THE POLITICAL POWER OF WORDS:
"DEMOCRACY" AND POLITICAL STRATEGIES
IN THE UNITED STATES AND FRANCE [1776-1871]

by

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Abstract

For more than two thousand years, "democracy" had referred to chaos, violence, irrationality and the tyranny of the mob. Almost all the principal founders of what we now call the "democratic" systems of the United States and France openly and proudly proclaimed their opposition to "democracy." "Democracy" was a term which, for them, had a disparaging connotation. Thus, the term "democracy" was an effective weapon for undermining the legitimacy of a political actor, faction or platform.

Despite this inauspicious beginning, political leaders gradually became defenders and promoters of "democracy" (around 1830-40). The shift may be explained by the birth of the official parties in the United States and by the introduction of Universal suffrage (for adult males) in France. The word "democracy" was consciously employed to induce the people into believing that the politicians cared about representing their wishes and interests. In both cases—the United States and France—political factions competed for control of the term "democracy" and even openly acknowledged the existence of this semantic competition. It may be said, therefore, that it is mainly due to successful propaganda that we use the label "democracy" today to characterize the American and the French regimes.
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“Democracy is ... a volcano which conceals
the fiery materials of its own destruction.”
Fisher Ames, 1787

“Democracy is the cause of Humanity ... 
It is the cause of philanthropy ...
It is the cause of Christianity ...
Democracy is a creed of high hope and universal love.”
John L. O'Sullivan, 1837.

"Est-ce donc le nom que l'on donne au gouvernement
qui en constitue la nature?"
Camille Desmoulins, 1794.
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation proceeds from the observation that, despite their very different institutions and decision—and law—making processes, the modern elective regime and ancient Athenian democracy share the same label: "democracy." I first wondered about the philosophical and political implications of using the same label to identify two such different animals. In searching for answers, I was confronted with a troubling fact: the founders of modern "democracy" held democracy in contempt. John Adams declared, for instance, that "a democracy" is an "arbitrary, tyrannical, bloody, cruel, and intolerable" government (in Bailyn 1967: 282 n. 50). This view was shared by almost all the principal founders of what we now call the "democratic" systems of the United States and France: John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, George Washington, Honoré-Gabriel Riqueti Mirabeau and Emmanuel Sieyès. These men neither believed they were establishing a democracy, nor did they want to label the new regime a "democracy." In fact, they openly and proudly proclaimed their opposition to "democracy." "Democracy" was a term which, for them, had a disparaging connotation since it was associated with a weak regime undermined by irrationality, by the power of demagogues who misled the agora, and by rivalries between competing factions. Democracy, moreover, was reviled for being the rule of the poor, thus leading to disastrous egalitarian policies and laws (see de Romilly 1975). The brave few who tried to promote democracy were seen as dreamers or dangerous radicals.¹

But then, how did a political regime established on anti-democratic foundations come to be called a "democracy"? This is the question I shall try to answer through my
My thesis is that political actors were instrumental in effecting this semantic shift in "democracy" from deprecation to laudation because they believed it would serve their political interests. Indeed, the semantic shift did not occur as a result of major institutional modifications that would have necessitated relabelling the political regime, but was part of a political strategy using the political power of words. My argument rests on hard historical evidence: political actors openly referred to their semantic strategy in personal letters, newspaper articles and public speeches.

The Concept of Political Agoraphobia

In writing my dissertation, I was often unhappy with my own use of "democracy" as an analytical concept. Indeed, I found it very ambiguous to lump together as anti-democrats people such as Aristotle, Madison and Sieyès, who openly condemned "democracy," and others like Andrew Jackson or Léon Gambetta, who publicly praised "democracy." Even though all of them rejected democracy (i.e. people gathering at the agora in order to participate directly in the decision—and law—making process) some, such as Madison and Sieyès, commonly understood the term "democracy" as having a derogatory meaning, while Jackson and Gambetta used it as a catchword in their electoral campaigns. I was at a loss for a word that might express their common aversion to democracy. I decided to borrow the word "agoraphobia" from psychology. In psychology, agoraphobia refers to a pathological fear, a phobia, of crowds and/or of large public places. I shall define political agoraphobia as the fear of the agora, the name of the public place in Greek cities where the people (the demos) gathered and deliberated. Of course, citizenship was denied to the majority of people living in Athens, including women, slaves and foreigners. Nevertheless, every individual who had the privilege to be a citizen had a right to come to the agora and participate in the debates and in the decision making process. In contrast, the doors of the modern agora, the parliament, are closed to all but the
elected representatives of the citizens. More precise than a concept like "anti-democratism," which may refer to either a direct democracy or an elective regime, political agoraphobia refers specifically to the idea that the rule of the agora — direct democracy — leads to chaos and/or to the tyranny of the majority and is very likely to jeopardize the wealth of the privileged. Generally speaking, political agoraphobia is the result of a combination of fear, contempt, and reason, grounded in social, economic, political and philosophical considerations. For agoraphobic people, it is important not to let the people rule, but rather to ensure that only appropriate individuals (philosophers, warlords, prophets, kings, elected political actors, etc.) participate in the law and decision-making process.

As this investigation will show, agoraphobia often is expressed by modern American and French political actors and commentators, and this agoraphobic attitude, as well as the political organizations that result from it, has been extensively rationalized. There are several kinds of political agoraphobia. For instance, Maximilien Robespierre was an anti-liberal agoraphobe, while the American Federalists were liberal agoraphobes. Moreover, political agoraphobia may be fuelled by "demophily" (i.e. "a sincere, authentic, dedicated love for the people" [Sartori 1987: 475-476]). In the case of Robespierre’s rule, but also with the Marxist-Leninist dictatorship, demophily was at the core of the official discourse, the political goal being to legitimate a dictatorship in the name of the people. Such dictatorship was necessary, accordingly to the ideologues, because the people is not enlightened enough to rule. They need, therefore, to be lead by enlightened despots who should rule in the interest of the people. Politically speaking, such discourse could be used, of course, to justify the thirst for power of the elite and its oppressive actions. The concept of agoraphobia—instead of "anti-democratism," which would be too confusing since the meaning of "democracy" changed dramatically during the period I will discuss—shall help us, I believe, to go beyond political catchwords and better analyse the political
motivations that lead political actors to give the name of "democracy" to our elective regimes.

Methodology and Sources

I do not pretend to be the first to observe that the term "democracy" had a derogatory normative meaning when the modern elective regimes were first established in America and in France. Nor am I the first to observe that it was in about 1835 that the normative and the descriptive meaning shifted, the word being then used to identify in a honorific manner an elective regime instead of a direct democracy. My own research owes a great deal to the path-breaking unpublished Ph.D. dissertation of Regina Ann Markel Morantz, entitled "Democracy" and "Republic" in American Ideology, 1787-1840 (1971), to Bertlinde Laniel's Le mot "democracy" aux États-Unis de 1780 à 1856 (1995), to Pierre Rosanvallon's analysis of the use of the word "democracy" in France from 1789 to 1840 (1993 and 1995), as well as to general works such as Democracy, Ideology and Objectivity: Studies in the Semantics and Cognitive Analysis of Ideological Controversy, by Arne Naess, Jens A. Christophersen, and Kjell Kvalø (1956), and to Jens A. Christophersen's The Meaning of "Democracy" As Used in European Ideologies from the French to the Russian Revolution (1968).

My specific aim is to reveal a general pattern of how and why the term "democracy" has been used by the political actors of elective regimes in their political struggles. From this perspective, the work of Morantz, Laniel and Rosanvallon, lack two important elements: (1) a comparative aspect, and (2) a rigorous historical, philosophical and political framework of analysis. Hence, while indebted to these studies, I believe my work is more comprehensive, first, because my analysis contains more examples of the occurrence of the word "democracy" and its related expressions ("democratic" and "democrat") than do any of the works above, even with regard to a specific context (United States or France). Furthermore, I offer a comparative
perspective which allows me to tease out a general pattern of how and why political actors involved in the modern elective regime used the word "democracy" in order to attack their foes or to win adherents: through my work, I demonstrate that both American and French political actors deployed very similar linguistic strategies. Comparison is called for since both American and French political actors shared a very similar state of mind. (1) Regarding their understanding of "democracy," American and French founders were influenced mainly by classical and modern republicanism, and they openly referred to the same sources (for examples, Aristotle, Montesquieu, Athens, and Rome), which they interpreted in the same way. (2) American and French mainstream political actors were skilled politicians who belonged to assemblies even before the American War of Independence or the French Revolution of 1789. (3) American and French mainstream political actors were pursuing the same political goals (i.e. to get more power for the assembly they were part of, and therefore more power for themselves). (4) American and French political actors had very similar professional backgrounds, being not just skilled politicians, but also for the most part lawyers or judges; thus, in their discourses they focused on rights rather than power (promoting individual rights and liberty instead of the idea of people’s power to rule directly). (5) With regard to rights, these elected political actors generally believed in the sacredness of property, while egalitarian laws such as the redistribution of the soil were understood as democratic policies threatening the social harmony for the egoistic sake of the poor. (6) Psychologically speaking, both American and French mainstream political actors shared an agoraphobic outlook, often openly and proudly acknowledged; thus, in both cases, they shamelessly declaimed self-celebrating discourses extolling the excellence of the elective regime and expressing simultaneously the high esteem they had of themselves as representatives. (7) Finally, American and French mainstream political actors were interested in reading and knowing about each other, they met in Paris or in America and they wrote to each other. In a word, they shared a very similar world-view. Therefore, comparative
analysis rests on solid foundations, and is both useful and insightful. Moreover, the United States and France, foremost among countries where long-lasting elective regimes were established, have deeply influenced the modern political world, an influence broadly acknowledged in modern times by both students and politicians. In my conclusion, I also consider albeit very briefly, other cases such as Canada, Germany and Latin America, which also seem to confirm my hypothesis.

Adopting Reinhart Koselleck’s and Quentin Skinner’s approach, I studied pamphlets, speeches, newspapers, treatises, parliamentary debates, personal letters, poems and popular songs in order to reveal the meaning conveyed by the term "democracy" from 1776 to 1871. American and French primary sources such as parliamentary debates and collections of the writings of major political figures are often available in book format. The works of political philosophers who influenced the American and French Patriots, like Aristotle, Cicero, Harrington, Locke, Montesquieu and Rousseau, among others, are also available. Hence, I had access to thousands of pages from primary sources for both the American and the French cases. I refer extensively to primary sources, although I made use of secondary sources in order to render my research manageable. I found in the secondary literature a number of quotations in which the word "democracy" and its related expressions appear. I also consulted dictionaries and compilations of quotations (for instance, Dournon 1982). I drew some instances of the use of the word "democracy" directly from such secondary sources when, for practical reasons, it was impossible to get a copy of the primary source. I realize the danger of such a practice, although I believe that I have found enough examples of the term "democracy" in primary sources to be able to interpret the secondary sources quite accurately. Yet, because there is always a risk of misinterpretation, I clearly indicate the exact reference of the secondary literature from which these quotations are taken.

I am well aware, too, of one of the main limits and paradoxes of my research: it is impossible to know for sure how often and in what circumstances the proverbial
man on the Clapham omnibus used the word "democracy." The evidence of the way ordinary people in the street, in the tavern, at work or in their living-room used the word "democracy" is lost for ever. It is ironic, to say the least, that it is more difficult for us to know what the demos thought of "democracy" than what the political elite thought about it. However, by studying the usage of the term "democracy" not only in their personal letters, but also in their public speeches, pamphlets, or newspaper articles, we should be able to deduce at least what the elite believed the common folk's understanding of "democracy" to be. Moreover, sources such as popular songs and names of workers' associations in which the term "democracy" figures, do inform us about the use of the word "democracy" by the commoners. In the case of France, for instance, I surveyed over 121 popular political songs (Delon & Levayer 1989) to grasp how the common folk understood and used terms like démocratie and démocrate.

Outline

The first chapter of this dissertation deals with theoretical issues. I discuss the thinkers who have analysed the way in which words used by political actors could have a real impact on political reality. In this connection, I refer to the works of L. J. Austin, Noam Chomsky, Reinhart Koselleck, George Orwell, Quentin Skinner, Ludwig Wittgenstien, and others. I also mention the comments made by certain political actors of the American and French revolutionary eras openly expressing their belief that words matter politically. I analyse the founders' penchant for classical and modern republicanism, because it explains why the political actors in the late 1700s and in the early 1800s used the word "democracy" mainly in a derogatory manner.

I then show (part I) that "democracy" was the goal neither of the American War of Independence nor of the French Revolution. Mainstream American and French political actors publicly admitted that they wanted to establish an elective regime, rather than to give power to the people. In both the American and the French
cases, "democracy" had a derogatory connotation. Next (part II), I analyze how the term "democracy" and its cognates was used by political actors in the era following Independence in America, and the 1789 Revolution in France, while former allies (Federalists and anti-Federalists in America; Robespierre, Danton and Hébert in France) competed to control the new regime and to shape it according to their own ideals and interests. Finally (part III), I demonstrate that the word "democracy" was co-opted in the 1830s and the 1840s both in the United States and in France because political actors realized how effective the use of that word was in winning over electors.

Conclusion

I believe that my work may help to explain the process surrounding the construction of the modern discourse on democracy. I owe a great deal to historians such as Bernard Bailyn, Gordon S. Wood, Albert Soboul and François Furet. Yet, in the end, this research is not really about American or French history per se. I regard my work as part of the academic debate and the public discussion about the meaning of democracy. I analyse the birth of the modern pro-democratic discourse, and I reach the conclusion that it is not political philosophy but propaganda that gave the elective regime the name "democracy." This means, of course, that by calling our elective regime a "democracy," contemporary political theorists, either consciously or not, use a label proposed by the political actors of the 1830s and 1840s. In doing so, these political theorists are consequently, though this is not generally their intention, party to a form of propaganda. I shall have more to say about this in my conclusion.

1With regard to the United States, Roy N. Lokken (1955: 671) remarks that "the attribution of democratic motivations and ideas to eighteenth century colonists is a common fault among many
historians of the colonial period." For Cecelia M. Kenyon, "James Madison and Gouverneur Morris both advocated the direct, popular election of the President—on its face a radically democratic proposal—but neither was identified with the populist party in his state, and Morris was very closely associated with Alexander Hamilton. Thomas Jefferson devised a comprehensive plan of reform for the state of Virginia, aimed, as he said, at uprooting the last remnants of aristocracy there. But Jefferson was a staunch believer in separation of powers and therefore can scarcely qualify as a democrat for those who tend to identify democracy with the absence of separation of powers or the concentration of power in the legislative branch of the government" (1968: 298 and 296).

Richard M. Gummere remarks that "[t]he vocabulary of [the American] colonial period reveals many words which are out of use today, and many which are closer to their Latin derivation. ... Other words now in use have changed their meaning. Notify meant to make a thing public. Imbecility cast no slurs on a person's mental powers: it signified weakness of body or of situation. To us security implies safety: to the colonists it was the equivalent of freedom from worry" (1963, 11). Yet, what concerns us are the political reasons explaining why "democracy" has changed its meaning.

I introduced this political concept in Dupuis-Déri 1999a; 1999b; 1999c. See also Bourdieu (1998: 45).

Also known as Ekklesia.

Revolutions also occurred in Belgium, England, Holland, Sweden, and Switzerland in the 1600s or the 1700s. Yet, America and France had the greatest influence throughout the world with regard to the understanding and use of the term "democracy."

CHAPTER 1
Words As Political Weapons
Theoretical Issues

Introduction

Throughout this dissertation, I pursue the idea that words influence social reality (Austin 1962; Bourdieu 1982). Several contemporary writers and theoreticians have studied the relevance of words to politics. Noam Chomsky (1988 and Chomsky & Herman 1998; Otero 1988; Rai 1995) and George Orwell (1957) tackle the question of language in relation to politics. Although they are insightful and familiar to a large non-specialised public, their contributions have too often been dismissed by scholars who claim that they are polemical and biased rather than scientific. However, academics such as Terence Ball, John G. A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner, among others, also advocate a focus on words (Dunn 1992; Prévost 1995). They have been influenced by the historians R. G. Collingwood and Thomas Kuhn, the sociologist Max Weber and the philosopher of language J. L. Austin (Skinner 1988c: 233-234). Their works also echo some particular aspects of the theories of Michel Foucault, Karl Mannheim, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and are very similar to the approach to conceptual history of the German scholar Reinhart Koselleck. Murray Edelman (1988: 104) also stresses that "political language is political reality."¹ Those are the authors who have influenced my theoretical thinking with regard to the term "democracy" and its cognates in the United States and France from 1776 to 1871.
Following their methodological recommendations, I will examine how the word "democracy" was used in major texts (those of influential individuals such as James Madison, Emmanuel Sieyès and Benjamin Constant) as well as in other sources (newspapers, pamphlets, songs, diaries, etc.). I will also analyze how its use was related to specific political situations and struggles, since, as Michael Oakeshott (1993: 5) states, “in trying to make intelligible the utterances of writers on politics, [the historian of political reflections’s] first business must be to relate them to their immediate context: the activity of governing and the experience of being governed.”

*Political philosophy rather than political philosophy*

Like Skinner, I claim that individuals see and understand political reality through the words they use to think, talk and debate about reality. In politics, words are used to identify, in a laudatory or derogatory manner, actors, factions and identities. Too often, scholars naively suggest that the writings of the political actors and commentators of the times are merely political philosophy—philosophical analysis of politics—while they are, in fact, political philosophy—philosophical discourse used to establish, secure or increase one’s political power (Bourdieu 2000; Fritsch 2000). While political philosophers believe that words are merely the translation of "true ideas" ("idées vraies" in Bourdieu 2000: 24), philosophical politicians know that they must chose their words accordingly to their political force (Bourdieu 2000: 63 and 68). In political philosophy, words are used to win adherence to one’s cause or, on the contrary, to undermine the popularity of an opponent.

Of course, there is not on one hand a pure world of "ideas" and a dirty world of politics on the other. The question is then how can one distinguish a political philosopher from a philosophical politician? In other words: how can a student be sure about the political intention behind a particular statement? Words have to be studied carefully because it is with words that political actors express their thought, their
intentions, and their judgements with regard to the context surrounding them and the consequences of their actions. Yet, postmodernists are right when they claim that the audience may find unintended and unexpected signification in one's statements (Waismann 1962: 107-120). However, Umberto Eco (1996: 36) has suggested there are norms that may help limit the number of interpretative options since there are always interpretations that are more economical than others. It is therefore possible through interpretative practices to propose an accurate view of a person's intention in uttering a statement (Foucault 1979).

Skinner (1988a: 55) suggests that "we should study not the meanings of the words, but their use," echoing Wittgenstein (Philosophical Investigations, part I, §43) who maintains that "the meaning of a word is its use in the language." Likewise, T. D. Weldon (1970: 19) states that "words do not have meanings in the required sense at all; they simply have uses. ... To know their meaning is to know how to use them correctly." By studying the occasions when a specific word is used—addressed to whom, referring to what, etc.—we can get a clear idea of both the descriptive and normative meaning such a term conveys. Brutus's murdering Caesar, for instance, probably had several contradictory meanings (political, emotional, etc.), but Brutus knew that his act would not have the same political effect if he stated "I intend to kill Caesar because he is my father" instead of "I intend to kill Caesar because he is a tyrant" (Pocock 1973: 28-32). Although the act is the same—murder—the political reality and the political consequences resulting from it are at least partially determined by the way the actor talks about it. Thus, it is by studying the political context that I will try to understand why political actors used the word "democracy" as they did.

I will also examine various sources of the time (discourses, newspapers, diaries, letters, songs, etc.) since even when a student is not from the same epoch or culture, it is still possible to recast the writer's or actor's intention by comparing—as Skinner (1988b: 77) suggests—his or her statements with the linguistic conventions of the time, through the analysis of pamphlets, literature, political discourses and other political
writings, both major and minor (Tully 1988b: 12; Farr 1989: 39). Similarly, Koselleck (Tribe 1985: xxiii) finds it useful to study "numerous witnesses, from Antiquity to the present: politicians, philosophers, theologians, and poets. Unknown writings, proverbs, lexica, pictures, and dreams are interrogated." In the same spirit, Eco (1996: 63) talks about "social patrimony," to refer to this network of "cultural conventions" through which words acquire their meaning according to the use people make of them. Eco, Skinner and Koselleck are therefore closer to the structuralists (Fish 1980; A. Jefferson 1982: 87; Kurzweil 1980: 152 and 210; Laclau 1993: 433; Said 1976: 40) than to the postmodernists (Barthes 1977: 148; Derrida 1976: 158; Foucault 1979; Rosenau 1992: 32). According to the structuralist view of language, people passively integrate vocabulary through the process of socialisation: they learn when and how to use the words, but also they learn to understand the reasons why one is using specific words in a particular situation (de Saussure 1995: 30; Edelman 1985: 120 and 131; White 1984: 10).

It is also important to study what the Founders read about "democracy" and about other types of political regimes, since as James Farr (1989: 33) suggests, "concepts are never held or used in isolation, but in constellations which make up entire schemes or belief systems." Wittgenstein's theories (see Flathman 1973: 25) and those of linguists like de Saussure and Roland Barthes imply that words used by political philosophers operate within existing conventions. For instance, the use of a word like "democracy" always refers to related words like "monarchy," "aristocracy," and "anarchy." Laclau (1993: 432) summarizes de Saussure's idea as follow,

in language there are no positive terms, only difference. To understand the meaning of the term 'father' I have to understand the meaning of the terms 'mother', 'son', etc. This purely relational and differential character of linguistic identities means that language constitutes a system in which no element can be defined independently of the others.

To really understand the meaning of a word, one has to know the meaning of related words with which they share the same linguistic networks.
Such semiotic research will help us to distinguish political philosophy from political philosophy. Moreover, one must kept in mind that very rare are the philosophers interested in politics who did not take part in the political debates and struggles of their time (this is true for Plato, Cicero, Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Benjamin Constant, Karl Marx, Martin Heidegger and Michel Foucault). With regard to the era I will discuss, the political discourses are in many ways philosophical: political speeches are often very long and well structured, and refer extensively to history (Athens, Sparta and Rome) and to major philosophers (Aristotle, Cicero and Montesquieu, for example). However, almost all influential political writers of the time were involved in politics, being pamphleteers and/or elected politicians (Madison, Hamilton, Jefferson, Mirabeau, Sieyès, Robespierre, Constant, de Tocqueville). Among the more influential texts of the time, several were written with the intention to produce political effects (for instance: Paine's Common Sense, The Federalist Papers, Sieyès's Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-État?). Even though they dealt with philosophical issues, these texts were written by political actors who carefully chose their words accordingly to their political efficiency. As I will show, people knew that the right word could bring political power and glory to the author himself and/or to his political faction, while the wrong word could bring disgrace and defeat. The ultimate proof that political words and labels had an important influence on political power relations was that to be labelled an "aristocrat" during the French Revolution could lead you to the guillotine.

To sum up, my goal is to analyze the political history of the word "democracy" and to explain why and how politics, more than philosophy, influenced the way the Moderns use this word. Of course, and since political philosophy and political philosophy are interwoven, changes in the meaning of the word "democracy" have everything to do with philosophy (because the philosophical debates change) but these philosophical changes are intimately linked to the political debates of their times. In order to prove this point, I will focus on the main struggles of the early modern
political history of the United States and France and analyze how the words "democracy," "democrat," and "democratic," were used to identify individuals, factions and/or institutions. In this investigation, I am mainly concerned with the reasons explaining the alteration of the meaning of the word "democracy" since I believe with Alasdair MacIntyre (1966: 2-3) that "to alter concepts whether by modifying existing concepts or by making new concepts available or by destroying old ones, is to alter behaviour." It is by using a historical approach (as does Rosanvallon 2000: 32-34) that I shall be able to reveal how and why political actors changed their way of using the word "democracy" in order to face such and such situation. This is the reason why this dissertation has a chronological structure.

Why Do Political Labels Matter? (Contemporary theories)

One might wonder if political labels deserve so much attention. Indeed, political philosophers might argue that what really matters is not labels, but political reality (institutions, for instance) or ideas (political philosophy). Following this line of thought, it might be claimed that labels have only one function: to identify reality or to embody an idea. Charles Taylor (1985b: 222) summarized this attitude regarding words by stating that, for centuries, "words did not seem very important. They were the mere external clothing of thought." In other words, people believed that words themselves were neutral "nuts and bolts" assembled to express "truth" (in G.B. Madison 1989:250).

Yet, important philosophers such as Plato, Francis Bacon and David Hume talked about the political relevance of words. Regarding, more specifically, the political relevance of labels, Aristotle already refers to the use of glittery labels in his Politics (1979: 176-bk. IV, 1293b [emphasis added]): "The form of constitution called 'polity' ... is embellished, in most states, by a higher title." In Leviathan, Thomas Hobbes also suggests that labels express normative judgement. In defining political regimes,
Hobbes uses the traditional mathematical perspective. According to such typology, regimes are mathematically defined: monarchy is the rule of one, aristocracy the rule of few, and democracy the rule of many or all. For more than two thousand years, most political philosophers had agreed upon such a typology, one that suggests eternal and universal types of regime. Indeed, the use of mathematics might be seen as the guarantee of a descriptive rather than normative definition. Hobbes (1991: 129) stresses that "When the representative is One man, then is the Common-wealth a MONARCHY: when an Assembly of All that will come together, then it is a DEMOCRACY, or Popular Common-wealth: when an Assembly of a Part onely, then it is called an ARISTOCRACY." Hobbes is well aware that other labels are commonly used to name regimes, such as "tyranny," "oligarchy" or "anarchy." Yet, he believes that such pejorative names are simply normative labels used by discontented citizens in order to give a bad reputation to the regime they hate. Indeed, those who "are discontented under Monarchy," Thomas Hobbes (1991: 130) tells us, "call it Tyranny; and they that are displeased with Aristocracy, called it Oligarchy: So also, they which find themselves grieved under a Democracy, call it Anarchy." For Hobbes (1991: 130-131), derogatory labels are found "in the Histories, and books of Policy." May we not conclude, by pushing Hobbes' idea a bit further, that positive labels also derive from the same sources? Indeed, history and books of policy are a test from which words emerge with a positive or a negative value. The author of Leviathan, perhaps unintentionally, makes us realize that to label a political regime is never a neutral political act, since political terms are both descriptive and normative. "Tyranny," "oligarchy" and "anarchy" are derogatory labels. Yet, "monarchy," "aristocracy" and "democracy" are not simply neutral and mathematically descriptive terms. They also carry a positive charge. Aristotle arrives at the same qualitative distinction when he separates pathological regimes from healthy ones. To see the normative aspect of such a distinction, one might adopt an anarchist perspective. For an anarchist, "anarchy" is not a derogatory term, while "monarchy" and "aristocracy" are both
different kinds of tyranny. Conversely, "democracy" is very likely to bring to the mind of anti-democrats images of chaos and an irrational and tyrannical mob. It follows that according to the political context and one's political opinion, the meaning of political labels may shift from negativity to positivity. Even labels that seem to carry a positive value, or at least a neutral one—monarchy, aristocracy, democracy—may evoke very negative emotions and thoughts among people opposed to such regimes.

Contemporary specialists of language and politics also concluded that language participates in the legitimizing process. More specifically, several contemporary thinkers have come to the conclusion that words may be used in order to manufacture dissent and consent. Edelman notes (1988: 106), for instance, that "[w]hile most political language marks little change in how people live, it has a great deal to do with the legitimation of regimes and the acquiescence of people in actions they had no part in initiating." Dissidents may foment rebellion if successful in their attempt to undermine the regime's signifiers. On the other hand, political stability results in part from the success of the regime's defenders in manufacturing semiotic legitimacy. In fact, political language does mark important changes in how well people live, though not necessarily on the economic level, since to live in a world we find legitimate makes our lives and our actions more valuable (Edelman 1985: 127). By using either approbatory or derogatory labels, the political actor incites emotional reactions, encouraging individuals to approve or to reject political individuals, factions, institutions, actions or ideas "without examining the evidence," as the Institute for Propaganda Analysis notices (1995: 219 [emphasis added]):

"Glittering generalities" is a device by which the propagandist identifies his program with virtue by use of "virtue words." Here he appeals to our emotions of love, generosity, and brotherhood. He uses words such as truth, freedom, honour, liberty, social justice, public service, the right to work, loyalty, progress, democracy, the American way, constitution defender. These words suggest shining ideals. All persons of good will believe in these ideals. Hence the propagandist, by identifying his individual group, nation, race, policy, practice, or belief with such ideals, seeks to win us to his cause. ... glittering generalities is a device to make us accept and approve, without examining the evidence.
It is interesting to notice that the Institute for Propaganda Analysis identifies the word "democracy" as one of the glittery words used in contemporary political discourses in order to seduce the people.

Words can be used to seduce and delude the people by cynical political actors as well as by those who firmly believe that their system is the best one. Moreover, deceptive utilisation of words is not linked to any specific political regime but instead part of the general political game. John Grierson, for instance, who saw himself as "a fighting believer in democracy" (Grierson 1990: 31) declared that democratic propaganda was important to breathe the democratic "faith" into the people. Similarly, Walter Lippmann believed in the relevance of propaganda even though he was a defender of so-called "liberal democracy." Noam Chomsky borrowed his concept of "manufacturing consent" from Lippmann, who stated in 1921 that even "liberal democracy" requires the manufacturing—or engineering—of consent. Lippmann's idea rests on the opinion that in a regime where it is illegitimate to control the people by force, the people must be subjected to "thought control."

Of course, contemporary "deliberative democracy" theorists, such as Joshua Cohen, Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls, suggest that it is possible to rest political deliberation on reason and to avoid rhetoric and propaganda in the public realm. They suggest, in fact, that the citizens gathering in the agora must act, talk and think as philosophers (see Bohman & Rehg 1997). Such an ideal echoes philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, Samuel von Pufendorf, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who suggested that the social compact was the result of an agreement between individuals involved in rational discussion. In a political regime grounded on reason, common good emerges through non-coerced discussion from the force of the superior argument, rather than from generally appealing rhetorical discourse (Aubenque 1994: 94-250; Kerferd 1981: 68-77; Rankin 1983; Rodewald: 14; Rowe 1984: 145-162; Soulez 1991; Terray 1990). One of the initiators of the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant, clearly warns against rhetoric in his *Critique of Judgement* (1973 vol. I: 53),
Rhetoric, so far as this is taken to mean the art of persuasion, i.e. the art of deluding by means of a fair semblance (as *ars oratoria*), and not merely excellence of speech (eloquence and style), is a dialectic, which borrows from poetry only so much as is necessary to win over men's minds to the side of the speaker before they have weighed the matter, and to rob their verdict of its freedom. Hence it can be recommended neither for the bar nor the pulpit. ... [O]ratory (*ars oratoria*), being the art of playing for one's own purpose upon the weaknesses of men (let this purpose be ever so good in intention or even in fact) merits no respect whatever.

Like Karl Mannheim, I maintain that the emotional power of rhetoric in political philosophy, inescapably intermingled with the power of reason, is in part what makes political philosophy and political deliberation necessarily ideological. As Terry Eagleton (1991: 194) states, "It may help to view ideology less as a particular set of discourses, than as a particular set of effects within discourses." Michael Oakeshott (1991: 74 and 438) expresses a similar idea. Indeed, having listed words like "public," "private," "authority," "power," "representative" and "democratic," he states that

Every piece of political discourse ... may be said to be the recognition of a political situation and the defence or recommendation of a response to it in terms of a special vocabulary understood to be related to political activity. And it seems not inappropriate to speak of such special vocabularies as 'ideologies.' ... A political 'ideology' in this sense, is an invitation to interpret political situations and to think about what is desirable and undesirable in a certain manner.

Oakeshott also writes that "[t]he vocabulary of political discourse ... is a vocabulary that purports to express the conflicts, the tensions, and the alignments of political belief." The choice of political words and labels in discourses reveals preferences or dislikes with regard to political individuals, factions, institutions, actions or ideas and political labels and continually reflects both descriptive and subjective meanings. Political actors and philosophers describe and analyse while *simultaneously*—and with the very same words—legitimating or discrediting.

Moreover, while doing politics individuals often refer to historical and philosophical concepts. Yet, it would have been almost impossible for Hamilton, Washington, Danton and Robespierre—all of them being both political actors and commentators—to discuss, as they did in assemblies, newspapers or special
committees, the republican liberties of the Romans, the mixed constitution proposed by Aristotle and Cicero, republican virtue or the works of Montesquieu and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, without at the same time thinking about the political situation of America and France as well as their own political careers. These central figures of early political modernity had to refer to historical and philosophical notions, yet their ideas and words were also influenced by their political goals. Political actors were continually moving from one language game to another, playing these different games with the same words. It was consequently almost impossible for a political actor or a political philosopher to use a label that belongs exclusively to the philosophical language game (here, I draw freely upon Wittgenstein's notion of "language games"). To explain how words used in political *philosophy* and in *political* philosophy are closely interwoven, let us recall the Egyptian novelist Sonallah Ibrahim's comments on Ernest Hemingway's style. Ibrahim (1992: 81) asserts that even words chosen for clarity and coldness nonetheless contain multiple meanings. For Ibrahim and Hemingway, words are like "icebergs" (see also Taylor 1985b: 232): it is impossible to get close to the peak without colliding with the body. According to this metaphor, the body of the word "democracy" is made of all the meanings—descriptive and normative—the word had carried through history. Its normative meaning is determined according to the language games in which it participates. In this case: etymology, ancient history, classic and modern political philosophy, mainly republicanism. Thus, the descriptive *and* normative meaning the term "democracy" bears regarding one realm—etymology, philosophy, history, politics, poetry—is very often informed by the meaning it bears in the other realms. It is so because human activities are not easily pigeon-holed.
Why Do Political Labels Matter? (Views from the 18th and 19th centuries)

Although the contemporary theories I discussed are very much relevant for my research, it is even more important to know that several political actors and commentators of the period I study acknowledged the fact that words may be used by a political orator to delude the audience. They implicitly acknowledged the existence of political philosophy.

In America, during the Federal convention held in Philadelphia in 1787, Rufus King stressed that some words "had been often used & applied in the discussion inaccurately & delusively" (Farrand I 1966: 323 [emphasis added]). With regard to "democracy," King declared a few years later that "Words without meaning or with wrong meaning have especially of late years done great harm. Liberty, Love of Country, Federalism, Republicanism, Democracy, Jacobin, Glory, Philosophy, and Honor are words in the mouth of everyone and without precision used by anyone; the abuse of words is as pernicious as the abuse of things" (in Morantz 1971: 141 [emphasis added] and see also "The People the Best Governors" 1983: 390-391). In the newspaper Aurora (May 20, 1807), one may have read that "The use and abuse of words, is a very important branch of knowledge in a nation where public opinion may be said to be omnipotent."\(^\text{13}\) In the same vein, James Fenimore Cooper (1956: 242) maintained in 1838, in his book The American Democrat, that "Men are the constant dupes of names." Fisher Ames explained in a letter to John Rutledge that "Names and appearances are in party warfare arms and ammunition" (in Hanson 1985: 85), a comparison very similar to the metaphor used by the contemporary scholar James Tully, for whom "the pen is a mighty sword" (1988b).\(^\text{14}\)

The French political actors were also very conscious of the political relevance of words.\(^\text{15}\) "Until men have nothing else than words to express their thoughts, the words would have to be weighed," declared Octave Mirabeau (1989b: 618) to his colleagues of the Assemblée Nationale in the first days of the Revolution.\(^\text{16}\) In October
1789, Louis de Fontanes remarked that "for entire centuries, men fought for words ... . Actually, since the laws are made out of words, it is words which rule men" (in Barny 1978: 102).\(^{17}\) Echoing some statements by Americans, Maury (1989a: 594) declared in 1790 that terms such as "révolution" (revolution), "liberté" (liberty), "patriote" (patriot) and "ami du peuple" (friend of the people) aroused passions within the assembly, especially "when the mind is tired of thinking." "I ask," added Maury, "that the word Revolution at last be defined. I ask where will it [the Revolution] stop."\(^{18}\) In Maury's view, political actions should be determined by the definition given to the term "revolution."

