*,” will never cease to disarm them morally and undermine their authority. All of this whilst sharpening the blades that will soon be used to reap them in the name of Good, Justice, Liberty, Equality, Humanity and all other concepts with a capital letter.

For such suicide to occur, particular psychology, born from new living conditions, was required, (these conditions and new psychology were perfectly studied by Hippolyte Taine and to a lesser extent by Gustave Le Bon).

The French nobility, in its state of decay, began to read Rousseau instead of Bossuet; fell asleep in an idleness that rendered itself useless and vicious; abandoned its virile nerve that had been vital to its very existence; suddenly sought to seek happiness where its used to seek honor; began to naively dream of an inherently good universal human nature, often represented by

the good peasant of the good people whose image we passionately love but whose image we never really approach.

What is striking in the observation of these dreamy aristocrats, is the extraordinary relevance of their thoughts, their misdeeds, and their psychology, for our current time. Often, when reading their work and letters, one could be tricked into thinking that one is listening to representatives of our current left-wing and liberal elite. Which is not too surprising, considering that their progressive ideology directly derives from the enlightenment. But the similarities are not limited only to the elite: it appears that most postmodern Europeans feel and think exactly like 18th-century aristocrats when it comes to the outside world. Like privileged gentlemen full of good intentions, gentility and naivety, they are so blinded by their quest for happiness that they create conditions that will eventually leave them in horror.

Some behaviors weaken and transform psychologies so much so that they start to produce and then adopt ideas detrimental to their existence. This is what the history of the French Revolution demonstrates regarding enlightenment and nobility, and it seems that it continues to demonstrate this phenomenon through progressivism and our contemporaries.

**Keywords:** Progressivism, Enlightenment, Aristocracy, Decline

## Convention and Innovation: Contexts of Hungarian Radicalism in Late 18th-Century Hungary *Henrik Hőnich*

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The political discourses in 18th century Hungary cannot be described as homogeneous systems of modes of speaking, but rather as compounds of diverse functional elements, stemming from different historical and discursive contexts. Accordingly, one key feature of the predominant formation among them, the collective identity discourse of the estates,

characterised by the preponderance of noble corporatism and the ethnogenetic narrative of the nobility, was the interdependent coexistence of relatively disparate semantic, rhetoric, symbolic and narrative configurations. On a historical level, a sort of integrative potential is to be regarded as one key factor and indicator of the complexity of this ensemble of different motifs, narratives and political languages. In this regard, first and foremost, the process of cultural transfer holds enormous significance, which contributed to a great extent to the formation, reception, and transmission of new patterns of political thinking in the region.

However, it must be pointed out that the same tendency of semantic openness and flexibility come into view from another perspective on one and the same phenomenon. In my presentation, I would like to highlight the fact that the above sort of textual (semantic and rhetorical) versatility is not only traceable in works or argumentations characterized by the predominance of the hierarchy of values determined by particular elements of the identity construct of the estates. Drawn from the analysis of a corpus consisting of political pamphlets and treatises from the first half of the 1790s, mainly from authors classified usually as members of the tiny group of “radical reformers”, one of the principal conclusions of my lecture will be that the tendency toward “hybrid forms” of political thought and a(nother) kind of heterogeneity can also be observed in works of the most radical thinkers of the time, most of them sympathisers or advocates of the French Revolution and some of them affiliated also to the Hungarian Jacobin movement led by Ignác Martinovics.

In my talk, employing a conceptualist approach, my aim will be to demonstrate, interpret and contextualise applications of concepts belonging to the social and political vocabulary of the time. The focus of attention will be on terms with social and political capacities like “law”, “common good”, “patriot” or “nation.” From the perspective of my lecture, the significance of social and political terms lies first and foremost in the fact that they played a crucial

role in building up and deploying conceptual frameworks, which may be described as “unconventional” as regards to their relation to formulations giving expression to particular aspects of the hierarchy of values determined by the idea of the ancient constitution and that of the privileges of the estates. On this level of investigation, I intend to analyse (partial) redescriptions of “conventional” usages of the political vocabulary of the time. Besides, by examining a handful of other passages from the same corpus, I am also going to analyse some “standard” applications of elements taken from the estates’ collective identity discourse.

