

## Abstract

*Tocqueville, equality and individualisation. On the democratisation of pre-university education in postwar Sweden.* Tomas Wedin, PhD student, Department of Literature, History of Ideas, and Religion, Göteborgs universitet, Sweden, tomas.wedin@gu.se

The purpose of this article is to elucidate the Swedish postwar educational landscape by reactivating the French diplomat and proto sociologist Alexis de Tocqueville's reflections on the promises and challenges of democratic society. Writing in the initial stages of the developing modern society, he addressed challenges of a fundamental character that I maintain can open up new perspectives on the changes of pre-university education from 1945 until today. I activate four closely intertwined ideas from his reflections on democratic society in *De la démocratie en Amérique* and expound how these analytical categories can be mobilised to discern hitherto overseen aspects of the political reforms around 1990. I emphasise in particular how Tocqueville's reflections on a specific form of individual-centred equality can enhance our understanding of how a neoliberal logic permeated the educational sphere in particular – and political life more generally – from the 1990s onwards.

Keywords: Education, democracy, Tocqueville, Sweden

# Tocqueville, Equality and Individualisation

*On the Democratisation of Pre-University  
Education in Postwar Sweden*

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When the reforms of the Swedish educational system were launched soon after the Second World War, an essential ambition was to create a more democratic and equal school.<sup>1</sup> Besides the economic reasons of making it more efficient, a key motive behind the reforms was to create more equal opportunities for all pupils, independently of their social background. The period was, according to the dominant historiography, later interrupted by a number of policy changes around the 1990s – most notably the introduction of a voucher system, the delegation of responsibility from state to municipalities, as well as the facilitation of starting private schools – described as expressions of a “system change”.<sup>2</sup> Considered as such, it is often related to a neoliberalisation of Swedish politics more generally.<sup>3</sup>

For all the merits of this narrative of a rupture, it obscures a dimension of the policy changes that I maintain have been crucial. Drawing on previous analyses of educational policies, I will reactivate Tocqueville’s analysis of the role of equality in modern society and argue that his reflections on the burgeoning modern society enable new and fertile ways of understanding the dynamics of this period of “continuous educational reforms”.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of the study is thus to discuss how and why some of the central strands in his reflections on democratic society can elucidate certain aspects of the transformations of the Swedish postwar educational landscape that have hitherto been overlooked.

The paper will proceed as follows: in the first section, the background against which Tocqueville wrote is briefly presented, as well as why and how his analysis remains relevant for understanding postwar society. In

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the second section, I give an outline of the relevant themes. In the third section, I present the relevant Tocquevillian themes via four analytical categories: (i) democratic epistemology; (ii) opinion replacing authority: the transhistorical premise; (iii) temporal provincialism; and (iv) a shift from social to natural bonds. In the fourth section, I open with a brief account of the dominant interpretations of the policy changes around 1990, whereupon the categories are activated. In the concluding section, I summarise and discuss the further implications of my findings.

I argue that a specific form of imagined [*imaginaire*] equality has been a crucial ideological component of the reforms, propelling a dismantling of different forms of substantial ideals in the form of qualitative distinctions, most notably manifested by disparaging the transmission of a given content and in nourishing a new role for teachers. By qualitative differences, I refer to structuring ideals that transcend the individualist values of self-determination and positive rights.<sup>5</sup> In virtue of representing something other vis-à-vis the individual, I shall refer to this shift as the withering of alterity as a structuring ideal in educational policies. To this end, I will show that in reactivating particular Tocquevillian themes it is possible to discern and delineate these major changes in the postwar education system.

Concomitant with this structuring ideal of equality has been – and remains – a predominantly negative ideal of liberty, whereby liberty is conceived of as the exercise of the unimpeded individual will, both of which are intertwined with a predominant focus on the present (at the expense of both past and future as structuring time horizons). This postwar educational impulse has indirectly facilitated a privatisation of the educational sphere.<sup>6</sup> Via the Tocquevillian categories outlined, I will argue that central tenets of the postwar equality-promoting impulse prepared the ground for the subsequent (from 2006 onwards) and explicit admonition to address the pupil as an “entrepreneur of himself”.<sup>7</sup>

### The relevance of Tocqueville (i)

From our horizon, with the postwar political landscape and the reforms around 1990 in focus, the questions with which Tocqueville struggled are pertinent for at least two reasons. First of all, like most of his contemporaries, Tocqueville was anxious about what the French philosopher Frédéric Brahami has described as a “shared sentiment of an *offense made against time* of the Revolution”.<sup>8</sup> The revolution was experienced not only as an institutional and moral revolution, but also as an action where men attempted to become “constructors of time” rather than being *in time*.<sup>9</sup> A crucial dimension of Tocqueville’s critique of the process of democratisation

was that this would tend to dis-embed individuals and to foment an increasingly abstract idea of the individual, denying the society and traditions that preceded her.<sup>10</sup> During the postwar period, this dimension has, I maintain, become alarmingly topical with the attempt to democratise the educational system.

The second reason goes back to the political gaze orienting his reflections. Just as the anthropologist, moving from one cultural sphere to another, can see things that pass unnoticed by those immersed in it, so we can unveil and/or further our understanding of our society by dint of approaching it via a time-bound outsider struggling with the phenomena as they emerged.<sup>11</sup> In virtue of operating “in-between two worlds”, rooted in the old world but restlessly curious about the new one emerging in front of him, Tocqueville was well placed to do this.<sup>12</sup> It is against this backdrop that I hold that Tocqueville’s reflections on the modern form of equality, and its relationship to individualism, are of relevance for understanding our late modern condition.

### The process of democratisation: some preliminary remarks (ii)

It was after having been sent to USA on behalf of the French government to write a report on their penitentiary system that Tocqueville undertook the work that would lead to *De la démocratie en Amérique*, undoubtedly his most famous work. Although discussing his experiences in the USA, the purpose was not primarily to provide an image of the USA as a case study in itself; Tocqueville’s ambition was to approach North America in order to get an idea of what to expect – and fear – from the process of democratisation also in Europe. As he writes in the introduction to book one:

[T]here I have looked for an image of democracy itself, of its penchants, of its character, its prejudices, its passions; I wanted to get to know it, if only at least to understand what we can hope for and fear from it.<sup>13</sup>

Two essential concepts, defined in slightly unorthodox ways, in his thought are *democracy* and *equality*. In contrast to the classical tradition, democracy does not here refer to a regime in the Aristotelian sense.<sup>14</sup> Instead, democracy is defined as a social state of society, a form of structuring pattern.<sup>15</sup> Drawing on Montesquieu’s idea that each regime has its principle, Tocqueville argues that the specificity of the democratic age is that equality is the superior principle, or passion, inspiring people to act.<sup>16</sup>

Equality, or equality of conditions, is not defined in any consistent way in *De la Démocratie en Amérique*. On the one hand, in the opening pages of book one Tocqueville asks rhetorically:

[...] after having destroyed feudality and vanquished the kings, will democracy retreat in the face of the bourgeoisie and the rich? Will it stop now that it has become so strong and the adversaries so weak?<sup>17</sup>

Then, in book two, published five years later (1840), he indicates that there are clear differences between rich and poor people in the USA, and that the emerging industrial class could develop into a new elite.<sup>18</sup> And, he continues, should some people have the “misfortune of arriving” at a condition “of perfect equality”, there would still be “inequality of intelligences, which, coming directly from God, will always elude the laws”.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, although indicating an awareness, he did not explicitly take on what Raymond Aron a century later would refer to as the dialectics of equality, i.e. the complex interplay in modern society between the desideratum of equality and the hierarchical order that a high level of productivity seems to imply.<sup>20</sup> How to understand his idea of equality and its role in history therefore remains a matter of debate.<sup>21</sup>

As an operative definition for the purpose of this article, I will draw on the French philosopher Marcel Gauchet, who – in “Tocqueville, l’Amérique et nous” – defines equality of conditions (in Tocqueville’s thought) as a structure. In this light, equality is not