Political actors of the time were so concerned by the political relevance of words that some even argued in favour of linguistic laws. In 1780, for instance, the Berlin Academia of sciences and belles-lettres launched an intellectual competition, asking participants to answer the following question: "Is it useful to delude the people?" (Biou 1973: 187).\(^{19}\) Participants mentioned words and language as efficient tools to delude the people. For Fouquet d'Auxonne, the matter is so important that laws must prevent the "too numerous abuses of language" (in Biou 1973: 190).\(^{20}\) In 1794, the member of Convention Edmé Petit submitted a decree (rejected by the Convention) according to which the government must define the "true meaning" of words and even ban some terms (in Jaume 1989: 24-25).\(^{21}\) The attitude of the French is similar to the approach proposed by the American newspaper the National Gazette (December 12, 1792):

> We have too long been amused and misled by names. The improper use of words, or the artful misapplication of names and epithets it is very evident, has had a great and dangerous influence upon the politics of this country. Has not every abuse of language, that can be thought of, been constantly practised for a long time, to give the people false ideas, both of the government, and of its administrators... I wish some ingenious hand, would furnish the public with a short dictionary of those words, which, like many of the political leaders of our country, have changed their meaning since the year 1776.

Finally, one author warned the readers of Les Révolutions de Paris (November 1789) that political authority may impose its own definitions of words in order to legitimise
its authority and power: "The misuse of words has always been one of the main means used to enslave nations .... [W]hen the executive power succeeds in imposing its views as to the meaning of some expressions, it seems to be doing one thing while doing something else; and step by step it would be putting us in chains while talking to us of freedom" (in Soboul 1979: 15-16).22

In the late 18th century United States and France, several political actors and commentators also believed that labels were like political weapons. Words and labels, it was said, may be used to legitimize a political identity or to undermine a political position. Since words carry values and normative power, political groups tend to control particular words for their own interests. The American Philodemus declared (1983 [1784]: 615) that "an Aristocracy ... is generally a most oppressive government, although often, for the sake of blinding the people, it is dignified with the name of a Republic." Victor Hugo remarked (1972: 105), in the same vein, "After July 1830, we need the republican thing and the word monarchy."23 During the French Revolution, people fought violently in order to be considered "republican" or to rid themselves of the label of "aristocrat" and "counter-revolutionary" (J.-C. Martin 1998: 10-11).24 These were not unconscious strategies analysed decades later by historians or political scientists. Indeed, political actors of the time such as Trophime-Gérard de Lally-Tollendal (1989c [1789]: 391) and Jean-Joseph Mounier (1989b [1789]: 932) admitted that a word like "aristocrat" was used as a form of reproach. In the same spirit, Robespierre declared (in Soboul 1979: 15) to the Jacobins, on October 29, 1792, that because of the influence words have over men, it is too easy with "odious words" to speak ill of the Patriots.25 Referring to the importance of labelling political identities, the nobleman Jacques-Antoine-Marie de Cazalès declared (1989a: 212), in a speech to the Assemblée Nationale delivered on May 21, 1790: "There is no town where the citizens are not divided into two parties. ... Banish, proscribe these ugly words, aristocracy and democracy; they are used to rally the factious. Advocate unity to all Frenchmen ... all personal interests must be merged into the public interest."26
Since American and French political actors and commentators of the late 18th and the early 19th believed that words and labels had political relevance, it follows that they probably used a word like "democracy" according to what they believed to be the political power of that term. Hence, words really influence political actors' thoughts and actions, precisely because political actors do act as if words may be used as weapons in the political realm.

The Meaning of "Democracy" According to Etymology, History, and Philosophy

It is important to note that the Founders of so-called modern "democracy" used the word "democracy" to express contempt. It was not until the mid-19th century that Americans and French started to praise "democracy." Until then, political actors and commentators used "democracy" always keeping in mind its etymological, historical and philosophical roots. In fact, American and French political figures of the late 18th century and of the 19th century openly acknowledged that etymology, ancient history and classic and modern republicanism informed their understanding of "democracy." I intend to show, in the following sections, that what they did when using the term "democracy" in public speeches and writings was to invest the minds of their audience with the judgement of etymology, history and political philosophy on "democracy": to have the people gathering at the agora rule is to open the door to economic, political and social chaos.

"Democracy" and Etymology

Latin and Greek were taught at school both in English America and in France of the late 18th century. In order to be admitted to an American colonial college, a student had to prove that he had mastered both Latin and Greek. In fact, it was not until after Independence that English began to be taught in American schools, since
English was seen by many as a matter of private concern and school was concerned exclusively with the high-mindedness of classical tongues (Richard 1994: 13. See also Reinhold 1984: 25-28).\textsuperscript{27} Several French Revolutionary leaders had also attended colleges providing a classical curriculum. Camille Desmoulins and Robespierre, for instance, studied Greek at Louis-le-Grand, a college in Paris. The future American and French Patriots read, studied, and worked on classical texts often in their original version. Hence, it is very likely that the etymology of a political concept such as "democracy" influenced their understanding of it.\textsuperscript{28} For the linguist de Saussure (1995: 181; Gadet 1990: 42-43), some words are unmotivated ("immotivés") while others are "relatively motivated" ("relativement motivés"). If "two" and "four" are both unmotivated words, "twenty-four" is not the result of mere arbitrariness. It is in fact a motivated construction using as raw material pre-existing words. Greek is a language in which a great number of words are motivated, especially in the fields of politics and of philosophy. This is the reason why Martin Heidegger (1968b: 320; Tribe 1985: viii) declared that words with Greek roots speak Greek. Thus, the word "philosophy" itself is not an entirely arbitrary amalgam of letters. Indeed, the Greek term \textit{philo} means "friend" and \textit{sophy} means "wisdom." American and French political figures who studied ancient Greek knew that words like "democracy" are the result not of chance, but of a motivation to give utterance to a specific meaning. For them, "democracy" is not an arbitrary mixture of letters, but a motivated word constructed with two specific parts: \textit{demos} which means "people," and \textit{kratos} which means "rule" or "authority." "Democracy" in itself embodies the idea of the people ruling. Even though Robert A. Dahl (1989: 3), W. B. Gallie (1962: 123), and others (Birch 1993: 47-48; Held 1987: 2-3; Miller 1983: 41 and 43; Pennock 1979: 3-15) suggest that to know the etymological meaning of "democracy" does not supersede the need to define "people" and "rule," the etymological meaning of the term "democracy" is consistent with the meaning of "democracy" according to (Greek) history and to philosophy.
"Democracy" and History

The historian R. G. Collingwood (1946: 226) remarks that past formulations of concepts such as "democracy" are very much relevant to modern political life "Because the historical past, unlike the natural past, is a living past, kept alive by the act of historical thinking itself, the historical change from one way of thinking to another is not death of the first, but its survival integrated in a new context involving the development and criticism of its own ideas." As a matter of fact, American and French political actors themselves believed classical history to be a tremendous social and political laboratory.  

John Adams (1983: 402), for instance, referred to classical history in order to find examples to be emulated, and in 1772, he openly suggested that Americans must copy the mixed governments of the classical world (in Roberts 1996: 172). Later, when talking about the American War of Independence, Adams said "That great event turned the thoughts and studies of men of learning to the ancient Greeks, their language, their antiquities, their forms of government" (in Richard 1994: 87 [emphasis added] and see also Roberts 1996: 178). The French political actors were also great consumers and producers of references from and about the classics. A very telling example of the use of classical references is provided by Hérault de Séchelles, one of the main editors of the Constitution of 1793, who, when in need of inspiration, sent a request to the director of the Bibliothèque nationale (National Library) in order to get a copy of the laws of Minos, the mythical Cretan legislator.  

Of course, the Americans and the French political actors of the 18th century focused on the elements of the classical corpus that would not only help them to understand their world but would also validate their own political views or invalidate the opinions of their foes. On this score, I agree with J. Peter Euben, John R. Wallach and Josiah Ober (1994: 12) when they state that "Every construction of the past, every story told, origin uncovered, or telos invoked, is partly strategic," echoing the opinion of several major historians such as Edward Hallett Carr (1961: 3-35) and Moses I.
Finley (1985a: ch. 4 and Epilogue). In the same spirit, Steven Best (1995: xvi) declares that "each interpretation of history is inevitably political in its representation of events, in its stance toward the present social reality, and in the practical implications of its narrative, method, and vision." In America, politically motivated references to antiquity were very common during the debates about the new Constitution. In order to promote the idea of a federation, many congressmen used the Amphictyonic example to justify their argument. Generally speaking, Sparta (Rawson 1969: 368) and especially Rome were seen as models to be emulated, whereas Athens was considered an anti-model. In France also, examples from antiquity were used in order to promote or to reject ideas about how to reform the French political system. Jean-de-Dieu Raymond de Cucé de Boisgelin (1989 [1790]: 176-177), de Cazalès (1989a: 209), Stanislas-Marie-Adélaïde de Clermont-Tonnerre (1989: 261-262) and Mirabeau (1989c: 732-756) referred to Rome during the violent debates that took place in the spring of 1790 in the Assemblée nationale (National Assembly) on the right to declare war. In addition, Rome was cited as an example by the delegates debating the idea of prohibiting the members of the Assemblée constituante (Constituent Assembly) from being re-elected (de Cazalès 1989b: 223), and Lally-Tollendal (1989b: 376), among others (Malouet 1989d [1791]: 492; Maury 1989d [1789]: 534; Maury 1989b [1790]: 566; de Sade 1995: 28), referred to England, to the American republics, but also to Athens, Carthage, Rome and Sparta, while arguing on the separation of power. He also made references to Plato and Xenophon (Catalano 1995: 167-187; McNeil 1965: 135; Pocock 1975: 511).

In fact, it was common for American and French political figures to see themselves as direct heirs of the classical world, pursuing the same journey toward the Land of Liberty initially undertaken by the Ancients. Americans named their nation "the new Rome," "our Rome of the West" or the "Christian Sparta" (Miles 1974: 263). During the French Revolution, political factions claimed to be the genuine heirs of Athens, Roma or Sparta (Rawson 1969). Saint-Just identified himself publicly as a
partisan of Rome and also declared that the Revolutionaries have to be Romans. Chateaubriand as well finds the same political forces all along the path of history. According to the Chateaubriand, "the party of the Mountain" in Athens "was composed, as the famous party in France having the same name, of the poorest citizens of the Republic, who wanted a pure democracy. ... They were the Jacobins of Athens." In America, Jefferson expressed the same idea in a letter he wrote to his friend John Adams in 1813: "The same political parties which now agitate the U.S. have existed thro' all time. Whether the power of the people or that of ‘the aristoï’ should prevail were questions which kept the states of Greece and Rome in eternal convulsions" (in Richard 1994: 83. See also Gummere 1963: 57). To sum up, people belonging to the American and French elites believed that they faced the same political issues as the classics; that by studying the classics, one could clarify the contemporary political struggles which were of the same nature as those prevailing in classical times. Furthermore, at least in the case of France, references to the classics were not limited to a small circle of highly educated men. People named new born babies after classical figures, such as Solon, Lycurgus, Phocion, Aristides, Socrates and Brutus, and some French towns were renamed after Sparta or Thermopylae. The sans-culottes of Saint-Maximin, in the Var region, wanted their town to be renamed after Marathon, in reference of course to antiquity, but also to the Revolutionary leader Marat. Hence, it is legitimate, especially with regard to politics, to talk of a truly "classical conditioning" (Richard 1994) of the Patriots.

Having studied them extensively, the American and French Founders had a clear knowledge of what commentators—historians, philosophers, poets—claimed the classical world to be. With respect to democracy, American and French political actors believed the comments of classical authors to be relevant for them, especially since there had not been any serious experiments in democracy since ancient Athens, and no regime other than Athens had ever called itself a "democracy." Classical history clarified the meaning of "democracy," since it introduced a normative
element to the general definition of the term. Classical historians, while defining "democracy" as the rule of the people, commonly made it clear that they did not believe that such a political regime was worthwhile. For classical historians, democratic Athens was weaker than her opponents, Sparta and Rome. Their works taught their American and French readers that a city like Athens ruled by the people would unavoidably fall under the yoke of the poor demanding egalitarian laws. Moreover, the people were said to be irrational and easy prey for ambitious demagogues. Thucydides, for instance, depicted the demos as an irrational mob. Readers of Thucydides' work learned that democracy was an unappealing, weak, and short-lived type of regime. Indeed, Thucydides explained that Athens' defeat during the Peloponnesian War as the result of the flaws in her democracy, and he praised Pericles because he succeeded in controlling the demos (de Romilly 1975: 149-150). Thucydides' diagnosis resembles that of Plutarch, who maintained that the social and political stability of Athens was undermined by demagogues and the passionate and irrational will of the demos. For another historian, Polybius, Athens did not provide a political example to be emulated, since the City was undermined by chaos. Not only classical historians, but even eighteenth-century historians of the ancient world pictured Athens and her democracy as something to be feared. In Charles Rollin's widely read Histoire ancienne, for instance, French men and women learned that "fickleness and inconstancy were the prevailing characteristics of the Athenians" (Vidal-Naquet 1976: 22; and Roberts 1996: 9). In 1795, another historian, the monarchist Pierre-Charles Lévesque, also condemned the "excess of democracy" in Athens.

One of the main lessons the American and French Founders learned while studying Athenian history was its lack of a balance of power. This flaw was especially troubling for the Founders who admired Montesquieu's ideal of mixed regime. The Athenian demos was frightening because it was too powerful, simultaneously exerting the executive, legislative and judicial powers (Roberts 1996: 182). Finally, the
uncontrolled \textit{demos} was feared also for its alleged will to enact a more egalitarian redistribution of wealth and property, an issue having quite a clear resonance in the American and French political contexts. Rather than being admirers of the \textit{demos}, Americans expressed a deep respect for great men like Solon and Lycurgus, famous individuals who embodied the figure of the Legislator, the enlightened Law-giver. In the same spirit, Robespierre publicly admitted that he would have enjoyed being like the great legislator Lycurgus.

Hence, for the American and the French political actors, "democracy" commonly referred to Athenian rule of the mob, known to be responsible both for Athens' internal and external failures (Roberts 1996: 176). Because of the bad reputation democracy had among classical historians, very few presented Athens—and Athenian "democracy"—as a model to be emulated (see for instance "The People best Governors" 1983 [1776]: 391 and Richard 1994: 75). Thomas Paine was one of the rare admirers of Athens, declaring (in Roberts 1996: 180) that "what Athens was in miniature, America will be in magnitude." But Paine did not go so far as to advocate direct democracy; he maintained that representation was a good thing that would have helped Athens to surpass "her own Democracy" (in Roberts 1996: 180). In France, Camille Desmoulins was probably the only mainstream revolutionary figure to hold Athens in higher esteem than Sparta, although others, such as Nolliac (probably Restif la Bretonne's \textit{nom de plume}), made honorific reference to Athens (1969: 41). In fact, Desmoulins adopted a quite complex attitude toward Athens, using it sometimes as a model (Hartog 1993: 31; Rouland 1994: 446; Vidal-Naquet 1990: 227-228; Roberts 1996: 195), sometimes as an anti-model. As we shall see while studying the French Revolution, such ambivalence tends to prove that individuals such as Desmoulins selected historical examples consistent with their political goals (see part II, chapter 5), and when these goals changed, they had to find new historical examples.
Several very influential political actors such as John Adams, Madison, Saint-Just and Robespierre (see Mossé 1989: 124) referred to Athenian democracy in a derogatory manner. For Adams, Athens was the scene of debauchery and moral bankruptcy. For Saint-Just, Athenian demagogues easily established their tyranny. According to Condorcet, slavery and direct democracy were the two major problems of ancient politics. With regard to the rule of the people assembled in the agora, Condorcet claimed it is impracticable in modern states because they are too large and too populous. Consequently, Condorcet—himself a "representative"—advocated a "representative" government.

Because the American and French Founders knew their classic history so well, it is more than likely that they did have Athens and its bad reputation in mind when they uttered or encountered the term "democracy." For their audiences, reference to "democracy" was almost sure to evoke disturbing images of political chaos. Significantly, the term "democracy" came to be commonly used in a laudatory fashion around the same time—mid-19th century—that Athens became identified as a political model to be cherished, while Sparta fell into disgrace (Rawson 1969).

"Democracy" and Philosophy: Classical Republicanism

The American and French political figures of the late 18th century studied not only Greek and ancient history, they also studied classical philosophy. It is hard to overestimate the influence of the classical authors over the American and French elite. The popularity of these classical authors was furthermore increased by modern philosophers who acknowledged their debt to the classics. Montesquieu, for instance, referred extensively to classical sources. One thing American and French political actors and commentators learned from classic philosophers was to distrust democracy. As J. S. McCelland (1989: 1-2) states, "It could almost be said that political theorizing was invented to show that democracy, the rule of men by themselves,
necessarily turns into the rule by the mob. ... If there is such a thing as a Western tradition of political thought, it begins with this profoundly anti-democratic bias."

Expressing a similar idea, Philip Resnick (1997: 75 [emphasis added]) states:

For two thousand years the concept of democracy in the western world was closely tied to the idea of direct democracy. Those who thought about democracy as a political regime, most often to reject it, had something like the Athenian polis in mind. It is no great secret that political philosophers and advisers to princes such as Plato, Aristotle, Polybius, Cicero, Thomas Aquinas, Machiavelli, Bodin, and Hobbes showed no particular sympathy for a regime where the people as a whole was the sole source of political power. Their own preference lay with monarchy, aristocracy, or, at best, a mixed constitution with the citizens under the thumb of consuls or a Senate issuing from the upper classes, as in Rome. For its critics, democracy was the regime of the base and ignorant, seeking equality with those who were their superiors.

Likewise, J. Peter Euden (1994: 199) stresses that "[t]here is a tradition, almost as old as democracy itself, that says that ‘the people’ must be saved from themselves as well as from their overly ardent and indulgent defenders. Demos-kratia, the power, rule, and mastery of ‘the people’ is a disease that must be cured." Defending a bold position, Sheldon S. Wolin (1994: 37) proposes "accepting the familiar charges that democracy is inherently unstable, inclined toward anarchy, and identified with revolution and using these traits as the basis for a different, aconstitutional conception of democracy. ... This democracy might be summed up as the idea and practice of rational disorganization."

Wolin’s view is quite marginal. Historically, the Patriots rarely encountered any substantial pro-democratic arguments while reading either classical or modern philosophers. It is ironic that among the very few pro-democratic discourses that survived through history, the main one was part of a global criticism of democracy written by Plato. Indeed, Plato recalled Protagoras’s pro-democratic arguments only in order to show how Socrates refuted them. Moreover, Plato believed that the death of Socrates was a dramatic proof of the inadequacy of democracy. In The Republic (bk. VIII, 544-545), Plato (1980: 238-240) also argues that democracy usually leads to tyranny. For Plato (1980: 253 [The Republic bk. VIII, 577]), "a democracy ... comes into being when the poor have gained the day; some of the opposite party they kill, some
they banish, with the rest they share citizenship and office on equal terms; and, as a
general rule, office in the city is given by lot."^{51}

Aristotle and Cicero, both firmly agoraphobic and strong advocates of mixed
government, were the ancient philosophers most respected and most often invoked
by the Patriots. For Aristotle, "democracy" meant a corrupted form of regime.
Aristotle was afraid of democracy because for him it meant the rule by the poor: "The
real ground of the difference between oligarchy and democracy is poverty and riches.
... it is ... inevitable that a constitution under which the poor rule should be a
democracy." And further: "Democracy is directed to the interest of the poorer classes
[not] ... to the advantage of the whole body of citizens" (Aristotle 1979: 116 and 115
[Politics bk. III, 8; 1280a and 1279a-1279b]). Aristotle remarked that the poor are
almost always the majority in every city. Since democracy rests on the rule of the
majority, a democracy is consequently the rule by the poor. Aristotle shared Plato’s
and Xenophon’s distrust of the political skills of the poor, and he believed that the rule
of the poor—which was equated in Aristotle’s mind with "democracy"—would have
disastrous economic and political consequences. For Aristotle (1979: 175 [Politics bk.
IV, 1294a]): "Men regard it as impossible that the rule of law should exist in a state
which is governed by the poorer sort, and not by the best of its citizens."
Consequently, Aristotle believed that the best form of regime is a mixed government
that is, a political patchwork of monarchical, aristocratic and democratic elements.

In De re publica, Cicero expressed similar ideas. While pure regimes such as
monarchy, aristocracy and democracy are very likely to lead to tyranny, the mixed
government, known as a "republic," is the most likely to secure the common good.
Cicero distinguished between good and bad republics, the latter being undermined by
the irrationality of the mob and licentia, the former being the best regime, comprised
of the three political orders (monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic), and a system
of balance of power (Rome, for instance, had a political organisation allowing
different interests to express, defend and promote their views through the function of
consuls, senators and the popular tribune). With regard to democracy, Cicero (1951: 71) argued that if “the absolute rule of one man will easily and quickly degenerate into a tyranny,” so will “the absolute power of the Athenian people ... when it changed into the fury and licence of a mob,” a statement that as we shall see resembled many of those formulated by the American and French Patriots about 'democracy.' In his *In Defence of Flaccus* (16-19), Cicero clearly expressed his distrust of democracy: "It was this one evil, the unrestrained and extravagant freedom of their public meetings, that brought about the destruction of the power, prosperity and glory that the Greeks at one time enjoyed." Thus, according to Cicero, individuals who were used to democracy and who moved to Rome were a source of disturbance: "Persons emanating from those regions often cause disturbances at public meetings here in Rome: what, then, do you expect to happen when they are on their own?"

Another problem with democracy, in Cicero's mind, was that the *demos* is disrespectful and unfair to its leaders.

Aristotle's and Cicero's political ideas are at the core of what is known as classical republicanism. According to this doctrine, the common good may be secured only in a regime made free from tyranny by a system of separation of powers. Participation of the citizen in the decision-and law-making process is not a founding element of a republican regime (Nipple 1994: 9). In fact, republicans focused on the central role of the Legislator or Lawgiver. The ordinary citizen, for *his* part, participated in the civic life only in a situation of war, when he had to be ready to kill and to die for *his* country. What is expected from the citizen-soldier is that *he* be virtuous enough to risk *his* life in order to defend the liberty of *his* City. Republicanism calls for a citizen-soldier rather than a citizen-ruler who would participate in the decision-making processes of government. Republicans believe that democracy, as well as other pure regimes—monarchy, aristocracy—inevitably lead to tyranny. As we have seen, "democracy" meant not the rule of the entire population, or all the citizens, but rather the rule of the poor, seeking to destabilize the social
order and plotting the destruction of private property (Rancière 1995: 31). This was an idea that the American leaders of the War of Independence and the leaders of the French Revolution considered an axiom (Sartori 1987: 22).

All of this explains why experts on the influence of the classics over America such as Carl J. Richard and Meyer Reinhold, maintain that Americans inherited from the classics a strong distaste for democracy. Richard (1994: 10) argues, for instance, that "the middle class imbibed the aristocratic fears of democracy common in classical texts." Following the same rationale, Reinhold (1984: 102) maintains that

One of the prime lessons adduced from antiquity by the Founding Fathers was the unsuitability of direct assembly government because of the instances known of instability and capriciousness of decisions in ancien republics. Further, such direct participation of citizens was incompatible with a republic possessing a large territory. Hence the Founding Fathers introduced into the Constitution the principle of representative government, repeatedly proclaiming that the secret of representation was invented by them.

It is interesting that none of the classical texts are entitled Democracy, although two major volumes, one by Plato and the other by Cicero, are known by the title Republic, at least in their translated versions. Trivial at first glance, this observation nonetheless encapsulates the idea that republicanism was the political lesson the Patriots learned from their classical education. Through their criticism of direct democracy and their promotion of "Republicanism," i.e. mixed government seeking common good, the classics offered the historical and theoretical grounds needed to elaborate a republican—anti-democratic—theory and rhetoric.

"Democracy" and philosophy: modern republicanism

The roots of modern republicanism may be found in the classical world.52 Classical republicanism was first revisited by Macchiavelli in his Discourses (Bock, Skinner & Viroli, eds. 1990 and Pocock 1975. For a criticism of Pocock's reading of the Discourses, see Sullivan 1992). It was in part from the ancients that modern republicans
such as Harrington and Montesquieu learned to distrust unbalanced regimes, and therefore democracy, which is one of the three pure regimes. Quantitatively speaking, Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* referred directly at least 21 times to Aristotle and 36 times to his works (mainly *Politics*), and 15 times to Cicero and 11 times to his works. In his *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, published in 1656, James Harrington made explicit references to Aristotle (14 times), Athens (around 20 times), Cicero (11 times), and Plutarch (7 times). Harrington's aphorism (1992: 10), "To go my own mind, and yet to follow the ancients," tells a great deal about the influence of the classics on his ideas. In the United States and in France, it was not uncommon to find references to Aristotle, Plutarch, the Bible, Rousseau and Montesquieu in the same public speech or pamphlet. In 1766, the American Jonathan Mayhew stated that "[h]aving been initiated, in youth, in the doctrines of civil liberty, as they were taught by such men as Plato, Demosthenes, and Cicero, and other renowned persons among the ancients, and such as Sidney and Milton, Locke and Hoadley among the moderns; I liked them; they seemed rational" (in Reinhold 1984: 24).

Openly referring to the ancients' typology of regimes, James Harrington (1992: 10 [emphasis added]) stated that "[g]overnment, according to the ancients and their learned disciple Machiavelli, the only politician of the later ages, is of three kinds: the government of one man, or of the better sort, or of the whole people; which by their more learned names are called monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy." Harrington then went on to argue for a mixed constitution: "But legislators, having found these three governments at the best to be naught, have invented another consisting of a mixture of them all, which only is good. *This is the doctrine of the ancients*" (1992: 10 [emphasis added]). French philosophers such as Montesquieu, Rousseau and Mably also owed an important debt to classical republicanism (Bouvet & Chopin 1997: 49-56). For republicans, the enemy was the absolute king, yet unbalanced aristocracy or pure democracy were also to be feared. Montesquieu, like Voltaire, Diderot and D'Holbach, usually claimed that Athens enjoyed a very good way of life and that it
had a very dynamic artistic and philosophical production, yet they generally condemned her direct democracy. For them, Athenian excess of liberty was the cause of Athens’ decline. According to Mably, one of the advantages of a balanced regime is that it prevents the "democratic part of the government ... [from misusing] its authority" (in Mossé 1989: 53-54 [emphasis added]).58 Thus, classical republicans openly expressed agoraphobia, which fuelled the agoraphobia of modern republicans.

Although Machiavelli’s political foes were the incompetent rulers of the Italian city-states, later republican writers such as Montesquieu would argue that despotism rather than incompetence was to be feared. Some republicans adopted the optimistic view that to have virtuous rulers at the head of the republic may secure the common good. Yet, with regard to power, various sources such as the historians of the Roman Republic, the Common Law, the Bible, Locke’s and Montesquieu’s works all teach the same lessons: no matter who is in power, there is always the risk that a legitimate regime may become tyrannical (Fontana 1994: 3; Lalande 1988: 923-924; Lefort 1991: 12). Hence, republicans were generally pessimistic, arguing that the republic needs a Constitution balancing and limiting power, to make sure that the rulers would not rule in their own interests, thereby jeopardizing the common good. Because excess of power, corruption and the selfish defence of private interests all lead to dramatic encroachments on liberties, modern as well as classical republicans generally proposed that the ideal way to secure the common good and liberties was a mixed constitution. In a mixed regime, the three organic orders of the society (monarchy, aristocracy, democracy) are represented, and they hold just enough power to limit the power of the others. This belief had historical and theoretical foundations, such as classic republicanism (Aristotle 1979: 135 [Politics 1265b]), the English tradition before the Civil War, the Colonial experience back to the Virginia Charter of 1624 (mixed regime composed of a colonial governor, a council, a colonial assembly), Montesquieu’s The Spirit of the Laws, and Harrington’s Commonwealth of Oceana. John Adams (in Reinhold 1984: 101) summarized this idea by stating that "A Balance, with
all its difficulty, must be preserved, or liberty is lost forever," mirroring Cicero's opinion (*De re publica* II, 4,1) that "the most effective constitution ... is a reasonably blended combination of the three forms,—kingship, aristocracy, and democracy."

Such a mixed regime was labelled "republic." Sparta, Rome as well as the British constitutional monarchy were given as examples of republican regimes. Thomas Wentworth, for instance, remarked in 1710 that the British constitution was originally "calculated for the good of the whole" since the king (monarchy), the lords (aristocracy) and the commons (democracy) "each ... check upon the other." Wentworth concluded that England "may more properly be called a commonwealth than a monarchy" (in G.S. Wood 1993: 99). Interestingly enough, even the British Crown acknowledged the importance of having a mixed constitution. As early as 1642 (after a dramatic clash between the Crown and the Commons), Charles the First released *His Majesty's Answer to the Nineteen Propositions of Parliament* in which he described the English Constitution as being a mixture of "absolute monarchy, aristocracy and democracy" in which "the balance hangs even between the three estates" (Nipple 1994: 17). As a matter of fact, it was not the identity of the rule, but the spirit of the government that defined a republic. Therefore, even monarchists used the word "republic" to label their beloved monarchy. In the Middle Ages, for instance, Nicolas Oresme and Jean Gerson suggested that a monarchy is republican when the king aims to promote the common good (Fossier 1983: 110-113 and Nicolet 1982: 391-392).

According to French philosophical tradition, indeed, there was no incompatibility between a republic and a monarchy (Goyard-Fabre 1987: 174-179). Jean Bodin, in his *Six Livres de La République*, released for the first time in 1576 and then reprinted 25 times in French and 12 times in Latin (but never reprinted after 1641), did not refer to "republic" as something essentially anti-monarchical. In 1596, Grégoire de Toulouse titled his book *De Republica*. Yet he declared that unless a Republic has only one head (the Crown), it is a monster. In Bossuet's works, the
ancient republic of Rome was a political model, although Bossuet himself was a well-known advocate of absolute monarchy. In 1685 and 1696, the abbé de Vertot published respectively *Révolutions de Portugal* and *Révolutions de Suède*, in which he defended monarchy. Vertot was a real monarchist, named to the Académie in 1701, and receiving a pension from the House of Orléans. Nevertheless, he published in 1719 *Révolutions de la République romaine*, in which he clearly side with the senatorial republic against the "dictatorship" of Caesar. Hence, it seems that it was possible to at once praise the ancient republics and be counted as a monarchist.

In the same vein, an aristocracy and a democracy may be republican. In this connection, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1993: 212 [Social Contract bk. II, ch. VI]) declared: "I ... give the name 'Republic' to every State that is governed by laws, no matter what form of its administration may be: for only in such a case does the public interest govern ... . Every legitimate government is republican." For Adam Smith, there were two types of government: monarchy and republic, the former enforcing order, the latter promoting liberty (G.S. Wood 1993: 97).

In some cases, however, political writers distinguished "republic" from absolute monarchy. In 1578 the French translation of *De Republica Helvetiorum* by Josias Simler (originally published in 1576) was released in Paris. This book, *République des Suisses* was reissued several times and was a reference on Helvetic institutions until the end of the 18th century. In his introduction, the translator explained that a republic is characterized by the balance between the three orders, "monarchic, aristocratic and popular" (Andrey 1994: 67-68). In the fourth volume of Jean Domat's *Droit Public* (released in 1679), "republic" appeared to be used indiscriminately to name an aristocracy or a democracy. However, the specificity of a "Republic" was that the people holding the political authority were selected through election (in Durand 1973: 9). The Jesuits published the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* in 1704, in which "République" was defined as follow: "Popular state or government ... . It is a kind of government in which the sovereign authority rests in the hands of the people as a whole, or only in a
part of the people. If, in a republic, the people as a whole hold the sovereign authority, it is a democracy" (in Durand 1973: 8-9). This is almost identical to Montesquieu's definition. In the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, published in 1762, the "republicans" are defined as being "people who are passionate about the liberty of their country" (in Nicolet 1982: 27).

Hence, since the term "republic" generally evoked appraisal, people used it to label their ideal community. That the term "republic" generally evoked an ideal community of free equals is embodied by the 15th century expression République des Lettres, which designated the community of European intellectuals irrespective of political, religious and cultural borders (Masseau 1994: 17), and by Leibnitz and Sully's expression Respublica christiana, referring to their project of a cosmopolitan and Christian European union. There are, however, rare cases when "Republic" was seen as a weak regime which could too easily degenerate into tyranny. Carton Braxton (1983: 335), for instance, wrote in the *Virginia Gazette* on June 8, 1776, that the state of Venice, "once a republic", is now governed by one of the worst of despotisms." In a similar vein, Theophilus Parsons stated, in *The Essex Result* (1983: 488), published in Newburyport, in Massachusetts in 1778, that "The republics of Venice and Holland ... have degenerated into insupportable tyrannies." The Swiss-born American John Joachim Zubly (in G.S. Wood 1969: 95) was even harsher, stating that "A Republican Government is little better than Government of Devils." In England as well, "republic" and "republican" were weapons used by political actors to attack their opponents on the political battlefield. To tag some one as "Republican" implied that he was not genuinely loyal to the crown, as revealed by the story of Peter Timothy, accused of being a "republican" because he published *Cato's Letters*. In order to legitimate republicanism, he replied (in G.S. Wood 1993: 101 and Hanson 1985: 59) in a subtle fashion that he was not a "Republican ... unless Virtue and Truth be Republican." Despite these negative judgements, "republic" became through the 18th century the label that the principal political actors and commentators used in order to talk in an
honorific way about themselves, their allies and their ideals. Even in Latin-America, Simon Bolivar declared that he was establishing a "Republic" in Venezuela. Gordon S. Wood (1993: 99) recalls that "Republicanism was never a besieged underground ideology, confined to cellar meetings and marginal intellectuals. On the contrary, there were no more enthusiastic promoters of republicanism than many members of the English and French nobility."

The views of Montesquieu and Rousseau were highly influential. They did not present a clearly republican view in all of their works (Nicolet 1982: 56-81), but they were famous among those who would turn out to be republicans (Lefort 1992b and Bouvet & Chopin 1997: 39-56). The radical Marat, for instance, praised Montesquieu at the Académie of Bordeaux, in 1785. Yet, the Monarchists under the Restoration would extensively refer to Montesquieu, and his works were published several times. Indeed, Montesquieu's output is so diverse that, depending on the political situation, individuals from different positions on the political spectrum focused on some specific part of his work in marshalling rhetorical and philosophical arguments (Nicolet 1982: 59-81).