By means of the text analysis, I would like to demonstrate that it is inevitable that even the most innovative discursive acts rely in some respects on prior, “conventional” forms of argumentative frameworks, semantic structures and rhetorical formulations. Consequently, their interpretation ought to be carried out from an intellectual history perspective, which not only reckons with the individual’s capacity to use collective (historical-situational and discursive- linguistic) structures in creative forms but which also takes into consideration the potential of these structures for providing some leeway and setting limits for these individual acts at the same time.

In concrete historical terms, if we are interested in understanding the complexity of the semantic interconnections within particular layers of political discourses in 18th century Hungary, it seems to be insufficient to apply the binary opposition based on the simple counter-position of “conservative” and “progressive” sets of values and the corresponding linguistic tools for expressing them. Contenting ourselves with normative metaconcepts for describing contemporary political discourses, we deprive ourselves of being able to understand the complex mechanisms of how seemingly irreconcilable discursive configurations can work perfectly well alongside one another in a given text. Thus, it is of utmost importance to prescind from the subsequent historical significance of value attributions and argumentative frameworks, often interpreted as manifes-

tations of a supposed “(proto)liberalism and/ or (proto)nationalism”. To overcome decontextualisation and to get closer to revealing contextual meanings, the approach of close textual analysis provides useful tools.

**Keywords:** Radicalism, proto-liberalism, proto-nationalism, Hungary, 18th century

## Kant and the French Revolution: Can There be Historical Signs of Moral Progress?

*Stefano Lo Re*

UDC 94(44)\*1789/1799\*:1 Kant

The paper explores the significance of historical events to the question of the nature of humanity’s moral progress by considering the case of Immanuel Kant’s approach to the French Revolution. I set the context by connecting Kant’s historical interpretation of the facts of the Revolution, his theoretical rejection of a right to resist, and his praise of the Revolution, or at least of its ideals. I then turn to Kant’s argument in the *Conflict of Faculties*. There, he asks whether the human race is progressing towards the morally better. He argues that this question cannot “be resolved directly through experience,” and “yet the prophetic history of the human race must be connected to some experience.” What we need, he argues, is an event that points to the presence of a moral disposition in the human race, a “historical sign” that “would allow progress toward the better to be concluded as an inevitable consequence”. Kant introduces “an occurrence in [his] time which demonstrates [a] moral tendency of the human race”. The “sign” is the purely moral enthusiasm the French revolution raised in spectators outside of France. Finally, I turn to a problem, namely, that the enthusiasm may be prompted by other events in history. Some of Kant’s pre-1789 texts seem to lean in this direction, which would support the view that his argument in *Conflict of Faculties* need not single out the French revolution as a historical unicum. If so, if the argument is that the

revolution’s republican spirit will not or should not be forgotten, perhaps because it is expression of some universally valid principles which only needs to be discovered, then a historical trigger for moral enthusiasm is unnecessary. The upshot is that Kant’s sympathy for the French Revolution, even merely qua expression of certain ideals, should not be seen as stemming from intrinsic features of the historical event itself. However, this puts extra pressure on Kant’s argument for a teleological conception of history, because events in history do not seem to afford any epistemic support to it, however tenuous. Kant must retreat to a practically grounded hope that the influence of certain principles in history is self-reinforcing.

**Keywords:** Kant, moral progress, philosophy of history, political resistance

## Revolutionary Ideals from Reason to Domination

*Paola Gentile*

UDC 323.27/.28

In his philosophy, Hegel reserves a prominent place to Enlightenment and French Revolution as the first attempt of building the realm of Reason in the historical reality. He attributes its failure to a shortcoming in its insight of reason. That became tragically apparent under the Terror, “real of absolute freedom” where, in Hegel’s words, death has “no more meaning than chopping off a head of cabbage or swallowing a mouthful of water.” In his view, the Terror represents the fanatic essay of erasing all singularity, a mere “fury of disappearing” that reflects Reason’s ambition to impose itself as immediately universal. It follows the annihilation of all social organization, namely a political resolution where a supposedly universal power operates only through negation, by putting to death anyone who stands his individuality against it—sequence of cold and plate deaths “without any meaning.” Operating this way, the Revolution that once brought to the fore the great negative power of intellect reaches the nonsense of an insane and total massacre: by