[...] discernible in itself, within each and every one of them [the individuals] taken by itself. It rests on the socially defined way in which they meet and situate one against the other – on the structure of a relation that determines them [...]<sup>22</sup>

Equality will thus, as Tocqueville himself puts it, be defined as a “sort of imagined [*imaginaire*] equality, in spite of the real inequality of their [the citizens’] conditions”; a structuring principle, inculcating among its members the idea that they are similar.<sup>23</sup> As such, it must be distinguished both from “formal” equality (before the law, etc.) and distributive or “real” economic equality. Preceding hierarchical societies had been organised around an explicit, collective, normative structuring ideal, serving to integrate “society with reference to its values”, and as such to something other than the individual.<sup>24</sup> Another way to think of the structuring idea of the *semblable* is therefore to understand it as the evanescence of, in accordance with how I defined it above, alterity as a principle around which society is ordered. Due to the rise of the absolutist state in Europe, subjects were continuously suppressed under an ever-stronger state:

Under *l’Ancien régime* like in our times, there did not exist a city, borough, countryside, village, not even a small hamlet in France, hospital, fabric, convent or college, that could have an independent say in its specific affairs,

and in the administration of its own possessions. Then as well as now, the administration thus held the French in tutelage, and if the insolence of the word had not yet been created, one had at least the thing.<sup>25</sup>

The specific trait of democratic society is thus its successive elimination of qualitative hierarchical structures.<sup>26</sup> As the order of similarity progressed, new fields were – and are – successively included; it is in this light that Tocqueville’s thought, or so I maintain, becomes apposite for our understanding of the postwar educational changes and how they tie in with the reforms around 1990.

Indissolubly intertwined with this all-encompassing ideal of equality is, according to Tocqueville, each individual’s enhanced focus on herself. In order to clarify the difference, he makes a distinction between egoism and individualism. Whereas the egoistic propensity to an exaggerated love of oneself was not unfamiliar to earlier societies, individualism is defined as the “reflected and calm sentiment that disposes each citizen to isolate” herself from her co-citizens.<sup>27</sup> While analytically distinguishable, the latter will not leave the former untainted; soon, individualism will tend to undermine the political virtues, which depend for their survival on a mediating instance between the separate individuals. With time, it will therefore also hinder the development of other virtues, and thus, by extension, breed egoism as well.<sup>28</sup> To the extent that these forces are not countered by appropriate means, they run the risk of also backfiring against the most fervent advocates of an unfettered individual:

When the conditions are equal, each person voluntarily isolates within herself and forgets the public world. If the legislators among democratic peoples do not make any effort to counterbalance this fatal tendency, or favour it with the intention to reroute the citizens from political passions and thus divert them from revolutions, it might be that they end up producing the evil that they wanted to avoid, and that one day the moment comes where the disordered passion of a few men, helped by the unintelligent egoism and pusillanimity of the majority, ends up constraining the political body to undergo strange vicissitudes.<sup>29</sup>

For Tocqueville, it is nevertheless crucial that it is the latter – i.e. individualism – that is deemed to be intrinsically intertwined with democratic society.

#### Four dimensions of the process of democratisation (iii)

*Democratic epistemology (i).* The first aspect to which I would like to draw attention is Tocqueville’s reflections on the prevalent “philosophical method” of men in democratic society. Method must here not be understood

as a specific reflexive way of orienting in the world; rather it should be understood as the implicit fashion in which individuals approach the world. The characteristic way in which people will tend to approach the world in democratic societies should, he continues, be seen in light of their strong belief in their own capacities; conversely, they will exhibit an equally limited trust in other persons. As pointed out, one of the linchpins of Tocqueville's sociological theory is how the non-hierarchical imagined equality in democratic society is concomitant with an impulse among its citizens to retreat into themselves. On the relation between the two dimensions, he writes that:<sup>30</sup>

[...] not seeing in any of them [the other citizens] the signs of any grandiosity or incontestable superiority, [they] are incessantly driven back to their own reason as the most visible and closest source of the truth. It is thus not only confidence as such that is destroyed, but the very taste for taking a man whomever at his word.<sup>31</sup>

Closely connected to this strong belief in one's own abilities is the democratic penchant for the concrete and practical, for non-abstract thinking. In order to get to the point, so to speak, democratic men will be particularly keen to get rid of anything that will keep them separated from the object at hand – theories included. This will tend to make them deeply hostile to abstract thoughts, considering them to be “useless and bothersome veils placed between them and the truth”.<sup>32</sup> Similar ideas come to the fore in Tocqueville's reflections on the sciences, which he believes will be strongly biased vis-à-vis “the tangible and real”, and to be “inversely contemptuous towards traditions and forms”.<sup>33</sup>

Along the same lines, he discerns two ways of approaching the sciences. One is practically oriented, structured by instrumentalism and mercantile considerations, whereas the other is disinterested, pursuing truth as an end itself.<sup>34</sup> The preference that men in democratic society have for the former is, in Tocqueville's own words, explained by the fact that they are “greedy for material and present pleasures [...] always unhappy with the position that they occupy”.<sup>35</sup> Besides this explanation, which in evoking materialism as the explanans seems to be question begging, I would want to adduce another, more Tocquevillian, justification.<sup>36-</sup>

For an individual approaching science from this “democratic” starting point, it will be easier to submit to a cognitive framework clearly related to an immediately experienced interest than to a theory demanding submission “merely” for the sake of understanding. It will be harder because it demands submission to a non-discernible and arguably non-existent concrete goal, but rather an abstract finality in the form of a backcloth to orient against, which in its essence implies a lack on the part of the person

seeking it.<sup>37</sup> In virtue of representing something beyond the confines of the individual and her immediate interests, and as such representing otherness, it is therefore much more unlikely to penetrate and compel individuals in democratic society.

*Opinion replacing authority: the transhistorical premise (ii).* In spite of the predilection for democratic epistemology, Tocqueville continues, no one can live a life entirely based on their own experiences. Anyone who actually tried to empirically find out for herself how to act in each and every situation would render her reason increasingly weaker, restraining her from plumbing the depths of any issue.<sup>38</sup>

In democratic societies, as in all other societies, people will, in consequence, inevitably also rely on preformed judgements. But rather than believing in what this or that concrete person professes – unwilling to be subject to any concrete equal – they will instead tend to let their actions be inspired by opinion, and this with a fervour analogous to the high esteem in which they hold their own belief.<sup>39</sup> Faced with the sum of a large, abstract and undefined number of equals, the insignificance of the individual now becomes as overwhelming as her corresponding belief in her own forces. Hence, the very same impulse that triggered her not to take anything on trust from a concrete authority also, in accordance with the same logic, invites her to believe all the more strongly in the opinion.<sup>40</sup> This leads Tocqueville to conclude that:

In equality, I can clearly see two different tendencies: one directs the mind of each man towards new thoughts, whereas the other one would happily reduce him to not think further.<sup>41</sup>

The individualism that democratic society renders possible must therefore be considered primarily as a challenge, a window of opportunity, rather than as an accomplished fact. In order to make this thought more concrete, we could say that the sceptical attitude towards authorities in democratic society must not be confused with all individuals' inevitable dependency on exterior sources of inspiration:

Individual independence can be more or less extended; it could never be without limits. Thus, the question is not whether there exists an intellectual authority in the ages of democracy, but simply where it resides and by what standard it is to be measured.<sup>42</sup>

*Temporal provincialism (iii).* A further consequence of the democratic epistemology is, Tocqueville notes, the temporal breaches that this will tend to trigger. Increasingly trusting in their own beliefs here and now, individuals

in democratic society will be less interested in and prone to draw from what has been thought and done.<sup>43</sup> Besides the aversion towards concrete authorities, we ought therefore also to add an enhanced temporal distance.<sup>44</sup> The individualism nourished by democratic society is thus interdependent with what could be called a contraction of temporal horizons, diminishing both past and future to the advantage of the present:

In this way, democracy does not only make each man forget his forbears but hides his descendants from him and separates him from his contemporaries; it drives him incessantly back into himself and threatens to lock him up entirely in the solitude of his own heart.<sup>45</sup>

This drift towards an ever-greater provincialism of time can, furthermore, be related to how a given society is conceptualised.<sup>46</sup> In conformity with the unwillingness to submit to concrete authorities, individuals in democratic societies will be equally reluctant to be fettered by the shackles of invented traditions. The narrowing time horizon and increased individualism therefore seem to be mutually reinforcing. Again, this does not imply that individuals will cease to interact with each other; rather it will trigger new forms of relating to others: from common beliefs and ideals, to bonds knitted via mutual interests. Finally, it should be emphasised that the envisioned contraction towards the present is on the level of the content of Tocqueville's reflections, not the structure of his thought more generally, which is firmly rooted in the emerging historicist vision of the world.<sup>47</sup>

*From conventional to natural bonds (iv).* Another aspect of democratic societies is what the author of *l'Ancien régime et la révolution française* refers to as the softening of mores: on a societal level in general and in the family in particular. Although the democratic energies dissolve convention-based social bonds, they strengthen others, in particular bonds between family members. While they promote a general softening of discipline, they will also tend to be infused with energies they previously did not have at their disposal.<sup>48</sup> This could be described as a form of de-conventionalisation of upbringing, where previous norms are replaced by less rigid and more tender forms of educating children. This, concludes the author, is in line with a more encompassing shift taking place in democratic societies: "Democracy loosens the social bonds, but it tightens the natural bonds. It brings family members closer at the same time that it separates citizens"; and this, he adds, could be considered a summary not only of the actual chapter 'The influence of democracy over the family', but of a number of others as well.<sup>49</sup>

It thus follows that the categories operate on two different levels. Whereas (i) the democratic epistemology, (iii) the temporal provincialism, and (iv) the shift from conventional to natural bonds are historical categories, the second theme (ii) opinion replacing authority: the trans-historical premise, as indicated, is of another kind. As such, the latter will in the subsequent application of the categories be employed in a somewhat different fashion, serving as a form of underlying condition in contrast to the historical categories.

### Tocqueville, individualism and the challenge of democratic education (iv)

Postwar educational policies in Sweden are often divided into two general periods.<sup>50</sup> The first, dominated by the strong influence of the Social Democratic Party, aimed at promoting a more democratic and equal educational system. Clear manifestations can be seen in the Comprehensive School reform (*enhetskolan*) in 1962 and the attempts to democratise the school's inner life. This period was then interrupted by a number of policy changes around the 1990s described as expressions of a "system change".<sup>51</sup>

The reforms referred to are primarily the introduction of a voucher system as well as the delegation of responsibility from the state to the municipalities. As many studies have shown, these reforms spurred a development towards a more user- and market-oriented school system.<sup>52</sup> A second important change during the 1990s was the shift towards management by objectives, which in turn forms part of a more general reorientation under the influence of New Public Management in Swedish politics.<sup>53</sup> During the same period, a discursive shift took place wherein education was successively replaced by learning as a key term in central policy documents. This is a shift that the educational philosopher Gert Biesta relates to the marketisation of the educational system.<sup>54</sup> These changes notwithstanding, politically significant – and often overlooked – signs of continuity are also identifiable.

The paramount aim with the democratisation of the educational system during the postwar period was to replace the existing school system, which was based on two, strongly class-biased, pathways – "a class society in miniature" – with one school: the *Comprehensive School*.<sup>55</sup> The ambition was to change not just the forms of education, but the inner life of schools as well; the "school of authority" would now, the commissioners argued, be replaced by the "school of activities".<sup>56</sup> Deterred by the experiences in the totalitarian states and determined to further the democratisation of Swedish society, the 1946 School Commission declared that the coming

educational reform should aim at not only reflecting the democratic society, but also creating a “democratisation of the school system” itself.<sup>57</sup>

As earlier research has shown, the decentralisation launched with the 1989 bill, transferring the lion’s share of the responsibility for schools from the state to municipalities, was in significant respects the culmination of a trend that stretched back to the 1970s.<sup>58</sup> The critique vis-à-vis the centralist state was a crucial aspect of social criticism in 1968, which in important respects shaped political life in the 1970s. One of the suggested reforms was a decentralisation of decision-making in order to bring power closer to the citizens, thus furthering the process of democratisation – including the educational system.<sup>59</sup> But as we shall see, the decentralisation was not the only crucial strand of continuity between the postwar policy changes and the reforms around 1990.<sup>60</sup>

To Tocqueville, one of the characteristic traits of the emerging democratic society was what he referred to as de-conventionalisation of upbringing (iv), in which hitherto dominant practices were replaced by more flexible and tender forms of educating the child. During the postwar period, a number of reforms were realised that could – and should – be seen as manifestations of this. In order to avoid reproducing the previous parallel school system, where differences between teachers in various school forms were significant, measures were taken to diminish differences between various teacher categories. Policy documents reveal an ambition to diminish differences between teachers on various levels (varying from teaching pupils between 5-19 years). Therefore, wrote the commissioners of 1946, the “teacher’s training should to a large degree be made common for all categories of teachers”.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the suggested colleges for teacher training were expected to serve as an institutional materialisation of the democratic school; they should become a “breeding ground for progressive pedagogics”.<sup>62</sup> In relevant respects, this ambition culminated in the teacher training reform of 2001, where teachers on all levels followed all teacher-specific courses together.<sup>63</sup> In contrast to the previous structuring ideas, where the public educational system was thought of as an institution introducing pupils to a convention-based public world, further initiatives were now taken to adapt school to the pupils’ experiences, thereby making it more home-like and natural (from the perspective of pupils that is).

Besides the ambition to make uniform different teacher categories, a further objective was to reduce teachers’ authority and to increasingly delegate more and more decisions to pupils. The teachers were, moreover, exhorted to further include the experiences with which pupils came to school.<sup>64</sup> As the commissioners put it in a report on the changing role of teachers in the emerging school, their role will “become more supporting

and stimulating rather than directly transferring knowledge”.<sup>65</sup> Authority, write the Social Democratic government representatives in the teachers’ training bill of 1999/2000, is “something that one procures in a democratic process”.<sup>66</sup> Along the same lines are the summons to decrease the gap between different stages in school, to prioritise caring aspects in school, and the strong critique of grading.<sup>67</sup>

Tocqueville claims that natural bonds will tend to strengthen, whereas citizens concurrently will distance themselves from one another. In spite of the proclaimed efforts to further deepen the democratisation of the educational system, I would argue that the above-mentioned changes indicate an indirect sapping of belief in common institutions, which depend on convention-based ways of inter-individual coalescence. The tendency worked indirectly by undermining the role of teachers as transmitters, and as such the representatives of common institutions, vis-à-vis the pupils and their parents.<sup>68</sup> Another way to present these changes is to describe them as a political shift undermining the artificially constructed idea of a political community in the name of democratic equality. In adapting school to the private experiences with which pupils arrive, the school as an arena in which pupils are prepared for life in the public sphere (incarnated by the authority of the teacher) was undermined.<sup>69</sup>

Returning to the initially defined definition of equality, this can be described as the ideal of the imagined equal serving to undermine the normative basis on which a shared political order could justify and impose itself. It is in this sense, I argue, that it is motivated to speak of a shift of emphasis from the artificially instituted public institutions, to the admonition of a more home-like and intimate approach among teachers and others employed in schools.<sup>70</sup> To be sure, the ambition was not to intentionally “privatise” the educational system, but rather to make it a more familiar and welcoming place, particularly for those coming from non-academic homes. Thus, when New Public Management entered Swedish political life in the 1990s, the manifest economism in which it was immersed might have been a novelty, but the sapping of the school *qua* institution articulating/reproducing the public realm had been prepared well in advance.<sup>71</sup> And as for the promoted role of the teacher during the 1990s, it was only further driven towards the democratic ideals sketched above.<sup>72</sup>