Be that as it may, Montesquieu was a philosopher mainly concerned with the Law, freedom and the balance of power, all of these elements being interwoven. According to him, only power can counter power (The Spirit of the Laws, Book XI, ch. 4). He is not against monarchy (he cherished the British constitutional monarchy), but against absolute monarchy (see Book XI). He advocated representation (Book XI, ch. 6) and he spoke of a "democratic republic" (Book X, ch. 6). His definition of a republic was so influential that it would be copied word for word in the Encyclopédie in 1765 as well as in Démontier's Encyclopédie méthodique, released in 1788 (Lacorne 1994: 82).

In sum, both classical and modern republican thinkers fuelled American and French agoraphobia and encourage political commentators and actors to use the term "democracy" in a derogatory manner. First, according to republicanism, democracy (like the two others type of pure regime, monarchy and aristocracy) may too easily
turn to tyranny or chaos. As Harrington (1977 [1656]: 737) explained, "The spirit of the people is not wise to be trusted with their liberty, but by stated laws or orders; so the trust is not in the spirit of the people, but in the frame of those orders" (see also p. 738). Thus, the people are not necessarily concerned with the common good, and even if they are, their lack of rationality would still undermine the common good. Modern republicans, following Aristotle, commonly maintain that since the poor are the majority, they therefore control the agora. This fear of the poor was rationalized as follows: the poor and the workers who are not financially independent may easily be bought, especially with respect to politics. If the poor have the right to vote, for instance, the wealthy may buy their suffrages. Several republicans focused on property as the source of public virtue and political knowledge ("The People the Best Governors" 1983: 397). Conversely, it may be argue that the wealthy are those who lack morality since they use their money to corrupt people. This argument, however, does not belong to republican philosophy. For republicans such as Thomas Jefferson, political rationality is rooted in the land owned by the property-owner; one who lacks property consequently lacks political rationality. In sum, democracy understood as the rule of the poor is to be feared because it leads too easily to the tyranny, to egalitarian policies (ultimately to the abolition of private property) and to chaos. For republicans, the good of the majority—the poor—is not good enough, since it is not the good of the whole. They conclude that the government must rest in the hands of gifted individuals. Indeed, even if by chance the people genuinely seek the common good, their lack of rationality shall unavoidably undermine such an endeavour. That is why Harrington (in Worden 1994: 96) declared that in what "is properly to be called democracy, or popular government ... debate [is] managed by a good aristocracy [because] debate in the people maketh anarchy." Harrington's position is thus that even in a democracy, there is a "true and natural aristocracy" (in Worden 1994: 97 and see also Pocock, ed. 1977: 209). As we shall see, political actors such as Jefferson and Robespierre drew upon such theories in order to legitimate their own political power
and to claim that the people must follow the counsel of natural aristocrats like themselves (in letters, John Adams and Jefferson both acknowledged the existence of such a natural aristocracy. Jefferson [in a letter to Adams, Oct. 28, 1813] declared: "I agree with you that there is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents. ... The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift nature, for the instruction, the trusts, and government of society. ... May we not even say, that that form of government is the best, which provides the most effectually for a pure selection of these natural aristoi in to the offices of government?" [Wilstach, ed. 1925: 92-93]. Adams replied (Nov. 15, 1813): "We are now explicitly agreed on one important point, viz., that there is a natural aristocracy among men, the grounds of which are virtue and talents" [Wilstach, ed. 1925: 97]).

The use of election as a means to select political leaders was clearly an aristocratic choice. Indeed, according to truly democratic values, all citizens have an equal capacity to express their political will. Choice by lot is consequently the best way to select citizens for public office. Election, on the other hand, implies that some citizens are better than others and is, therefore, a practice befitting aristocracy (Manin 1997). This is why elections had been designated as aristocratic in nature by several major political theorists, including several republican philosophers: Plato (1980: 253 [The Republic bk. VIII, 557]), Aristotle (1979: 199 [Politics, bk. IV, 1300b]), James Harrington (1977 [1656]: 184), Spinoza (Naess, Christophersen & Kvalø 1956: 97), Montesquieu (de Montesquieu 1989: 13—“Voting by lot is in the nature of democracy; voting by choice is in the nature of aristocracy" [The Spirit of the Laws, part I, bk. II, ch. 2]), and Rousseau (1993: 279). To equate elections with the republic rather than with the aristocracy was therefore a kind of intellectual revolution. But, as we shall see, it was necessary for the Patriot leaders to do so for political reasons, in order to promote their self-interests and careers as professional politicians, since most of them were already elected representatives under the colonial regime.66
This natural aristocracy seeking more political power transformed republican philosophy into a republican ideology (political philosophy rather than political philosophy). Indeed, parliamentarians looked to the philosophy of republicanism in order to legitimate their struggle and their political goals. In fact, one of the principal republican philosophers, Montesquieu, was himself a member of the parlement of Bordeaux (as was his father). These politicians used arguments from the republican corpus to simultaneously condemn monarchy and democracy. Their main political goal was to increase the power of the parliaments they were members of, and thereby their own power.

"Democracy" and Politics: Parliamentarism

The Middle Ages witnessed the creation of parliaments and assemblies. In Aragon, town representatives participated in the Cortes as early as 1162, as was the case in Castille seven years later. In Germany, the delegates of the cities entered the Diet in 1255. In France, the first États Généraux were summoned in 1302 (Wilkinson 1972:110). As R. R. Palmer explains (1959: 27)

> those "constituted bodies" ... existed everywhere in the European world, west of Russia. The term is meant to include the British and Irish parliaments, the American colonial assemblies and governors' councils, the parlements and provincial estates of France, the assemblies of estates in the Dutch and Belgian Netherlands and the princely states of the Holy Roman Empire, the diets of Sweden, Poland, Hungary, and Bohemia, and the councils of the German free cities and the city-states of Switzerland and Italy. All were different, yet all were in some ways alike.

Significantly, such representative bodies were not identified with "democracy." In fact, during the Middle Ages, the term "democracy" appeared neither in English nor in French to describe contemporary political events, or the few short-lived local democracies (in Alpine rural cantons, Northern Italy, Germany, Northern France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and among the Vikings) (Monahan 1987: 148-149 and 158-159), or these representatives bodies. Major medieval philosophers such as Thomas
Aquinas used the word "democracy" in their Latin works, although the term usually conveyed a derogatory meaning (Naess, Christophersen & Kvalø 1956: 92). With respect, more specifically, to representative bodies, they were established in every instance by the Crown itself. They were meant to be a place where the monarch and the aristocrats could meet to negotiate, cooperate and clash peacefully. As Bertie Wilkinson (1972: 4) stresses, medieval parliamentarism "was not the product of abstract theories of law or of speculations about political theory. ... Instead, it arose out of the age-long habits and traditions of feudalism, with its ideas of personal loyalties, mutual obligations, and limited power." For Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1993: 266), there was no doubt about the origin of the representative system: "The idea of representation is modern; it comes to us from feudal government, from that iniquitous and absurd system which degrades humanity and dishonours the name of man." In the same vein, the American historian Samuel Williams (1983: 964) wrote in his book *The Natural and Civil History of Vermont*, published in 1794, that "[r]epresentation ... unknown to the ancients, was gradually introduced into Europe by her monarchs; not with any design to favour the rights of the people, but as the best means that they could devise to raise money." Since medieval representative institutions were not yet designated as democratic, it is not surprising that they did not influence the meaning of the word "democracy." Even during the dramatic upsurge of the Levellers and the clash which opposed the British Crown and the Parliament, it seems that no political actors were self-proclaimed democrats (Naess, Christophersen & Kvalø 1956: 95). As a matter of fact, this event was part of what may be called *parliamentarism*, i.e. members of assemblies competing with the Crown to get more political power for their assembly and thus for themselves (regarding America, England and France, see Palmer 1959: 44-52). In short, this struggle was not understood as a democratic endeavour (Morgan 1989: ch. 2). The American War of Independence and the French Revolution were part of that very broad political movement led by political actors sitting in elected assemblies: the colonial assemblies
in America and the États généraux in France (Palmer 1959: 27 and 41-52). Moreover, Parliamentarians in America and in France were conscious of belonging to a broad and international political movement: the delegates of the Federal Convention in Philadelphia talked about the "German Diet," and in a speech to the Convention, in 1789, the French elected political actor Mounier referred to the Roman and American Senates, and to the British and Swedish elective systems (Mounier 1989a: 880-907 and Farrand, ed. 1966a: 285 and 283).

Regarding "democracy" and the people, the members of parliament openly referred to national or popular sovereignty in order to secure their own legitimacy. They created the fiction of popular sovereignty (Benhabib 1996: 205; Bourdieu 2000; 1984; 1981; Castoriadis 1996: 164-165; Morgan 1989), which blind us to the agoraphobic fondations of the so-called "democratic" regimes. The mythical nature of popular sovereignty was acknowledged by several influential political commentators and actors of the time. Friedrich Schlegel, for instance, stated that every political regime rests on a fiction, and political representation is in all cases a fiction. "The constitution concerns the form of fiction and the form of representation," Schlegel (1996, 102) declared, adding (104) that "the highest fictio juris [legal fiction] is not only justified but practically necessary." Of course, reference to representation is not specific to so-called "representative democracy." Dictatorships, monarchies, and aristocracies, have produced a discourse on representation which is linked to the legitimacy of the regime (Roels 1967: xiii, 6 and 12). With regard to the so-called "representative democracy," Robespierre explained how the sovereignty of the people was a fiction, with almost magical or superstitious implications: the elected political actors took on the role of the King who had represented God on earth, and the people took on the role of God as source of legitimacy. Robespierre declared that when the people delegate to the representatives their power to make laws, it is therefore "only by fiction that the law is the expression of the general will" (in Jaume 1989: 82 [emphasis added]). Yet, whereas God is, in principle, powerful enough to
bypass his or her representative (the king) and to directly impose his or her will on human beings, animals and nature, the people have the authority only to choose their representatives (the deputies). Similarly, the elected political actor Lambert declared to the Assemblée Nationale, in 1794, that the phrase "the sovereign people" refers only to "a purely metaphysical being" (in Soboul 1979: 22), and Benjamin Constant remarked that the people "are called at most to exercise sovereignty through representation, that is to say in a fictitious manner" (1988d: 103-104 [emphasis added] and see also 1988b: 312). Praising the people's sovereignty on the one hand, parliamentarians declared on the other that because of the people's lack of political skills, this sacred sovereignty had to be represented (Nicolet 1982: 87).

Thus, parliamentarians were against democracy, i.e. the people assembled in an agora to rule directly without parliaments and representatives. However, the demos took advantage of the political instability resulting from the struggle between the parliaments and the Crown to enter the fray and promote democracy and egalitarian policies. This happened in the republic of Florence (Lefort 1992b: 192-201), in England (Mougel 1978: 49-59), the United Provinces (Palmer 1959: 324-340 and Tilly 1993), Geneva (Palmer 1959: 127-139), and Belgium (Palmer 1959: 341-357). These cases were of course well known by the American and French Patriots and they taught them that the people were very likely to try to take advantage of any political turbulence.

It is worth noting also that the Lower House was sometimes considered the "democratic" branch of a mixed regime, while the Upper House was the "aristocratic" one. Indeed, the idea of a mixed regime implies that monarchy, aristocracy and democracy may be understood as labels for pure regimes as well as components or branches of a mixed regime. Seen in this light, "democracy" is not alien to republicanism. In fact, a republican mixed regime must integrate, at least partially, the principle of democracy as well as the principles of monarchy and aristocracy. Edward Johnson (in Lokken 1959: 574), writing in Massachusetts in the 17th century, expressed just such an idea in discussing the colonial system: "The chiefe Court or suprême
power of this little Commonwealth consists of a mixt company, part Aristocracy, and part Democracy of Magistrates." Although this example reveals a neutral attitude toward democracy, "democratic" references to the Lower House commonly expressed strong contempt. Interestingly, while the parliamentarians disparagingly identified "democracy" with the radicals (egalitarian poor and workers), they were themselves condemned by their monarchical or aristocratic opponents for being "democrats" or for seeking to establish an "absolute democracy." Such a rhetorical game reveals that the word "democracy" was commonly used to evoke radicalism, egalitarianism and chaos. Writing on the rise of a democratic spirit in America during the Seven Years War, and dealing precisely with the power of the Lower Houses, a Crown officer warned that "it will be necessary to check the licentiousness of a democracy, by reducing the present exorbitant power of Assemblies" (in Lokken 1959: 577 n. 34). This implies that a mixed government is partially "democratic," and that the democratic branch of a government—although having a representative rather than a direct form—is still something to be feared. Thus, the semantic strategy was to undermine the legitimacy of the Lower House by tagging it with a negative label. As we shall see, such attacks would often be part of a global strategy seeking to increase the power of political institutions such as the Upper House, the Presidency and the executive power.

The Founders had, of course, good economic and political reasons to be agoraphobic and not to seek democracy. As we shall see in the next chapters, almost all the members of the elite of the Patriotic movement were part of the upper class of their society (being elected politicians and/or lawyers or jurists) and they had been raised to believe that the plebeians owed them deference and respect (Beeman 1992; Pocock 1976; Schudson 1998: 11-16 and 19-24). They were also taught that the plebs were almost by nature less rational and less virtuous than them. It seems that individuals from the lower class shared this social view. Yet, it is clear that the study of classical history and ancient and modern republicanism fuelled the Founders'
agoraphobia. Thus, the new regime was labelled a "republic." The American and French Patriots had to find a word—a label—to name what they were doing, or more specifically, a name that would embody their political project. People need to find a political tag not only to identify themselves but also to explain what they are doing in order to position themselves on the political scene. The label "republic" gave meaning and coherence to their thoughts, their actions, their lives and even, in some extreme cases, their deaths. The other labels available at that time were limited: monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. But all these pure regimes were generally held in contempt by the Patriots, who were seeking to establish what they called a mixed regime in which each of the three orders balances the power of the others so as to prevent tyranny. Since the majority of mainstream Patriots were also sitting in assemblies, they were seeking to increase the power of the institution they belong to, and consequently, their own power. They had neither philosophical nor political reasons to promote a "democracy," i.e. a regime where the people assembled in an agora participate directly in the decision-making process. The texts—speeches, articles, diaries, personal letters, etc.—written in the first years of the American and French ‘revolutions’ revealed that the revolutionaries’ vocabulary was openly anti-democratic in as much as it expressed an agoraphobic attitude.

Conclusion: Manipulating Meanings

Both in the United States and France, it was around 1830-40 when political actors started to use the word "democracy" as a panegyric term. Noam Chomsky (in Otero 1988: 664) argues that "[l]anguage is, after all, a tool for thought. If you debase the language, you debase the thought. I don’t want to exaggerate this element of it, but it is one element, and one that’s certainly consciously manipulated in order to introduce confusion and lack of perception." According to Quentin Skinner, too, writers may play with words and manipulate existing conventions. Skinner would
probably disagree with some of the boldest assertions of the structuralists for whom the structure of language is so rigid that innovation in language is almost impossible, except perhaps in fictional literature. Writers are compelled, in a way, to respect the linguistic conventions of their time, but they may try to play with the meaning of words especially within a new linguistic, social or political context. Yet, with regard to the transformation of the normative meaning of the word "democracy" around 1830-40, it is striking that linguistic manipulation took place without any major transformation of political institutions such as the constitution. Of course, universal suffrage (for males) was introduced in France in 1848, and it might explain why people started to identify France with democracy. Yet, to vote is not to rule. Even with universal suffrage, the doors of the modern agora—the parliament—are closed for all citizens save their elected representatives. And we have seen in the current chapter that elections are aristocratic rather than democratic. Thus, I shall argue throughout this dissertation that to name the modern elective regime "democracy" is inconsistent with etymology, ancient history and both ancient and modern political philosophy. My aim is to demonstrate that the shift of meaning was primarily motivated by political interests.

Altering and manipulating a set of terms is the job of what Skinner (1988d: 112) calls the "innovating ideologist": "His concern, by definition, is to legitimate a new range of social actions which, in terms of the existing ways of applying the moral vocabulary prevailing in his society, are currently regarded as in some way untoward or illegitimate." Going further, Skinner (1988d: 114-115; see also Tully 1988b: 11-15) considers the specific problem of modifying a derogatory term in order to give it a neutral or a positive meaning:

The practical question: how is it possible ... actually to manipulate an existing normative vocabulary in such a way as to legitimate such new and untoward courses of action? ... The first consists in effect of manipulating the standard speech-act potential of an existing set of descriptive terms. The agent's aim in this case is to describe his own actions in such a way as to make it clear (from the context) to his ideological opponents that even though he may be using a set of terms which are standardly applied to express disapproval, he is nevertheless using them to express approval or at least neutrality on this particular occasion. The point of this
strategy is, of course, to challenge his opponent to reconsider the feelings of disapproval or even of mere neutrality which they are standardly expressing when they use these particular terms.

According to John G.A. Pocock (1989: 19), "a power-structure may survive by successfully transforming its idiom." George Orwell, in his novel Nineteen Eighty-Four, exemplifies how language is manipulated in order to mean their exact opposite. Thus, the slogan "war is peace" is used in order to deceive people and to gain their support. But one does not have to read novels to find such examples. James Farr (1989: 36 [emphasis added]) gives historical examples:

Mid-eighteenth-century Tories change reference to become 'patriots'; late-sixteenth-century Protestant investors introduce 'frugality' as the new virtue of their practice; American 'blacks' in the 1960s and 1970s dramatically overturn the expression of attitudes by adopting as their own a previously denigrated term of colour; 'behavioural' scientists in the late 1940s emerge to avoid the socialist implications feared to be latent in 'social' science. In short, in order to gain popular support for party policy, or to gain religious acceptance of new economic practices, or to mobilize the political power of ethnic pride, or to gain federal funding for the sciences of social phenomena, all in the face of contradictions thrown up by prevailing beliefs about partisanship or usury or ethnicity or ideology, concepts may be changed. In these and a myriad other cases, conceptual change may be explained in terms of the attempt by political actors to solve speculative or practical problems and to resolve contradictions which their criticism has exposed in their beliefs, actions, and practices.

However, the task of the innovating ideologist is not easy. Indeed, to play with words is not an individual, isolated activity. It takes place within relations with other people. It does not follow, however, that individuals are prisoners of a static language. But one would normally need a good deal of time and energy to modify a word's current connotation. Moreover, conceptual changes and political changes are interrelated, as James Farr (1989: 32) observes: "in acting politically actors do things for strategic and partisan purposes in and through language; and ... they can do such things because the concepts in language partly constitute political beliefs, actions, and practices. Consequently, political change and conceptual change must be understood as one complex and interrelated process." Modifications in political language often presuppose a change in the power relations. In the case of the word "democracy," as we shall see, the intentions of political actors in redefining it were, first, to seduce
electors, and second, to manufacture consent (mainly in France regarding socialist activism). The fact that political actors started to identify themselves and the regime with "democracy" has real political impacts (it helps to win elections and to manufacture consent), but one consequence in particular must not be downplayed: in adopting a pro-democratic discourse, political actors felt the need to promote some popular policies because linguistic innovation in politics implies a dialectical dynamic. Finally, my aim is also to show that the manipulation of the term "democracy" was acknowledged by political actors and commentators themselves.

1"It is language about political events, not the events in any other sense, that people experience; even developments that are close by take their meaning from the language that depicts them. So political language is political reality; there is no other so far as the meaning of events to actors and spectators is concerned" (Edelman 1988: 104; also Edelman, 1967: 114).

2With regard to the French Revolution, see Groethuysen (1956).

3"Le but est même d'arriver à ne plus séparer histoire politique et philosophie politique, de trouver le point où les deux démarches finissent par fusionner. La justification de cet objectif tient au fait que l'histoire est à la fois la matière et la forme de la philosophie politique" (Rosanvallon 2000: 33).

4Plato already lamented that the Sophists used words in order to delude people. In 1620, Francis Bacon also referred to the political power of words. Commenting on the political life of his time, David Hume declared that the republican discourse was so powerful that even the Tories finally "embraced the sentiments, as well as the language of their adversaries" (Hawkes 1996: 31 [emphasis added]. See also Dant 1991: 56; Wood 1993: 103).

5See the comments on Herodotus, in Goyard-Fabre (1998: 18-19). See also Aristotle (Politics, bk. III, ch. 7, 1279-a); Jean Bodin (La République, II, I, p. 252 sqq.); James Harrington (1992: 10); Thomas Hobbes (Leviathan, ch. XIX); John Locke (Second Treatise, ch. 10, § 132); Machiavelli (Discourses, bk. I, ch. 2); and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (The Social Contract, bk. III, ch. 3 sqq.). Aristotle's typology of political regimes is inconsistent: see the differences between Politics, bk. III, ch. 17, 1288a; bk. IV, ch. 7, 1293a38; bk. V, ch. 10, 1310a39; 1311a22-25; 1311b37; Rhetoric, I, 8, 1365b29-30. Few philosophers offer alternative typologies. Despite different labels, their types of regimes may be divided according to the three mathematical options (one, few, all). See Socrates cited by Plato, Republic, bk. VIII, 557; Aristotle, Politics, bk. III, ch. 7, 1279-2 [3]; or Montesquieu, Spirit of Laws, bk. II, ch. I. Several philosophers have given different names to the pathological variations of the classical regimes (depotism for monarchy, oligarchy for aristocracy, and the tyranny of the majority or anarchy for democracy). See for instance Aristotle, Politics, bk. III, chap. 7, 1279-a [2], and Machiavelli, Discourses, bk. I, ch. 2. That traditional typology respects the etymological root of the word "democracy" (a regime in which every citizen has the right to participate in the
assembly). Mathematically speaking, however, political philosophers forget another possibility: a political system in which no one holds political authority, i.e. anarchy.

Established in 1937 in New York city and dissolved after the attack against Pearl Harbour by the Japanese forces. Its members included several prominent scholars, including Charles A. Beard and Hadley Cantril of Princeton University, Paul Douglas of the University of Chicago, Robert S. Lynd and Clyde R. Miller of Columbia University, and Leonard W. Doob of Yale University (in Jackall, ed. 1995: 223 n. 1).

It is important to distinguish between ideology and propaganda. Within a discourse which claims to deal with Truth, ideology still finds its way. In the case of philosophical discourse, ideology is an epiphenomenon — i.e., it is often there by default, since political philosophy can not be practised with neutral tools. Propaganda, on the other hand, should be described as a phenomenon or, more precisely, a form of discourse, whose main function is to defend or to promote an ideology (One should not be surprised either to learn that the word “propaganda” comes from the Roman Catholic Church, which established the Congregatio de propaganda in 1622, under Pope Gregory XV. This congregation was composed of missionaries who embraced the duty “to reconquer by spiritual arms, by prayers and good works, by preaching and catechising the countries ... lost to the Church in the debacle of the sixteenth century and to organize into an efficient corps the numerous missionary entreprises for the diffusion of the gospel in pagan lands” [Jackall 1995: 1]. Mark Goldie [1989: 266-291] shows the logical ties between the concepts of ideology and religion).

Yet, Lippmann is wrong in implying that representative democracies rather than totalitarian states extensively use propaganda and thought control. Under the Nazis and the Communists, thought control was employed to give an appearance of legitimacy (see Klemperer 1996 and Faye 1972). On linguistic engineering in the USSR, see Siniavski (1988: 245-285).

My view is similar to that of Karl Mannheim. See also Tim Dant (1991: 5): “Analysis using the ‘particular conception of ideology’ always speaks from a position of superiority, assuming that its own perspective is not socially situated. Mannheim’s ‘total conception of ideology’ incorporated the recognition that all perspectives were ideological and socially situated. ... [I]deology is cast not as the bogey of false knowledge to contrast with the purity of sciences as truth, but as a process that is interwoven with all other social processes including science.”

For Eagleton (1991: 9), “You could not decide whether a statement was ideological or not by inspecting it in isolation from its discursive context ... . Ideology is less a matter of the inherent linguistic properties of a pronouncement than a question of who is saying what to whom for what purposes. ... [E]xactly the same piece of language may be ideological in one context and not in another; ideology is a function of the relation of an utterance to its social context.”

James Tully sees politics as a power game: philosophical debates about politics are part of the struggle and they happen when “arms are set aside.” Political philosophy as part of the political game is thus about attacking, winning support and legitimating specific forms of organisation. In 1798, John Thayer (1991: 1357) explained that it is easy to “fascinate the ignorant and unwary” with “the charm of the word Liberty”.


“Pendant des siècles entiers, les hommes se sont battus pour des mots ... . D’ailleurs puisque les mots font les lois, ce sont les mots qui gouvernent les hommes.”
"quand l'esprit est fatigué de penser"; "je demande qu'on me définisse enfin le mot Révolution. Je demande où doit-elle s'arrêter?"

19 Among the 33 people who answered, 13 answered in the affirmative.

20 F. d'Auxonne wrote: "Abuser du langage c'est faire un mal réel et un tort considérable aux hommes." And he proposed "que les lois daignent veiller sur le trop fréquent abus du langage."

21 "ôteront à tous les mots de la langue française leur véritable sens." "Le Comité d'instruction publique est chargé de rédiger un ouvrage périodique destiné à donner aux mots qui composent la langue française leur véritable sens, et à rendre à la morale républicaine sa véritable énergie." "la véritable, la seule acceptation du mot peuple."

22 "L'abus des mots a toujours été un des principaux moyens qu'on a employés pour asservir les peuples ... quand le pouvoir exécutif est venu à bout de nous en imposer le sens de certaines expressions, il paraît faire une chose et il en fait une autre; et peu à peu il nous chargerait de chaînes, en nous parlant de liberté."

23 "Après juillet 1830, il nous faut la chose républicaine et le mot monarchie."

24 "contre-révolutionnaire."

25 "mots odieux"; "car on connaît l'empire des mots sur les hommes."

26 "il n'est pas un village où les citoyens ne soient divisés en deux partis. ... Bannissez, proscrivez ces mots affreux d'aristocratie et de démocratie; ils servent de ralliement à des factieux. Prêchez l'union à tous les Français ... que tous les intérêts particuliers se confondent dans l'intérêt public."

27 By showing that they mastered the classics, the members of the American elite were able to secure their social position within American society itself; but it was also a means of gaining respect from the European elite (for similar behavior in Russia, see Greenfeld [1992: 196 and 233]). This quest for recognition was also a source of distress, as the American legislature of Georgia suggested in 1785, declaring that to send children to Europe to be educated properly was "too humiliating an acknowledgment of the ignorance or inferiority of our own" institutions. Noah Webster maintained that until Independence, the desire to send children to study in England was "an appropriate reflection of our servile station in the British Empire" (Yazawa 1994: 413). See also Bolivar (1995: 223-225).

28 Giovanni Sartori (1987: 22) defends a somewhat different view.

29 Bernard Bailyn, argues that the Founders' use of the classics was merely "window dressing," although he admits that they were a valuable source of example and illustration (Bailyn 1967: 23-27 and 44). In the case of France, Claude Mossé (1989: 61) and Vidal-Naquet (1976 and 1990) echo Bailyn's judgment. Yet, Carl J. Richard (1994: 2) remarks that "Bailyn cited Charles F. Mullet for the term 'window dressing,' neglecting to note that Mullette had applied it only to a few isolated instances. Mullette had emphasized the numerous cases in which the classics had exerted real influence." (Mullet 1939: 92-104) In the same vein, Gordon S. Wood (1993: 103) states that "[t]he writings of classical antiquity provided more than window dressing for educated Englishmen on both sides of the Atlantic; they were, in fact, the principal source of their morality and values. ... Public morality was classical morality." Richard M. Gummere expresses a similar opinion, stating that "[t]he delegates to the Constitutional Convention ... were not interested in mere window dressing or in popular slogans filched from history books. They dealt with fundamental ideas and considered them in the light of their applicability"; Aristotle, Cicero and Polybius especially inspired them (Gummere, 1963: 174; see also Gummere 1962: 5). Referring implicitly to this debate over "window dressing," Meyer Reinhold (1984: 102) declares that "It is clear that the precedents, analogies, and lessons Madison and others quarried from antiquity were not mere window dressing or 'pedantry in politics,' but solemn exercises in comparative political institutions and history." With respect to France, Chateaubriand declared in his Essai sur les révolutions: "Notre révolution a été produite en partie par des gens de lettres qui, plus habitants de Rome et d'Athènes que de leur pays, ont cherché à ramener dans l'Europe les mœurs antiques" (in Hartog 1993: 30). In Great Britain, finally, John Stuart Mill wrote: "The battle of Marathon, even as an event in English history, is more important than the battle of Hastings. If the issue of that day had been different, the Britons and the Saxons might still have been wandering in the woods!" (in Arlen W. Saxonhouse 1996: 21)

30 As a matter of fact, members of the American elite offer almost endless examples of the influence of the classics, not only in politics, but also in culture. Horses and slaves were given classical names.
Jefferson confessed his passion for the classics in a letter written in 1810—"I read one or two newspapers a week, but with reluctance give even that time from Tacitus and Homer and so much agreeable reading."—, and in another one written in 1819: "I feel a much greater interest in knowing what has happened two or three thousand years ago than in what is now passing" (Richard 1994: 27. See also pp. 35-36, p. 48 p. 50 and p. 69; Gummere 1963: 17). Jefferson's classical conditioning also influenced American public architecture (G.S. Wood 1993: 355): Americans chose the names of Roman republican institutions—the Capitol and the Senate— and, as Richard (1994: 50) observed, they "adopted the Roman eagle as the national bird, and embellished their seals and currency with Latin mottoes. They even named the tiny stream running through Washington D.C., 'the Tiber'" (see also Miles 1974: 263).

31 One can get a good idea of the influence of classical authors, and also of classical history, by looking at the index of collections of texts from the founding era such as Charles S. Hyneman & Donald S. Lutz, eds. (1983) and James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, The Federalist Papers, or books analysing the American war of independence, such as Bailyn (1967) and G.S. Wood (1993). Their indexes include a large number of classical references like "Aristotle," "Cicero," "Athens," "Rome," etc. For the French case, see for instance Nicolas Bergasse (1989: 105).

32 In France, the vogue of antiquity did not start with the revolutionary uprising. References and comparisons to antiquity were a way for the French to make sense of their own experiences. J.-F. Lafitau, who in 1724 wrote Moeurs des sauvages américaines comparées aux moeurs des premiers temps, and Volney in his Leçons d'Histoire (1795), equated the Mohawks to the Spartans (see Hartog 1993: 42 and n. 46). In the few decades before the Revolution, influential authors such as Mably, Montesquieu and Rousseau referred very often to the classical world. They had even written books dealing exclusively with ancient history (Montesquieu, for instance, wrote Dissertation sur la politique des Romains dans la Religion. In 1734, and after travelling to Italia, he also published Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence. D'Alembert declared that Montesquieu should have named his book "Roman History for Statesmen and Philosophers" ["son livre, Histoire romaine, à l'usage des hommes d'Etat et des philosophes"]). See Ehrard 1968: 11). Yet, this vogue of antiquity clearly reached its climax during the revolutionary years. References to the ancient world were common in newspapers, even in widely distributed publications such as the Vieux Cordelier. As in British America, references to the classics were even visual: in front of the hall of the Convention were placed the busts of classical major figures such as Solon, Lycurgus, Demosthenes, Plato, Brutus and Cincinnatus. Moreover, David, among other, produced paintings representing classical topics, such as Le Serment des Horaces (1785), Socrate buvant la ciguë (1787) and Les Licteurs apportant à Brutus le corps de ses fils (1789) (Mossé 1989: 134-135; Robert 1996: 9 and 195; Vidal-Naquet 1976: 16, 22 and 26-27).

33 Jefferson was in Paris at that time, but he shipped copies of the works of Polybius and other classical writers to his friend Madison and to George Wythe. (Gummere 1963: 174)

34 On federations and leagues, see the references to the Amphictyonic League in Gummere (1962: 9-13). See also Richard (1994: 73). The example was also used by Luther Martin of Maryland to defend the idea that every state must send the same number of delegates to the Senate, to make sure that the smaller states would not be the underrepresented. (Gummere 1963: 180 and 182) The classics provided military examples to which Americans referred simply for the sake of comparing their experiences with those of the Ancients, or even in order to develop their own strategies. Jefferson maintained in 1775 that the march of Benedict Arnold's troops to Quebec through the woods of Maine resembled the retreat of Xenophon's army from the Persian empire in 401 BC. (Richard 1994: 57) John Adams wrote to General Nathanael Greene in 1777: "It is Time for Us to abandon this execrable and defensive Plan... We must have a fighting, enterprizing Spirit conjured up in our Army. The Army that attacks has an infinite Advantage and ever has had from the Plains of Pharsalia to the Plains of Abraham." The quotation refers to Caesar's troops defeating Pompey on the Plains of Pharsalia, and to James Wolfe leading the British army to victory against the troops of the Marquis de Montcalm in 1759, on the Plains of Abraham, before the City of Québec (Richard 1994: 66).

35 Rawson (1969: 1) explains that "Two hundred years ago, ... an ordinary Englishman would most probably have viewed the Spartan constitution as a prototype of the British limited monarchy in
all its perfection; his French contemporary might have been one of those who revered her, with Rousseau and others, primarily as an egalitarian, often more or less communist, republic. Two hundred years before that she appeared in still other guises; as the ideal aristocratic republic, for example, practically indistinguishable from Venice” (See also Gummere 1962: 16-17).

36John Adams, in 1805, also highlighted his belief in the close parallel between America and the Classical world, when he said of Middleton’s Life of Cicero: “I seem to read the history of all ages and nations in every page, and especially the history of our country for forty years past. Change the names and every anecdote will be applicable to us.” A few years later, in 1812, Adams wrote with regard to Thucydides’ and Tacitus’ works: “When I read them I seem to be only reading the History of my own Times and my own Life” (in Richard 1994: 78, 84 and 87).

37“Le monde est vide depuis les Romains; et leur mémoire le remplit, et prophétise encore la liberté.” From Saint-Just’s speech to the Convention, Germinal 11, Year II, during Danton’s trial (in Vidal-Naquet 1976: 19).


39“la première [faction], appelée le parti de la montagne, était composée, ainsi que le fameux parti du même nom en France, des citoyens les plus pauvres de la République, qui voulaient une pure démocratie. ... C’étaient les jacobins d’Athènes” (in Mossé 1989: 143). See also Robespierre, who claimed in his “Rapport du 18 floréal” (May 7, 1794), that “La liberté et la vertu se sont à peine reposées un instant sur quelques points du globe. Sparte brille comme un éclair dans des ténèbres immenses.” Robespierre’s infatuation with Sparta was condemned by several Revolutionaries who condemned him for promoting a too spartan way of life. Robespierre answered Camille Desmoulins’ attacks stating, on Pluviose 17 (February 6, 1794): “Nous ne prétendons point jeter la république française dans le moule de celle de Sparte; nous ne voulons lui donner ni l’austérité ni la corruption du cloître” (in Vidal-Naquet 1976: 28. See also p. 31 n. 75).

40In his American Liberty, A Poem, written in 1775, Philip Freneau made explicit the comparison between the citizens of the ancient republics and the Americans: “like the ancient Romans, you/At once are soldiers, and are farmers too” (in Reinhold 1984: 99).

41“Cenomsacre nous rappelle la plaine athénienne qui devint le tombeau de cent mille satellites : mais il nous rappelle avec encore plus de douceur la mémoire de l’ami du peuple” (in Vidal-Naquet 1976: 16).