their degeneration into the Terror, revolutionary ideals overtake the religious fanaticism they pretended negate. In the pages of *Phenomenology of Spirit* dedicated to Terror, Hegel points out the paradox concerning revolutionary ideas: at the beginning enhancement of critical human reason, they come in the wrecking of concrete individuals, sacrificed in the name of a murderous universality. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* published in 1944, Horkheimer and Adorno renew the Hegelian critique in the light of the terrible historical breakdown that reason just demonstrates with the outcome of the First World War and the ascension of totalitarian powers. The starting point of their reflection is the original purpose of Illuminist project, namely make men free from fear. This task, undertaken by the domination of natural forces through technique knowledge, continues with the dominance of inner nature as control of impulsions and instincts; this constitutes the psychological basis of repression, mechanism that will be widely exploited by totalitarian governments. Revolutionary Terror represents the archetype of retrogression of the Reason turned in its proper contrary. Its fatal results, according to Adorno, show that the reason and the liberal principles of Revolution cannot promise anymore a conciliation among men. The question arises of how to preserve reason and the conquests of Revolution without domination: we shall, therefore, discuss the forms of political mediation that could determinate rational principles in a non-repressive way.

**Keywords:** Enlightenment, Terror, domination, Reason

## Philosophy as Revolution. On Hegel's Speculative Thinking of the (French) Revolution Georg Schafer

UDC 94(44):1789/1799:1 Hegel

Without any doubt, the event of the French Revolution is the central reference for the whole sequence of German Idealism; for Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schelling as well as for many other thinkers within this philosophical constella-

tion, the French Revolution has to be regarded as the impulse for the foundation of a new type of thinking. It marks, as such, paradigmatically the manifestation of modernity in its both theoretical and practical, both metaphysical and normative claim to emancipation from the old life and to the beginning of a new life, of a new type of thinking and acting within the world.

For Hegel, the French Revolution constitutes the emphatical actuality, the present time that philosophy—as Hegel puts it famously—has to “grasp in thoughts”. By grasping its time in concepts, speculative thinking—as which Hegel understands his philosophy—is not mere philosophy, but implies, as such, a practical dimension. The French Revolution manifests an event that, as such, performs the identity of theory and praxis. In this revolution, as Hegel puts it, the “divine” of former metaphysics becomes, as such, practical, finding its reconciliation with the social-political world. This event, thus, for Hegel, is qualitatively more than a merely empirical-historical event. Its very specific actuality does not depend on and cannot be falsified by its problematic outcome – criticized and problematized by Hegel himself. From the perspective of speculative thinking, the revolution indicates the specific presence of an “interregnum”, the critical momentum of a space and time between the old world and the new world—the transition to something really new where everything that before seemed to be fixed once and for all “now” becomes radically transformed. The crisis marked by the revolution is the necessary precondition for both universal and singular actuality in that “the birth of the new world” takes place. The “spirit” of the Revolution, for Hegel, is characterized by this specific type of speculative actuality.

It is the aim of the present paper to outline this Hegelian perspective on the concept of revolution. By this, it puts forward the argument that this speculative perspective accounts for an understanding of “interregnum”—of crisis—that as such remains actual also for our own time. From this perspective, the French Revolution is not a historical past but remains the epochal actuality in which we still think

and live. Speculative thinking, thus, can help us think and conceptualize the crisis with which – as a heritage of the French Revolution – we obviously are still confronted.

**Keywords:** Crisis, Emancipation, German Idealism, Hegel, Metaphysics, Speculative thinking

## The Difference Between the French Revolution and the Serbian and Greek National Uprisings of the 19th Century

Marko Pejković

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My conference paper will try to demystify the claims of many prominent Serbian and Greek historians (Batakovic and Kordatos respectively) regarding the alleged resemblance between the Serbian and Greek national uprisings of 1804 and 1821 and the French Revolution. Quite the contrary, I argue that these uprisings have nothing to do, neither with the intellectual mindset of the French Revolution nor with its political goals. The French revolutionaries were imbued with ideas of rational constructivism (Hayek), while the leaders of Serbian and Greek Uprisings were inspired by traditional religious beliefs. The goal of the French Revolution was to destroy the old political order and create a new one based on a rational plan of a democratic republic and universal citizen rights. The goal of the Serbian and Greek Uprisings was to liberate the Serbs and Greeks from Turkish rule (or more precisely occupation) and form an independent state based on traditional non-constructivist principles. The cornerstone of delineation between the Revolution and these uprisings is the role of traditional religion and clergy. While the Roman Catholic clergy was severely persecuted by the French revolutionaries and its political role was absolutely denied, the Serbian and Greek clergy of the Orthodox Church worked shoulder to shoulder with the respective rebel leaders of the two people in order to attain the common goals of liberation. This will especially