The second aspect that I would like to highlight is related to the increased ephemerality of the content declared in the policy documents, or the time-bound provincialisation (iii) that I argue took place during the period.<sup>73</sup> In a world where, as it was claimed in a number of policy documents, the knowledge of today runs the risk of being outdated tomorrow, it is all the more important that pupils improve their learning techniques rather than simply internalise a given content.<sup>74</sup> This shift towards learning

how to learn is neatly captured in the introduction of knowledge as a verb, “to knowledge” (*kunskapa*), in policy documents in the 1990s.<sup>75</sup> As the professor of pedagogics Ingrid Carlgren puts it in her contribution on the new concept of knowledge in the report of 1992, it is:

[...] neither something outward nor inward, outside of man, nor something inward, inside of the individual, but rather something that rests in-between the individual and the surroundings. An important part of these surroundings are other humans, the social context in which knowledge is communicated within language.<sup>76</sup>

This shift of emphasis, or so I maintain, further strengthens the expansion of the present at the expense of past (forebears) and future (descendants).<sup>77</sup> As the belief in the relevance of a particular content and the transmitting teacher diminished, so too did both past and future as balancing temporal horizons. The past was directly undermined by the questioning of a specific content, as the democratic teacher as an ideal implied a strong belief in the pupil’s own reflective forces in the present. As it is formulated in the report concerning the teacher in the new democratic school, teachers should provide pupils with a framework for “self-realisation, being-together-experiences and shared solidary work in the present”.<sup>78</sup> It thus appears as if the downplaying of temporal continuity vis-à-vis the past successively spilled over and undercut teachers’ legitimacy to exercise an influence on the child’s long-term interest. This shift was reinforced by the pupils’ proclaimed right to exercise a greater influence and the idea of inviting them to practice democracy in school.<sup>79</sup>

Nevertheless, it would be naïve to believe that any individual had the cognitive forces to get by without relying on preformed judgements. The sceptical attitude towards explicit authorities does *not*, as emphasised in the second theme (opinion replacing authority: the transhistorical premise), inhibit individuals from relying on exterior sources. As Tocqueville argues, opinion will replace the role of exterior, concrete authorities. Clearly, these reflections are not directly applicable in comprehending the changes in the educational system. Still, it is not difficult to imagine how peer pressure among pupils could roughly be compared to Tocqueville’s opinion; as the formalised authorities withdraw, informal sources of influence expand.<sup>80</sup> As such, it is an illustrative example of how the ideology of independence changes the conditions of our socialisation, but not, to be sure, our social conditioning itself – our dependency on some form of exterior influence is a transhistorical category.

The fourth and final aspect that I wish to address goes back to the first category and the changing ways in which the individual pupil was conceived during the period. A salient characteristic of the educational poli-

cies during the postwar period was that of enhanced individualisation.<sup>81</sup> To some extent, this was an inevitable dimension of the argumentation in favour of the Comprehensive School, serving as a riposte to those claiming that it would have levelling consequences. Indeed, the Swedish educational historian Gunnar Richardson even claims that it was a *sine qua non* for the reform.<sup>82</sup> The very structure of the new school thus embedded an individualising tendency into itself, making this one of its defining characteristics. One of many manifestations of this was the proliferation of the Deweyan method of “learning by doing”.<sup>83</sup> And although this method stretches far back to the 1940s (in Swedish policy documents), there are clear signs of its intensification during the 1970s. One example in this regard was that earlier counter-weights, such as the importance of inculcating a sensibility for cultural heritage, disappeared from the relevant policy documents.<sup>84</sup>

A further example can be found in the handing over of influence to pupils in order to prepare them for democratic citizenship. In the same vein, but addressing different problems, were the instructions to further adapt school practices to accommodate the experiences that pupils brought with them to school. As the Social Democratic Government put it in the bill “on the inner work of the school”:

The point of departure for the propositions is that municipalities and separate school units in the municipality should be given opportunities to adapt teaching to the pupils or group of pupils’ needs [...] The school should to a larger degree than is currently the case endeavour to implement a way of working that relates to the reality of pupils.<sup>85</sup>

These changes, aiming at furthering the unfettered free development of the individual, should be understood as partly motivated by the political conviction of further emancipating the individual, and thereby enhancing equality.<sup>86</sup>

The dimension of Tocqueville’s thought that I have referred to as democratic epistemology is primarily depicted as an impulse operating within each individual; it is a socially induced attitude that is fed to people in democratic societies at an early stage. Clearly, there is a difference in degree between this phenomenon and the shifts outlined in this section. What Tocqueville described as a socialised way of being had, in the post-war educational policy, been raised to a central policy aim – an officially promoted ideology.<sup>87</sup> As such, elevated from a spontaneous order of interaction to a decree, it should, I maintain, be thought of as the epitome of the Tocquevillian themes outlined herein. How it can be fleshed out and understood from a broader political-philosophical perspective is the subject of the concluding section.

### Alterity, individualism and pointillistic liberty (v)

In reactivating Tocqueville's reflections on democratic equality, I have sought to extract some strands of continuity in the Swedish postwar political landscape that have gone relatively unnoticed until now. Via the four categories, I have argued that a number of politically relevant facets of the educational reforms can be understood as, at least partly, internally engendered impulses.<sup>88</sup> Emphasising a number of central dimensions of postwar educational policies, I have argued that, in various ways, they evince a tendency to weaken political bonds and to strengthen interest-driven ones. The democratic epistemology, temporal provincialism, and intimisation of upbringing all converge in a tendency to have individuals retreating into themselves, nourishing the belief "that their destiny is entirely in their hands".<sup>89</sup> Moreover, as indicated in the final lines of the previous section, the fact that these social impulses have been raised to the status of officially imposed norms clearly indicates an even closer interlacing between them and societal development.

In the introduction, I defined the democratic equalisation of conditions as a force that negates alterity. In contrast to previous societies, which were structured around explicit, collective, normative ideals, against which individuals oriented themselves, democratic society has successively undermined this structure. As such, it stands in stark contrast to hierarchical societies, where an order was imposed that integrated "the society with reference to values", and thereby to something other than the individual.<sup>90</sup>

In its place, varieties of individually based normative patterns have been, and certainly continue to be, vindicated. Besides the private property right, other negative, "bourgeois" liberties and rights have been added, and since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, positive rights have successively been added. In my view, what makes Tocqueville such a germane thinker for comprehending our situation is that he provides analytical categories for understanding how critique that emerges from different political camps has furthered the idea of the unfettered individual.<sup>91</sup> His reflections thereby allow for historically anchored ways of approaching the tension – intrinsic to the modern project – between private rights and various forms of collective freedom and individual liberty, most notably the dialectics between individual and collective autonomy.<sup>92</sup>

The undermining of alterity is, I would argue, also the thread that draws together the policy changes explored above. The implicit bent to dismantle the idea of authority, the scepticism towards the disinterested (as opposed to that which serves a practical purpose) and towards engagement with

the abstract and theoretical, to increasingly focus on what is present, to promote the natural on behalf of the artificial (in the specific sense in which Tocqueville defines it) can all be thought of as manifestations of a hostility to alterity.<sup>93</sup> The disassembling of qualitative distinctions and the enhanced importance of the present appear rather straightforward in their direct scepticism towards time-bound and person-bound otherness.<sup>94</sup> Regarding the abstract, one could think of this as an example of alterity owing to its time-demanding, imperative and subjectifying character; treading their inaccessible paths, without any fixed terminus, requires subjecting oneself to their premises, and this in turn presupposes the acceptance of an initial degree of inequality. Without presupposing this gap, there is nothing to surmount, and thus it becomes difficult to see the point in undertaking “the fatiguing climb of its steep paths”, while its promised “luminous summits” will tend to appear like the endeavours of a bigot.<sup>95</sup>

When, on the contrary, the all-encompassing end is practical and mercantile interest and the concrete benefits that result therefrom, the act of submission appears in a rather different light. Vindicating the applicability and/or concrete utility, it remains within the horizon of the I, of the individual and what is graspable from her private horizon. As such, it appears acceptable also in societies immersed in the democratic order outlined above. As noted, Tocqueville does not claim that individuals will cease to interact with each other; rather that they will be increasingly prone to relate to each other through bonds knitted via mutual interests.