42It was not until around 1850 that archaeology became a serious enterprise. Until then, archaeology was more a matter of collecting interesting artifacts, mainly statues, with no systematic thought of analysing and understanding the past (Rachet 1983: 83-84). Thus, the historian Mogens H. Hansen (1991) distinguishes “survivals” from “accounts,” the former being texts produced as a result of political activities (decrees, discourses, archives, treatises) while the latter are texts produced by commentators on political life (historians, philosophers, writers of plays and poetry). Consequently, my aim here is not to describe how democracy was experienced in the age of the classics, but rather how Americans and French believed it was. For those who are interested in knowing more about real Athenian democracy, I suggest Hansen (1991), Ober (1989) and Sinclair (1988). For those who want to know more about politics in general in ancient Greece, see Finley (1983) and Meier (1995). Finally, for those who want to know if thinking about ancient democracy might be relevant for our modern politics, see Finley (1985), Castoriadis (1996: ch. 10, 11 and 14), Sartori (1987, ch. 10). With regard to Rome and democracy, see Rouland (1981).

43A few other cities, such as Syracuse, were also democracies. The case of Carthage is disputable, although some Americans believed it was a direct democracy (Kriegel 1994: 115).

44I am in debt to the work of de Romilly (1975) and Rodewald (1975).

45Herodotus stands as an exception. He was the first to use the word “democracy” in his Histories (VI, ch. 43). He had already discussed (bk. III, ch. 80) the rule of the people, known also as isonomia (meaning “equality before the law”), the most beautiful of all names according to Herodotus. On the differences between “democracy,” “isonomia,” isegoria,” and “isomoiria,” see Resnick (1997: 29-44).

46“I exces de démocratie.” Yet, in 1807, he published his Histoire critique de la république romaine in which he firmly attacked the Roman republic (Hartog 1993: 39-45).

47John Adams, in The Defence of the Constitution of the United States (1787) declared that democratic Athens suffered from “levity, gayety, inconstancy, dissipation, intemperance,
debauchery, and a dissolution of manners, [which] were the prevailing character of the whole nation" (Roberts 1996: 182-183).

The "democracies" Madison is talking about, can only be ancient democratic cities like Athens, when he writes after mentioning that "pure democracy ... consist[s] of a small number of citizens, who assemble and administer the government in person," "that such democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths" (in Hamilton, Jay & Madison 1987: 126). This reference to classical history is not isolated in Madison's work (see, for instance, the Federalist Papers number XVIII, number XIX, number XXXVIII, number LXIII, and number LXIV where Madison refers to the histories of Athens, Rome and Sparta). Alexander Hamilton also openly admitted his distrust regarding ancient Cities, when he wrote in his Federalist Paper number IX that "It is impossible to read the history of the petty republics of Greece and Italy without feeling sensations of horror and disgust at the distractions with which they were continually agitated, and the rapid succession of revolutions by which they were kept in a state of perpetual vibration between the extremes of tyranny and anarchy" (in Idem.: 118 [emphasise added]).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau even pompously declared that he would have liked to be born Roman, and he claimed in Lettres écrites de la Montagne VI that Rome was the best government which had ever existed (Rousseau declared: "que ne suis-je né Romain!" (in Catalano 1994: 27) According to Rousseau, the Roman republic was the "meilleur gouvernement qui ait existé" (in Lobjano 1994: 46). On Rousseau and antiquity, see also Leduc-Fayette (1974). Rousseau's fourth book of his Contrat social is devoted to the Roman republic. However, Rousseau was also an admirer of Sparta (see Mossé 1989: 40), a fondness also shared by Mably, who declared, in his Observations sur l'histoire de la Grèce, that Sparta, like the Roman republic, enjoyed a balanced political regime (Mossé 1989: 40. See also Hartog 1993: 34).

It is worth noting, however, that during the colonial and revolutionary periods Plato was read much more for his spiritual reflections than for his political philosophy (see Gummere 1962: 8). John Adams wrote to his friend Jefferson that after studying Plato's works in 1784, and comparing all the Latin, French and Greek versions, he reached the conclusion that the Republic and the Laws were "a bitter satyre upon all republican government," (in Gummere 1963: 195) an idea that Leo Strauss would express centuries later, suggesting that Plato's Republic was obviously too utopian to have been considered a serious political project by Plato himself. For Jefferson, Plato's Republic is a work of "whimsies, puerilities and unintelligible jargon" (letter to J. Adams, July 5, 1814) (Wilstach, ed. 1925: 107). And Adams replied (July 16, 1814): "I am very glad you have seriously read Plato; and still more rejoiced to find that your reflections upon him so perfectly harmonize with mine" (Wilstach, ed. 1925: 109).

As Isaac Kramnick (1991: 89) asserts, "Americans could come to republican ideas directly, as well as through the mediation of Renaissance Italy or English Commonwealth or Country Ideology. Greek and Roman authors were well known to the colonial mind. From Cicero, Aristotle, and Polybius, all widely read in America, notions of a higher law as well as constitutional arguments for mixed and separate powers in a stable government could be found." Students and theorists of republicanism produced a huge literature. See, for instance, Appleby (1992), Baily (1967), Bock, Skinner & Viroli, eds. (1990), Fontana, ed. (1994), Hanson (1985: 55-120), Lefort (1992b), von Maltzahn (1991), Nicolet (1982), Pangle (1988), Pocock (1975), Shalhope (1972), Shalhope (1982), G.S. Wood (1969 and 1993), Wootton (1994: 56-60).


55 In America, Jefferson also took very seriously the idea that his Saxon ancestors lived in a kind of elective monarchy (Colbourn 1958).

56 For similar comments by John Adams, see Reinhold (1984: 96). In the same vein but with liberty in mind instead of rationality, Josiah Quincy wrote in his will, in 1774: “I give to my son, when he shall arrive at the age of fifteen years, Algernon Sidney’s works,—John Locke’s works,—Lord Bacon’s works,—Gordon’s Tacitus,—and Cato’s Letters. May the Spirit of Liberty rest upon him” (Idem.: 94).

57 Algernon Sidney also referred explicitly to Xenophon, Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides, Cicero, among others, when he maintained that the demos has to be feared because it is more likely than the aristoi to commit political mistakes (Carrive 1989: 156 [for the influence of the classics in general over Sidney’s though, see pp. 224-228]).

58 “La République de Lycurgue, ainsi que Polybe l’a dit depuis de la République romaine, réunissait tous les avantages dont l’aristocratie, la royauté et la démocratie ne peuvent jamais posséder qu’une faible partie”, “par suite de l’équilibre établi entre les différents pouvoirs, dès que la partie démocratique du gouvernement voulait abuser de son autorité, elle se trouvait sans force, et contraînée par la puissance des magistrats.”

59 Rousseau also declared: “I understand by this word [Republic], not merely an aristocracy or a democracy, but generally any government directed by the general will, which is the law. To be legitimate, the government must be, not one with the Sovereign, but its minister. In such a case even a monarchy is a Republic” (1993: 212 [Social Contract, bk II, chap. VI]).

60 “monarchique, aristocratique ou populaire.”

61 “État ou gouvernement populaire ... C’est une forme de gouvernement dans lequel la souveraine autorité est entre les mains du peuple en corps, ou seulement d’une partie du peuple. Si dans une république le peuple en corps a l’autorité souveraine, c’est une démocratie.”

62 “des gens passionnés pour la liberté de leur pays.”


64 Bolivar belonged to the same culture as European and North-American republicans. Indeed, he studied the same books and he even travelled to Paris. In a speech delivered to the Congress of Venezuela, on February 15, 1819, Bolivar spoke about the “Roman Empire” and made reference to Jean-Jacques Rousseau (see Bolivar 1995: 223-225).

65 “‘Election by lot,’ says Montesquieu, ‘is democratic in nature.’ I agree that it is so; but in what sense? ... In every real democracy, magistracy is not an advantage, but a burdensome charge which cannot justly be imposed on one individual rather than another. The law alone can lay the charge on him on whom the lot falls” (Rousseau, The Social Contract [bk. IV, ch. 3]).

66 During the debates of 1787, in Philadelphia, James Wilson suggested that the presidential electors must be selected by lot, a practice in use in Athens, although his proposition had never been seriously discussed by the Congressmen (Gummere 1963: 186).

67 “c’est seulement par fiction que la loi est l’expression de la volonté générale.”

68 Pierre Paul Royer-Collard also spoke of popular sovereignty, suggesting that representatives have to express the sovereignty of reason. For rhetorical reasons, he agreed that “The word representation is a metaphor” (“Le mot représentation est une métaphore”) (in Royer-Collard 1986a: 123. See also 1986b: 116 and 118 : "hors l’élection populaire et le mandat [impératif], la représentation n’est qu’un préjugé politique qui ne soutient pas l’examen, quoique très répandu et très accrédité.")

69 “le peuple souverain,” “un être purement métaphysique.”
PART I
The Anti-Democratic Spirit of
The Founders of Modern Representative Regimes
CHAPTER II
The American War of Independence
An Anti-Democratic Enterprise

Introduction: The Meaning of "Democracy" in English in the Pre-modern Era

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (1989 [IV]: 442-443) it was in 1531 that the word “democracy” appeared for the first time in English, when Elyot noted that “[a]n other publique weale was amonge the Atheniensis, where equalitie was of astate amonge the people ... This maner of gouerbance was called in greke Democratia, in latine Populis potentia, in englisshe the rule of the comminaltie.” For Elyot, democracy refers to ancient history (Athens). Until the 17th century, “democracy” was mainly a learned word, referring specifically to a classical type of regime. Its use was consistent with the intellectual definition of the term, informed by etymology, history and philosophy. It was used by writers such as Robert Filmer, Thomas Hobbes and William Temple, who shared a quite negative opinion of the political value of democracy. While Locke’s Two Treatises on Civil Government adopted a neutral tone, defining “democracy” as the rule of the majority (Locke 1988: 354 [The Second Treatise, ch. X, 132]), Filmer equated “democracy” with the “power of the multitude,” and Thomas Hobbes in his De Corpore Politico, or the Elements of Law, Moral and Politics, recalled the fear of ancient philosophers such as Plato that “democracy is but the Government of a few Orators” (Naess, Christophersen & Kvalø 1956: 279-280). Hobbes also referred to “democracy” when discussing the traditional typology of regimes. As he explained in Leviathan (1991: 129):
When the Representative is One man, then is the Common-wealth a MONARCHY: when an Assembly of All that will come together, then it is a DEMOCRACY, or Popular Common-wealth: when an Assembly of a Part onely, then it is called an ARISTOCRACY. Other kind of Common-wealth there can be none: for either One, or More, or All, must have the Soveraign Power (which I have shewn to be indivisible) entire.

In *De Cive*, Hobbes’s definition of the three regimes is almost identical to the foregoing, although he specified that the democratic assembly is constituted of the bourgeois (Hobbes 1982: 167). The influential Scottish author David Hume specified that “[t]he republic of ATHENS was, I believe, the most extensive democracy, that we read of in history” (Hume 1994c: 191). Hume, however, praised neither democracy—“Democracies are turbulent” (1994d: 232)—nor Athens: “The ATHENIAN Democracy was such a tumultuous government as we can scarcely form a notion of it in the present age of the world” (1994b: 181). Still writing about Athenian democracy, he remarked (1994b: 191):

> it is well known, that popular assemblies in that city were always full of licence and disorder, notwithstanding the institutions and laws by which they were checked: How much more disorderly must they prove, where they form not the established constitution, but meet tumultuously on the dissolution of the ancient government, in order to give rise to a new one? How chimerical must it be to talk of a choice in any such circumstances?

William Blackstone’s work offers what seems to be the sole example—for that time—of a link between democracy, representation and election: “in a democracy there can be no exercise of sovereignty but by suffrage, which is the declaration of the people’s will ... . In England, where the people do not debate in a collective body, but by representation, the exercise of this sovereignty consists in the choice of representatives” (Lobrano 1994: 57 n. 20). But Blackstone’s attempt to link democracy to the concepts of representation and election was exceptional. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes brushed off the idea of a represented popular sovereignty: “it is absurd,” maintained Hobbes, “to think that a Soveraign Assembly, inviting the People of their Dominion to send up their Deputies, with power to make known their Advise, or Desires,
should therefore hold such Deputies, rather than themselves, for the absolute Representative of the people" (Hobbes 1991: 130).

The first speakers of English who settled in America were the Puritans who arrived in Massachusetts in 1629.\textsuperscript{1} The Puritans’ understanding of “democracy” was informed primarily by religious sources, but also by etymology, Greek ancient history and political philosophy. It seems that for the majority of them, democracy had a major flaw: it is not a type of regime mentioned in the Bible. John Winthrop declares in 1642 that “If we should change from a mixe aristocratie to a mere democratie, first, we should have no warrant in Scripture for it; there was no such government in Israel. ... a democracy is, among most civil nations, accounted the meanest and worst of all forms of government; and therefore in writers it is branded with reproachful epithets as bellua mutoru capitu, a monster, etc.” (Adler, ed. 1968: 169).\textsuperscript{2} Similarly, John Cotton, minister of the First Church in Boston, wrote in 1636 (in Adler, ed. 1968: 152-153)

It is better that the Commonwealth be fashioned to the setting forth of God’s house, which is His church, than to accomodate the Church frame to the civil state. Democracy, I do not conceive, that ever God did ordain as a fit government either for Church or commonwealth. If the people be governors, who shall be governed? As for monarchy and aristocracy, they are both of them clearly approved and directed in Scripture, yet so as referreth the sovereignty to Himself, and setteth up theocracy in both as the best form of government in the commonwealth as well as in the Church.

In the Puritan mind, democracy generally referred to chaos, irrationality and meanness. This was so because Puritans did not trust a free people, having in fact a pessimistic view of human nature. Nathaniel Ward, one of the first Puritans, claimed to be “neither Presbyterian nor plebsbyterian,” thereby making a strong statement against the plebs and betraying his agoraphobia. Cotton Mather’s diary contains expressions such as “tumultuous people,” “fickle Humors of the Populace,” “silly people,” “foolish people,” “people strangely and fiercely possessed of the Devil” (Laniel 1995: 48). It is worth noting that according to republicanism, mixed government is a necessity precisely because human nature may not be trustworthy.\textsuperscript{3}
Because of the geographical size of North America, opponents of the Puritan leadership could choose to resist and contest it, or simply move away. Roger Williams, for instance, arrived in Massachusetts in 1631 and was banished in 1636. He went on to found Rhode Island. This event is important, since it led to the first recorded pro-democratic declaration in America. Indeed, the Constitution of 1641 of Rhode Island (in Swindler, ed. 1979: 356-357) established “a DEMOCRACIE, or Popular Government; that is to say, It is in the Powre of the Body of Freemen, orderly assembled, or the major part of them, to make or constitute Just Lawes, by which they will be regulated, and to depute from among themselves such Ministers as shall see them fairly executed between Man and Man.” This is apparently the first explicitly democratic declaration in the English language, that is to say a declaration through which one proclaims a will to establish a “democracy.” Although the normative meaning is laudatory, the descriptive meaning still referred to the classical definition, i.e. an agora or “assembly.” In the same year, it was stated, at a meeting in Newport, Rhode Island, that “the government which this body politic doth attend unto ... is a democracy or popular government” (Jensen 1966: 270). The Colonial Records of Rhode Island contains the following statement made in 1647: “It is agreed, by this present assembly thus incorporate, and by this present act declared, that the forme of Government established in Providence Plantations is Democraticall; that is to say, a Government held by ye free and voluntarie consent of all, or the greater parte of the free inhabitants” (Laniel 1995: 49 and Jensen 1966: 270).4 Democracy was not incompatible with order and the making of “Just Lawes.” The text referred to “Freemen, orderly assembled,” in clear contradiction with the agoraphobic penchant of the time, that equated democracy and popular assemblies at the agora with chaos.

John Wise, from the town of Ipswich, Massachusetts, was another openly pro-democratic person. When talking of the motherland in his book A Vindication of the Government of New England Churches. (1717), he claimed (Adler, ed. 1968: 332) that the English Constitution in particular, and “mixed governments” in general, “which
have] a regular monarchy settled upon a noble democracy as [their] basis” are "possibly the fairest in the World.” According to Wise, the Bible does not provide any clear hints with regard to the best form of government. But this did not prevent Wise from writing that “if Christ has settled any form of power in His church, He has done it for His church’s safety and for the benefit of every member. ... And it is as plain as daylight, there is no species of government like a democracy to attain this end” (Adler, ed. 1968: 333). Finally, Wise made it clear that what he means by “democracy” was the direct rule by the people, or, as he himself put it, “when the sovereign power is lodged in a council consisting of all members, and where every member has the privilege of a vote” (Adler, ed. 1968: 331 [emphasis added]). In a democracy, according to Wise, “the right of determining all matters relating to the public safety is actually placed in a general assembly of the whole people” (Adler, ed. 1968: 331 [emphasis added]).

Despite the cases of Williams and Wise, it seems that pro-democratic positions were uncommon during the colonial era. Moreover, the derogatory force of the term “democracy” was so strong that some people refused to have the political regime they were living in identified as democratic. For example, John Cotton, felt the need to confuse Britons who maintained that Massachusetts was a democracy because the people of Massachusetts were allowed to directly elect their governor. In a letter dated 1636, Cotton explained that there is no democracy where the people do not rule directly. Referring to Jean Bodin, Cotton wrote (Mayo, ed. 1936: 414 and 417):

thought it be status popularis, where a people choose their owne governors; yet the government is not a democracy, if it be administred, not by the people, but by the governors, whether one (for then it is a monarchy, though elective) or by many, for then (as you know) it is aristocracy. In which respect it is, that church government is iustly denied ... to be democratical, though the people choose their owne officers and rulers.

Here, Cotton is in tune with the intellectual definition of “democracy,” informed by etymology, history and philosophy. This is also true of the minister John Davenport, who declared in 1699 (1907: 6) that by choosing representatives, the people do not
“surrender so much their right and liberty, to their Rulers, as their Power.” Sharing this analysis, Governor John Winthrop (in Lokken 1959: 578) remarked in 1639 that

when the people have chosen men to be their rulers, and to make their laws, and bound themselves by oath to submit thereto, now to combine together (a lesser part of them) in a public petition to have any order repealed, which is not repugnant to the law of God, savors of resisting an ordinance of God; for the people, having deputed others, have no power to make or alter laws, but are to be subject.

Such comments echoes statements made by influential political philosophers such as Spinoza (1951) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Social Contract, bk. III, ch. XV).

The word “democracy” was rarely uttered in the years before the outbreak of the War of Independence. When it was used, it generally evoked disapproval. In the Pennsylvania Gazette of March 1734, for instance, one may read that arbitrary power “constituted a design almost as wicked as was the attempt to change the English constitution into a democracy” (Beeman 1992: 428). Or it had a neutral and descriptive function. In 1764, James Otis adopted the traditional view on political regimes in the following rather didactic explanation: “For the sake of the unlettered reader ‘tis noted that monarchy means the power of one great man, aristocracy and oligarchy that of a few, and democracy that of all men” (a footnote in the original pamphlet, in James Otis [1965: 427]). Writing more specifically about democracy, Otis noted, “If both those powers [legislation & execution] are retained in the hands of the many, where nature seems to have placed them originally, the government is a simple democracy or a government of all over all. This can be administered only by establishing it as a first principle that the votes of the majority shall be taken as the voice of the whole” (Otis 1965: 427). On April 23, 1764, the Newport Mercury stated that democracy was a kind of primitive political system: “[W]hen its members are few and virtuous, and united together by some peculiar ideas of freedom or religion the whole power may be lodged with the people, and the government be purely democratical.” According to the newspaper, historical examples show that the people “have been incapable, collectively, of acting with any degree of moderation or wisdom”; moreover,
apparently due to human fate, as they become larger and larger, political communities are no longer fit for democracy (Main 1968: 322 n. 2). Hence, it seems that in the mid-18th century, it was the intellectual tradition (etymology, history and philosophy) that most influenced how Americans understood and used the term “democracy.” With regard to politics, it is not surprising that "democracy" was viewed with suspicion (or rejection). The administration was, after all, colonial and the Crown held the ultimate power. Thus, in such a political context, for a political actor to claim to be a partisan of democracy would have resulted in his marginalization. However, the dramatic events of the War of Independence would not change this situation.

The War of Independence

The historian Edward Countryman correctly states that the movement toward independence was very heterogeneous,6 an opinion shared by Gordon S. Wood, who remarks that the “American Revolution was actually many revolutions at once” (1969: 75). Indeed, there were thirteen colonies, each of which had their own political organisation (more or less self-governing institutions) (Ketchman 1986: 1). These colonies extended along the Atlantic seaboard for more than fifteen hundred miles, each with its particular level of urbanization and economic development, not to mention the diversity of the social structures, which included slaves, women, natives, etc.. Several philosophical, political, economic and cultural causes may be pointed to as having lead to the War of Independence (see, for instance, with regard to religion Morgan 1968: 235-274). Yet, the thirst for democracy is certainly not one of them.

During the War of Independence, almost no one was a self-proclaimed “democrat.” In 1776, Samuel West delivering an Election day sermon before the Council and House of Representatives of Boston spoke of “democracy” in a quite laudatory manner. He named three regimes—“a pure democracy, aristocracy, monarchy”—maintaining that “They have all their advantages and disadvantages,
and when they are properly administered may, any of them, answer the design of
civil government tolerably" (West 1983: 420). Such a positive attitude toward
democracy was quite unusual. Since democracy evoked irrationality, tyranny and
chaos, to be labelled a “democrat” was insulting and the term was mainly used as
weapon to attack political opponents. In other words, to label someone “democrat”
was a way to undermine his political credibility. It is not surprising to find that
Loyalists referred to “democracy” in speaking with distaste of the Patriots and their
political endeavour (Hanson 1988: 169). For example, the Royal Governor of North
Carolina denounced Samuel Johnston for his “bent to Democracy which he has
manifested upon all occasions” (G.S. Wood 1969: 83). Already in 1768, Thomas Gage
wrote to Viscount Hillsborough to complain about Boston because “the constitution
of the province leans so much to democracy, that the governor has not the power to
remedy the disorders which happen in it” (Pole 1962: 33). In the early 1770s, a debate
arose in the press about democracy. The Tories' goal was to undermine the
advocates of a balanced constitution by labelling them “democrats,” knowing that
such a tag carried a derogatory charge (Labaree 1959: 140). Forced by such a strategy
to defend himself and his political project, John Adams took a surprising stand in
favour of “democracy.” In 1775, Adams refuted the argument of the Tory Daniel
Leonard who condemned the Whigs for promoting the tyranny of the people. Adams
maintained in his Novanglus and Massachusettsensis that “a democratical despotism is a
contradiction in terms” (G.S. Wood 1969: 62-63). This was a “position [Adams] was to
reverse in a very short time,” remarks historian Elisha P. Douglass (1965: 18). Indeed,
Adams soon became a self-declared anti-democrat. In a letter to John Taylor, Adams
wrote: “In reality, the word ‘democracy’ signifies nothing more nor less than a nation
of people without any government at all ... . Remember, democracy never lasts long.
It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There never was a democracy that did
not commit suicide” (Laniel 1995: 65). Hence, mainstream Patriots did not hesitate to
use the term “democracy” quite inconsistently, defending “democracy” when they
were accused by Loyalists of being democrats, then condemning the radical Patriots for being in favour of “democracy.” In order to distinguish themselves from the radical fringe, mainstream Patriots such as J. Adams opposed “democracy” to “republic”: “I was always for a free republic,” claim Adams (in Bailyn 1967: 282 n. 50), “not a democracy, which is [an] arbitrary, tyrannical, bloody, cruel, and intolerable ... government.”

The terms “republic” and “republicanism” embodied the Patriots’ ideals and were uttered to stimulate enthusiasm. It seems at first glance that people were confused regarding the true meaning of “republic.” This confusion was echoed by John Adams, who told Mercy Warren, tongue in cheek, that he had “never understood” what republicanism meant and that he believed that “no other man ever did or ever will.” For Adams, republicanism “may signify any thing, every thing, or nothing” (in 1807 [G.S. Wood 1969: 49 and 1993: 96]). Alexander Hamilton also remarked that “Republicanism” was “used in various senses” (G.S. Wood 1993: 95). Yet, these quips must be taken with a grain of salt, since Adams and Hamilton were both self-proclaimed republicans. The same Adams who had “never understood” what a republic was, could nonetheless affirm that “the best Governments of the world have been mixed. The Republics of Greece, Rome Carthage were all mixed Governments” (Reinhold 1984: 100 [emphasis added]). In his Thoughts on Government, published in Boston in 1776, Adams stated that “They [Sidney, Harrington, Locke, Milton, Nedham, Neville, Burnet, and Hoadly] will convince any candid mind, that there is no good government but what is republican.” Again, Adams who pretended not to know what a republic was, explained that “the very definition of a republic is ‘an empire of laws, and not of men’,” and he specified that “a republic is the best of government” (J. Adams 1983: 403). “I [am] ... a republican on principle,” wrote Adams (in Reinhold 1984: 97) to Lafayette in 1782, adding, “Almost every thing that is estimable in civil life has originated under such government .... A new country can be planted only by such a government.” Hamilton, too, was able to understand what a
"republic" was, since, just before releasing his first Federalist Papers, he wrote that in them he intended to discuss, among other issues, "The conformity of the proposed Constitution to the true principles of republican government" (in Madison, Hamilton & Jay 1987: 89). Elsewhere, he stated: "the Roman republic attained the utmost height of human greatness" (Reinhold 1984: 98 [emphasis added]). Thus, and despite some confusion, it seems that for mainstream Patriots, the term "republic" was highly praised, and it was a label with which they wanted to be identified.

More than anyone else, it was Thomas Paine who gave republicanism its legitimacy in America. For Paine, the term "republic" does not signify a specific form of government, but refers rather to the spirit of the political system. To the question "what is a Republic?" Paine answered: "The word republic means the public good, or the good of the whole, in contradistinction to the despotic form, which makes the good of the sovereign, or of one man, the only object of government" (Hanson 1985: 60). By adopting this definition, Americans demonstrated how closely they were tied to their classical heritage since "Republic" comes from the Latin res publica, which means "of the public" or, in other words, commonwealth (Hanson 1985: 60). As in the case of "democracy," the etymology of the term "republic" is consistent with ancient history, as well as with classical and modern republicanism.

Yet, "republic" was not only about the common good, it was also about representing popular sovereignty. As Paine declared, "By republicanism, I ... understand simply a government by representation" (Morantz 1971: 23). James Madison, referring explicitly to the confusion between the terms "republic" and "democracy," stated that "Under the confusion of names, it has been an easy task to transfer to a republic observations applicable to a democracy only; and among others, the observation that it can never be established but among a small number of people, living within a small compass of territory." "The true distinction between these forms [democracy and republic]," explained Madison, "... is that in a democracy the people meet and exercise the government in person; in a republic they assemble and administer it by
their representatives and agents. A democracy, consequently, must be confined to a small spot. A republic may be extended over a large region” (Madison, Hamilton & Jay 1987: 141 [emphasis added]). In his famous Federalist Paper number X, Madison similarly explained that “a pure democracy [means] a society consisting of a small number of citizens, who assemble and administer the government in person,” while “A republic [means] a government in which the scheme of representation takes place” (Madison, Hamilton & Jay 1987: 126 [emphasis added]). Similarly, the anonymous author of The People the Best Governor: Or a Plan of Government Founded on the Just Principles of Natural Freedom, published in 1776, clearly explained that there was no room for representation in a democracy, or that representatives in a democracy held almost no power. Athens was put forward as a model to be copied: “God gave mankind freedom by nature, made every man equal to his neighbour, and has virtually enjoined them, to govern themselves by their own laws. ... The people best know their own wants and necessities, and therefore, are best able to rule themselves. Tent makers, cobblers and common tradesmen, composed the legislature at Athens” ("The People the Best Governor" 1983: 391). Further, discussing representation, the anonymous author stated that “Agreeable to this observation was the government at Athens: The council consisted of 400 persons, and in a legislative capacity, could only advise, and prepare matters for the consideration of the people” ("The People ..." 1983: 393). If the anonymous writer seems to side with democracy and the agora, mainstream and very influential political actors and commentators such as Madison praised representation. This is not surprising, since he was a representative himself. To establish a democracy—a regime where “the people meet and exercise the government in person”—would have resulted in loss of political power for Madison and his colleagues.

This anti-democratic element of the Patriotic leaders' discourse explains in part why there is no mention of “democracy” in the Declaration of Independence of 1776, in the Constitution of 1787, or in the Constitutions of any individual States (Laniel
Similarly, no names of newspapers included the term “democracy” or its cognate before 1800, which supports the argument that the term did not have a high value from a marketing point of view (Morantz 1971). Even the regular soldiers of the Continental army did not identify themselves with “democracy”; their motivations were mainly economic—money or land. They were also moved by patriotic feelings as opposed to democratic aspirations (Royster 1979: 373-378). Even such a radical thinker as Thomas Paine was against democracy, mainly for demographic reasons: the decline of the Greek democracies was, for Paine, due to the enlargement of their population (Foner ed. 1945: 369). Dealing with the same issue, the Essex Result (1983: 496), written in 1778, stated:

Was the number of the people so small, that the whole could meet together without inconvenience, the opinion of the majority would be more easily known. But, besides the inconvenience of assembling such members, no great advantages could follow. Sixty thousand people could not discuss with candor, and determine with deliberation. Tumults, riots, and murder would be the result. But the impracticability of forming such an assembly, renders needless to make any further observations.

John Adams, in his Thoughts on Government (1983: 403), expressed a similar idea: “In a large society, inhabiting an extensive country, it is impossible that the whole should assemble to make laws.” Yet, it is up to human beings to define the borders of political communities. It is possible to reduce or enlarge them in accordance with political objectives. In America, for instance, the political leaders created a large and centralized federation at the end of the 1780s. Despite this nation-building, the opponents of “democracy” referred extensively to the geographic-demographic argument (even though some of the colonies at the time were no bigger, demographically speaking, than ancient Athens). It was also believed that public assemblies were incongruous with rational and wise decision-making. There was apparently no other solution than to advocate a representative system with assemblies, as Landon Carter already noted in his diary in 1734 regarding the debates.
in the House of Burgesses in Virginia: “The first institution of a Representative was for
the avoiding the Confusion of a Multitude in Assembly” (Ward 1991: 200 and
regarding town-meetings, see Brown 1955: 78-99). Right or wrong, it is clear that such
an argument was broadly used by the members of representative assemblies
themselves to legitimate their own social and political function. No wonder, then, that
mainstream American Patriots openly declared themselves to be opposed to
“democracy.”

Parliamentarians Seeking More Power

Long before independence, America had been the arena of parliamentarism, i.e.
a battle lead by members of assemblies to extend the power of their own institution.
Through this political struggle, individuals like John and Samuel Adams, James Otis,
Benjamin Franklin, Daniel Dulany, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick
Henry and John Rutledge became seasoned to politics. Before Independence, each
colony had its own assembly which enjoyed broad legislative autonomy. During the
last decades before Independence, almost every assembly except the Maryland House
of Delegates and the New Hampshire House of Assembly had seen its powers
increased (Greene 1968: 86, 88, 92). Nonetheless, local politicians could not abide the
Crown naming officers in an arbitrary fashion. The clash was also about the right of
Americans to be properly represented in England (Greene 1968: 95 and 100). The
relations between America and England became more tense after 1763 precisely
because new bills and taxes voted in England clashed with the wish for self-
government flourishing at that time in the assemblies of America. This clash lead to
the American War of Independence, understood as dramatically progressive by its
contemporaries, even though by our contemporary standards, it was more a war of
decolonization than a revolution. Even if some specialists like Gordon S. Wood
defend the thesis of the radicalism of the American revolution (Wood 1993 [especially

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the "introduction" pp. 3-8], they must still confess that it could easily have been much more radical (regarding, for instance, women's and Native's right, slavery, property laws and political institutions). The conservatism of the leaders of the Patriotic movement is obvious in the way they cherished the British Constitution, and also in their concern for preserving the current political institutions such as the assembly in which they were already sitting. Emblematic of this respect for Britain was George Washington's ritual toast to the King every night at his mess headquarters in Cambridge, before he read Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, in January 1776 (Morison 1976: 5-6). The Patriot Benjamin Church also expressed his shameless veneration for the British Constitution when he declared: "The Constitution of England, I revere to a degree of idolatry" (Lokken 1959: 574). According to James Otis, the British Constitution is "nearest the idea of perfection" (Lokken 1959: 573). In 1782, Zabdiel Adams explained in his *Election Sermon* (1983: 541) "Three different modes of civil rule have been prevalent among the nations of the earth, a *monarchy*, *aristocracy*, and *democracy*; and indeed *some* have a combination or mixture of all three, as England. This has been esteemed by enlightened foreigners to be the happiest of any other." And he added, in a footnote: "There was formerly a proper balance of power between the three constituent branches of the British constitution; and at that time it was a noble one. It had the strength and dispatch of Monarchy; the dignity and wisdom of Aristocracy, and the freedom of Democracy all combined in one." John Adams, in his *Defence of the Constitutions of the United States*, maintained that the English Constitution is "the most stupendous fabric of human invention ... Not the formation of languages, not the whole art of navigation and shipbuilding does more honor to the human understanding than this system of government" (Adair 1968: 403).

Regarding the second aspect of the Patriots' conservatism—their aim to secure the power of the assembly they were members of—Alexander Hamilton explained: "Our separation from the mother country cannot be called a *revolution* ... There have
been no changes in the laws, no one’s interests have been interfered with, everyone remains in his place, and all that is altered is that the seat of government is changed” (in Morison 1976: 17 and see also Maier 1997: 30 [emphasis added]). The political system established after the American War of Independence was almost identical to the political system of the colonial era. Even more troubling: turncoat Loyalists came back to participate in the new republican political life (G.S. Wood 1969: 167).17

Politically speaking, the struggle of the American parliamentarians against the motherland had political and philosophical foundations similar to those of the parliamentarian rebellions of England in the seventeenth century, and of Geneva in the 1760s. Ideologically speaking, elected political actors claimed that their struggle was the people’s. Assemblymen referred to the fiction (Morgan 1989) of the representation of the people’s sovereignty so as to gain legitimacy for their struggle. Yet, mainstream Patriots mainly wished to increase the power of the institution they were members of, and consequently, their own power. Since representation and democracy were two opposite concepts, almost no Americans understood, felt, or claimed that “democracy” was what motivated them to embrace the Patriotic cause. “Democracy” was neither the dream of mainstream Patriots nor the name they gave to their dream. As a matter of fact, and despite their claim to represent the people, mainstream Patriots opposed the political and economic struggle of the radical masses.

A closer look at their artful manipulation of the concept of representation can throw light on mainstream Patriots’ opposition to “democracy.” While fighting against England, the Patriots claimed that “virtual representation” was not good enough. In the context of the colonial empire, virtual representation meant that Americans were virtually represented in the British Parliament, although they did not send any elected representatives to sit on their behalf on the benches of the Parliament. Advocates of virtual representation claimed that American interests were represented since the Members of Parliament aimed for the common good. In the same
vein, it was argued that women's interests were virtually represented by the Members of Parliament. Thomas Whateley explained that "None are actually, all are virtually represented; for every member of Parliament sits in the House, not as a Representative of his own Constituents, but as one of the August Assembly by which all the Commons of Great Britain are represented" (Morone 1990: 39). American Patriots contested this opinion (Pocock 1993: 261).