be clarified in the Greek case. The “anathema” of the Greek Uprising by the Patriarch Gregory V was artificial inasmuch as it was a desperate maneuver to prevent large-scale atrocities. The Patriarch considered it possible, with this “extorted” anathema, to avert a *fatwa* from the Shaykh al-Islām against all Greeks of the Ottoman Empire, causing an unbridled tide of total extermination of civilians. The Patriarch succeeded—the *fatwa* was not issued. Nevertheless, the Sultan’s wrath against him was not mitigated. The Patriarch was executed precisely for complicity in the preparation of the Uprising (a charge that was actually founded). Shortly before the execution, the “extorted” anathema was revoked by the Patriarch and his bishops synodically in secret.

**Keywords:** French Revolution, Serbian Uprising of 1804, Greek Uprising of 1821, conservatism, religion, clergy, rational constructivism

## The Impact the American Revolution on the French Revolution

María Sánchez Castellanos

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Traditional French historiography has not recognized enough the enormous role that the American ideas had in the burst of the French Revolution. Filtered through various channels into France, the ideas of human rights, social and legal equality, liberty, popular sovereignty, virtuous citizenship, republicanism, freedom of religion and of the press, and many other liberal revolutionary ideas provoked a serious change of mind among the French. France had her own philosophers or philosophes and had for a long time read about similar ideas but had never put them actually into practice. The important change came when the French saw their philosophy materializing for the first time in America. They realized those were no longer their ideas, but instead they had become facts. The ideas were now the reality, happening in front of their eyes in a country that was previ-

ously under the dominion of a monarchy, just like France was. Suddenly, this people broke off and became free, independent republics with a genuine form of government that could only remind them of ancient Greece and its “democracy,” a term that would begin to popularize right at this time.

To what extent did the American Revolution impact the French Revolution? We will look into the publications that circulated France in the “inter-Revolution era,” that is, between the American and the French Revolutions, to see exactly how the French reacted to this phenomenon. We will examine that the impact in pre-revolutionary France was so great that it divided the philosophers and the enlightened elite in two main ideologies: those for and those against following the American example to reform France. The fact that France took part for America in her War of Independence made her the channel through which these liberal ideas would enter the Old World, spreading and unifying the entire Western World in a common Atlantic revolution that would make us share the same principles upon which we erected our singular Western Society. The role that the veterans had initiating the riots in the dispersed provinces within France results of tremendous importance, for they had experimented the American dream and they were the ones that brought it back to their home country. The role of the peasant soldiers mobilizing the common people is comparable to the role politicians like Franklin or Jefferson and philosophes like Condorcet and Brissot had in influencing the high circles of French society. When the Estates General were summoned and the National Assembly formed, all these writings and private political meetings had already provided the representatives with all the arguments and ideas about the advantages and disadvantages of implementing and adapting the American model to the reforms for France. Plenty of examples evidence this tremendous influence, for instance, the names of some of the most “genuinely” French institutions were, in fact, taken from America. The Assemblée Nationale, the Patriotes party, the Convention,

and even the Comité de Salut Publique derive from their equivalent names in English.

**Keywords:** American revolution, French revolution, liberalism, enlightenment

## The Romantics and the French Revolution

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This conference paper will argue that the German Romantics had never been fervent ideological supporters of the French Revolution or its goals and ideas. Contrary to some interpretations (Beiser, Brinkmann), we claim that the initial approval of the Revolution by some Romantics was not ideologically motivated, and had nothing to do with their political conceptions or ideas. Rather, it was an expression of their enthusiasm for a new and strange phenomenon combined with repulsion towards the reality of the life in, mechanistic, German absolutist bureaucratic and mechanical states. We also claim that this initial enthusiasm did not last long. Up to 1800, all representatives of the Romantic Movement turned away from the Revolution and became its critics and even stronger proponents of conservative ideas. In the early days, the Romantics had already formulated all the important concepts of their criticism of the Revolution which they later developed in detail. This criticism of the Revolution was in accordance with the Romantic understanding of the concepts of tradition, state and religion as well as with their general criticism of the Enlightenment and modernity.