In light of the fact that dependence on opinions will not dissipate “in the ages of democracy” either – it is a transhistorical premise – the following question then arises: whence is authority exercised?<sup>96</sup> This is where the Tocquevillian themes outlined here tie in with Michel Foucault’s analysis of the emergence of a new form of governmentality during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and which was further intensified in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, incarnated by thinkers such as Gary Becker who focus on the idea of human capital. The crumbling of the manifest spiritual authority that in the past was exercised to a larger extent in, for example, schools thus stands in a negative relation to the subtler but deeply influential force of man as an entrepreneur of himself; as the former has withdrawn, the latter has expanded.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, in line with what has been argued above, this is in conformity with other aspects of the democratisation of society highlighted by Tocqueville, such as the tendency towards more interest-driven social relations, and the shift towards an education that is guided more by economic values and utility. This is a revealing example of how the Tocquevillian themes, when taken together, elucidate how the cited policy changes can be interlaced with the explicit instruction to address the pupils as potential entrepreneurs.<sup>98</sup>

In Tocqueville's day, democratisation was still in its relative infancy, and as a consequence the "spirit wander[ed] in obscurity".<sup>99</sup> The current situation is different. Concerning the questions discussed here, 70 years of dismantling the tradition-bound school in Sweden provide a substantial space of experience on which to draw – and hopefully also to extend our horizon of expectation.<sup>100</sup> From this point of view, the historical preconditions of a reflexive re-embedding of education *in time*, i.e. of the traditions that we make ours, hereby articulating man in both the singular and the plural, have perhaps never been better.<sup>101</sup> My argument is thus that the fierce negating critique of tradition *tout court* invites us to reconsider what a re-embedding of the tradition could mean; as such, it can be seen as an invitation to a constructive negation of the annihilating critique that since the 1970s has dominated the school political landscape.<sup>102</sup> Approaching education in this way would seem to open up new avenues for an ideal of equality envisaged *over* time, in contrast to the time-contracting imaginary equality, thereby enlarging the horizons of the individual pupil as well as the political community out of which the former emerges.

## Noter

1. As the Swedish historian Johan Östling has convincingly argued, the experiences of totalitarian regimes further added to the endeavour to create a more democratic educational system. See: Johan Östling: *Nazismens sensmoral: svenska erfarenheter i andra världskrigets efterdyning* (Lund, 2008).

2. Mattias Börjesson, *Från likvärdighet till marknad: en studie av offentligt och privat inflytande över skolans styrning i svensk utbildningspolitik 1969–1999* (Örebro, 2016); Tomas Englund (ed.), *Utbildningspolitiskt systemskifte?* (Stockholm, 1996); Tomas Englund, "Education as a Citizenship Right – A Concept in Transition: Sweden Related to Other Western Democracies and Political Philosophy" in *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 26:4 (1994), 383–399; Gunnar Richardson, *Svensk utbildningshistoria: skola och samhälle förr och nu* (Lund, 2010).

3. Kristina Boréus, *Högervåg: nyliberalismen och kampen om språket 1969–1989* (Stockholm, 1994); Peter Antman, Göran Greider & Tomas Lappalainen (eds.), *Systemskifte: fyra folkhemsdebatter* (Stockholm, 1993); Anders Ivarsson Westerberg, Ylva Waldemarsson & Kjell Österberg (eds.), *Det långa 1990-talet: när Sverige förändrades* (Umeå, 2014).

4. Ulf P. Lundgren, *Att organisera omvärlden. En introduktion till läroplansteori* (Stockholm, 1979), 116. The previous analyses referred to are: Piero Colla, *L'héritage impensable* (Paris, 2017); Tomas Wedin, "In Praise of the Present", *History of Education* 46:6 (2017), 768–787; Tomas Wedin, "The Aporias of Equality" in *Confero* 5:1 (2017), 193–241. Although without predecessors in Sweden, Tocqueville has more recently been adduced in education policy analyses. See: Steven Connolley & Rune Sarronmaa Hausstätter, "Tocqueville on Democracy and Inclusive Education: A More Ardent and Enduring Love of Equality than of Liberty" in *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 24:3 (2009); Pierre Statius, *De l'éducation des modernes: Réflexions sur la crise*

*de l'école à l'âge démocratique* (Paris, 2009). On Google Scholar, the keywords “Tocqueville” and “education” in the title yield 23 results (March 2017), of which 5 are related to the debate that emerged in the wake of Connolly & Hausstätter’s article. In France, Marcel Gauchet has written a number of books approaching the educational system from a kind of Tocquevillian perspective. Tocqueville himself never wrote anything more substantial on education in the democratic society that he successively saw replacing the earlier aristocratic society. The closest we get to an explicit confrontation with the issue is the chapter ‘Éducation de jeunes filles aux États-Unis’ in Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique 2* (Paris, 1981 [1840]). However, for the purposes of this article, this chapter is of no particular relevance.

5. Positive rights would include a right to education, unemployment benefits, etc., whereas negative rights evoke the classical liberal right to non-interference, etc.

6. Colla, *L’héritage impensable*; Wedin: “In Praise of the Present”; Wedin, “The Aporias of Equality”.

7. “[...] un entrepreneur de lui-même”, Michel Foucault, *La naissance de la biopolitique* (Paris, 2004), 232. As has been shown, this has become a structuring educational ideal for at least a decade (Magnus Dahlstedt, “The Swedish Road to Democracy? Governmentality, Technologies of Citizenship and Popular Movements” in *ThemES – Themes on Migration and Ethnic Studies* 30 (2009); Magnus Dahlstedt & Fredrik Hertzberg, “Den entreprenörskapande skolan: styrning, subjektsskapande och entreprenörskapspedagogik” in *Pedagogisk forskning i Sverige* 16:3 (2011); Tomas Wedin, “The Rise of Knowledge School and its Relation to the Resurrection of *Bildung*” in *Nordic Journal of Educational History* 2:2 (2015), 49–67.

8. “[...] le sentiment partagé d’une *offense faite au temps* par la Révolution”, Frédéric Brahami, *La raison du peuple* (Paris, 2016), 26.

9. “les bâtisseurs du temps”, Brahami, *La Raison du peuple*, 25. Another way to comprehend this is to envision it as an extreme form of the separation between space of experience and horizon of expectation that Koselleck has outlined. See: Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York, 2004 [1979]), 263.

10. For Tocqueville, the focus was directed against the process of democratisation, preceding the revolution by centuries, whereas the attempt to break with the past for many other writers was related to the revolution and the abstract reason throughout the *lumières* (Brahami, *La raison du peuple*, 276–277). Independently of their differing focus, they all – Tocqueville included – shared a fear of the nihilism that they associated with a dis-embedded abstract critique of society. Indeed, as Brahami writes, many of the sociological theses he is associated with today – such as his reflections on the form of equality, the tentacular state, the apathy of the people and even the continuity between the *l’Ancien régime* and Revolution – were considered “commonplaces of the time” among his contemporaries (Brahami, *La raison du peuple*, 279).

11. The analogy between anthropology and history is discussed by Louis Dumont in *Homo hierarchicus* (Paris, 1992 [1966]), 13–35.