In his pamphlet Consideration on the Propriety of Imposing Taxes in the British Colonies, Daniel Dulany (in Douglass 1965: 46) stated that there is a real common interest between the representative and the represented only if the electors and the elected are from the same vicinity. John Adams, sharing this idea, declared in 1776 that "The representative assembly ... should be in miniature an exact portrait of the people at large. It should think, feel, reason and act like them." (However, a few years later, Adams would state the exact opposite: "The proposition that [the people] are the best keeper of their liberties is not true. They are the worst conceivable, they are no keepers at all. They can neither act, judge, think, or will.") (Morone 1990: 33). Defence of a representative system even pushed Alexander Hamilton to use the word "democracy" in a laudatory manner, although in a private letter. Writing to Gouverneur Morris in May 19th, 1777, Hamilton explained (in Naess, Christophersen & Kvalø 1956: 101):

> When the deliberative or judicial powers are vested wholly or partly in the collective body of the people, you must expect error, confusion, and instability. But a representative democracy, where the right of election is well secured and regulated, and the exercise of the legislative, executive, and judiciary authorities is vested in select persons, chosen really and not nominally by the people, will, in my opinion, be most likely to be happy, regular, and durable.

Yet, after Independence, the core of the political system was still the assemblies directly inherited from the colonial era. Ironically, American Patriots, after challenging the theory of virtual representation when it was applied to the colonies, were quite happy to apply it to women, natives, slaves and the poor, who were allowed to neither vote nor to be elected. Mainstream American Patriots believed that active
citizenship—i.e. having the right to be elected or to vote—should only be given to independent individuals (E.M. Wood 1994: 69). Such an argument came from republicanism, whereby to be independent meant to own property. According to republicanism, those who have to sell their labour force and time in order to live are not independent. Hence John Adams wrote to James Sullivan, “Such is the fragility of the human heart, that very few men who have no property, have any judgement of their own” (May 26, 1776 [in Morantz 1971: 84]). Women but working men as well were seen as too easily influenced by the people exerting economic control over them. They have “no wills of their own” (Essex County Mass. 1787 and see also G.S. Wood 1993: 178-179) and their votes may therefore too easily be bought through financial and economic advantages and bribery. On the other hand, property owners were not only financially autonomous, they were the ones who more heavily felt the burden of taxes; because they were owners, they were more likely to have a long term understanding of political and social issues (Douglass 1965: 28-30; G.S. Wood 1993: 106; Zagarri 1994: 652). In any case, the representative was supposed to be an extraordinary man or, in the terms of that time, a virtuous man (J. Adams 1983: 402), which meant educated, wise, witty and disinterested enough to stand for the common good rather than for specific local and individual interests (with respect to the influence on the classics regarding "virtue," see Reinhold 1984: 142-173 [ch. V “The Classics and the Quest for Virtue in Eighteenth-Century America”). For John Adams, “Public Virtue is the only Foundation of Republics. There must be a positive Passion for the public good, the public Interest” (Reinhold 1984: 98). His view was shared by the anonymous author of The People the Best Governors (1983: 397), who stated that “virtue is the principle of a republican government.”

In theory, anyone might be virtuous. Yet, it was those well-to-do who seem to have had a legitimate to claim to virtue. Not a very new belief, indeed, since Aristotle had already stated clearly that “the rich are regarded by common opinion as holding the position of gentlemen” (Aristotle 1979: 176 [Politics IV, 1294a]). Several sources
associate class considerations with political skills. According to a Marylander, members of the house should be "ABLE IN ESTATE, ABLE IN KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING" rather than "The Creature that is able to keep a little Shop, rate the Price of an Ell of Osnabrigs, or, at most, to judge of the Quality of a Leaf of Tobacco" (Maryland Gazette, Dec. 3, 1767). In December, 1768, William Smith, from New York, argued that "the better Class of People" should hold offices so as to introduce that "Spirit of Subordination essential to good Government" (Main 1968: 323). On June 9 of the same year, Fabricus declared: "it is right that men of birth and fortune, in every government that is free, should be invested with power, and enjoy higher honours than the people" (Main 1991: 2).

A few radicals such as the anonymous author of The People the Best Governors condemned the idea of putting political power in the hands of the rich. Debating the link between citizenship and estate, he said ("The People ..." 1983: 397):

This notion of an estate has the directed tendency to set up the avaricious over the heads of the poor, though the latter are ever so virtuous. Let it not be said in future generations, that money was made by the founders of the American states, an essential qualification in the rulers of a free people. It was what never was known among the Ancients.

Yet, such a concern was rarely expressed. It was common sense in those days that the rich were also the wise and the virtuous. As the historians Richard R. Beeman (1992) and William F. Willingham (1973) have shown, "deference" was a very widespread attitude (see also Maier 1972: 28; Pocock 1976; Schudson 1998: 11-16 and 19-24). To describe the non-egalitarian relations of that time, Willingham used the concept of "Deference democracy," that he (1973: 401) defined as "an integrated structure of political relations and functions that was essentially elitist and was based on an organic, hierarchical view of society." Deference was inspired by higher education and economical superiority. Well educated and rich individuals were seen as worthy of deference, in a well-known psychological effect of merging qualities: a person is rich, so he must be intelligent, virtuous, etc. (Beauvois 1994). Expressing
without shame his contempt regarding the common folks, the New Yorker Morris remarked during the war that "The mob begin to think and reason ... Poor reptiles, it is with them a vernal morning, they are struggling to cast off their winter's slough, they bask in the sunshine, and ere soon they will bite ... . I see and I see it with fear and trembling, we will be under the worst of all possible dominions ... —a riotous mob" (Douglass 1965: 57). In the same spirit, one commented about the soldiers of New England in 1776: "they are composed of people of the smallest property, and perhaps of the least virtue. ... Anything above the condition of a clown, in the regiments we came in contact with, was truly a rarity" (Laniel 1995: 119 n. 1 [emphasis added]). Expressions like "better people", "first citizens", "the best", in opposition to "meaner", "lower", "base", or "worst," were commonly used during these days. John Adams, for instance, opposed "simple men" to "gentlemen" (Laniel 1995: 120).

The ending of colonial patronage did not imply, thus, that every individual would have an equal opportunity to climb the steps of the political world at an equal pace. Every town and state had its economic and political clique holding almost a monopoly over major offices because of their well-to-do background (Beeman 1992: 403 and Willingham 1973: 401-422). Many of the wealthy were quite concerned by rumours and news about activities of egalitarian radicals and shared Gouverneur Morris's opinion: "Life and Liberty were generally said to be of more value than property. An accurate view of the matter would, nevertheless, prove that property was the main object of society" (Morantz 1971: 85 n. 74). In a letter sent to Philadelphia by the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts in June 11 1775, the link between the establishment of a civil government and egalitarian policies is clearly mentioned and denounced: "There are in many parts of the colony ... alarming symptoms of the abatement of the sense in the minds of some people of the
After Independence: Economic Struggle and So-called "Democratic" Despotism

The war against Great Britain was seen by the radical wing of the Patriotic movement as a good opportunity to seek economic and fiscal reforms not only in relations between the colonies and the motherland, but also with regard to the distribution of wealth and property in America itself (Jensen 1966: 272). John Adams talked of "the rage for innovation" in describing this tendency of radical Patriots, who wanted more than only a external facelift to their political system (Jensen 1966: 275). In May 1776, Landon Carter from Virginia wrote to Washington: "I need only tell you of one definition that I heard of Independency: It was expected to be a form of government that, by being independent of the rich men, every man would then be able to do as he pleased" (Jensen 1966: 276). Even more dramatically, Edward Rutledge, wrote to John Jay in June 1776 (Laniel 1995: 131-132):

I dread their low Cunning, and those levelling Principles which Men without Character and without Fortune in general possess, which are so captivating to the lower class of Mankind, and which will occasion such a fluctuation of Property as to introduce the greater disorder ... We must keep the Staff in our Hands; for I am confident if surrendered into the Hands of others a most pernicious use will be made of it.

Such fears for political stability and the security of private property were fuelled by declarations made by radical Patriots where it was maintained that the war against Great Britain offered a good opportunity to fight at the same time against the "Foreign or Domestic Oligarchy" (Laniel 1995: 63 n. 20). Despite deference and widespread respect for private property, some Patriots were ready to pass laws in order to limit the amount of land an individual could possess and to regulate against luxury and expensive dress (G.S. Wood 1969: 70). In the same egalitarian spirit, a

sacredness of private property, which is plainly assignable to the want of civil government" (Douglass 1965: 146 [emphasis added]).
preliminary version of the Declaration of Rights of Pennsylvania had an article stipulating "that an enormous Proportion of Property vested in a few Individuals is dangerous to the Rights, and destructive of the Common Happiness of Mankind" and that therefore, it must be the concern of the state to prevent it by laws (G.S. Wood 1969: 89 and 1993: 234). Expressing a similar idea, Thomas Paine wrote, "The protection of man's person is more sacred than the protection of property. If property is to be made the criterion, it is a total departure from every moral principle of liberty, because it is attaching right to mere matter, and making man the agent of the matter" (Forner ed. 1945 [vol. II]: 287).

Among the few Americans who took the opportunity of the War of Independence to advocate economic equality, some openly referred to their program as the embodiment of the "democratic" ideal. For instance, the radicals of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, instructed their elected delegates in November 1776 to write a Constitution for the State, that it was to be a "simple democracy, or as near it is possible." Moreover, they must "oppose everything that leans to aristocracy or power in the hands of the rich and chief men exercised to the oppression of the poor" (Jensen 1966: 278). This is a telling quotation, since it merges the acclamatory utterance of the term "democracy" with a clear concern for the poor's interests. In other words, it encapsulates the belief at the time (consistent with history and philosophy) that democracy is the rule of the poor.

Yet, even within the radical fringe, the word "democracy" was rarely used, probably because it had such a bad reputation. The anonymous author of To the People of North America on the Different Kinds of Government remarked shrewdly "that the mentioning a democracy constantly excites ... the idea of anarchy" (Jensen 1966: 276). Already in May 1774, Gouverneur Morris writing to John Penn after a political meeting in New York identified "democratic principles" with the thirst for radical change he had witnessed among the crowd: "I beheld my fellow-citizens very accurately counting all their chickens, not only before any of them were hatched, but
before above one half of the eggs were laid. In short, they fairly contended about the future forms of our government, whether it should be founded upon aristocratic or democratic principles” (Jensen 1966: 273).

After Independence, a number of Patriot leaders shared the feeling that a too "democratic" spirit had blossomed up on American soil. Charles Lee, who was obviously taking the issue with a grain of salt, stated that "We have neither Monarchy, Aristocracy, nor Democracy; if it is anything, it is rather a Mac-O'-cracy by which I mean that a Banditti of low Scotch Irish are the Lords Paramount” (Laniel 1995: 70-71). But Lee's ironic attitude is not representative of the spirit of the time. Indeed, many were those genuinely concerned about the new political context. The Articles of Confederation, adopted in 1777 and ratified in 1781, allowed one vote to each State within the confederation, and declared that nine votes were necessary in order to adopt any major resolution. To amend the Articles, unanimity was required. It was therefore quite easy for a few states to block the work of the confederation. Moreover, there were several elected political actors who were not seriously committed to continental politics. For instance, only five states were represented at the 1786 Congress of Annapolis. Moreover, the lack of trade regulations opened the door to bitter commercial rivalries between states, such as that between Virginia and Maryland with regard to the Potomac river. The rivalry among New York, New Hampshire and Connecticut regarding the territory of what would become Vermont went so far that it degenerated into armed skirmishes. Having no money, the Continental Congress was unable to pay all the soldiers who had participated in the War of Independence. The veterans returned home with certificates rather than real money and became easy prey for speculators who traded the certificates for less than their real value. The Continental Congress was also unable to control inflation. The lack of gold and silver forced several states to print more paper money, and such a policy led to inflation. Yet, some state legislatures (Massachusetts' for instance) asked their citizens to pay the tax in specie. Such an attitude was the cause of the Shays'
rebellion, a revolt of several hundred debtors of Massachusetts in September 1786. Named after the leader Daniel Shays, a former officer of the Continental army, the Shays’ rebellion would symbolize in the minds of mainstream politicians the failure of the Articles of the Confederation. The rebellion showed that the lack of fiscal power undermined the ability of the Continental Congress to enforce military control over the territory. Finally, on the international scene, England took advantage of the weakness of the Union: redcoats occupied Detroit despite the fact that, according to a treaty, the city was supposed to have been transferred to the control of the United States. And the Mississippi was still controlled by the Spaniards (Madison, Hamilton & Jay 1987: 146-147).

For many people such as James McHenry, speaking in 1787 to the Maryland House of Delegates, America was suffering from the “disorders of a democracy” (Farrand, ed 1966b: 146). In keeping with already existing common practice, several Republicans used the term “democracy” as a derogatory tag to condemn the newly independent States that they believed were enforcing overly egalitarian laws. As was the case during the War of Independence, it was mainly the economic consequences of a so-called democratic regime that lead mainstream politicians to condemn it. Whether there was a real economic struggle in America may be open to debate (Hoerder 1979: 65-80), but one thing is clear and is based on hard evidence: mainstream republicans used the economic argument interwoven with an anti-democratic discourse to criticize their foes and to legitimize their own political positions. It seems that the mainstream politicians over-reacted—or simply deluded the people with their fear of democracy—since the dogma of equal opportunity and the sacredness of private property had never been under serious attack. Nevertheless, both the egalitarian pressure and the newly independent institutions were associated with the excesses of “democracy.”

The struggle between the well-to-do and those seeking to limit property holding was related, true to the spirit of the time, with the anti-debt movement (Nash
which often resulted in a shut-down of the courts and bloody uprisings (Douglass 1965: 18-20). It is worth recalling that one of the first reforms of Solon, the Athenian legislator of the late 590s B.C. and one of the midwives of Athenian democracy, was to abolish the practice of enslaving individuals unable to pay their debts (Sinclair 1988: 1-2). In America, debts did not lead to enslavement. However, indebtedness was a widespread calamity, resulting from inflation and the irresponsible or inexistent use of paper money, and led, eventually, to jail. Indebtedness affected many aristocrats of the South, merchants of the North, farmers from everywhere and, of course, poor people of the lower class. The turbulence resulting from the war against England offered a good opportunity for many debtors to express their resentment and to try to rid themselves of this financial burden. Already in the Fall of 1775, John Adams' discussion with a “horse jockey” reveals how debtors regarded the dramatic events then taking place as a very particular solution to their financial problems: “As soon as he saw me, he came up to me, and his first Salutation to me was ‘Oh! Mr. Adams what great Things have you and your Colleagues done for us! We can never be grateful enough to you. There are no Courts of Justice now in this Province, and I hope there never will be another!’” And Adams told himself: “Are these the Sentiments of such people? And how many of them are there in the Country? Half the Nation for what I know: for half the Nation are Debtors. If the Power of the Country should get into such hands, and there is great danger that it will, to what purpose have We sacrificed our Time, health and every Thing else?” (Morison 1976: 6). Adams' reflections show his fear of an egalitarian popular regime, a fear which appears elsewhere in his writings (for instance: "The moment the idea is admitted into society, that property is not as sacred as the laws of God, and that there is not a force of law and public justice to protect it, anarchy and tyranny commence" [Roberts 1994: 183]). Adams feared that the people with “no property” will usurp “the rights of the one or two millions who have.”

James Madison was another influential patriot who claimed that the rule of the majority, or

In order to neutralize “democracy” and to protect the wealthy, Adams and Madison promoted balanced government (equilibrium among the three orders: crown, aristocracy, demos) and separation of powers (legislative, executive, judicial). In his Thoughts on Government, John Adams attacked firmly the idea of unicameralism. He wrote, for instance: “I think a people cannot be long free, nor ever happy, whose government is in one assembly”; “A single assembly is liable to all the vices, follies, and frailties of an individual”; “A single assembly is apt to be avaricious”; “A single assembly is apt to grow ambitious, and after a time will not hesitate to vote itself perpetual. This was one fault of the Long Parliament; but more remarkably of Holland”; “A single assembly ... would make arbitrary laws for their own interest” (J. Adams 1983: 404). Samuel and John Adams wanted to establish just such a balanced constitution, including a strong executive power held by a governor as head of a council having an absolute veto over the legislature (Douglass 1965: 27). François Jean Marquis de Chastellux encountered Samuel Adams in the early 1780s. He wrote in his Travels in North America 1780-1782 what Adams had told him about the political life in America, including the following (de Chastellux 1987: 167-168):

The house of representatives which form the legislative body, and the true sovereign, are the people themselves represented by their delegates. Thus far the government is purely democratical; but it is the permanent and enlightened will of the people which should constitute law, and not the passions and sallies to which they are, too, subject. It is necessary to moderate their first emotions, and bring them to the test of enquiry and reflection. This is the important business entrusted with the governor and senate. Thus the democracy is pure and entirely in the assembly, which represents the sovereign; and the aristocracy, or, if you will, the optimacy, is to be found only in the moderating power.

John Adams himself would write the constitution of Massachusetts in 1780 and his book would influence the constitutions of North Carolina, Virginia, New Jersey, and New York. In fact, the majority of political actors and commentators were in favour of bicameralism. Bicameralism was openly presented as a regime in which the rich
would control the Upper house in order to limit the democratic branch. The draft of a Constitution for the state of Massachusetts made in 1778 and known under the label of the Essex Result (1983: 511), states that “In electing the members for this body [the Upper house], let the representation of property be attended to.” To make sure that private property would be protected, the text specified that “in a free government, a law affecting the person and property of its members, is not valid, unless it has the consent of a majority of the members, which majority should include those, who hold a major part of the property in the state” (496). It added (492-493):

If the law affects only the persons of the members, the consent of a majority of any members is sufficient. If the law affects the property only, the consent of those who hold a majority of the property is enough. If it affects, (as it will very frequently, if not always,) both the person and property, the consent of a majority of the members, and of those members also, who hold a majority of the property is necessary.

Several political actors and commentators lamented that in the newly independent States, the Lower houses were too powerful and too much under the control of common folks. Quincy Adams, for instance, writing in 1787 about a request to abolish the Senate of Massachusetts, stated that the “democratical branch” (the Lower house) was “quite unrival’d.” Similarly, Adams complained that the people tend too often to see the Senate as “a useless body” (Pole 1968: 418). Independence opened the door of the assemblies to more elected political actors coming from the commons. Yeomen and artisans constituted approximately 20% of the assemblymen before the Revolution; after Independence they constituted the majority in the northern houses, and more than 40% overall (Main 1968: 335). Concerning the new House of Burgesses of Virginia, Roger Atkinson wrote to Samuel Pleasants, on November 23, 1776, that it was “composed of men not quite so well dressed, nor so politely educated, nor so highly born as some Assemblies I have formerly seen.” Although quite critical at first glance, Atkinson added on a much more happy tone: “They are People’s men (and the People in general are right). They are plain and of consequence less disguised, but I believe to the full as honest, less intriguing, more sincere. I wish the People may
always have Virtue enough and Wisdom enough to chose such plain men” (Main 1968: 338). Yet, Atkinson’s optimism was not shared by everyone. Although the number of seats increased, offering in principle a better representation (several assemblies would double or even triple the number of seats in their legislative assemblies), the right to vote in America was not significantly altered by the "revolution" and most of the American political leaders believed that elected political actors were not supposed to be plebeian nor even to mirror plebeian interests. In fact, the new politicians not stemming from high society were generally regarded with much suspicion by the traditional politicians. According to Elbridge Gerry: “in Massts. the worst men get into the Legislature. Several members of that Body had lately been convicted of infamous crimes. Men of indigence, ignorance & baseness, spare no pains however dirty to carry their point agst. men who are superior to the artifices practiced” (Farrand ed. 1966a: 132). Similarly, one may have read in the American Herald of Boston (Dec. 11, 1786) that “men of sense and property have lost much of their influence by the popular spirit of the war ... since the war, blustering ignorant men, who started into notice during the troubles and confusion of that critical period, have been attempting to push themselves into office.” Some towns in Western New Hampshire and Western Massachusetts also claimed that each of them should be entitled to be represented in the legislative body. William Whiting brushed off this claim in a pamphlet published in 1778, in which he denounced the towns of Massachusetts for “erecting little democracies” (G.S. Wood 1969: 192). “Democracy” was not only presented as an excessively egalitarian regime, but it was also depicted as too weak—or simply unwilling—to prevent extra-parliamentary egalitarian actions such as Shays’ rebellion. Shays’ rebellion was an indicator of how unstable and dangerous the current political structure was. Indeed, George Washington clearly said of the rebellion, “We are fast verging to anarchy and confusion” (Laniel 1995: 67).

Shays’s rebellion was the culmination of a socio-economic struggle that had already produced a backlash couched in anti-democratic discourse. “Democracy”
referred to the commons, to a class rule in which the majority (the poor) opposed the minority (the wealthy) (Hanson 1985: 56). The democratic tyranny of the majority was sometimes depicted with disdain. Samuel Seabury, for instance, writing around 1780, stated that "If I must be enslaved ... let it be by a King ... let me be devoured by the jaws of a lion, and not gnawed to death by rats and vermin" (Laniel 1995: 65-66).

Having read Aristotle’s work, Patriots leaders knew that “The proper application of the term ‘democracy’ is to a constitution in which the free-born and poor control the government—being at the same time a majority” (Aristotle 1979: 164 [Politics, 1290b]). According to Aristotle, “Democracy is directed to the interest of the poorer classes,” which means that it is a perverted form of government since “the constitutions directed to the personal interest of the One, or the Few, or the Masses, must necessarily be perversions.” Therefore, "democracy" is the perverted form of what Aristotle names "polity," which is a system in which “the masses govern the state with a view to the common interest” (1979: 164 [Politics, 1279a-b]). Several patriotic leaders even started to declare that they feared that the monarchical tyranny they had recently defeated was going to be replaced by a “democratic” despotism (Main 1968: 337).

The Case of Pennsylvania and Other Radicals States

The fear of democracy was not felt everywhere in the United States, or at least not by every American. In Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, for instance, democratic demands were more insistent than in other states mainly because there was no free land for unhappy farmers and the proportion of urban workers and merchants was higher than in other states. The acknowledgement of economic disparities would lead the conservatives to fight against democracy. William Findley, for instance, maintained in 1786 that in Pennsylvania, as elsewhere in America, individuals were
“too unequal in wealth to render a perfect democracy suitable to our circumstances” (G.S. Wood 1969: 401).

However, some states like Georgia, Vermont, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire and Rhode Island had what were commonly known as more democratic Constitutions. Their Legislative branch—the Lower house—enjoyed considerable power, such a situation that was loudly denounced. “Look at the legislature of Rhode Island! What is it but the perfect picture of a mob,” declared a politician of that period (Laniel 1995: 67). *The Anarchiad*, a poetic-pamphlet written in 1787 against the constitution of the Rhode Island, equates Rhode Island with “democracy” using an obviously derogatory tone (Laniel 1995: 66):

The giddy rage of democratic States;
The wiser race... like Lot from Sodom, from Rhode Island run
(the pariah of States);

Led by wild demagogues, the factious crowd,
Mean, fierce, imperious, insolent and loud;
Th’extremes of license, and th’extremes of power;
See, from the shades, on tiny pinions swell;
And rise, the young DEMOCRACY of hell!

Yet, only in Georgia, Vermont and Pennsylvania would unicameralism prevail (Douglass 1965: 31). Such constitutions were held in contempt by many Americans, such as Joseph Clay, a merchant from Savannah, Georgia. He maintained that the new Constitution was “so very democratical that it has thrown power into such hands as must ruin the country” (Douglass 1965: 346). In Pennsylvania, unicameralism was directly inherited from the colonial era, though it would be blamed after Independence for irresponsible egalitarian policies. Imprisonment for debt was not allowed anymore and the charter of the Bank of America was cancelled (Morison 1976: 11 and 14).27

Pennsylvania offers a good example not only of the link between democratic and egalitarian struggles, but also of the semantic transformation the words “democracy” and “republic” underwent during these struggles. In Pennsylvania, the
unicameralists were known as "Radicals" or "Constitutionalists," while their foes took on the name of "Republicans." Therefore, and probably for the first time, "Republican" came to refer to elitism in the public debate. Furthermore, it was one of the first times that the term "democracy" was publicly used to describe not a direct democracy—with an agora where every citizen may come, deliberate and vote—but an elective regime (albeit with only one house) (Morantz 1971: 33-34). This was enough, according to the historian Regina Ann Markell Morantz, to legitimize the use of "democracy" in order to describe the elective regime of the United States. As she states: "Once divested of its ancient and literal meaning, the term would be applied more often to American governmental arrangements" (Morantz 1971: 34). And as a matter of fact, William Vans Murray, a Marylander studying law in London, wrote in 1785 that Independence turned the American states into "democracies" of a new kind: "It is impossible to say that ancient republics were models ... the picture of ancient governments, except freedom, could furnish but a slight resemblance to the American democracies" (Reinhold 1984: 106-107 [emphasis added]). However, Morantz (1971) downplays the strength of the anti-democratic discourse. The Pennsylvanian experience fuelled anti-democratic feelings even in other States. William Hooper, from North Carolina, declared that Pennsylvania was an "execrable democracy—a Beast without a head ... the Mob ruling," concluding that democracy deserved "more Imprecations than the Devil and all his Angels" (Laniel 1995: 64). Also unsatisfied with "democracy" even though he declared that "the people will be right at last," Washington explained to the Marquis de Lafayette in a letter written on July 25, 1785, that "it is to be regretted, I confess, that Democratical States must always feel before they can see: it is this that makes their Governments slow" (in Allen, ed. 1988: 306). Washington expressed the same idea in a letter to Henry Knox (March 8, 1787) (in Allen, ed. 1988: 356). Rufus King, congratulating Theodore Sedgwick for his election to the Massachusetts state legislature in 1787, hoped that Sedgwick would be able "to check the madness of Democracy" (Pole 1968: 431). Hence, I do not entirely agree
with Morantz's conclusion, since it is quite obvious that despite the experiences of some radical States, the term "democracy" still conveyed a derogatory meaning in the mind of the more influential politicians of that time.

A very exceptional text, however, deserves some attention. Published in 1784, Philodemus's *Conciliatory Hints, Attempting, by a Fair State of Matters, to Remove Party Prejudice* is one of the rare texts in which one may find at the same time the approval of "democracy" and an analysis of the anti-democratic discourse still prevailing at that time. First, Philodemus (1983 [1784]: 616) summarized the anti-democrats' discourse in a very critical manner:

[I]t is become a received opinion, that a Commonwealth, in proportion as it approaches to Democracy, wants those springs of efficacious authority which are necessary to the production of regularity and good order, and degenerates into anarchy and confusion. This is commonly imputed to the capricious humour of the people, who are said to run riot with too much liberty, to be always unreasonable in their demands, and never satisfied but when ruled with a rod of iron.

These are the common place arguments against a democratic constitution. They are the pleas of ambition to introduce Aristocracy, Monarchy, and every species of tyranny and oppression. Unfortunate indeed for the liberties of mankind, if it be true, that, to render them orderly, it is necessary to render them slaves. However generally this position may have been admitted, we may venture to deny that it is an inference fairly drawn from experience.

Then, Philodemus commented on the political skills of the people:

[W]e cannot justly grant that the people at large are capricious or unreasonable, or that a true Democracy will be productive of disorder or tumult. On the contrary, I am inclined to believe, that in general the people are pretty easily satisfied when no injustice is intended towards them; and if it be allowed to reason a priori in such case, I conclude that a real Democracy, as it is the only equitable constitution, so it would be of all the most happy, and perhaps of all the most quiet and orderly.

With reference to the purported democratic tendency to "turbulence and caprice", he declares (1983: 617) that

it is [to] the oppressors, and not the oppressed, that the mischief is to be imputed. It is thus, I apprehend, and no otherwise, that a government approaching to Democracy, is apt to be disorderly. The people have a right to complain, so long as they are robbed of any portion of their freedom, and if their complaints are not heard, they have a right to use any method of enfranchising themselves.
Despite such an extraordinary case and despite Morantz's belief that from the Pennsylvanian experience the term "democracy" acquired an approbatory connotation, the Constitutional debates would offer the perfect context for the anti-democratic discourse to reach its peak. In fact, the idea of calling a Constitutional meeting was mainly determined by a drive to get rid of the democratic spirit. To establish a strong and centralized government was the best means to stop "democracy." Voicing this view on the new Constitution, Madison wrote of Alexander Hamilton that "he sees evils operating in the States which must soon cure the people of their fondness for democracies" (June 18, 1787, in Ketcham, ed. 1986: 77). Expressing a similar idea, George Washington explained to his friend Lafayette, in a letter dated May 10, 1786, “It is one of the evils of democratical governments, that the people, not always seeing and frequently misled, must often feel before they can act right; but then evils of this nature seldom fail to work their own cure.” Then Washington adds (in Allen, ed. 1988: 320): “I am not without hopes, that matters will take a more favorable turn in the foederal Constitution.” It certainly did, at least for him, since he became the first President of the new union.

\textsuperscript{1}It might be argued that Euro-Americans did encounter a vivid example of a democratic society through their contacts with Native Americans. Yet, the European elite in America was not ready to consider the model of the Native society as a serious alternative. In fact, to copy the Native social organization would have been understood as a regression rather than an evolution. James Burgh, who wrote \textit{Political Disquisitions}, released in three volumes in England, and reprinted in Philadelphia in 1775, stated that unmixed democracy was "the plan of government among the Indians in America, and other simple and uncultivated people," "thought only compatible with a small dominion." Yet, Burgh's use of the word "democracy" was an exception. The Europeans referred to Native communities of America sometimes as "Monarchies," often, as "Republics," but very rarely as "Democracies" (see Lokken 1959: 572; and Dickason 1984: ch. 4). It might also be argued that Europeans encountered
democracy in Africa, but they were clearly more interested in practicing slavery there than anything else. They certainly did not attempt to learn from the political organisation of the Africans (see Nyerere 1996: 555).

2 The debate did not end that easily, witness Samuel Langdon's *The Republic of the Israelites an example to the American States*, printed in Exeter in 1788 (Sanduz, ed. 1991: 941-968). Yet, the Bible is not the only reference with regard to politics: in what is probably one of the first reflections on politics to be written in English in America, Lord Saye and Sele referred to Greece in a letter to John Winthrop, the 9 of July 1640 (Laniel 1995: 48).

3 The republican James Harrington, however, did not agree with the Puritans' interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. For Harrington, "Israel, from the institution of Moses to the monarchy, was a democracy or popular government" (Worden 1994: 84 and see also the biblical republicanism of Fobes [1983: 1000]). In the same vein, although more than a century later, the anonymous author of *The People the Best Governors: Or a Plan of Government Founded on the Just Principles of Natural Freedom* (1983: 391), released in 1776, stated that "God gave mankind freedom by nature ... to govern themselves by their own laws. The government, which he introduced among his people, the Jews, abundantly proves it, and they might have continued in that state of liberty, had they not desired a King" (see also Draï [1999: 116] who states that "Dieu ... est bien compatible avec la démocratie, à supposé qu’il n’en soit pas lui-même l’inventeur").

4 In his *The Bloody Tenet of Persecution for Cause of Conscience*, written in 1644, Roger Williams openly promoted the sovereignty of the people, in words that resemble Locke's: "The Soveraigne, original, and foundation of civill power lies in the people ... A People may erect and establish what forme of Government seems to them most meete for their civill condition : It is evident that such Governments as are by them erected and established have no more power, nor for no longer time, than civill power or people consenting and agreeing shall betrust them with" (Laniel 1995: 50).

5 Spinoza stated in his *Tractatus Politicus* that "rule by elected representatives" means to live under an aristocratic regime. With respect to democracy, Spinoza wrote: "I believe it [democracy] to be of all forms of government the most natural, and the most consonant with individual liberty" (1951: 207 and see also Naess, Christophersen & Kvalo 1956: 97).

6 "Revolution was no more a simple matter of poor versus rich, or of radicals versus conservatives, or of city versus country, or of good versus bad, than it was a simple matter of Americans versus British. The revolutionary movement was never a united front facing one enemy. It was a series of coalitions that formed, dissolved, and re-formed" (Countryman 1985: 7).

7 In 1771, the Governor Hutchinson refers to "mobocracy," word which apparently appeared first in 1754, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and which expresses the idea of an uncontrolled democracy (Laniel 1995: 65 n. 40).


9 During the War of Independence, republicanism—both classical and modern—was the main source of influence regarding the concept of democracy and the political use of it (though other traditions such as religion, political economy, and so on were more important with regard to other issues such as the Bill of rights, women, slavery, Natives, religion, etc.).

10 Thomas Jefferson, writing to John Taylor on May 28, 1816, remarked that "the term republic is of very vague application in every language" (in Somerville & Santoni, eds. 1963: 252). John Marshall, Patrick Henry, James Wilson, and Jefferson from time to time used "democracy" and "republic" interchangeably (Morantz 1971: 17).

11 With regard to this paradox—having undemocratic founders of democracy—I find significant the fact that there is neither an article on "democracy" nor an entry in the index for this word in the *Blackwell Encyclopedia of the American Revolution*, comprised of 845 compact pages (Greene & Pole, eds. 1994).

12 Colonial assemblies conducted audits, initiated and amended money bills, voted on the salary of the governors and officials, issued paper money, and had their say with regard to trade, courts of justice, religion and war (Ward 1991: 198-199 and Greene 1969: 94). Great Britain vetoed only about
five per cent (469 out of 8563 acts) of the bills passed by the American assemblies (although it must be kept in mind that British vetoes usually dealt with the most important issues) (Ward 1991: 194). By 1760, the conflict between the governors and the assemblies with regard to the distribution of powers ended with a victory of the latter over the former in the majority of colonies (Palmer 1959: 190-191).

13 G. S. Wood notes (1993: 175) that “the great social antagonists of the American Revolution were not poor vs. rich, workers vs. employers, or even democrats vs. aristocrats. They were patriots vs. courtiers—categories appropriate to the monarchical world in which the colonists had been reared. Courtiers were persons whose position or rank came artificially from above—from hereditary or personal connections that ultimately flowed from the crown or court.” Regarding such privileges, George Mason states in the 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights that he drew up that “the Ideal of Man born a Magistrate, a Legislator, or a Judge is unnatural and absurd.” In the same vein, New Hampshire declared that “no office or place whatsoever in government, shall be hereditary—the abilities and integrity requisite in all, not being transmissible to posterity or relations” (Idem: 181).

14 Political scientist Giovanni Sartori states (1987: 52) that “the American Revolution, ... was not, in truth, a revolution—it was secession. The American Declaration of Independence of 1776 was, in essence, a claim for the right to advance along the path of the liberties already existing in England.” Regarding the meaning of “revolution” according to the Patriots, see Dunn (1989: 338), Hanson (1985: 62), Pocock (1975: 516) and Douglass (1965: 71) who states that “in their [the Patriots] own minds they were defending the body of traditional English rights against an omnipotent, and therefore revolutionary, Parliament. Not accepting the Parliamentary supremacy implicit in the eighteenth-century British constitution, they considered themselves as counter-revolutionists rather than as rebels against lawful authority.”