**Keywords:** French Revolution, Romantic Movement, Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel

## The Slow Burning-Fuse of the Revolution

*Aleksandar Novaković*

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The French Revolution, regardless of the unprecedented unleashed terror, is still perceived as a civilizational milestone in the

epochal change that shaped the world we live in. However, the world in which we live is gradually becoming more centralized, monolithic, uniformed, more politically controlled and politized, with the ever-encroaching state swallowing remaining parts of personal liberty. Frantic appeals for more freedom and equality in the form of new freedoms and new segments of equality—that mighty hand of the centralistic democratic state has to secure—are seen as direct consequences of the progressive ideal of the Revolution. Although its initial ideals were liberty and the rule of law conceived in Lockean tradition, they were promptly supplanted with the leveling down egalitarianism of the democratic ideal of Rousseau. What the Revolution brought in a highly condensed form of its short-lived but profoundly devastating totalitarian phase has been steadily evolving through the political history for several centuries, sometimes in the extreme guises of the red and black terrors and sometimes as crawling totalitarianism disguised under the cloak of democratic legitimacy. To fully understand the significance of the Revolution, it is thus necessary to analyze and comprehend its enduring attractiveness. Only then can we build the protective mechanisms that will preserve civilization from the menaces of a new totalitarianism.

Complementary with these considerations, the intellectual legacy of the Revolution raises the question of the philosophical character of political ideas and their historical incarnation. For the Revolution is the most striking example of how highly attractive political concepts tend to blend with entirely different and even opposing political ideals—as when liberty drowned and disappeared in yearnings for equality. Sometimes political ideas are like slow-burning fuses—it can take centuries for their authentic nature to be revealed, but then it might be too late. The much-admired aspects of the Revolution—namely, that it initiated the termination of preexisting order of artificially sustained privileges and hierarchies in Europe have to be taken into consideration simultaneously with all other important developments that it inspired, such as the formation of the contem-

porary nanny state. The very acknowledgment of the fact that the power of the modern state and totalitarian potential it invokes enormously surpasses the most autarchic monarchy of the past times should diminish and relativize the initial appreciation for the Revolution—especially among people who cherish liberty. Those sympathies should be suppressed from the start, lest their advocates share the same fate as Malesherbes.

The following presentation embraces classical views on democracy of Aristotle and Plato, as well as the views of the Revolution's contemporaries and its eminent critics Burke, Tocqueville, Constant and others. Notably, the presentation will build on some of the most penetrating but neglected insights on the Revolution, such as those presented in the work of Erik Ritter von Kuehnelt-Leddihn.

**Keywords:** French Revolution, democracy, egalitarianism, centralism, nationalism, liberalism, Kuehnelt-Leddihn

## The Posterity of Hippolyte Taine's *Origins of Contemporary France* – 1879 Thomas Flichy de La Neuville

UDC 94(44)\*1789/1799:321.01 Hippolyte T.

Living at the margins of the University, Hippolyte Taine devoted most of its efforts to the constitution of an *opus magnum* on the revolutionary episode. *Les origines de la France contemporaine*, published in 1879, are written by a positivist historian, whose heritage will be claimed by the French monarchists of the 1930's before falling into oblivion. Why has Taine's work been systematically attacked by the official *republican* historiography? Several reasons can be examined. First of all, *The origins of contemporary France*—which are divided into three volumes corresponding to the end of the monarchy, the history of the revolution and its extinction by Bonaparte—disturb, because they elaborate a general theory of decadence, based on the examination of the psychology of the elites. For Hippolyte Taine,



the monarchical state has reduced the action of intermediate bodies to nothing. In a world marked by hollow speculation, Taine notices a general dissolution of existing bonds. For him, the engine of the revolution is a determined and violent sect of ideologues associated to a band of criminals. These criminals are well paid and ruthlessly used in order to reach the initial aim of the *semi-philosophers*: the substitution of a cynical plutocracy to an aristocracy which has dissolved itself into its exacerbated sensitivity. The revolution is seen as the plot of a minority, determined to use violence in order to retain power. The analysis of the action of minorities, engine of the revolution, obviously ran against the republican *fabula* of a spontaneous popular uprising. But Hippolyte Taine is not content with just elaborating a general theory of the revolutionary mechanic, his thoughts are nourished by a multitude of singular anecdotes. In order to unveil the machinery of the revolution, Taine portrays the governing trio, Danton, *the barbaric engineer of the revolution*, Robespierre, *the supreme aborted*, and Marat, *the monomaniac homicide*. Hippolyte Taine describes with precision the way in which the frightened herd of parliamentarians is intimidated by subordinate revolutionary agents placed in the tribunes. These agents are paid to drive the parliamentary cattle in the direction given by the hidden brain. This is how the radical minority drives the majority. The external pressure always triumphs over the internal indecisiveness. Sometimes this pressure is not sufficient. This explains the reason why the minority resorts to electoral manipulations. As for the political executioners of the orders given by the committees, they are progressively *purified* of their most resistant elements, especially those who are not content with their role of puppets. Taine explains the reason why the majority remains paralysed: first of all, the old elites are far too sensitive to struggle against ruthless criminals, second, the masses tend to become inert when the revolution resorts to physical pressure. But the revolution is not all-powerful, it cannot last because it has promoted the most incompetent ones. Its course

