



French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville: Liberty in a Levelled Society? (Ideas in Context)

Annelien de Dijn

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This study makes a major contribution to our understanding of one of the most important and enduring strands of modern political thought. Annelien de Dijn argues that Montesquieu's aristocratic liberalism - his conviction that the preservation of freedom in a monarchy required the existence of an aristocratic 'corps intermédiaire' - had a continued impact on post-revolutionary France. Revisionist historians from Furet to Rosanvallon have emphasised the impact of revolutionary republicanism on post-revolutionary France, with its monist conception of politics and its focus on popular sovereignty. Dr de Dijn, however, highlights the persistence of a pluralist liberalism that was rooted in the Old Regime, and which saw democracy and equality as inherent threats to liberty. She thus provides an alternative context in which to read the work of Alexis de Tocqueville, who is revealed as the heir not just of Restoration liberals, but also of the Royalists and their hero, Montesquieu.

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