16 Carter Braxton (1983: 331) also declared: “the English, after contemplating the various forms of government, and experiencing, as well as perceiving, the defects of each, wisely refused to resign their liberties either to the single man, the few, or the many. They determine to make a compound of each the foundation of their government, and of the most valuable parts of them all to build a superstructure that should surpass all others.” Thomas Jefferson remarked: “we have employed some of the best materials of the British constitution in the construction of our government” (Colbourn 1958: 57). The Convention of Maryland, for instance, instructed its delegates to the Continental congress to make a special effort to obtain reconciliation with England, and Virginia and New England instructed their delegates to refuse secession from the Motherland (Maier 1997: 30 and 38). There was even a cultural foundation—or a moral ground—for this will to save the ties between the colonies and their motherland. In Dickinson’s Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania, the consequence of independence for America is described as follow: “torn from the body, to which we are united by religion, liberty, laws, affections, relations, language, and commerce, we must bleed at every vein.” Another author explained that independence will reduce to nothing “the bands of religion, of oaths, of laws, of language, of blood, of interest, of commerce, of all those habitudes ... which hold us among ourselves” (Maier 1997: 29).

17 Thomas S. Martin (1989: 108) argues that “the Revolution was, quite simply, co-opted; the new nation was dominated by the same land-owning and mercantile elite that had controlled the colonies.” It is estimated that between 60,000 to 100,000 of Americans faithful to the Crown left the colonies, generally voluntarily. However, many of them came back after the Declaration of Independence. Cadwalader Colden, a former Loyalist, was elected mayor of the City of New York. Henry Cruger was elected senator of the State of New York. Some members of loyalist military units even came back and still cashed their British pension. In Connecticut, in the towns of Long Island
Sound, Loyalists were invited to come back because it was acknowledged that their trading skills would help the local economic life (Morison 1976: 8-9). These examples refute Palmer's assertion (1959: 188-189) that "the émigrés from the American Revolution did not return" or that "only individuals, without political influence, drifted back to the United States."

Although Edmund Burke was in favour of a policy of reconciliation with the American colonies, he was at the same time a firm promoter of virtual representation. His discourse to his electors of Bristol may be said to embody all the arguments in favour of virtual representation. In The People the Best Governors: Or a Plan of Government Founded on the Just Principles of Natural Freedom (1983 [1776]: 396), we find this very same idea with a reference to Blackstone: "Every government is an entire body politic, and therefore, each particular member in the legislature does not represent any distinct part, but the whole of the said body. Blackstone's words are these, 'For it is to be observed, that though every member is chosen by a particular county or borough, yet, as is justly observed by Lord Coke and others, when in parliament, he serves for the whole nation'" (see also Morone 1990: 39).

Charles Inglis argued, in his The True Interest of American Impartiality Stated, published in 1776, that with the establishment of a Republic, "All our property throughout the continent would be unhinged." James Chalmers, in his Plain Truth: Addressed to the Inhabitants of America, Containing Remarks on a Late Pamphlet, entitled Common Sense, published in 1776 (Philadelphia) claimed that Republicanism would lead to economic chaos, agrarian laws undermining liberty, and that "A war will ensue between the creditors and their debtors, which will eventually end in a general sponge or abolition of debts, which has more than once happened in other States on occasions similar" (G.S. Wood 1969: 94). In 1776, Carter Braxton, in his A Native of the Colony, wrote about "some ancient republics" in which there were "unjust attempts to maintain their idol equality by an equal division of property" (Braxton 1983: 334).

For Gary B. Nash (1979: viii), "What has led early American historians to avoid questions about class formation and the development of lower-class political consciousness is not only an aversion to Marxist conceptualizations of history but also the persistent myth that class relations did not matter in early America because there were no classes." For Joseph Ernst, "there is too much analysis of the Revolution's superstructure—ideas, principles, politics, and culture—and too little of its substructure—political economy. As for the connections and interrelations between the two, there is virtually nothing (in "'Ideology' and an Economic Interpretation of the Revolution" [Young, ed. 1976: 60]).

Although America was far more egalitarian than the old world, the socio-economic spectrum of America still displayed extreme disparities between the slave, the indentured servant, the dependent son, the wife, the in debt farmer, the wealthy land owner, the merchant, the lawyer, etc. Furthermore, Americans had witnessed a narrowing of socio-economic opportunities in the second half of the 18th century. America was heading toward an economic stratification (downsizing of the average size of farms in New England from 100 acres to less than 50, actions of the Spanish, French and Indians limiting the possibilities of founding new towns, concentration of the wealth into the hands of a limited number of rich merchants) (Appleby 1992: 152-155 and 177 and G.S. Wood 1993: 184).

An odd statement, since the global population of British America was around 3 or 4 millions (Roberts 1994: 183).

An isolated case is the author of The Interest of America (1776), who advocated unicameralism, equating it with "democracy": "I think there can be no doubt that a well-regulated democracy is most equitable" (Jensen 1966: 276).

It was rejected less because of its content than because voters believed that people who had drawn up the Constitution must have been elected only for this purpose, which was not the case of the authors of the Essex Result.

It is estimated that, depending on the colony, from 50 to 80 per cent of white males were allowed to vote during the colonial era, which was around ten times more than in England. Moreover, if not allowed to vote for the representatives to the legislative assembly because of property restrictions, individuals were often allowed to vote for the town or county officials (Brown 1955; Cary 1963: 251-276; Douglass 1965: 4, 35 and 43; Lutz 1994: 635; Pole 1957; Speck 1994: 4; Syrett 1964: 352-366; Zagarri 1994: 652).
Jackson Turner Main (1968) refers with regard to this antidemocratic tendency among the Whigs, to the *Independent Chronicle* (Boston, Aug. 7, 1777); *Boston Magazine* (Aug. 1784: 420-423); *Connecticut Courant* (Hartford, Apr. 10, 1786); *Vermont Gazette* (Sept. 18, 1786); *Massachusetts Spy* (July 12, 26, Aug. 2, 1775); *Maryland Gazette* (Dec. 11, 1777); *Pennsylvania Packet* (Philadelphia, Feb. 6, 1779); *New Jersey Gazette* (Trenton, Oct. 10, 1785); *Falmouth Gazette* (Sept. 17, 1785).

One of the reasons for the success of the Pennsylvanian radicals was the lack of organisation of the conservative forces. Moreover, Pennsylvania never experienced a bicameral political system and its political system was shaped by the Penn family’s proprietary charter. Contrary to what happened in other colonies, individuals alien to traditional politics (James Cannon, Timothy Matlack, Robert Whitehill, George Bryan) succeeded in gaining control of the disintegrated organization. These outsiders, helped by the powerful working class of Philadelphia, were very well organized and motivated by the presence of individuals like Thomas Paine and Thomas Young, and they drew up the most radical constitution of the United States.

In the case of debt, fraudulent behaviour still lead to jail (Douglass 1965: 269). The self-proclaimed conservative Samuel Eliot Morison went so far as to bemoan the fact that “This Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776 [Abolished in 1791 in favour of a more conservative constitution inspired by the constitutions of New York and Massachusetts] established the nearest thing to a dictatorship of the proletariat that we have had in North America; a real ‘popular front’ government” (Morison 1976: 12). An article of the Bill of Rights stating that “An enormous proportion of property vested in a few individuals is dangerous to the rights, and destructive of the common happiness of mankind; and therefore every free state hath a right to discourage possession of such property” (Douglass 1965: 266).
CHAPTER III
The French Revolution of 1789
An Anti-Democratic Enterprise

Introduction

As we shall see, the French case is very similar to the American one regarding the use of the term "democracy." According to Pierre Rosanvallon, "for a long time the word 'democracy' was used only to designate an obsolete type of political system. In the eighteenth century, it was employed exclusively in reference to the ancient world." He adds that "it was not until 1848 that the word 'democracy' really became current in political discourse" (Rosanvallon 1995: 141-142). Although Rosanvallon's work is very insightful, it lacks sufficient depth. Moreover, by focusing only on the French case, it does not provide a general model for how political actors in a modern elective regime may use the term "democracy" and its derivatives ("democrat," "democratic," "democratical," etc.) as political weapons. Hence, with the American case in mind, we shall extend Rosanvallon's analysis to see how the French political actors understood and used the term "démocratie," whether they were influenced by the American experience, and if their usage of the word "démocratie" fits into a general pattern of political strategy.

The Meaning of "Démocratie" in the Pre-modern Era

The word "démocratie" was rarely used by French political actors before 1789. In New France, for instance, the administrator Frontenac used the word on January 24,
1667, when he wrote about land distribution in Canada. According to Frontenac, it is important to prevent “revolution,” which might lead to “démocratie” (Mathieu 1998: 12). The word “démocratie” appeared more often in dictionaries—very numerous in France—or in philosophical works. It generally referred to an ancient or alien political system. The French term “démocratie” was borrowed around 1370 (Rey, ed.: 1993: 575) from the Greek via the Latin translation of Aristotle’s works. Related words also exist as early as the 14th century, such as the verb to “democratize” (“démocratiser”) and the adjective “democratic” (“démocratique”). In the mid-14th century, the French bishop Nicole Oresme published his book Motz Estranges (Strange Words) in which he defined “democracy” as a kind of polis in which the popular multitude holds the power (Rosanvallon 1993: 12). In the 16th century the noun “democrat” (“démocrate”) and the adverb “democratically” (“démocratiquement”) appeared, also with reference to antiquity (Rey, ed. 1993: 575).

Jean de La Fontaine who published his celebrated fables in the second half of the 17th century, wrote about the frogs’ democracy (Caron 1995: 197). In Richelet’s Dictionnaire français, published in 1680, “democracy” is defined as follow: “Popular government. Popular state. Form of popular government in a state. These peoples like democracy” (Caron 1995: 198). Richelet also specified that a democracy is “that form of government in which offices are distributed by lot” (Rosanvallon 1993: 12; English trans. in 1995: 141). Around the same time, another dictionary, Furetière’s Dictionnaire universel (1690), offered a definition in which references to classical antiquity, sedition and turbulence are all merged together: “Form of government in which the people have complete authority. Democracy flourished only in the republics of Rome and Athens. Seditions and troubles often occur in Democracie” (Rosanvallon 1993: 11; English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 141). About the adjective “démocratique,” the reader learns first that "the worse of all states is the democratic," and that "the government of modern republics is more aristocratic than democratic" (Caron 1995: 198). In the 1694 edition of the Dictionnaire de l’Académie française,
“democracy” means: “Popular government in a state. These peoples like democracy.” And the adjective refers to Athens (Caron 1995: 198). Interestingly, the definition of “anarchy” refers to “democracy”: “Anarchy: state out of order, without head and without any kind of government. Pure democracy easily degenerates into anarchy” (Caron 1995: 198-199).

“Democracy” is also synonymous with “anarchy” for the 18th century philosopher Gabriel Bonnot de Mably. The renowned Charles de Secondat, baron de la Brède and de Montesquieu, offered quite a subtle explanation of democracy. He stated first that a “fundamental law in democracies is that the people alone should make the laws” (de Montesquieu 1989: 14 [The Spirit of the Laws, part I, bk. II, ch. 2]). Nevertheless, Montesquieu openly expressed his agoraphobia, when he remarked that the people are not able to debate public matters (de Montesquieu 1989: 14-15 [The Spirit... I, bk. II, ch. 2]) and that “there are a thousand occasions when it is necessary for the senate [instead of the people] to be able to enact laws” (Ibidem.). Montesquieu often used the demographical-geographical argument in order to dismiss the idea of democracy. Like Richelet in his Dictionnaire français, Montesquieu remarked, in The Spirit of the Laws, that suffrage by elections is an aristocratic procedure, and that only suffrage by lot is consistent with democracy.

In 1754, a few years after the publication of the influential The Spirit of the Laws, the no less famous Encyclopédie, edited by d'Alembert and Diderot, was released. Chevalier de Jaucourt, who wrote the definition of “democracy” stressed that “It is the fate of this government, admirable in principle, to become almost inescapably the prey of a few citizens' ambition, or the ambition of foreigners, and thus to pass from a precious liberty to the heaviest servitude” (Dumont 1994: 15). Democracy rests on valuable principles, yet its weaknesses makes it a quite unattractive regime.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's work did not offer a clear picture of “democracy.” In his Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, Rousseau (1971: 140) declared that he would have liked to be born in a democracy. Like Richelet and
Montesquieu, Rousseau insisted, in his *Contrat Social*, that suffrage by lot is the only genuinely democratic way to fill public offices, and he declared that the people's will cannot be represented. In *Émile* (book V), Rousseau explained that "democracy can embrace the whole people or can be confined to as little as half of it" (Rosanvallon 1993: 13; English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 141). Rousseau, contrary to so many of his contemporaries, dismissed the demographical-geographical argument according to which democracy is unfit for the modern Western States. Yet, in one of the most famous lines of his *The Social Contract*, Rousseau suggested that a democratic regime may only befit a society of gods: "Were there a people of gods, their government would be democratic. So perfect a government is not for men." And elsewhere, "If we take the term in the strict sense, there never has been a real democracy, and there never will be." 

Yet, some dictionaries published around the same time as *Du Contrat social* maintained that democracy may exist, and even that it does exist. In the fourth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, released in 1762, it is said that "some Swiss cantons are authentic democracies" (Rosanvallon 1993: 12; English trans. Rosanvallon 1995: 141). The new edition of the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*, published in 1771, adopted a similar view. More troubling were D'Argenson's comments on "democracy" in his *Considérations sur le gouvernement ancien et présent de la France* (published in Amsterdam, 1765). D'Argenson was apparently the first French-speaker to relate the concept of democracy to an elective regime. For D'Argenson, one should distinguish "false democracy" from "true democracy" (in Rosanvallon 1993: 14-15; English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 143):

> False democracy soon collapses into anarchy. It is the government of the multitude; such is a people in revolt; insolently scorning law and reason. Its tyrannical despotism is obvious from the violence of its movements and the uncertainty of its deliberations. In true democracy, one acts through deputies, who are authorised through election; the mission of those elected by the people and the authority that such officials carry constitute the public power. (trans. by Rosanvallon)
For D'Argenson, "democracy" and "representation" are no longer incompatible. As Rosanvallon remarks, however, D'Argenson was a lonely author, "to whom we should not grant broad significance" (Rosanvallon 1995: 143). The political events in America a few years before the French Revolution would have a far greater influence than d'Argenson.

"Démocratie": a Derogatory Term

As in the American case, several philosophical and cultural traditions influenced the French Patriots. Several sources—religion, history, classical and modern philosophy, economics, foreign examples (England, Holland, United States)—simultaneously influenced the French Revolution. Yet, specifically with regard to the use of the term "democracy" as a weapon in political struggles, the two main sources were—as in America—classical history and classical and modern republicanism. But before analysing how the political actors understood and used the term, let us start with a short summary of the most significant events of the French Revolution.22

The dramatic events that shook French society in 1789 and after are tremendously more complex than those which the United States witnessed in 1776 and in 1787.23 In May 1789, the French King summoned the États Généraux, hoping that it might solve the financial crisis that was undermining the stability of the kingdom. Already in 1788, political rivalries between the Crown and parliaments resulted in riots in Toulouse, Dijon, Pau and Grenoble (Soboul 1988: 124-125).24 A few days before the opening of the États Généraux, a riot broke out in Paris: houses were burned and people murdered (Soboul 1988: 80). The riots of 1788 and 1789 revealed how tense the social and political situation was. The États Généraux (formed of three estates—the nobility, the clergy, and the Tiers État; comprised of the bourgeoisie, mainly lawyers and merchants, but also a few noblemen and clergymen such as
Honoré-Gabriel Riqueti Mirabeau and Emmanuel Sieyès rapidly degenerated into fierce competition to decide who would represent the "nation." On June 17, the Tiers État declared itself to be the Assemblée Nationale. On July 14, the Bastille was stormed by the common people of Paris. Although this event was certainly less significant when it happened than it has become in modern mythology, it nevertheless revealed that the Revolution from its beginning was not simply the business of a few elected political actors clashing with the Crown. On July 16, the Commune de Paris and the Gardes Nationaux were founded. Over the following years, the Commune would be a tool used by radical Parisians to influence the work of the Assemblée Nationale. At the end of July, the first wave of counter-revolutionaries migrated abroad, and turbulence began to break out in the countryside, such as the burning of castles by the peasantry.

By that time, the King himself and the counter-revolutionaries abroad were planning to raise an army to crush the revolutionaries. In the Assemblée Nationale, members of the left were still moderate—almost no one yet was arguing in favour of a "republic" or egalitarian policies—although the abolition of seigniorial rights (August 4), the adoption of the Declaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen (August 10), and, the rejection of an Upper House (September 10), were considered as very progressive decisions. Moreover, the commoners, including women, were actively participating in political life, pushing consciously or not, the official revolutionary political actors toward radicalization. It was, for instance, a crowd of women who walked to Versailles on October 5 and forced the King to leave his palace and move to the Tuileries, in Paris. Individuals such as Mirabeau, Lafayette and Barnave were competing to halt the Revolution, hoping to establish their control over the new political system. Meanwhile, France was still facing a deep financial crisis. Moreover, controversial decisions such as the nationalization of the Church's possessions in November 1789 would lead to a civil war which would encourage more radical revolutionaries to push for even more political reforms. On June 14, 1791, workers
associations' were outlawed by the Le Chapelier Law, a decision that seemed to indicate a victory for the right. Six days later the King escaped from Paris but was detained in Varennes on June 22 and returned to the capital—an event that dramatically undermined the legitimacy of the Crown. This turn of events led some political actors, such as the members of the Cordelier club, to dream of a France without a king. In some towns, the people erased the words "roi" and "royauté" from the walls of public buildings. Nevertheless, mainstream political actors—those sitting on the benches of the Assemblée Nationale—were not yet ready to promote the republic. Barnave switched to the right and advocated a Constitutional monarchy, stating that his goal was to "end the Revolution." On July 16, Barnave and his allies quit the club of the Jacobins (reputed to be a nest of radicals) and founded the club of the Feuillants (moderates). In September 1791, the new Constitution was completed; the Monarchy was preserved, unicameralism prevailed, and a distinction was made between “active citizens” (around 4 298 000) and “passive citizens” (around 3 000 000) (Tulard 1985: 81-82). Even though the King retained executive power, he was subject to the law. He did, however, have a suspensive veto, that is, he could veto a law for two legislative terms (i.e. four years). On September 30, the delegates were dismissed. Yet, the French Revolution had just began.

With regard to the use of the term “democracy” and its cognate, Raymonde Monnier (1999) using Frantext, the data base of the Institut national de la langue française, found 258 occurrences of “democracy” from the 16th century to the Revolution of 1789 (256 of which from 1740 to 1788 alone), 91 during the revolutionary period, 621 during the 19th century and more than twice that in the 20th century. According to Monnier’s research, “democrat” is almost never used before the Revolution but is broadly used during the Revolution in opposition to “aristocrat” (1999: 55). Monnier’s inquiry reveals that the French Revolution did not witness a very widespread use of the term “democracy.” The case of France is thus similar to the case of the early United States. Yet, although Monnier’s work is useful, it
does not provide much in-depth analysis of the political use of "démocratie." To further this analysis, it is important to recall, first, that French political actors, like the Americans, were quite aware of the political impact of words. Long before linguists and sociologists such as J.L. Austin and Pierre Bourdieu, they understood the importance of words for the achievement of political goals.\textsuperscript{31} They openly acknowledged that terms and labels such as "aristocrat" and "democrat" or "democracy" were used by political actors with the intent of misleading people. Indeed, Jacques-Pierre Brissot declared in 1789 in \textit{Plan de conduite pour les députés du peuple aux états-généraux de 1789} (April 1789) that "the word 'democracy' is a scarecrow that the mischievous are using to fool the ignorant" (Rosanvallon 1993: 15; English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 143).\textsuperscript{32} Even though "démocratie" was sometimes used in a neutral register (de Boisgelin 1989 [May 21, 1790]: 177), or within the classical typology of political regimes (monarchy, aristocracy and democracy),\textsuperscript{33} individuals generally thundered against democracy. As in America, "democracy" referred in France mainly to the rule of the poor, to chaos, to tyranny, etc. Such an understanding is not surprising for noblemen such the Comte d'Antraigues, who declared in the Chamber of the Nobility in May 1789 that people have a "tendency toward democracy, which in a large country can mean nothing but anarchy" (Rosanvallon 1993: 15; English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 143).\textsuperscript{34} During the États Généraux, the newspaper \textit{Gazette de Leyde} (September 15, 1789, no 74) declared that the "Democratic party " promotes "excesses of the popular principles" (Rétat 1988: 79).\textsuperscript{35} A similarly negative opinion was also expressed in personal letters, such as the one written by Etienne-François Schwendt to Frédéric de Dietrich, on May 24, 1789, in which one may read that "Sometimes, our democratic orators altogether miss the mark. A democracy is inappropriate for us and would only bring anarchy" (Tackett 1996: 278). Even more radical political actors such as Lanjuinais brushed off "with horror" the idea of democracy, a regime "where each citizen is a despot and a tyrant" (Tackett 1996: 105). In \textit{Considérations sur les Intérêts du Tiers État}, published in 1789,
Jean-Paul Rabaut wrote that despite his concerns for the commoners, he fears that the State would collapse “in an immense democracy which will lead inevitably to anarchy or despotism” (Tackett 1996: 105).

The word “democracy” was not the only one used to attack and condemn individuals, factions or ideas. Indeed, the elected political actor Lally-Tollendal noted that the label "aristocrat" was used as “blame” (in French, "reproche") by those who “abuse such a word in discourses” (de Lally-Tolledal 1989c [Sept. 14, 1789]: 391).36 Commoners, for instance, protested that it was because there were too many aristocrats that the rents were too expensive in Choisy (Hardman, ed. 1973 [II]: 2). “Aristocracy” commonly referred to “counter-revolution” (Hardman, ed. 1973 [II]: 88). However, because words and labels are never totally clear and unequivocal, one may had read in December 1789 in the Patriote vérindique about “this clique that we name simply that of the aristo-democrats,” apparently an imagined collection of factions seeking to establish the “turbulent reign of the sedition-mongers” (Retat 1988: 84). In sum, “democracy” was commonly used in France in a derogatory manner. Such an attitude toward “democracy” was fuelled by etymology, history, philosophy and American politics.

The Birth of the American Republic and the Meaning of "Démocratie"

The American political situation offered French political actors rhetorical arguments whereby they could either express their approval or challenge their opponents’ view more efficiently.38 French revolutionaries who began to advocate republicanism, for instance, referred to the United States as a model.39 French political actors and observers were very well informed on the American War of Independence and the debate between Federalists and anti-Federalists. This was so because several influential Frenchmen travelled to the United States and wrote about their experiences there.40 Furthermore, Americans travelled to France (Benjamin Franklin, Gouverneur
Morris and Thomas Jefferson, for instance), corresponded with their French friends (Washington and Lafayette, for instance) or wrote articles for French newspapers (Thomas Paine, for instance). Finally, several books about the political life of the United States were released in France in the 1780s, and French translations of major texts of the War of Independence period, and even French versions of American constitutions, were also available in France. The American War of Independence also had a more tangible influence on French political life: it accelerated the fall of the French Monarchy because the French military involvement in America was so expensive that it increased the financial burden, prompting the King to summon the États Généraux (General Estates) to address the financial crisis (Soboul 1988: 118).

With respect to the meaning of "democracy," it seems that American politics did not disturb the French language enough to influence it, although the dramatic events America witnessed in the 1770s and the 1780s would be understood by the French as related to "democracy." There are, however, some exceptions. In 1786, Jean-Nicolas Démeunier criticized Mably's understanding of "democracy" in his Essai sur les Etats-Unis (Lobrano 1994: 51-52) and in his definition of the "États-Unis" included in his Encyclopédie Méthode, Économie Politique et Diplomatique (1786). In the latter, Démeunier explained (in Lobrano 1994: 51-52):

We have shown in the entry on DEMOCRACY the mistakes that were made ... when the term democracy, or democratic government was misunderstood: abbot Mably's book is full of wrong judgements which are the result of such misunderstanding. ... In the ancient republics which are discussed, the people acted by themselves without representatives; in the United States, the people act through their representatives and not by themselves: the government there is democratic; yet it is not a democracy, if we give to the expression the meaning Aristotle and the Abbot Mably give to it.

To use, as Démeunier did, the term "democratic" in referring to the situation in the United States implies an alteration in the meaning of the word. The concept of representation needs to be added to its definition. Démeunier seems to be a kind of "innovating ideologist," as Quentin Skinner (1988d: 112) would have called him. Yet, Démeunier's attempt to integrate the concept of representation into the meaning of
"democracy" did not give raise to a broad agreement. Moreover, Démeunier presented no less than thirteen problems inherent to democracy in his Encyclopédie Méthode, Économie Politique et Diplomatique. According to Démeunier, democracy is unstable, and it often leads to tyranny and violence. In Athens, the regime was a "pure democracy", which is "generally very dangerous." True to the intellectual tradition in which the meaning of “democracy” had been grounded for thousands of years, Démeunier maintained that suffrage by lot is the only democratic way to distribute offices. He stated that elected representatives must therefore be called an "elective aristocracy" ("aristocratie éléctive"). He concluded nevertheless that “American institutions are democratic, indeed” (Lobrano 1994: 51-52). Démeunier’s confusion reveals that dramatic political events such as the American War of Independence may entail a debasement of language.

Yet, French political actors and commentators generally used the term "démocratie" in a very traditional fashion. With regard to America and “democracy” the example of the United States offered: (1) arguments against the establishment of (direct) democracy, (2) arguments in favour of an elective regime, and (3) a good political and linguistic context, however rarely used, for anyone who wished to reinterpret the meaning of “democracy.” It is worth noting that on the first and the second points, arguments were often interwoven. When commentators identified the United States with “democracy,” it was generally in a critical perspective. The elected political actor Malouet, for instance, declared that the Americans “were probably prepared to welcome liberty with all its energy; because their tastes, their manners, their position make them fit for democracy” (Malouet 1989a: 453). Although such a statement seems positive at first glance, Malouet was in fact referring to the Bill of Rights, which he opposed. To evoke the Americans' fitness for democracy was a method by which Malouet could equate individual rights and “democracy,” and could dismiss both as not suitable for French society (Malouet 1989a and see Furet & Halévi, eds. 1989: 1366). Emmanuel Sieyès, in his Sur l’organisation du pouvoir législatif (1787),
maintained that the American political model, if adopted in France, would “rend France into a infinity of small democracies” (Lacorne 1994: 94). Lafayette also referred to America as a “slow-moving democracy” in his Memoir in 1779 (in Idzerda, ed. 1977 [vol. I]: 170). Significantly, for our investigation, Bresson commented on the fact that the Americans themselves did not give their republic the name “democracy.” Indeed, Bresson submitted a text to the Convention Nationale entitled Réflexions sur les bases d’une constitution, in the Year III (1794). Referring to the French constitution of 1793, Bresson declared: “Look at the wise Americans: did they name a single part of their Union Democratic Republic? Examine their different constitutions; not one of them could have survived with the system of democracy. ... We must stop talking about something that is not, that may not be, that must not be, we must not say that we have a democratic constitution” (Lobrano 1994: 50). The elected political actor Larevellière-Lépeaux also explained in his speech Opinion sur la Sanction Royale, delivered in 1789 to the Assemblée Nationale, in which he referred openly to the “American model,” that the Americans “never have all the citizens without discrimination, deliberate on public affairs, but only their delegates” (Deleplace 1992: 23).

Thus, French political actors generally drew from the politics of the United States a reinforcement of the understanding of “democracy” they had inherited primarily from the classics and republicanism i.e., a negative understanding of the term. What was true for the members of the French political élite was apparently true also for the commoners. If we consider the French soldiers who served in the corps expéditionnaire sent by the King to America to fight the British, it seems they did not bring back any radical ideas. As a matter of fact, their contact with the American Patriots and the soil of the New World did not even instill them with any penchant for republicanism. These soldiers appeared to be no more likely than other French people to take the side of the French Revolution in 1789 or to promote the republican ideal in France after 1789. In fact, these men believed that their job in America had nothing to
do with republicanism; it was a colonial war waged in the name of their king, a war that gave many of them the opportunity to be promoted within the Royal Army (Scott 1979: 565-578).

When the French Revolution broke out, political actors in Paris were too infatuated with Monarchy (absolute or constitutional) to find in the United States a model worthy of emulation. For instance, in his "Discours sur l'inviolabilité du roi," delivered to the Assemblée Constituante (July 15, 1791), Barnave (1989b: 30) condemned those who used the example of the United States as proof that a republic could be established over a very large territory such as France. Moreover, the Federal model adopted by the Americans in 1787 clashed with the faith the French people had in strong and centralized political power, inherited from centuries of absolute Monarchy (Mossé 1989: 67-68).

We now shall see if the term "democracy" was used with respect to specific issues such as representation and economic struggle, as was the case in America during the War of Independence and its aftermath.

The Fiction of the People's Sovereignty: Representation and Agoraphobia

The French Revolution was first of all a revolution led by official politicians—the historian Jean Tulard (1985: 11-12) referred to the revolution as a "revolution of parliamentarians"—seeking, as their American counterparts, to secure and to increase the power of their institution, and therefore, their own political, economic and symbolic power. Representative institutions were numerous and very active in France, although the États Généraux had not been summoned since 1614. There were the États provinciaux (Soboul 1988: 108), the Assemblées du clergé (Soboul 1988: 109-110 and 124-132), and the Parlements. Of course, France was an absolute monarchy and these assemblies did not have as much power as the British House of Commons or even the colonial assemblies in America. Nevertheless, the Parliament
of Paris was especially active and its members (mainly noblemen and lawyers or judges) were claiming more rights and more power in the years before the dramatic summer of 1789 (Tulard 1985: 11 and 15). The commoners often took sides in the political confrontations between these institutions and the Crown, occasionally going so far as to riot, as was the case in the months before the Revolution of 1789. The recriminations of the French elected political actors against the Crown, were fostered by the examples of the constitutional monarchy of England and of the American institutions and their written constitutions.

The Crown and the political institutions were competing for legitimacy. Political sovereignty traditionally had been founded on divine authority. The King claimed to be the earthly representative of God. The King also claimed to represent the people (Brissot called in 1791 for “a popular monarchy, tending to the popular side,” specifying: “Such is my democracy” [Palmer 1959: 16]) (Soboul 1988: 101-102). Members of the elected bodies also claimed to represent the people, although they did not advocate direct democracy. Agoraphobia was as common among French political actors as it was among their American counterparts. Yet, town meetings traditionally did exist in France: although Louis XIV suppressed the urban popular assemblies, town meetings still existed in the countryside until the eve of the Revolution. There were no standard rules throughout France that applied to these town meetings (traditions and rules were different depending on the region or even the town) (Tønnesson 1988: 295-297). Generally speaking, however, the meeting was open to every male head of family or their widows. Of course, these assemblies did not have a large jurisdiction. They dealt exclusively with local matters, and they were under the control of the seigneur, or the king’s representative. Despite these local political entities which allowed people to meet and discuss public issues directly, almost all the revolutionary leaders—including those from the extreme left, like Babeuf—took for granted the idea of representation and dismissed the ideal of direct democracy (Nicolet 1982: 91 and 109-110). French political actors claimed, as the American ones
had, that modern geography and demography would not allow direct democracy (Barnave 1989a [1791]: 51; Bourin-Derrau 1987).

Yet, some French political actors did advocate a quasi-direct democracy, stating that almost every law drafted by the members of the Assemblée Nationale would have to be approved—or rejected—directly by the people. During the summer of 1789, Peuchet advocated democratic organisation in his De l'appel au peuple. According to Peuchet, not only the Constitution, but even the laws must be read and debated “before the Assemblée not of the representatives of the nation, but of the nation itself.” To the sceptics arguing that “it is impossible to physically assemble the nation,” Peuchet replied that “in each city, each straggling village, we can communicate to the citizens, and by a very simple administration, summarize the common opinion.” Peuchet must have known that because of “the habit of seeing democracy as a monster” [emphasis added], “the very proposition of such a plan seems ridiculous to many readers.” Yet, according to Peuchet, it was not only because “democracy” had such a bad reputation that it was dismissed as a political option, but also because of “a kind of inclination to political laziness, that is the error of yielding to a few individuals the control of public affairs.” While Peuchet acknowledged that among his contemporaries, it was commonly understood that “the appeal to the people seems useless, chimerical and dangerous,” he also declared that “what seems monstrous today may be thought of as not being monstrous in a hundred years.” Peuchet’s comments are highly perceptive. First, he talked of the common opinion his contemporaries had of “democracy” (“the habit of understanding democracy” as monstrous, dangerous, ridiculous, chimerical, useless, etc.); then he proposed a plan (local democracies), although he acknowledged that both the uneasy feelings related to “democracy” and a sort of political laziness would undoubtedly make his plan unattractive to his fellow citizens. Finally, and most insightfully, Peuchet declared that the understanding of words and political ideas do change over time (in Genty 1995: 44-45).
Similarly, Camille Desmoulins explained in 1790 in his *Révolutions de France et de Brabant* (no. 17, March 22, 1790: 166 [in Rose 1983: 78]):

I cannot conceive of a republic without a *Forum*, without a public meeting place, and without the *veto* of the people. We have no public meeting place big enough, but our districts supply the need, and fulfill much better, the object of tribune and *Forum*. People often speak of the three powers that ought to balance one another in a good government. These three powers, in my opinion, are the National Assembly, the municipalities, and the districts. The National Assembly decrees, it is the legislative power; the municipalities put into execution and administer, they are the *executive and ministerial power*; and the districts propose the law; they have the veto; this is the prerogative and negative power.

Yet, the advocates of such a direct democracy argued that in order to make it manageable, the nation has to be divided into small districts or sections, each of them being an agora where direct democracy would prevail. These advocates drew upon the historical examples of the Franks, the Romans, the Gauls and the Jews. Claude-Charles Martin, who referred to Rhode Island and the Swiss cantons, stated "That which is practicable in Switzerland in assemblies of twenty thousand men, can be done easily enough in France in assemblies that will not be composed of more than a thousand and fifty persons" (*Révolutions de Paris*, no. XXI, Nov. 28-Dec. 5, 1789: 14-15, and see *Révolutions de Paris*, no. XX, Nov. 21-28, 1789: 13-14 [Rose: 1983: 78-79]). Such ideas were not mere dreams. In April 1789, the City of Paris was divided into 60 *districts* or *sections* for the elections of the *États Généraux*. These *sections* did not disappear after the elections but took advantage of the political confusion resulting from the Revolution of June and July 1789 to become permanent and to deliberate on local issues as well as migration, the *garde nationale*, the police force; they also collected money for a Patriotic fund, took care of the family acts, and even organized the seizure of food and money (Genty 1995: 40). The example of the *section* des Postes shows how very active the sections were: it met no less than 20 times from July to December 1790 and as many as 9 times in April 1791 (Genty 1995: 48). Some even argued that gathering so often resulted in a lower turn-out.
Not only did these sections embody the ideal of a more direct democracy, but their members also advocated the enforcement of measures allowing the electors to control their representatives. Members of the "sectional democracies," to borrow Philip Resnick's expression, had strict control over their deputies sitting in City Hall. According to members of the section (sectionmen), the people had the right to debate with their deputies, electors could address petitions to the Convention and they had the right to rebel. Moreover, sections implemented semi-universal suffrage i.e., for males (Resnick 1997: 78; Soboul 1958). Sectionmen also supported the idea that the laws must be sanctioned by the popular assemblies (veto or approval) and they militated for the establishment of the mandat impératif (both in the City Hall and the Assemblée Nationale) (Guilhaumou 1994: 91). According to the notion of mandat impératif, developed mainly during the Fall of 1789, elected political actors are mere spokespersons of their constituents, i.e. they are not allowed to freely express their will, debate the so-called common good, or stand on behalf of the whole nation. Moreover, they can be recalled at any time by their constituents. If elected politicians were not controlled by mandats impératifs, then they would constitute a new "aristocracy." In such a case, the sections explained to the Assemblée Nationale in March 1790, elections would be nothing else than a procedure allowing the people to choose their own masters (Genty 1995: 41).