12. Between the hierarchical past in which he was deeply immersed, with renowned precedents such as Vauban and Malesherbes, and the democratic society that he saw successively replacing the world that his family tree represented, Tocqueville was particularly well placed for articulating the challenges posed by a democratic society. See: Sheldon Wolin, *Tocqueville Between Two Worlds: The Making of a Political and Theoretical Life* (Princeton, NJ, 2001).

13. “j’y ai cherché une image de la démocratie elle-même, de ses penchants, de son caractère, de ses préjugés, de ses passions; j’ai voulu la connaître, ne fût-ce que pour savoir du moins ce que nous devons espérer ou craindre d’elle”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique 1* (Paris, 1981 [1835]), 69. Essentially, the same intention is repeated in the introduction to the second book, published five years later in 1840.

14. Compare with: Aristotle, *Politics* (Indianapolis/Cambridge, 1998), Book III.

15. Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique 2*, 5

16. Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique 2*, 120. As Montesquieu writes: “Il y a cette différence entre la nature du gouvernement et son principe, que sa nature est ce qui le fait être tel, et son principe ce qui le fait agir. L’une est sa structure particulière, et l’autre les passions humaines qui le font mouvoir” (Montesquieu, *De l’esprit des lois* (Paris, 1979 [1748]), book III, chapter 1).

17. “[...] qu’après avoir détruit la féodalité et vaincu les rois, la démocratie recule-t-elle devant les bourgeois et les riches? S’arrêtera-t-elle maintenant qu’elle est devenue si forte et ses adversaires si faibles?”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique 1*, 61.

18. Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique 2*, 199ff.

19. “[...] l’inégalité des intelligences, qui, venant directement de Dieu, échappera toujours aux lois”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique 2*, 173.

20. This, argues Aron, is the dynamic that makes modern society not only something that is in process, but *a process in itself*. See: Raymond Aron, *Progress and Disillusion: The Dialectics of Modern Society* (New York, 1968 [1965]), 3–4. Tocqueville demonstrates an awareness of the possibilities of a new “industrial aristocracy” in Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique 2*, chapter 20, book two.

21. Where some of the more prominent participants in the discussion are: Claude Lefort, *Essais sur le politique: XIX–XXe siècles* (Paris, 2005); Marcel Gauchet, *La condition politique* (Paris, 2005); Aron *Progress and Disillusion*; Dumont, *Homo hierarchicus*; Louis Dumont, *Homo aequalis I* (Paris, 2008 [1977]).

22. “[...] discernable en soi, au-dedans de chacun d’eux pris en particulier. Il tient à la façon, socialement définie, dont ils se rencontrent et se situent les uns vis-à-vis des autres – à la structure d’une relation qui les détermine [...]”, Gauchet, *La condition politique*, 350–351. This depiction corresponds neatly to how Manent explains his interest in Tocqueville’s thought as well. See: Pierre Manent, *Le regard politique* (Paris, 2010), 130–131. For a more elaborate discussion of Tocqueville in Manent’s thought, see: Pierre Manent, *Tocqueville et la nature de la démocratie* (Paris, 2012 [1982]).

23. “[...] une sorte d’égalité imaginaire, en dépit de l’égalité réelle de leurs conditions”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique 2*, 226. Gauchet evokes the idea of this form of equality as a “central imaginary signification” as defined by Greek-French philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis.

24. Dumont, *Homo hierarchicus*, 318.

25. “Sous l’ancien régime comme de nos jours, il n’y avait ville, bourg, village, ni si petit hameau en France, hôpital, fabrique, couvent ni collège, qui pût avoir une volonté indépendante dans ses affaires particulières, ni administrer à sa volonté ses propres biens. Alors comme aujourd’hui, l’administration tenait donc tous les Français en tutelle, et si l’insolence du mot ne s’était pas encore produite, on avait du moins déjà la chose”, Alexis de Tocqueville, *L’ancien régime et la révolution* (Paris, 1988 [1856]), 145–146.

26. Tocqueville was persuaded that religious conviction is necessary. The content of such conviction, however, was seen as less crucial: “what is most important for it

[society], is not that all citizens profess a true religion, but that they profess a religion”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, 396. Religious beliefs, born out of a “natural disgust for existence, and an immense desire to exist”, should as such, i.e. due to their existential character, be directed towards the hereafter (Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, 403).

27. “[...] sentiment réfléchi et paisible qui dispose chaque citoyen à s’isoler”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 125.

28. Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 125.

29. “Lorsque les conditions sont égales, chacun s’isole volontiers en soi-même et oublie le public. Si les législateurs des peuples démocratiques ne cherchaient point à corriger cette funeste tendance ou la favorisaient, dans la pensée qu’elle détourne les citoyens des passions politiques et les écarte ainsi des révolutions, il se pourrait qu’ils finissent eux-mêmes par produire le mal qu’ils veulent éviter, et qu’il arrivât un moment où les passions désordonnées de quelques hommes, s’aidant de l’égoïsme inintelligent et de la pusillanimité du plus grand nombre, finissent par contraindre le corps social à subir d’étranges vicissitudes”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 317.

30. For a discussion relating the formal equality in Tocqueville’s thought to *both* the contemporary critique of Karl Marx as well as to the dialectics between formal equality and the very real economic inequality in modern society, see: Aron, *Essai sur les libertés*; Aron, *Progress and Disillusion*; Aron, *Dix-huit leçons de la société industrielle*, 33–51; Aron, *La lutte de classes*, 94ff.

31. “[...] n’apercevant dans aucun d’entre eux les signes d’une grandeur et d’une supériorité incontestables [*sic*], [ils] sont sans cesse ramenés vers leur propre raison comme vers la source la plus visible et la plus proche de la vérité. Ce n’est pas seulement la confiance en tel homme qui est détruit, mais le goût d’en croire un homme quelconque sur parole”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 10.

32. “[...] voiles inutiles et incommodes placés entre eux et la vérité”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 11.

33. “[...] du tangible et du réel, le mépris des traditions et des formes”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 53.

34. Reflections pointing in the same direction we also find in, e.g., the chapters treating the modifications of language and literature in the democratic society. See: Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, chapters XIII and XVII,

35. “[...] avides des jouissances matérielles et présentes [...] toujours mécontentes de la position qu’ils occupent [...]”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 57.

36. More specifically Tocquevillian in the sense that the materialist card could be related to, e.g., Marx’s writings on commodity fetishism and a number of other traditions as well. A second possible explanation is of a more general character, and in line with many others who were writing on the emerging modern society (Brahami, *La raison du peuple*). In the chapter entitled ‘How the aristocracy could come out of the industry’, Tocqueville presents, apart from discussing the content of the title, a view on the expected paths of workers and industry. The subsequent phrase captures neatly the tone of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: “we could say that in him [the worker], man degrades to the extent that the worker is perfected” (Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 199). In a society dominated by a dehumanised collection of proletarians and an elite interested primarily in advancing industry (and all of them

oriented towards advancing in society), the outlook for pursuing the disinterested search for truth and contemplation is not very favourable.

37. As exemplified by the distinction between the ideal of *Bildung* and instrumental forms of education.

38. Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 16. Leaving aside the fact that there are virtually endless streams of situations in which we are uninterested in examining how we ought to act.

39. A pattern Tocqueville sees as typical of pre-modern society, where individual authorities are the norm.

40. Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 16ff.

41. “Je vois clairement dans l’égalité deux tendances: l’une qui porte l’esprit de chaque homme vers des pensées nouvelles, et l’autre qui le réduirait volontiers à ne plus penser”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 18.

42. “L’indépendance individuelle peut être plus ou moins grande; elle ne saurait être sans bornes. Ainsi, la question n’est pas de savoir s’il existe une autorité intellectuelle dans les siècles démocratiques, mais seulement où en est le dépôt et quelle en sera la mesure”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 16.

43. This can be compared with Brahami’s distinction between being in time and trying to assume the role of creators of time (compare p. 2 above).

44. Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 10.

45. “Ainsi, non seulement la démocratie fait oublier à chaque homme ses aïeux, mais elle lui cache ses descendants et le sépare de ses contemporains; elle le ramène sans cesse vers lui seul et menace de le renfermer enfin tout entier dans la solitude de son propre cœur”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 127.

46. The idea of a provincialism of time is inspired by T.S. Eliot. See: T.S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* (New York, 2009), 72.

47. When reading his reflections on the shifting time horizons, it is almost as if he would have navigated between all three, following François Hartog, regimes of historicity at the same time. See: François Hartog, *Régimes d’historicité* (Paris, 2012). In Tocqueville’s thought, we first of all find a lamentation on a time when past, present and future generations were like contemporaries, and the past *did* illuminate the future, i.e. when men still drew lessons from the past in a predominantly circular way. In parallel, the narrative itself bears clear signs of a typically modern, future oriented regime of historicity: “I have wanted to look, not differently, but longer than the parties; and whereas they worry about tomorrow, I have pondered [*songer*] over the future” (Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 1, 71, my italics). As Hartog has shown, he hereby inverts the ancient schema, making the future the guide of the present, rather than the past (Hartog, *Régimes d’historicité*, 131ff.). And then thirdly, on top of the pre-modern and modern approaches to history, his reflections over the expected expansion of the present, which best seem to fit with what Hartog defines as a presentist regime of historicity (Hartog, *Régimes d’historicité*, 149ff.).

48. Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 245.

49. “La démocratie détend les liens sociaux, mais elle resserre les liens naturels. Elle rapproche les parents dans le même temps qu’elle sépare les citoyens”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 245. Clearly, the outlined impulse intersects with Foucault’s writings on biopolitics and the new techniques of disciplining in, e.g., Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique*. To my knowledge, no one has so far scrutinised the closer affinities and differences between Foucault’s writings on the modern forms

of disciplining, Tocqueville's reflections on the process of democratisation and its relation to the ever more influential state, and finally Arendt's reflections on the rise of what she terms the social.

50. Which in turn are sometimes, depending on the approach of different authors, divided into more nuanced periodisations, in particular the period 1946–1990.

51. See quote 2 above.

52. Börjesson, *Från likvärdighet till marknad*; Englund et al. (eds.), *Utbildningspolitiskt systemskifte?*; Englund, "Education as a Citizenship Right", 383–399; Lisbeth Lundahl, Inger Erixon Arreman, Ann-Sofie Holm & Ulf Lundström, "Educational Marketization the Swedish Way" in *Education Inquiry* 4:3 (2013), 497–517.

53. Shirin Ahlbäck Öberg, Thomas Bull, Ylva Hasselberg & Niklas Stenlås, "Professions Under Siege" in *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift* 118:1 (2016), 93–126.

54. Gert Biesta, "Against Learning: Reclaiming a Language for Education in an Age of Learning" in *Nordic Studies in Education* 25:1 (2005), 54–66; Gert Biesta, *Bortom lärandet: demokratisk utbildning för en mänsklig framtid* (Lund, 2006).

55. Tage Erlander, *Tage Erlander 1940–1949* (Stockholm, 1973), 233.

56. SOU 1948:27, *1946-års skolkommissions betänkande med förslag till riktlinjer för det svenska skolväsendets utveckling*, 5; 354.

57. SOU 1948:27, *1946-års skolkommissions betänkande*, 1. For an analysis of how the Second World War and the experiences of totalitarian regimes affected postwar educational policies as well as policies more generally in Sweden, see: Östling, *Nazismens sensmoral: svenska erfarenheter i andra världskrigets efterdyning*.

58. Lindensjö & Lundgren, *Utbildningsreformer och politisk styrning*; Johanna Ringarp, *Professionens problematik: lärarkårens kommunalisering och välfärdsstatens förvandling* (Stockholm, 2011), 48–49; Ninni Wahlström, *Om det förändrade ansvaret för skolan* (Örebro, 2002), 207–208.

59. Richardson, *Svensk utbildningshistoria: skola och samhälle förr och nu*, 14, 138–140.

60. The subsequent notes all draw on what is developed at greater length in: Wedin, "In Praise of the Present"; Wedin, "The Aporias of Equality".

61. "[...] egentliga yrkesutbildningen i stor utsträckning bör göras gemensam för alla lärarkategorier", SOU 1948:27, *1946-års skolkommissions betänkande*: 363. Formulations in the same spirit were then rearticulated in the report on teacher training that was presented a few years later as a consequence of the suggested reforms of the school, SOU 1952:33, *Den första lärarhögskolan: betänkande utgivet av 1946-års skolkommission*, 7ff.

62. "[...] vara härda för progressiv pedagogik", SOU 1948:27, *1946-års skolkommissions betänkande*, 410; SOU 1952:33 *1946-års skolkommissions betänkande*, 24.

63. Bill 1999/2000:135, *En förnyad lärarutbildning*.

64. Wedin, "In Praise of the Present"; Wedin, "The Aporias of Equality".

65. "[...] blir mer stödjande och stimulerande än direkt kunskapsförmedlande", SOU 1978:86, *Lärare för skola i utveckling: betänkande av 1974 års lärarutbildningsutredning*, 24.

66. "[...] något man skaffar sig i en demokratisk process", Bill 1999/2000:135, *En förnyad lärarutbildning*, 8.

67. Bill 1975/76:39, *om skolans inre arbete m.m.*, 1–2; Karin Hadenius, *Jämlikhet och frihet: politiska mål för den svenska grundskolan* (Uppsala, 1990), 254ff; Wedin, "In Praise of the Present".

68. Wedin, "The Aporias of Equality".

69. This is along the lines of how Arendt argues in ‘Crisis in Education’, writing that the school should be considered “the institution that we interpose between the private domain of home and the world in order to make the transition from the family to the world possible at all”, Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (London, 2006), 185. Regarding the assumed time dimension in her argumentation, i.e. that the school should *prepare* the pupils for a future life as political equals, Gert Biesta has written a clarifying analysis of Arendt’s approach. See: Gert Biesta, “How to Exist Politically and Learn From it: Hannah Arendt and the Problem of Democratic Education” in *Teachers College Record* 112:2 (2010), 556–575.

70. As such, it seems to coincide with the alleged therapeutic turn in educational policies since the 1960s. See: Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud* (New York, 1966); Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York, 1979); Kathryn Ecclestone, “Resisting Images of the “diminished self”: The Implications of Emotional Wellbeing and Emotional Engagement in Education Policy” in *Journal of Education Policy* 22:4 (2007); Kathryn Ecclestone & Dennis Hayes, *The Dangerous Rise of Therapeutic Education* (London, 2009); Frank Furedi, *Wasted: Why Education isn’t Educating* (London, 2009); Paul Smeyers, Richard Smith, & Paul Standish, *The Therapy of Education: Philosophy, Happiness and Personal Growth* (Basingstoke, 2010). As the intellectual historian Thomas Karlsruhn argues, it would nevertheless seem deceptive to conceive of this as a tension between emotions (which would be dangerous, misplaced), and the Reason proper for education. The apposite question is rather how the dynamics between emotions and reason can be reconceived in order to improve the educational system. See: Thomas Karlsruhn, “On Emotions, Knowledge and Educational Institutions” in *Confero* 4:1 (2016). Compare also the distinction I have drawn elsewhere between two emotional logics: Tomas Wedin, “Education and Emotions: From One Emotional Logic to Another” in *Conference Proceedings. The Future of Education* (Florence, 2018).

71. Colla, *L’heritage impensable*; Wedin, “The Aporias of Equality”.

72. Bill 1999/2000:135, *En förnyad lärarutbildning*.

73. A dimension that is further discussed in Wedin, “In Praise of the Present”.

74. SOU 1965:29, *Lärarutbildningen: 1960 års lärarutbildningssakkunniga*, 83; SOU 1978:86, *Lärare för skola i utveckling*: 78–79. With the advent of the communication revolution, and emergence of the Internet in particular, yet another argument was added to those sceptical of a content-oriented form of teaching.