is finally ended by a determined *condottiere* who seems to come directly from the Genoese 15th century. Taine disturbs because his imagination is served by a magnificent style, and moreover because he combines psychological, cultural and political aspects to restore a lively, savage and colourful portrait of the revolutionary episode. As his account was very carefully sourced, he was considered an immediate danger: in 1879, no alternative to the official historiography was acceptable, especially when it originated from a non-Catholic.

**Keywords:** minorities, revolution, Taine, héritage, decline

## The Man Who Ate Death – Borislav Pekić's Literary Homage to De Tocqueville

Milena Pešić

UDC 94(44)\*1789/1799:[321.01 Tocqueville A+821.163.41.09 Pekić B.

This paper is an attempt to synthesize two critical views of the French Revolution, which at first glance, with the exception of the object of criticism, provide no basis for deeper connections. These are Tocqueville's observations made in his work *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, on the one hand, and Borislav Pekić's narrative *The man who ate death*. Although these are two very different discourses, scientific and literary, as well as authors shared by a two-hundred-year period, we find that linking their complementary insights regarding the meaning, character, and effects of the French Revolution provides one, if not a new, and undoubtedly interesting view to this problem.

Describing the intellectual and political sources of the French Revolution, Tocqueville develops three important concepts: individualism, egalitarianism, and democracy. Individualism and its reverse – atomization of society, for Tocqueville, represent a phase of society, as a product of political centralization that destroyed all the mediating structures of civil society that could protect the individual from the coercive power of the state/government.

The royal administration, as a system of bureaucratic control, concentrates all aspects of social, political and economic life under its wing, thus creating a symbiotic link between an almighty patronizing state and an individual deprived of meaningful involvement in public affairs and anything beyond egoistic self-interest. Thus, according to Tocqueville, already under the old regime, the basis was created for the deviant form of unifying egalitarianism developed by the French Revolution.

Although critically minded, Tocqueville did not deny the value and importance of the French Revolution. With its appearance, for the first time, people of the libertarian spirit began to influence historical events with their teachings and works. For the first time in history, something imagined in the theory of philosophers, a different form of order, came to life in a violent revolution in society, although he clearly saw all the negativity of the gap between theory and practice.

Tocqueville does not write of revolutionary dynamics, internal transformations, violence, and political upheavals. It does not mention Jacobin messianism, the ideological war that began in 1792. The revolution, for Tocqueville, ended in 1789. The rest is only the consequence of the emergence of democracy whose exacerbated form goes so far as to erase people.

Where Tocqueville stopped, Borislav Pekic continues his narrative in a very compelling, synthesizing way, giving the reverse of the French Revolution a more universal anthropological sense, accentuating certain problems as if he were in collusion with Tocqueville. Story *The man who ate death* follows the time of the so-called power struggles, more specifically the reign of terror of 1793. The hero of the story, Jean-Louis entirely, works as a clerk who lays down the verdicts in the Protocol, which would later be forwarded to the Tribunal for execution. The qualities of the protagonist are completely in line with the time in which they live, they are, in fact, formed under the pressure of a social atmosphere. Being indirectly in the service of the terror of the revolution, through the combination of ironically shaped circumstanc-

es, this dormant man—being outside the history, has been finally awakened. He is now undergoing a series of involuntary transformations, until becoming the savior of many death row inmates, a hidden and unknown hero, whose head, finally, finds its place under a guillotine.

**Keywords:** French Revolution, Ancien Régime, bureaucratic centralization, liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, democracy

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*The Festival of the Supreme Being*  
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