Such ideas fuelled debates in newspapers, clubs and pamphlets. Authors writing in L'Ami du peuple and Révolutions de Paris proposed that laws should be submitted to annual popular assemblies in which the people would be allowed to approve or reject each law (Genty 1995: 44-45). The Abbot Fauchet, in his Discours sur la liberté françoise (Dec. 27, 1789), and the social club Bouche de fer advocated popular assemblies in which major issues would be debated by the people, a proposition repeated several times in November and December 1789, at the Assemblée des représentants of the Commune de Paris. On July 29, 1791, Marat declared, in the same vein, "It is not the will of five or six hundred individuals among 24 millions that might
constitute the general will. What is the right of our mandatories? I mean what is their duty? It is to propose the Law to the 24 millions individuals, to collect their votes the majority of which must establish the Law” (Genty 1995: 47-48 and Vovelle, ed. 1988: 158-162).

Despite these discourses promoting real democracy, the majority of French mainstream political actors commonly militated in favour of national representatives. “Those men dreamed”, as the historian Lucien Jaume (1989: 147) emphasises, “of a ‘regenerated representation.’ Their objective was more to search out a way toward the identification of people and power than to suggest the superiority of direct popular government.” In Le Moniteur (Dec. 14, 1790), one observer stressed that “legislators, while establishing the municipality of Paris, did not want to make of the capital an Athenian democracy” (Genty 1995: 37).

In August 1791, a conservative proposition from the Constitutional committee declared that “The nation, from which alone originates all powers, may exercise them only by delegation. The French constitution is representative; the representatives are the legislative body and the king” (McNeil 1965: 141 and see also D'Antraigues 1989: 7-8).

French mainstream political actors used the exact same rhetorical strategy as American mainstream Patriots, referring to a mythical representation of national sovereignty. In common with their American forerunners, the French political actors who both explained and advocated such representation, were biased, to say the least. It is indeed difficult to imagine a situation where a person is to such a degree at once judge and jury as those several elected political actors who candidly claimed that the people’s sovereignty could only express itself through the voice of the elected political actors. In other words, revolutionary leaders were elected political actors fighting for the legitimacy of a elective regime. Most telling in this regard was the dramatic debate on whether or not the members of the three Estates were supposed to simply follow the instructions of their constituents (mandat impératif) or to promote an abstract national interest and vote according to their personal convictions (see Kessel, ed. 1969: 113).
This debate concerning the selection of mandatories rather than independent delegates went on for years in the États Généraux, then in the Assemblée Nationale and among the clubs and the popular sections of Paris. The debate referred openly to "democracy," advocates of mandats impératifs arguing that they were democrats, while their opponents were anti-democrats (Cornu 1990: 81). Although delegates to the États Généraux were only supposed to express the grievances (doléances) of their constituents, the most influential elected political actors of the time did indeed speak in favour of free and independent elected politicians (see de Talleyrand to the Assemblée Nationale [1989: 1037-1044]).

Mounier (1989a: 880) was clearly acting as both judge and jury when in 1789, as a member of the Assemblée Nationale, he declared to this assembly that “It is an undeniable truth that the principle of sovereignty rests in the nation, that all authority derives from it; but that the nation may not rule itself.” This idea was reiterated in April 1793 by another member of the Assemblée, Montgilbert, who declared to the Assemblée Nationale that “the people never ruled themselves” (Wolikow 1995: 65). According to Mounier, the legislative body represents the nation and its function is to “want in the nation’s place” (Gueniffey 1988: 235). With respect to the mandats impératifs, Mounier (1989a: 897) declared that when a constitution did not allow such a thing, then electors are no longer sovereign. Similarly, Brissot claimed in his Plan de conduite pour les députés du peuple aux états généraux, that the people are not skilled enough to constitute themselves and that they therefore must give to skilled elected political actors the right to decide for them (Genty 1995: 44).

We must not conclude that these elected political actors were genuinely cynical manipulators. As with the American political leaders, the French leaders had a high opinion of themselves, and their interpretation of their own identities made them seek to resemble great and famous ancient legislators, such as Lycurgus and Solon (Vidal-Naquet 1976: 27). The mythical image of the ancient legislator was cherished in widely read works such as Montesquieu’s and the Chevalier de Jaucourt’s definition.
of Sparta in l’Encyclopédie (Mossé 1989: 52). Hence, it is no surprise that while Rousseau declared “It would take gods to give laws to men,” Robespierre, himself a legislator, dreamed of godlike legislation (McNeil 1965: 137).

Nonetheless, the rhetoric about the representation of the people’s sovereignty rests on a fiction. As in the United States, French political actors spent time and energy making clear the distinction between their elective regime—in which they occupied prestigious and important functions—and "democracy." These elected political actors, again acting as both judge and jury, were in fact justifying their own political function.

Let us analyse in greater depth three archetypal figures of elected political actors: the monarchist Barnave, the moderate Sieyès and the radical Robespierre, to see how they legitimized their own political function (and the power related to it) by interpreting the fiction of representation and by uttering strong statements about the people’s political skills.

Barnave, along with Mirabeau, was one of the most influential political actors of the first wave of the French Revolution (1789-1790). Barnave had been mayor of Grenoble and president of the Assemblée Nationale. He was a revolutionary, although a conservative one cherishing monarchy (Barnave 1989d: 25 and 1989b: 29). It seems therefore very logical that he would dismiss democracy. Yet an analysis of his speeches reveals troubling similarities to those of Sieyès and even Robespierre. In his "Discours sur la révision du cens électoral," August 11, 1791, Barnave (1989c: 42) discussed what he called a “fundamental mistake” of confusing “democratic government and representative government”.

Barnave complained about individuals “who are profoundly ignorant of the nature of representative government, and its advantages, and are forever holding up to our eyes the models of the governments of Athens and Sparta!” implying that references to the classical world were commonly used in political debates on democracy and the nature of the new government. Instead of dismissing references to the classics as irrelevant, he stated that the people who cherish the memory of the ancient democracies must
know that it was massive slavery that made them possible. Moreover, according to Barnave, direct democracy was attractive by default, mainly because "representative" government was unknown by the ancients (Barnave 1989c: 43 and see n. 1 and n. 2).\(^{59}\)

To those who "come to this Assembly opposing pure democracies to representative government" (Barnave 1989c: 44), the representative Barnave declared that "representative government" is "the first, the most free, the most sublime among governments."\(^{60}\) Barnave explained that representatives must be enlightened, interested in public affairs, and enjoy financial independence. Paradoxically, Barnave explained that "it is obvious that one's interest in public affairs should be greater if one has more personal interests to defend," and he adds, expressing a common idea of his time, "financial independence, by putting the individual above want, puts him more or less beyond the reach of the means of corruption that might be employed to seduce him" (1989c: 44).\(^{61}\) Barnave was not simply interested in keeping power in the hands of a few elected political actors like himself. He also claimed that suffrage must be limited to the upper classes, because the poor and those who must work all the time are not enlightened enough, nor do they have sufficient interest in the preservation of the existing social order to vote rationally and wisely, and they may be too easily bought off by the rich (1989c: 45).\(^{62}\)

In another speech delivered a few days later to the Assemblée Nationale ("Discours sur les conventions nationales et le pouvoir constituant," August 31, 1791), Barnave (1989a: 56), echoing several statements by the American Patriots, declared that "the people are sovereign, yet in a representative Government, their representatives are their tutors, only their representatives can act for the people, because the people's own interest is almost always founded on political truths of which the people may not have a clear and deep knowledge."\(^{63}\) This is an obvious case of agoraphobia. This self-legitimizing statement by the representative Barnave goes on as follows: "to replace the representative power—the most perfect form of government—by what in nature is the most odious, the most subversive, the most
detrimental to the people themselves, i.e. the direct exercise of sovereignty, democracy, proven by experience to be the most dreadful calamity" (1989a: 54).64

Sieyès, like Barnave, would use "democracy" in his speeches as a counter-model. Although as an elected political actor he was probably less influential than Barnave and Robespierre, Sieyès nonetheless wrote the tremendously influential pamphlet Qu’est-ce que le Tiers-État?, published in early 1789. Thirty thousand copies were sold in a few weeks and it was republished at least four times within the year (Bredin 1988: 12-13). To draw a comparison, let us say that Sieyès’ book is the equivalent in French of Thomas Paine’s Common Sense. Sieyès’ and Paine’s books, of all political books and pamphlets, are probably those which have had the most dramatic and direct impact on politics in the modern era. In Quelques idées de constitution, applicables à la ville de Paris en juillet 1789, Emmanuel Sieyès wrote: “We do not intend to impose on the National Government, or even on the smaller Municipal Government, a Democratic regime” (Iobrano 1994: 57 n. 20).65 He added: “Under democracy, the citizens themselves make the laws, and name their public officials directly. Under our plan, the citizens decide—more or less immediately—on their deputies to the legislative assembly; lawmaking thereby ceases to be democratic, and becomes representative” (Rosanvallon 1993: 18-19; English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 145).66 For Sieyès, elected government is more appropriate for a modern society of individual traders and workers. Like Benjamin Constant a few years later, Sieyès believed that the elective regime was the political equivalent of the economic division of labour. Sieyès explained that it is for the “improvement of the state of society” that a “specific profession” must be implemented in order to have a properly ruled government (Manin 1995: 14).67 The excuse for such delegation of political duty to a few professional politicians was that it was in tune with the desire and interest of the modern individual to focus his time and energy on that which would allow his private affairs to flourish.
Sieyès’s speech entitled “Sur l’organisation du pouvoir législatif et la sanction royale”, delivered to the Assemblée Nationale on September 7, 1789, deserves a closer look. First, Sieyès (1989: 1023) considered the United States in order to dismiss the option of implementing local "democracies" in France: “France must not be a collection of small nations” or "democracies" resembling the 13 States of America.68 Sieyès (1989: 1026) remarked:

I have always maintained that France is not, and cannot be a democracy ... . Because it is obvious that five or six million active citizens cannot be gathered together, it is clear that they cannot wish anything other than legislation through representation. ... the citizens who choose representatives for themselves ... do not have a specific will to impose. ... If they [the citizens] dictated their wishes, it would not be this representative State; it would be a democratic State.69

Hence, Sieyès (himself a "representative") dismissed the idea that France might live under a democratic regime, going even farther by stating that the citizens themselves wish to have representatives. However, Sieyès tried to base his case on sociological observations: as Sieyès had remarked in his previous work, the modern individual was a working individual. It would be incorrect to deprive the working “multitude” of civic and even political rights, even if the workers are not properly educated and are mainly concerned with their work. Moreover, Sieyès declared that this multitude should take part in the law-making process. Such a participation could take two forms (1989: 1024-1025):

The citizens may give their trust to a few among them ... . [these representatives] are much more capable than they of knowing the general good, and of interpreting their own will with regard to it. The other manner of exercising their right in making the law is to participate directly in making it. Such direct participation is what characterizes real democracy. Indirect participation refers to representative government.70

Sieyès’s discourse is quite traditional, merging descriptive comments, normative statements and fiction: certainly, citizens may select a small number of individuals among themselves to represent them (descriptive), yet it does not necessarily follow that these delegates “are much more able to know the common good” (normative).
nor that they are so insightful that they can "interpret the citizens' own will about the common good" (fiction). Between these two methods for citizens to participate in the process of law-making, Sieyès openly favoured the second, i.e. representative government. Sieyès praised representation in a speech he delivered as a representative to the Assemblée Nationale. In the same speech, he went even farther, expressing his agoraphobia openly (1989: 1025): "The very large majority of our fellow citizens have neither enough education, nor enough spare time to want to involve themselves directly in the laws that should rule France; their decision is therefore to name representatives for themselves" Sieyès then added candidly, "because it is the decision of the great majority, enlightened men must acquiesce to this as others do."71 Thus, the majority of citizens, realizing that they know too little about politics and are more occupied with working and making money, will choose to name representatives, and more learned individuals must follow the will of these citizens. However, did Sieyès at least believe that the representatives ought to consult—through referendum, for instance—their constituents? No: "The expression appel au peuple is therefore wrong; moreover, it is politically improper. I repeat, in a country which is not a democracy (and France should not be one), the people can speak and act only through their representatives" (Sieyès 1989:1027).72

Of course, the fiction of the representation of the people's sovereignty can have real political consequences. The delegate Malouet, a member of the pro-monarchist faction, pointed out that even if the people are sovereign only in "principle" and do not exercise their sovereignty as was the case in the "small democracies" of antiquity (Malouet 1989c: 503),73 it is still important for elected politicians to be conscious of the possibility that such a fiction may backfire:

You wanted ... to bring people and sovereignty closer together, and you continually offer them the temptation of sovereignty, without immediately entrusting them with its exercise ... by saying that sovereignty belongs to the people, but only delegating some powers, the enunciation of the principle is false as well as dangerous. It is false because the people, in a body, in the assemblées primaires, cannot grasp anything of what you have declared to be theirs, and you even prohibit them from deliberating; it is dangerous because it is difficult to hold in a subject
Thus, Malouet (1989c: 504) openly referred to the manipulation of words for political purposes, when he talked of "the misuse of these two terms: sovereignty of the people, general will."\(^{75}\)

Of course, the legitimizing fiction of representation, with its two corollaries—that the people are unfit to rule and that the representatives are necessarily a better and wiser sort of political man—was used for political reasons. Robespierre’s use of the idea of representation is interesting precisely because his opinion on representation changed according to the context (here, I shall transgress the time limit of this specific chapter, 1789-1791, in discussing Robespierre’s political use of the idea of representation) (McNeil 1965: 135-156). Jacques-Louis David and Jean-Louis Prieur (2000: 203) have summarized Robespierre’s strategy as follow: "What Robespierre meant by the people differed according to time and circumstances." They add (206) that "Robespierre ... constantly invoked the people when doing battle with an adversary, but he did so because it served his purpose." What is true for the "people" is also true for "representation" and "democracy." Robespierre himself referred to “fiction” while discussing the idea of representation ("only by fiction is the law the expression of the general will" (Jaume 1989: 82 [emphasis added]^{76}). Interestingly, when the Assemblée Nationale was controlled mainly by Robespierre’s foes—the Girondins—he then violently condemned representation and talked of “representative despotism,” using the threat of direct intervention by the people to fight his enemies. Robespierre also referred to a “representative aristocracy” in his Lettres à ses commettans (Sept. 1792 [McNeil 1965: 148]).^{77} In his Des maux et des ressources de l’État (Défenseur de la Constitution, no. 11, Aug. 1792 [Jaume 1989: 82]), Robespierre explained:

The source of all our ills is the absolute independence our representatives have given themselves with regard to the nation without consulting it. They acknowledged the
sovereignty of the nation, and they reduced it to nothing. They were, in their own words, only the mandatories of the people, but they made of themselves sovereigns, that is to say, despots. For despotism is nothing other than the usurpation of the sovereign power.\textsuperscript{78}

Yet, when the Girondins were neutralized (some of them even guillotined), and Robespierre and his fellow Jacobins took control of the \textit{Assemblée Nationale}, Robespierre changed his discourse again, arguing that the people's sovereignty could be expressed only through the voice of their representatives sitting in the \textit{Assemblée Nationale}, and that the sections must have only very limited power (see Robespierre's \textit{Rapport sur les principes de morale politique qui doivent guider la Convention nationale dans l'administration intérieure de la République} and McNeil 1965: 152-153). Moreover, Robespierre condemned the right of the \textit{assemblées de section} to gather at will, as proposed by the Constitution of 1793.\textsuperscript{79}

Robespierre declared, referring in a derogatory manner to "democracy," that such a right "destroyed any form of government, and established a kind of democracy that subverts the rights of the people. Indeed, these assemblies having no specific object, could do whatever they wanted to, and you thereby establish a pure democracy."\textsuperscript{80} Robespierre's use of both the idea of representation and of the term "democracy" were determined by the political situation. On May 10, 1793, Robespierre delivered a speech entitled "\textit{Sur le gouvernement représentatif}" ("On Representative Government"). While he advocated more involvement of the people in the public sphere, he did not once use the word "democracy" in his address. In 1794, Robespierre and others—Saint-Just, for instance—would make greater use of the word "democracy" but always with the intention of attacking or defending individual political actors and positions. The word is used in a rhetorical sense, and it does not necessarily imply a desire to establish direct rule by the people. On July 5, 1794, in his address entitled "\textit{Sur les principes de morale politique qui doivent guider la Convention nationale dans l'administration intérieure de la République}" ("Concerning the Principles of Political Morality That Must Guide the National Convention in the
Internal Administration of the Republic”), Robespierre stated that “Democracy is not a state where the people continuously assembled, rules by itself over all public affairs ... democracy is a state wherein the sovereign people, guided by laws of its own making, does all that it can do properly on its own while delegating to representatives all that the people cannot do itself” (English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 147). Robespierre went as far as declaring emphatically, in Le Défenseur de la constitution: “I myself am people!” (“Je suis peuple moi-même!”) (McNeil 1965: 143). Such an attitude seems very similar, politically speaking, to that of the King when he declares: I myself am God. Such fictions obviously increase the legitimacy of the ruler.

Yet, few were those who stated that the rhetoric of representation was mere propaganda and fiction. We have seen that Robespierre was one of them, although he stopped criticizing this fiction when the fiction was useful for him. The fiction of representation was so useful that the "representative" Thouret candidly remarked (1981 [1791]: 1166): “until then no one thought of accusing us for having organised these powers for ourselves.” Then Thouret concluded, as if he believe in the myth: “In fact, those who are part of an elected regime do nothing for themselves, even if they can be elected, because they cannot control the election; but they do everything for the nation, which holds the right to elect.”

The political importance of this fiction explained the struggle around the name of the assembly of the Tiers État, but also about the new regime itself. Mirabeau, on May 18, 1789, explained that the representatives spoke of themselves as the “representatives of the French people.” Moreover, Mirabeau (1989a [1789]: 629) described as too “metaphysical" Sieyès' idea of calling the House the “Assembly of known and confirmed representatives of the French nation” (Mirabeau 1989a: 634 and Furet & Halévi 1989: 1435). Interestingly, Mirabeau claimed that his proposition was more likely to help the elected political actors gain the constituents’ support, as if Mirabeau was seeking to manufacture consent (1989d: 639). Finally, it was a delegate from Berry named Legrand who proposed calling the assembly “Assemblée nationale”
(Furet & Halévi 1989: 1436), an idea adopted on June 17, 1789. According to the elected political actors, such a national assembly has as its purpose to interpret and to express the will of the nation (Sieyès 1988 and Buchez & Roux 1834-38 [I]: 470). Regarding the name of the new regime, Condorcet was probably the first to call it—as early as 1789, in Journal de la société—a "representative democracy" (Monnier 1999: 55). More in touch with the intellectual roots of the term “democracy,” one observer wrote in October 1790 in La Bouche de fer (first issue) that “elective aristocracy” had replaced “hereditary aristocracy” (Monnier 1999: 62). By the end of August 1789, no fewer than fourteen epithets had been proposed. The members of the Assemblée Nationale dismissed “republic” and the strange term "royal democracy" (Bart 1994: 122; Soboul 1979: 16 and Moniteur Universel no. 48 [Aug. 28-31, 1789]). What the French political actors were establishing through their revolution in the Summer 1789 was a constitutional monarchy. Olympe de Gouges (1993a: 187), for instance, declared in June 1791: “I am a Royalist, yes, Sirs, but a patriotic Royalist, a constitutionalist Royalist.” Then, she added: “I was born with a real republican personality; but, the general spirit of the French Government requires a Monarchy” (1993a: 191).

Even as Part of a Mixed Constitution, "Democracy" Still Convey a Derogatory Meaning

Several political actors in France shared with American Patriots and with a majority of Englishmen the belief that a political regime must be mixed in order for liberty to be secure, a belief they had inherited from their readings of republican authors, both classical (Aristotle, Cicero) and modern (Montesquieu, for instance). The Americans were very concerned about having two Houses—the Commons and a Senate—precisely because, as they argued, having only one assembly would result in a tyranny. This idea of a mixed constitution commonly refers to the three organic elements of society: the Crown, aristocracy and democracy. Thus, the three estates specific to French society—the clergy, the nobility and the TiersÉtat—represent what
we would call today civil society. But within the State organization, the three more fundamental and almost universal organic elements—Crown, aristocrats, demos—must be represented in a mixed Constitution so as to preserve the State from instability and tyranny over the whole by any one of these orders. This balance of power was a major issue during the Revolution, an issue that had been broadly discussed even before 1789. As early as 1783, Barnave, at the age of 22, delivered before the Parliament a lecture entitled "De la nécessité de la division des pouvoirs dans le corps politique." In his *Qu’est-ce que le Tiers-État?*, Sieyès (1988: 116 n. 1) examined the importance attributed by his contemporaries to the notion of balance of power. Malouet (1989b: 459) delivering a speech to the *Assemblée Nationale* on September 1, 1789, referred to "aristocracy" and "democracy" in discussing a mixed monarchical regime. In *Esprit de la Révolution et de la constitution française*, released in 1791 (which rapidly sold out, thus demonstrating its apparent popularity), Saint-Just, inspired by Montesquieu, advocated a political system balanced by the three powers (monarchy, aristocracy and democracy). Then, in the fifth chapter of the second part, precisely entitled "Des principes de la Démocratie Française," Saint-Just (1976: 56-57) explained that "Ancient democracies did not have any positive laws; this was what raised them at first to the peak of glory that is reached by arms; yet, this is what finally reduced everything to confusion; when the people were assembled, the government no longer had an absolute form, everything followed the will of the orators; liberty was confusion; sometimes the cleverest, sometimes the strongest prevailed." Saint-Just added: "The principle of French democracy is the acceptance of the laws, and the right to vote." According to Saint-Just, democracy is the civil society, aristocracy the legislative power and monarchy the executive power. In a perfect democracy, liberty is excessive, in a pure aristocracy, rule of law collapses, in a pure monarchy, liberty is lost (1976: 51-52). In modern France, again according to Saint-Just, democracy seeks moderation (1976: 53). Saint-Just apparently made both descriptive and normative distinctions between ancient and modern "democracy."
Yet Saint-Just was unable to completely dispel the derogatory implications of the term "democracy." Indeed, he (1976: 69) declared that "the masterpiece of the Assemblée Nationale is to have moderated this democracy."88 Applying traditional criticism to modern democracy, Saint-Just (1976: 48) complained that, in fact, democracy in the Parisian sections was prey to sedition-mongers.89 Similarly, the Comte d'Antraigues declared, in 1789, that in a balanced constitution, democracy must be limited to ensure that the regime does not turn toward anarchy (Deleplace 1992: 22-23). Malouet (1989d [1791]: 494) also openly stressed that it is good to "fight the fanaticism of democracy."90

Mirabeau (1989c: 745-747), in his advocacy for a mixed constitution, declared to the Assemblée Nationale:

Rome was destroyed because of the merging of the royal, aristocratic and democratic elements. ... men, misusing an authority without necessary buffers, exceed the limits. It is thus that the monarchical government is transformed into despotism ... . But it is also thus that representative government becomes oligarchic, because two powers intended to balance each other succeed in taking over and invading each other rather than holding themselves in check.91

Yet, France was not America: while in the latter the Patriots, in a New World where nobility was unknown, were fighting against a distant monarchical power, France witnessed the violent revolt of the Tiers État against the privileged noblemen. Therefore, for French Patriots, the idea of having an Upper House was not really appealing. Revolutionaries such as Mirabeau, Condorcet and Sieyès, who were certainly not among the most radical, proposed a single House. In America, such an idea was clearly understood as radical and, therefore, "democratic" (Lacorne: 93). In France, the noblemen would have to be elected to the Assemblée Nationale if they wished to be politically active. No House would be established specifically for them. Apparently more radical than the Americans in establishing a single House, the first wave of French revolutionaries did not want to abolish the Crown. As a matter of fact, it should be precisely the Crown that would secure a balance in the regime. The
Assemblée Nationale would welcome both noblemen and commoners (in fact, mainly lawyers and members of the bourgeoisie) and would hold legislative power, and the Crown, executive power. Both the Assemblée Nationale and the Crown would claim to represent the people.

There was heated debate about the King's veto and the right to declare war. In this debate, Mirabeau (1989c: 745-747 and Roberts 1996: 197) expressed his distrust of "democracy" when he declared to the Assemblée Nationale that to allow the elected political actors to declare war in the name of the people would give to the people "a dangerous push toward democracy."\(^92\) The pro-monarchist Abbot Maury also used the term "democracy" in his speech to the Assemblée Nationale supporting the right of king to declare war and peace (1989b: 511 and 571). Maury started by complaining that the "multitude" wished that the representatives would contest the king's rights by presenting "the more democratic chapters of the Contrat Social of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, citizen and troublemaker of Geneva."\(^93\) Yet it is interesting to note that Rousseau was also used by pro-democratic individuals as a counter-model. In Lavicomterie's Du peuple et des rois (1790), one reads that "Rousseau says that real democracy would never exist, since it is impossible for the people to remain forever assembled to govern affairs. ... Let us see if a democratic State may exist: I do believe so, against the opinion of this great man" (Cornu 1990: 81).\(^94\) In another speech on the same issue, Maury (1989b: 578) rhetorically asked:

> Is it in the interest of France that the representatives of the nation claim and exercise the right of war and peace? This question may be reduced to two very simple elements: Would it be profitable for France to be a democracy? Such form of government would not be acceptable, and moreover would not be durable in a State of 27 000 square leagues.\(^95\)

Thus, for Maury, "democracy" refers not only to derogatory ideas such as Rousseau the "troublemaker" but also to the representatives opposing the rights of the King. Even individuals who opposed monarchy believed—at least in private—that such an attitude was synonymous with supporting democracy. For example, Brissot wrote in
his diary that “A democrat or a patriot (I believe they mean the same) ... wants liberty for all men: he wants it without exception, without modification ... Like Cato ... or Samuel Adams, from the firm belief that monarchy is a political plague” (Cornu 1990: 74).96

“Democracy” and Economic Struggle

In France as well as in America, “democracy” often referred to economic struggle. In 1789-1790 France, common folk suffered from the burden of misery (inflation, unemployment). Yet, in both the cities and in the countryside, the fury of the people was directed against the noblemen rather than the bourgeoisie (Soboul 1988: 76-79). This did not prevent some politicians of the left from denouncing the new regime for being controlled by the well-to-do. As early as October 1789, the elected political actors took measures in favour of the rich (for example: the distinction based on wealth between "active" and "passive" citizens). Robespierre and Condorcet would denounce such a policy, the latter nonetheless revealing his distrust of the poor by stating that universal suffrage is the best guarantee that the people would not use the streets to make their voice heard (Kessel, ed. 1969: 45). Yet, the law distinguishing active and passive citizens was approved, and consequently, the new legislative power was seen by many as the power of the rich. The expression "aristocracy of the rich" ("aristocratie des riches") came into use.97 The Abbot de Cournand, in his De la propriété ou la cause du pauvre, published in 1791, went so far as to talk about a "tyranny of the rich" ("tyrannie des riches") (Kessel, ed. 1969: 50). With regard specifically to the États Généraux, some had declared that the wealthy elected political actors of the Tiers État were unfit to speak on behalf of the poor, since rich and poor have “totally different or even opposite interests” as the Chevalier de Moret suggested in a letter sent to Necker. De Moret explained that the rich “have a great interest in keeping the others in their dependency and in their servitude” (Kessel, ed.
At the end of February, 1789, a pamphlet entitled *L'Ordre des Paysans aux États Généraux*, signed by Noillac (probably Restif de la Bretonne’s nom de plume) was published in which it was proposed to add to the already existing three orders—clergy, nobility and the *Tiers État*—a new order of yeomen, and even a fifth order for mothers (Kessel, ed. 1969: 39). In November 1790, Babeuf entitled one of his texts “*Démocratie politique et démocratie sociale,*” although the distinction between “political democracy” and “social democracy” is only implicit in the text (oddly, Babeuf use the term “democracy” only in the title of his text). Babeuf condemned the current political system for having limited political rights to a social elite, the rich. Babeuf (1976: 143) argued that in such a system, liberty for the poor is only a “mental illusion” (“fantôme”) and that only the rich—a new “aristocracy”—are sovereign. Similarly, Sylvain Maréchal wrote, in *Révolutions de Paris* (no. 82, Jan. 29-Feb. 5, 1791 [in Kessel, ed. 1969: 61]) that: “It was the poor who made the Revolution, but they did not make it to their own advantage; indeed, since July 14, they are more or less what they were before July 14, 1789.” Conservative political actors such as Malouet openly acknowledged that such criticisms had solid foundations. In the following quotation from a speech delivered to the *Assemblée Nationale*, Malouet (1989c [Aug. 8, 1791]: 505) begins by referring to the “democrats,” with whom he claimed to identify himself. Yet, in contrast to these so-called democrats, Malouet claimed that liberty and happiness might not be secure in a regime where it is not the proprietors who rule, clearly implying that democrats are against such a supremacy of the rich:

I want for them [the people], as for myself, and as much as the most ardent democrat, the greatest amount of liberty and happiness; however I maintain that we must rest them on solid foundations. ... The best arranged government is ... one in which proprietors alone exert influence, since they have as do those who are not proprietors an equal interest in safety and individual liberty, yet they have as well, great interest in a good regime of property.\(^{100}\)

Although the first two years of the Revolution were relatively quiet regarding the relations between the rich and the poor, it was only a matter of time before economic struggle became one of the major elements of French politics, and the main influence
Nevertheless, in the summer of 1791 Barnave already felt that economic struggle and revolutionary actions led by the poor must be avoided at any cost. Condemning those who wished to extend the Revolution, he (1989b: 38) declared to the Assemblée Nationale: “Are we going to stop the Revolution, or to start it again?” a declaration received by the members of the assembly with loud applause. Referring specifically to the threat to property, Barnave (1989b: 39) added that: “if the Revolution takes one more step, it cannot take it without danger; ... with regard to liberty, the first act that may follow would be the annihilation of the monarchy; with regard to equality, the first act that may follow would be the attack on property” (applause). Barnave went on to remark: “[I]s there any other aristocracy to be destroyed than that of property?” Barnave supported an aristocracy of property. That is why he (1989b: 40) declared emphatically, “It is therefore true that it is time to end the Revolution ... Today, gentlemen, everyone must feel that it is in the common interest that the Revolution stop.” But the Revolution was just gathering steam.

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1 The French version of the text (Rosanvallon 1993), includes a chart which shows the recurrence of the words "aristocrat," "aristocracy," "democrat," and "democracy" in the main French dictionaries published between 1789 and 1802.
2 "Il est de la prudence de prévenir, dans l'établissement de l'état naissant du Canada, toutes les fâcheuses révolutions qui pourroient le rendre de monarchique, aristocratique ou démocratique." As for English colonists, the French usually referred to Native societies as "republics" rather than "democracies." Father Bressani, for instance, wrote about the Hurons' "republican" regime, in 1653. Father de Charlevoix also used the term "republic" in referring to some native groups in his Histoire de la Nouvelle-France (1744) (see Durand 1973: 10).
3 "une espèce de policie en laquelle la multitude de populaire tient le princey." Note: this citation does not figure in the English version of the text (Rosanvallon 1995).
4 "Les grenouilles, se lassant/De l'état démocratique,/Par leurs clameurs firent tant/Que Jupin les soumit au pouvoir monarchique."

6 "forme de gouvernement où les charges se donnent au sort.

7 "Démocratie : Sorte de gouvernement où le peuple a toute l'autorité. La Démocratie n'a été florissante que dans les Républiques de Rome et d'Athènes. Les séditions et les troubles arrivent souvent dans les Démocraties.

8 "Qui appartient au gouvernement populaire. Le pire de tous les états est le démocratique. Le gouvernement des Républiques modernes tient plus de l'aristocratie que du démocratique.


10 "état déréglé, sans chef et sans aucune sorte de gouvernement. La démocratie pure dégénère facilement en anarchie.

11 Mably wrote: "Quand tous les citoyens d’une république sont assemblés, l’État n’a plus de frein. Qui peut modérer ses caprices? Qui peut lui prescrire des lois? Qui peut l’obliger d’obéir à celles qu’il a faites? ... Ce qui est arrivé dans plusieurs républiques anciennes est une preuve que dans un moment de fermentation, d’enthousiasme, de colère ou de reconnaissance, les lois les plus sages et les plus respectables n’y étaient pas toujours en sûreté." In Mably’s Parallèle des Romains et des François par rapport au gouvernement, released in 1740, he deplores that in the mixed Roman constitution, the democratic element had too much weight. Mably again expressed his hostility to democracy in his Étude de l’Histoire; and in his De la législation ou principes des lois (1776) (see Dorigny 1994: 112).

12 "C’est une loi fondamentale de la démocratie que le peuple seul fasse les lois.

13 "Le grand avantage des représentants c’est qu’ils sont capables de discuter des affaires. Le peuple n’y est point du tout propre: ce qui forme un des grands inconvénients de la démocratie.

14 "C’est le sort de ce gouvernement admirable dans son principe, de devenir presque infailliblement la proie de l’ambition de quelques citoyens, ou de celle des étrangers, et de passer ainsi d’une précieuse liberté dans la plus grande des servitudes.”

15 "quoique je ne pense pas que la démocratie soit la plus commode et la plus stable forme du gouvernement; quoique je sois persuadé qu’elle est désavantageuse aux grands états, je la crois néanmoins une des plus anciennes parmi les nations qui ont suivi comme équitable cette maxime: ‘Que ce à quoi les membres de la société ont intérêt, doit être administré par tous en commun’ (Goulemont 1987: 19-24). "Ce serait une chose bienheureuse si le gouvernement populaire pouvait conserver l’amour de la vertu, l’exécution des lois, les mœurs et la frugalité; s’il pouvait éviter les deux excès, j’entends l’esprit d’inégalité qui mène à l’aristocratie, et l’esprit d’égalité extrême qui conduit au despotisme d’un seul: mais il est bien rare que la démocratie puisse longtemps se préserver de ces deux écueils" (Rosanvallon 1993: 14 n. 12 [this note does not figure in Rosanvallon 1995]).

16 "j’aurais voulu naître sous un gouvernement démocratique, sagement tempéré."

17 "Le souverain peut commettre le dépôt du gouvernement à tout le peuple ou à la plus grande partie du peuple, en sorte qu’il y ait plus de citoyens magistrats que de citoyens simples particuliers. On donne le nom de démocratie à cette forme de gouvernement. “La démocratie peut embrasser tout le peuple ou se resserrer jusqu’à la moitié.”

18 In an ironic tone, Rousseau writes: “Le peuple assemblé, dira-t-on! Quelle chimère! C’est une chimère aujourd’hui, mais ce n’en était pas une il y a deux mille ans. Les hommes ont-ils changé de nature?” (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract, bk. III, ch. XII.).) And Rousseau goes on to give the example of Rome, where, despite demographic and geographical size, people did meet in public assemblies quite often.

19 "S’il y avait un peuple de dieux, il se gouvernerait démocratiquement. Un gouvernement si parfait ne convient pas à des hommes.” And he adds: “À prendre le terme [démocratie] dans la rigueur de l’acceptation, il n’a jamais existé de véritable démocratie, et il n’en existera jamais” (bk. III, ch. 4).