75. SOU 1992:94, *Skola för bildning: huvudbetänkande av läroplanskommittén*, 67.

76. “[...] varken något yttre eller inre, utanför människan, eller något inre, inne i individen, utan snarare någonting som ligger mellan individen och omgivningen. En viktig del av denna omgivning är andra människor, det sociala sammanhang där kunskapen kommuniceras inom språket.” For a closer analysis of the specific form of constructivist ideas of knowledge and their role in Swedish educational politics during the 1990s, see: Jonas Linderöth, *Lärarens återkomst: från förvirring till upprättelse* (Stockholm, 2016).

77. These tendencies towards a stronger emphasis on the present can be thought of as indications of a successive shift in how a given society, to borrow the expression from Hartog, develops in time. See: Hartog, *Régimes d’historicité*. With development in time, he refers to the implicit temporal horizons that during different historical epochs have structured human societies. Hartog’s concept of regimes of historicity can, as I have argued elsewhere, be used to illuminate the changes out-

lined in the paragraph above: Wedin, “In Praise of the Present”. See footnote 47 for further remarks on how different temporal horizons are operative in Tocqueville’s thought.

78. “[...] jag-förverkligande, gemenskapsupplevelser och gemensamt solidariskt arbete i nuet”, SOU 1978:86, *Lärare för skola i utveckling*, 78.

79. This side of the changes ties in with how Raymond Aron has argued, when claiming that the full realisation of the modern ideal of equality seems to “imply a social order strictly nonhereditary in character and devoid of any continuity”, Aron, *Progress and Disillusion*, 3.

80. For a reflection on the consequences of this, see Arendt’s reflections in ‘Crisis in Education’, in: Arendt, *Between Past and Future*.

81. Joanna Giota, “Individualiserad undervisning i skolan: en forskningsöversikt”, *Vetenskapsrådets rapportserie* (Stockholm, 2013); Monika Vinterek, “Individualisering i ett skolsammanhang” in *Forskning i fokus* 31 (2006); Wedin, ‘In Praise of the Present’.

82. Richardson, *Drömmen om en ny skola*, 154.

83. For a clarifying analysis of John Dewey’s educational philosophy and the misuses of it, see: Tove Österman, “Vad är det att kunna? Dewey och flumskolan”, in Gustavsson, Hållén & Österman (eds.), *Vad ska en svensk kunna? Utbildningens dilemma – intressenas spel* (Göteborg, 2016).

84. Wedin, ‘In Praise of the Present’, compare also: Olle Widhe: “Estetisering och avestetisering: Nedslag i de svenska läroplanernas tal om läslust från 1906 till 2011”, in Egeland, Olin-Scheller, Tanner & Tengberg (eds.), *Tolftje nationella konferensen i svenska med didaktiska inriktning* (Karlstad, 2016), 90.

85. “Utgångspunkten för förslagen är att kommuner och skolenheterna i kommunen bör ges möjlighet att anpassa undervisningen efter enskilda elevers eller grupp av elevers behov [...] Skolan bör i högre grad än f.n. sträva efter ett arbetssätt som knyter ant [*sic*] till elevernas verklighet”, Bill 1975/76:39, *om skolans inre arbete m.m.*, 1.

86. Colla, *L’héritage impensable*; Wedin, “In Praise of the Present”; Wedin, “The Aporias of Equality”.

87. And ever since it was proclaimed as the overarching aim by the school commission of 1946, the educational policies have vacillated between the two extremes of what Aron names the dialectics of equality: a tension between the “promethean” ambition to maximise the production of goods and the endeavour to equalise conditions, Aron, *Progress and Disillusion*, 3.

88. Of which it does not evidently follow that other forces also have not influenced the policy development. My claim is that the egalitarian impulses highlighted here are *one* dimension that elucidates the changes, not that it is *the* exclusive and overriding force. Clearly, the shift from quality to quantity was a pivotal question for other interpreters of modernity as well, in particular Marx.

89. “[...] que leur destinée tout entière est entre leurs mains”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 127.

90. “[...] la société par référence aux valeurs”, Dumont, *Homo hierarchicus*, 318.

91. Even if Sweden is an extreme example, the development occurs in comparable countries, albeit the contrasts are less harsh. As to what concerns the affinities between this dominant form of liberalism and a wider liberal tradition, this is a development that primarily seems to be anchored to the uprooted physicalist liberal tradition, which since the 18<sup>th</sup> century has gained ground at the expense of other traditions, Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism* (Cambridge, MA,

2014), 337–338. Besides Siedentop, a number of other prominent thinkers have contributed to emphasising this from different angles: Brahami, *La Raison du peuple*; John Milbank & Adrian Pabst, *The Politics of Virtue: Post-liberalism and the Human Future* (London, 2016), but the list could be made much longer.

92. For an illuminating discussion of the difference between freedom and liberty, see: Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, “Are Freedom and Liberty Twins?” in *Political Theory* 16:4 (1988), 523–552. As such, his way of tackling the contradictions of modernity offers a potentially rich contrast to Marx’s reflections on the same problems, as well as Fredric Jameson’s much more recent work in the same tradition, see: Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London/New York, 1992).

93. For an interesting attempt to think with and against Tocqueville, see: Mark Reinhardt, *The Art of Being Free* (New York, 1997), primarily chapters 2 and 3.

94. The reflection is in a similar vein to the distinctions made by Louis Dumont, a French anthropologist who was deeply inspired by Tocqueville. Approaching the egalitarian society via a geographical detour, Dumont spent 20 years in India studying the caste society and later wrote a number of texts reflecting on the differences between the different societies. Together with Aron and Furet, he played a pivotal role in reactivating Tocqueville in the postwar period: Serge Audier, *Tocqueville re-trouvé* (Paris, 2004); Manent, *Le regard politique*. In line with Tocqueville, Dumont considered individualism a form of ideogeme that rendered the increased hostility to authorities understandable. The egalitarian society does not preclude difference, but will contain inequalities within itself rather than having them structured in a hierarchy (Dumont, *Homo hierarchicus*, 323). The notable inequalities will be accepted “under the condition that these differences are morally neutral” (Dumont, *Homo hierarchicus*, 322). This should be contrasted with the hierarchical society, which is characterised by its non-material and symbolic meaning, serving as a guiding principle for the unity of society.

95. Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 1* (London, 1990 [1867]), 104 (preface to first French edition, 1872–75).

96. “[...] dans les siècles démocratiques”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 16.

97. Along the lines of how Arendt argues in ‘What is Authority?’, the possible alternative definition of “authority of market” would seem like an oddity, since the influence exercised by the market is not of this symbolically erected character, see Arendt, *Between Past and Future*. For Foucault’s reflections on these themes, see: Foucault, *La naissance de la biopolitique*; Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population* (Paris, 2004).

98. And it is an indication of how deeply immersed we are in this rights-based, atomistic liberalism that a devastating majority of today’s liberals would not even define our predicament as a *tragic* situation, i.e. where the “impossible and the necessary join”, Vladimir Jankélévitch, *L’Alternative* (Paris, 1938), 150.

99. “[...] l’esprit marche dans les ténèbres”, Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique* 2, 399.

100. However, from a wider perspective it can be argued that we have almost 200 years of experience of the tension between tradition (in the form of the role of Latin in the educational system) and the role of more utility-oriented subjects.

101. Viewed from a narrow educational historical perspective that is; when taking

other aspects into consideration, such as the current political landscape, the matter appears in a rather different light.

102. In some respects, the attempt to reactivate *Bildung* as a central idea for the reformed school in the 1992 report, named *School for Bildung*, could be considered an early – albeit failed – attempt to do precisely this.