20 "quelques cantons suisses sont de véritables démocraties.”

21 D’Argenson, Considérations sur le gouvernement ancien et présent de la France (Amsterdam, 1765: 8): "La fausse démocratie tombe bientôt dans l’anarchie, c’est le gouvernement de la multitude; tel est un peuple révolté; alors le peuple insolent méprise la loix et la raison; son despotisme tyrannique se marque par la violence de ses mouvements et par l’incertitude de ses délibérations. Dans la
véritable démocratie, on agit par députés, et ces députés sont autorisés par l'élection; la mission des élus du peuple et l'autorité qui les appuie constituent la puissance publique."

22 Exhaustive chronological tables are available in Furet (1992) and in Tulard (1985).

23 As for the American case, the specialized literature on the French Revolution is extremely voluminous. See, among others, Furet (1992); Soboul 1988; Tulard (1985); and more specifically about the radicals, Rose (1983); Slavin (1995); Soboul (1979). For a good overview of the debates among historians and of their various interpretations, see Gérard (1970) and Kates, ed. (1998).

24 Mass action in France did not break out only in Paris, and the mass was sometimes opposed to the revolution (Lucas 1988: 259-285).

25 Only 13% of the representatives of the Tiers État attending the États Généraux to oppose the crown and nobility could be considered "capitalists" (merchants, manufacturers, financiers). The overwhelming majority were in fact linked to the Ancien Régime, being local officers: administrators, prosecutors and judges (Kates 1998: 5).

26 Assemblée Nationale was already the label of the États Généraux. See for instance de Lally-Tollendal (1989a: 351).

27 Bonaparte then noted in his diary: "Vingt-cinq millions d'hommes ne peuvent pas vivre en république est un adage impolitique" (Tulard 1985: 79).

28 "terminer la Révolution" (Tulard 1985: 80).

29 With respect to the idea of active and passive citizens, and the political disenfranchisement of the poor and of women, see Grandmaison (1992: 39-70 and 273-296). With regard to women, see, among many others, Godineau (1988).

30 The data base includes 3 000 texts from the 16th to the 20th century, 33 million words for the 18th century, 54 million for the 19th, and 65 million for the 20th (Monnier 1999: 50, n. 1).

31 See the theoretical chapter.

32 "Le mot démocratie est un épouvantail dont les fripons se servent pour tromper les ignorants."

33 See the pamphlet Catéchisme patriotique à l'usage des mères published in 1789 (Gruder 1992: 175).

34 "tendent à la démocratie qui, dans un grand empire, n'est autre que l'anarchie."

35 "pousse à l'excès les principes populaires," "Parti démocratique en un mot."

36 "en abusent dans le discours."

37 "cette clique que nous appelons tout bonnement celle des aristo-démocrates," "le règne turbulent des factieux."

38 Madame Roland, for instance, wrote to Bancal des Issarts on September 2, 1792, arguing that George Washington's idea of moving the American Congress far away from popular pressures was a good one (in Hardman, ed. 1973 [II]: 9).

39 Camille Desmoulins, for instance, in an article published in La France Libre (no 6), referred to Athens, Geneva, England, Switzerland, Holland and America, and he noted that in both America and Greece, the nation rules (Mossé 1989: 79-80).

40 Brissot, for instance, travelled around the United States and he published in 1787, with Clavière, De la France et des États-Unis, ou de l'importance de la Révolution de l'Amerique pour le bonheur de la France, and François Jean Marquis de Chastellux wrote Travels in North America 1780-1782. The Marquis de Lafayette, accompanied by several thousand French soldiers, went to America to fight against the redcoats.

41 In 1784, for instance, Mably published Observations sur le gouvernement et les lois des Etats-Unis, in which he discussed the legislative assembly of the American republic. Two years later, Condorcet released De l'influence de la révolution d'Amerique sur l'Europe. In 1787, Brissot came back from America and with Clavière as co-author published De la France et des États-Unis, ou de l'importance de la Révolution de l'Amérique pour le bonheur de la France. With reference to the American constitutions, the Constitutions des Treize États Unis de l'Amérique translated by La Rocheboucauld was available in France as early as 1783, and the French version of the Federal Constitution was published in Le Mercure de France (Nov. 17-24. 1787) (see Dorigny 1994: 115-116; Hartog 1993: 37; Lacorne 1994: 95 n. 5 and 6).
Mark Olsen, who studied the linguistic impact of American Independence in France, has nothing to say about the word “démocratie,” which tends to prove that the American Independence did not lead the French to reinterpret the meaning of “democracy” (Olsen 1988).

Nous avons fait voir à l’article DÉMOCRATIE dans quelles erreurs on est tombé... pour avoir mal saisi le sens du terme démocratie, ou gouvernement démocratique: le livre de l’Abbé de Mably est plein de faux jugements qui viennent de cette méprise. ... Dans les républiques de l’antiquité dont on nous parle, le peuple agissoit par lui-même & sans représentants; dans les États-Unis, il agit par représentants & et non par lui-même: le gouvernement y est démocratique; mais ce n’est pas une démocratie, si l’on donne à cette expression la valeur que lui donnent Aristote & M. l’Abbé Mably.

démocratie pure" is "en général fort dangereuse"; “Les institutions américaines sont bien démocratiques.”

De tels hommes étaient sans doute préparés à recevoir la liberté dans toute son énergie: car leurs goûts, leurs mœurs, leur position les appelaient à la démocratie." déchirer la France en une infinité de petites démocraties.”

"Voyez les sages américains: ont-ils appelé une seule des parties de l’Union République démocratique? Examinez leurs différentes constitutions; il n’en est pas une qui pût subsister avec le système de la démocratie. ... Qu’on cesse donc de dire une chose qui n’est pas, qui ne peut être, qui ne doit pas être, qu’on ne se dise pas que nous avons une constitution démocratique.”

On ne craint pas de nous proposer les Américains pour modèle, et même de les surpasser en institutions propres à favoriser l’anarchie, car ils ne font jamais délibérer tous les citoyens indistinctement sur les affaires publiques, mais seulement leurs délégués.” révolution des parlementaires.

devant l’Assemblée, non des représentants de la nation, mais de la nation même”; “il est impossible d’assembler physiquement une nation”, “on peut dans chaque ville, chaque bourgade, s’adresser aux citoyens, et par une administration fort simple, résumer l’opinion commune”, “la proposition seule d’un pareil projet paraît ridicule à plus d’un lecteur; l’habitude de regarder la démocratie comme un monstre, un certain penchant à la paresse politique, c’est-à-dire, au défaut d’abandonner à quelques personnes le soin des affaires publiques”, “faire regarder l’appel au peuple comme inutile, chimérique et dangereux”. But, “ce qui paraît monstrueux aujourd’hui, peut ne pas l’être dans cent ans”.

Ce n’est donc pas la volonté de cinq ou six cents individus sur 24 millions, qui peuvent former la volonté générale. Quel est le droit de nos mandataires? Je veux dire leur devoir? C’est de proposer la Loi aux 24 millions d’individus, d’en recevoir les suffrages, dont la majorité doit former la Loi.”

See the definition of "représentants" in L’Encyclopédie, written by d’Holbach: “Pour que les sujets s’expliquent sans tumulte, il convient qu’ils aient des représentants, c’est-à-dire des citoyens plus éclairés que les autres, plus intéressés à la chose, que leurs possessions attachent à la patrie, que leur position mette à portée de sentir les besoins de l’État, les abus qui s’y introduisent, et les remèdes qu’ils conviennent d’y porter.” He added, however: “Les constituants peuvent en tout temps démentir, désavouer et révoquer les représentants qui les trahissent, qui abusent de leurs pleins pouvoirs contre eux-mêmes, ou qui renoncent pour eux à des droits inhérents à leur essence” (Monnier 1999: 56-57).

les législateurs, en constituant la municipalité de Paris, n’ont point entendu faire de la capitale une démocratie athénienne.” See also Barnave (1989d [May 21, 1790]: 21): “En s’appuyant de l’exemple des républiques anciennes, on n’a pas cessé de comparer notre Constitution avec la démocratie de la place publique d’Athènes, avec le sénat aristocratique de Rome, qui tâchait de distraire le peuple de la liberté par la gloire.”

C’est une vérité incontestable que le principe de la souveraineté réside dans la nation, que toute autorité émane d’elle; mais la nation ne peut se gouverner elle-même. Jamais les peuples ne se sont gouvernés eux-mêmes.”

"vouloir pour elle." See also Mounier (1989a: 880): “C’est une vérité incontestable que le principe de la souveraineté réside dans la nation, que toute autorité émane d’elle; mais la nation ne peut se gouverner elle-même. Jamais aucun peuple ne s’est réservé l’exercice de tous les pouvoirs. Tous les peuples, pour être libres et heureux, ont été obligés d’accorder leur confiance à des délégués, de constituer une force publique pour faire respecter les lois, et de la placer dans les mains d’un ou plusieurs dépositaires” (see also p. 895). Mounier then declared: "La démocratie, dans un grand État, est une absurde chimère" (892), “c’est pour le bonheur de tous les citoyens que le gouvernement doit être
institué, mais non pour tout subordonner aux décision de la multitude. Je rivaliserai avec les plus démocrates en respect pour mes semblables, en amour pour l'égalité. [mais si le peuple] veut gouverner lui-même, il perd sa liberté, et se replace sous le despotisme ou l'aristocratie, après avoir parcouru toutes les horreurs de l'anarchie la plus cruelle" (894).

57 "leur peuple seul a le droit de se constituer, mais il n'en a pas le talent; il doit donc confier une partie de son droit à ceux qui en ont le talent."

58 "erreur fondamentale," "le gouvernement démocratique et le gouvernement représentatif."

59 "La fonction d'électeur n'est pas un droit ... c'est à la société seule qu'il appartient de déterminer les conditions avec lesquelles on peut être électeur; et ceux qui méconnaissent profondément la nature du gouvernement représentatif, comme ses avantages, viennent sans cesse nous mettre sous les yeux les modèles des gouvernements d'Athènes et de Sparte!"; "le démocratie pure n'exista dans ces petites républiques" and in Rome only because of slavery. Moreover, "gouvernment représentatif" was "encore inconnu dans cet âge du monde."

60 "viennent dans cette Assemblée opposer les démocraties pures au gouvernement représentatif." And "le gouvernement représentatif" is "le premier, le plus libre, le plus sublime des gouvernements."

61 "lumière," "l'intérêt de la chose publique" and "l'indépendance de fortune": "premièrement lumières; et il est impossible de nier que, non quant à un individu mais quant à une collection d'hommes, une certaine fortune, une contribution déterminée, est, jusqu'à un certain point, le gage d'une éducation plus soignée et de lumières plus étendues; la seconde garantie est dans l'intérêt de la chose publique ... et il est évident qu'il sera plus grand de la part de celui qui aura un intérêt particulier plus considérable à défendre; enfin, la dernière garantie est dans l'indépendance de fortune, qui, mettant l'individu au-dessus du besoin, le soustrait plus ou moins aux moyens de corruption qui peuvent être employés pour le séduire."

62 "ce n'est pas dans la classe de citoyens qui, obligés immédiatement et sans cesse, par la nullité absolue de leur fortune, de travailler pour leurs besoins, ne peuvent acquérir aucune des lumières nécessaires pour faire les choix, n'ont pas un intérêt assez puissant à la conservation de l'ordre social existant; étant enfin sans cesse aux prises avec le besoin et étant chaque jour, par l'absence d'un moment de travail, réduits aux dernières extrémités, ils offriraient, par là même, à la corruption de la richesse, un moyen trop facile de s'emparer des élections. C'est donc dans la classe moyenne qu'il faut chercher les électeurs."

63 "le peuple est souverain, mais dans le Gouvernement représentatif, ses représentants sont ses tuteurs, ses représentants peuvent seuls agir pour lui, parce que son propre intérêt est presque toujours attaché à des vérités politiques dont il ne peut pas avoir la connaissance nette et profonde."

64 "remplacer le pouvoir représentatif, le plus parfait des gouvernements, par ce qu'il y a dans la nature de plus odieux, de plus subversif, de plus nuisible au peuple lui-même, l'exercice immédiat de la souveraineté, la démocratie, prouvée par l'expérience le plus grand des fléaux."

65 "Nous n'entendons point soumettre le Gouvernement National, ni même les plus petits Gouvernements Municipaux au régime Démocratique."

66 "Dans la démocratie, les citoyens font eux-mêmes les lois, et nomment directement leurs officiers publics. Dans notre plan, les citoyens font, plus ou moins immédiatement, le choix de leurs députés à l'Assemblée législative; la législation cesse donc d'être démocratique, et devient représentative."


68 "La France ne doit point être un assemblage de petites nations qui se gouvernerait séparément en démocraties [à peu près comme les 13 ou 14 États-Unis d'Amérique se sont considérés en convention générale]; elle n'est point une collection d'États; elle est un tout unique ... . Tout est perdu, si nous nous permettons de considérer les municipalités qui s'établissent, ou les districts, ou les provinces, comme autant de républiques unies seulement sous les rapports de force ou de protection commune."

69 "je soutiens toujours que la France n'est point, ne peut pas être une démocratie ... . Puisqu'il est évident que cinq à six millions de citoyens actifs ne peuvent point s'assembler, il est certain qu'ils ne peuvent aspirer qu'à une législature par représentation. ... les citoyens qui se nomment des
représentants ... n’ont pas de volonté particulière à imposer. ... S’ils dictaient des volontés, ce ne serait plus cet État représentatif; ce serait un État démocratique."

70"Les peuples européens modernes ressemblent bien peu aux peuples anciens. Il ne s’agit parmi nous que de commerce, d’agriculture, de fabriques, etc. Le désir des richesses semble ne faire de tous les États de l’Europe que de vastes ateliers: on y songe bien plus à la consommation et à la production qu’au bonheur. Aussi les systèmes politiques aujourd’hui sont exclusivement fondés sur le travail ... vous ne pouvez pas refuser la qualité de citoyen, et les droits du civisme, à cette multitude sans instruction qu’un travail forcé absorbe en entier. Puisqu’ils doivent obéir à la loi, tout comme vous, ils doivent aussi, tout comme vous, concourir à la faire. Ce concours doit être légal. Il peut s’exercer de deux manières. Les citoyens peuvent donner leur confiance à quelques-uns d’entre eux. ... C’est pour l’utilité commune qu’ils se nomment des représentations bien plus capables qu’eux-mêmes de connaître l’intérêt général, et d’interpréter à cet égard leur propre volonté. L’autre manière d’exercer son droit à la formation de la loi est de concourir soi-même immédiatement à la faire. Ce concours immédiat est ce qui caractérise la véritable démocratie. Le concours médiat désigne le gouvernement représentatif."

71"la très grande pluralité de nos concitoyens n’a ni assez d’instruction, ni assez de loisir pour vouloir s’occuper directement des lois qui doivent gouverner la France; leur avis est donc de se nommer des représentants; et puisque c’est l’avis du grand nombre, les hommes éclairés doivent s’y soumettre comme les autres."

72"L’expression d’appel au peuple est donc mauvaise, autant qu’elle est impolitiquement prononcée. Le peuple, je le répète, dans un pays qui n’est pas une démocratie (et la France ne saurait l’être), le peuple ne peut parler, ne peut agir que par ses représentants."

73"les petites démocraties."

74"Vous avez voulu ... rapprochez intimement le peuple de la souveraineté, et vous lui en donnez continuellement la tentative, sans lui en confier immédiatement l’exercice. ... en disant que la souveraineté appartient au peuple, et en ne déléguant que des pouvoirs, l’énonciation du principe est aussi fausse que dangereuse. Elle est fausse, car elle est fausse, car le peuple, en corps, dans les assemblées primaires, ne peut rien saisir de ce que vous déclarez lui appartenir, vous lui défendre même de délibérer; elle est dangereuse, car il est difficile de tenir dans la condition de sujet celui auquel vous ne cessez de dire : tu es souverain. ... Tel est donc le premier vice de votre Constitution, d’avoir placé la souveraineté en abstraction."

75"L’abus de ces deux mots: souveraineté du peuple, volonté générale."

76"c’est seulement par fiction que la loi est l’expression de la volonté générale."

77"despotisme représentatif."

78"La source de tous nos maux, c’est l’indépendance absolue où les représentants se sont mis eux-mêmes à l’égard de la nation sans l’avoir consultée. Ils ont reconnu la souveraineté de la nation, et ils l’ont anéantie. Ils n’étaient, de leur aveu même, que les mandataires du peuple, et ils se sont faits souverains, c’est-à-dire despotes. Car le despotisme n’est autre chose que l’usurpation du pouvoir souverain.

79"Robespierre, the friend of the people, had to compete with the people for power—not the moral people of his abstract concept, but the militant sans-culottes of the Paris sections. The only way for Robespierre to carry out the terror, according to his objectives, was to strip the Paris sections of their power" (David & Prieur 2000: 220 and 195-225).

80 See Moniteur Universel (16: 653): "L’article est si vague qu’il détruit toute espèce de gouvernement, et établit une espèce de démocratie qui renverse les droits du peuple. En effet, ces assemblées n’ayant aucun objet déterminé, elles pourraient faire tout ce qu’elles voudront, et par là vous créez la démocratie pure" (see also Gueniffey [1988: 249 and 244]).

81"jusqu’ici il n’était venu en pensée à personne de nous taxer d’avoir organisé ces pouvoirs pour nous mêmes. C’est qu’en effet ceux qui constituent un régime électif ne font rien pour eux, quoiqu’ils puissent être élus, parce qu’ils ne peuvent pas disposer de l’élection; mais ils font tout pour la nation, à qui le droit d’élire appartient."

82Sieyès’ line is: "Assemblée des représentants connus et vérifiés de la nation française."

83"À l’aristocratie héréditaire ne vous apercevez-vous pas que vous avez substitué l’aristocratie électorale?"
"je suis Royaliste, oui, Messieurs, mais Royaliste patriote, Royaliste constitutionnelle" and "je suis née véritablement avec un caractère républicain; mais l'esprit en général du Gouvernement français exige une Monarchie."

Les démocraties anciennes n'avaient pas de lois positives; ce fut ce qui les éleva d'abord au comble de la gloire qui s'acquiert par les armes; mais ce fut ce qui brouilla tout enfin; quand le peuple était assemblé, le gouvernement n'avait plus de forme absolue, tout se mouvait au gré des harangueurs; la confusion était la liberté; tantôt le plus habile tantôt le plus fort l'emportait. ... Le principe de la démocratie française est l'acceptation des lois, et le droit de suffrage."

La France a coalisé la démocratie, l'aristocratie, la monarchie; la première forme l'état civil, la seconde la puissance législative, et la troisième la puissance exécutive. Là où il y aurait eu une parfaite démocratie, ce qui est la liberté outrée, point de monarchie; là où il n'y aurait eu qu'une aristocratie, point de lois constantes; là où le prince eût été ce qu'il étoit autrefois, point de liberté."

"qu'on examine combien est saine la complexion de la France; la présomption n'est point l'âme de sa démocratie, mais la liberté modérée; la violence n'est point le ressort de son aristocratie, mais l'égalité des droits; la volonté n'est point le mobile de sa monarchie, mais la justice" (see also Saint-Just 1976: 66: "la démocratie constitue, l'aristocratie fait les lois, la monarchie gouverne!").

"Le chef-d'œuvre de l'assemblée nationale est d'avoir tempéré cette démocratie."

Les districts de Paris formaient une démocratie qui eût tout bouleversé, si au lieu d'être la proie des factieux, ils se fussent conduits avec leur propre esprit."

combattre le fanatisme de la démocratie."

Rome ne fut détruite que par ce mélange de formes royales, aristocratiques et démocratiques. ... les hommes, abusant d'une autorité qui n'est pas suffisamment arrêtée, en franchissent les limites. C'est ainsi que le gouvernement monarchique se change en despotisme ... . Mais c'est encore ainsi que le gouvernement représentatif devient oligarchique, selon que deux pouvoirs faits pour se balancer l'emportent l'un sur l'autre, et s'envahissent au lieu de se contenir."

"Ne craignez-vous pas que le peuple, instruit que ses représentants déclarent directement la guerre en son nom, ne reçoive par cela même une impulsion dangereuse vers la démocratie, ou plutôt l'oligarchie ... Enfin, ne comptez-vous pour rien le danger de transporter les formes républicaines à un gouvernement qui est tout à la fois représentatif et monarchique?" Mirabeau, «Premier discours sur le droit de paix et de guerre" (20 May 1790).

présenter en détail à la sanction royale les chapitres les plus démocratique du Contrat social de Jean-Jacques Rousseau, citoyen et perturbateur de Genève."

Rousseau dit qu'il n'existera jamais de véritable démocratie, parce qu'il est impossible que le peuple demeure toujours assemblé pour régler les affaires.... Voyons s'il peut exister un état démocratique: je le pense ainsi, contre l'opinion de ce grand homme."

s'il est de l'intérêt de la France que les représentants de la nation revendiquent et exercent le droit de la guerre et de la paix. Cette question peut être réduite à deux termes fort simples : Serait-il avantageux pour la France d'être une démocratie? Une pareille forme de gouvernement ne saurait être admissible, ne saurait surtout être durable dans un État de vingt-sept mille lieues carrées."

"Un démocrate ou un patriote (je les confondrais) ... veut la liberté pour tous les hommes : il la veut sans exception, sans modification. ... Un démocrate hait la royauté, non pas pour des causes personnelles ... Mais comme Caton, ou comme Hampden, ou comme Samuel Adams, par la conviction intime que la royauté est un fléau politique, un foyer autour duquel se rassemblent les détracteurs de l'humanité."


"dont les intérêts sont totalement différents et même opposés, ceux-ci ayant le plus grand intérêt à conserver les autres dans leur dépendance et dans leur servitude" (in “Lettre du chevalier de Moret adressée à Necker” [Apr. 28, 1789]).

"Ce sont les pauvres qui ont fait la révolution, mais ils ne l'ont pas faite à leur profit; car depuis le 14 juillet, ils sont à peu près ce qu'ils étaient avant le 14 juillet 1789.”"
"je veux pour lui [le peuple], comme pour moi, et tout autant que le plus ardent démocrate, la plus grande somme de liberté et de bonheur; mais je prétends qu'on doit l'asseoir sur des bases solides. ... Le gouvernement le mieux ordonné est ... celui dans lequel les propriétaires seuls influent, car ils ont, comme les non-propriétaires, un intérêt égal à la sûreté et à la liberté individuelle, et ils ont de plus un intérêt éminents au bon régime des propriétés."

"tout prolongement de la Révolution est aujourd'hui désastreux; la question, je la place ici, et c'est bien là qu'elle est marquée par l'intérêt national. Allons nous terminer la Révolution, allons-nous la recommencer?"

"cette grande vérité, que, si la Révolution fait un pas de plus, elle ne peut le faire sans danger; c'est que dans la ligne de la liberté, le premier acte qui pourrait suivre serait l'anéantissement de la royauté; c'est que, dans la ligne de l'égalité, le premier acte qui pourrait suivre serait l'attentat à la propriété." (Applaudissements) "existe-il encore à détruire une autre aristocratie que celle de la propriété?"

"Il est donc vrai qu'il est temps de terminer la Révolution ... . Aujourd'hui, Messieurs, tout le monde doit sentir que l'intérêt commun est que la Révolution s'arrête."
In the first part, which deals with periods of political ruptures—independence, revolution—at least three reasons may explain why mainstream Founders did not use the term “democracy” in order to describe their project. First, for both the American and French Founders, “democracy” meant direct democracy. Mainstream Founders believed that to offer the people the opportunity to gather in a large agora in order to directly participate in political decision making would lead to political, social, moral and economic disaster. Mainstream political actors also argued that direct democracy was unfit for modern societies such as America and France, mainly for geographic and demographic reasons. Even less radical reforms, such as the establishment of “mandats impératifs,” were rejected as too “democratic.” Since the American and French Founders did not aim to establish such a regime, they saw no reason to describe their endeavour as “democratic.”

Next, the Founders’s defence of the elective regime and their distrust of “democracy” were informed by historical and philosophical considerations, but also by political and economic self-interest. Several leaders were already members of colonial assemblies or of the États Généraux (Douglass 1965: 46-47). This is in part why political leaders favoured an elective regime in which they would be the ones actually ruling. Furthermore, their comments on the dangers that democracy posed for property bespoke their personal fear of being themselves ruined1 by too democratic a regime.

Finally, the word "democracy" was seen as a weapon efficient enough to discredit political opponents. In order to gain support for themselves and to discredit
their opponents, artful political actors carefully chose the words and the labels they used to identify themselves and their opponents. In both America and France, the term “democracy” was almost always used by people who did not identify with it. As we saw, both American and French mainstream political actors used terms and labels such as “democracy” or “democrat” to embody and condemn with a single word a very broad range of political ideas such as the direct rule of the people, the demands of the poor, chaos and anarchy. For instance, in the anti-revolutionary song *Apothéose de Mirabeau*, written in 1791, the radical Bishop of Paris Gobel is said to be the “Pontiff of the democrats” (Delon & Levayer 1989: 72), a clearly derogatory term in the context of an anti-revolutionary song. In both America and France, “democracy” is “monstruous,” “horrible,” etc.

Since the term “democracy” belonged to overlapping “language games,” to borrow the terminology of Wittgenstein—language games of philosophy (both classical and modern republicanism), history, politics and ideology—it was not even necessary for political actors to express clearly what they had in mind when using that word. Indeed, when a political actor used the term apparently in a purely political context—the *Assemblée Nationale*, for instance—he knew that his audience would decode its (derogatory) meaning according to these numerous language games. The word “democracy” carried a clear derogatory meaning because of its intellectual history. Agoraphobia made it also easy to use the term “democracy” as a weapon to discredit the most radical Patriots. Thus, it was easy for conservative political actors to use it to (1) undermine the legitimacy of their opponents’ ideas, but also to (2) give to themselves a respectable image.

1- By identifying his opponents as "democrats," one implied that they were irrational and that they jeopardized political and economic stability. Every moderate reform seeking more political power for the people (such as annual elections) or for
townships was identified by mainstream conservative political actors as "democratic" so as to discredit any individual, faction, or doctrine advocating such reforms.

2- Moreover, by accusing his opponent of being a "democrat," one implied that he was not a "democrat" himself, i.e. that he was virtuous, reasonable, and respectful of political and economic stability. Here is a good example of this political strategy: forced to defend his political behaviour, the French assemblyman Mounier published on November 11, 1789, Exposé de ma conduite dans l'Assemblée nationale, in which he (1989b: 986) acknowledged that he himself was hated by the "democratic party." Mounier (979) added that several newspapers were siding with the "democratic faction" and that such a faction had Rousseau as mentor. He also referred (930-931) to a so-called "democratic party," a "democratic faction" and also "a mad rabble of democrats." For Mounier (1989b: 980), "partisans of democracy ... misuse ... terms such as general will, sovereign, and nation." Thus, "democracy" and "democrat" are words that must be seen as flags used by political actors to position themselves in a positive way on the political scene.

However, some conservative political actors complained that the word "democracy" was used by patriotic demagogues to delude the people (one's claim to be a "democrat" implies that he sides with the "people"). In his reply to Thomas Paine's Common Sense, even though Paine did not once use the word "democracy" in his pamphlet, the author of Plain Truth: Addressed to the Inhabitants of America, Containing Remarks on a Late Pamphlet, Entitled Common Sense (Philadelphia, 1776) maintained that "The demagogues ... to seduce the people into their criminal designs ever hold up democracy to them; although .... [i]f we believe a great Author, 'There never existed, nor ever will exist a real Democracy in the World'" (Lokken 1959: 572). This comment is one of the first references to the possibility of deluding the people with the word "democracy." Similarly, Carter Braxton referred to the "artifices" of those who speak out "for popular governments," and who "can influence and delude" people. Braxton (1983 [June 8, 1776]: 333) argued that
The systems recommended to the colonies seem to accord with the temper of the times, and are fraught with all the tumult and riot incident to simple democracy; systems which many think it their interest to support, and without doubt will be industriously propagated among you. The best of these systems exist only in theory, and were never confirmed by the experience, even of those who recommend them.

French political actors referred to “democracy” more often than the Americans, probably because France witnessed a more dramatic political struggle than America did. Indeed, since “democracy” referred to commoners, and French commoners were very much more active than the Americans, it is therefore understandable that “democracy” was more often used in France than in America.⁸

Significantly, in contrast to what happened in revolutionary France, no members of the American elite championed the poor, probably because social mobility in America made it relatively easy for an ambitious individual to reach the upper level of society. To mobilize the poor was probably less appealing since poverty was, relatively speaking, less of a burden in America than in France. Farmers, even when poor, generally preferred to move to more prosperous lands rather than get involved in hazardous political struggles. An American popular leader might not necessarily have found enough partisans among the poor, convinced of the necessity of undertaking a struggle for democracy. Ambitious political actors were thus less likely to base their quest for personal political, financial, and symbolic benefits on an alliance with the poor. Furthermore, there was no reason for political actors to refer either to democracy or to the poor when attacking the arbitrary way political offices were obtained by the crown. Instead, they articulated their grievances with reference to the cherished rights of Englishmen.

In France, on the contrary, some people started as early as 1789 to condemn the Revolution for being controlled by the well-to-do. Such criticisms became common in the next era we shall study, and political actors such as Babeuf openly sided with the poor and identified this political position with “democracy.” Yet, in 1789-1791 such pro-democratic propaganda was still very unusual. It would be in the
next period that the term “democracy” was used more than ever, when the Patriots having won the War of Independence in America and the Revolution of 1789 in France started to compete among themselves.

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1 It is interesting to note, however, that according to the republican spirit, public servants and representatives were expected to serve on a volunteer basis. General Washington, for instance, refused to be paid for his work as Commander-in-Chief. The 1776 Constitution of Pennsylvania prohibited “offices of profit” in the government. Although political leaders from the South were wealthy enough because of their property holding, it was not the case for several leaders from the North, who had to resign and go back to the practice of law, for instance, in order to earn a living (G.S. Wood 1993: 287).

2 “Pontife des démocrates.”

3 “Where ANNUAL ELECTION ends, TYRANNY begins” was a popular Whig maxim of the time. The Constitution of Maryland states that in order to secure “the right of the people to participate in the Legislature, elections ought to be free and frequent.” Extended mandates were regarded as a an indirect way of establishing an aristocracy de faits, and was too likely to lead to corruption (G.S. Wood 1969: 165 and 166).

4 “Aujourd’hui ... je suis détesté par le parti démocratique.”

5 “Jean-Jacques Rousseau [est] l’oracle de tous les partisans de la démocratie.”

6 “parti démocratique,” “faction démocratique” and also “une tourbe frénétique de démocrates” linked to “une multitude ignorant.” In a footnote, he persisted: “J’entends, par démocratie, l’état où le peuple en corps gouverne, soit qu’il exerce simplement le pouvoir de faire des lois, soit qu’il exerce tous les pouvoirs.”

7 “Les partisans de la démocratie ... trouvent plus simple et plus commode d’exciter l’orgueil de la multitude en abusant des mots volonté générale, souverain et nation.” Then, in a footnote: “Rien au monde ne serait plus ridicule que l’abus qu’on fait aujourd’hui du mot nation, s’il n’avait pas produit de si terribles conséquences. ... On s’est servi de ce mot: d’abord, pour exagérer les droits des députés, en les confondant avec le corps du peuple.” And p. 996: “La faction ... des démocrates égarés par de fausses idées sur la liberté.”

8 Popular protests and riots were common events in revolutionary France, and whereas the Constitutional Debates were held behind closed doors in Philadelphia, the debates of the Assemblée Nationale were open to the public, and sometimes they were even disrupted and suspended because of the noise coming from the public gallery (Robespierre nevertheless complained that only a few hundred individuals could sit in the gallery, and he proposed that the Assemblée be held in a place where at least 10,000 spectators might sit) (McNeil 1965: 149-150).
PART II

Competition Among Former Allies
CHAPTER 4
Constitutional Debates

Introduction

A Constitutional convention was called in Philadelphia during the summer 1787 to study the possibility of improving the Articles of Confederation. The Constitutional convention of Philadelphia was followed by a struggle opposing the so-called "Federalists" and the so-called "anti-Federalists." The former advocated a centralized and strong national government to deal with political and economic dangers (the rise of "democracy"), while the latter condemned the idea of the union, in an attempt to consolidate the already existing loose Confederation. The word "democracy" was use widely during the Constitutional debates. Although neither Federalists nor anti-Federalists wanted to establish a genuine democracy, it was the openly anti-democratic discourse of the Federalists—the Founders of the modern United States—which happened to be the more effective, rhetorically speaking.

The Constitutional Convention (Philadelphia, Summer 1787)

The goal of those who called the convention was to create a central government strong enough to enforce law (on property, for instance) and order (more specifically with regard to uprisings like the Shays' rebellion), and empowered to levy taxes and regulate trade between the new independent states as well as between the states and foreign countries. The result of the Constitutional convention
would be rather more than a simple reform of the existing Confederation: it would involve a complete change in the American political system. In fact, the delegates drafted an entirely new Constitution. On several occasions, Convention delegates used the word "democracy" to encapsulate their discontent. According to several delegates, independence had opened the gate to a democratic tide and the new Constitution was supposed to act as a dam. The debates occurred behind closed doors, and no actual minutes of the debates exist. Luckily, some delegates such as Madison, Pierce and Yates took extensive notes (Ketcham, ed. 1986: 35).

A first mention of the term "democracy" refers to the 1780s. In the delegates' minds, the word clearly evokes the unstable social and political context prevailing—according to them—in the recently independent states. Elbridge Gerry, from Massachusetts, stated that "The evils we experience flow from the excess of democracy." He spoke also of "the danger of the levelling spirit" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 48). For George Mason, "we had been too democratic" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 49), and Alexander Hamilton referred to the "vices of democracy" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 288) and, as mentioned in a previous chapter, pointing to "evils operating in the States which must soon cure the people of their fondness for democracies" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 291). Edmund Randolph declared that democracy was "evil," a "popular torrent," and he denounced "the Democratic licentiousness" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 218) and "the turbulence and follies of democracy" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 51). On other occasions, delegates did not necessarily refer to the post-Independence era, though they still condemned "democracy" in very harsh terms (Ketcham, ed. 1986: 39-40; Laniel 1995: 64). Democracy was "no government at all, but in fact the death or dissolution of other systems, or the passage from one kind of government to another," claimed Gouverneur Morris (Hazen 1964: 58). For Madison, "Democratic communities may be unsteady, and be led to action by the impulse of the moment" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 430). These communities must consequently be guarded "against the turbulency and weakness of unruly passions" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 431). For
ambitious politicians such as Hamilton, democracy was not only a threat to the inner stability of the American states, but it prevented America from reaching international grandeur:

Foreigners are jealous of our increasing greatness, and would rejoice in our distractions. Those who have had opportunities of conversing with foreigners respecting sovereigns in Europe, have discovered in them the anxiety for the preservation of our democratic governments, probably for no other reason, but to keep us weak.\(^5\)

Several delegates to the Convention in Philadelphia such as King, Paterson, Yates, Madison and Mason explained that "The first Br. [branch]" is synonymous with "the Democratic Br" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 27-28, 48, 55). Edmund Randolph complained about "the demagogues of the popular branch" (i.e., the Lower house) (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 218). In another speech, Randolph explained that "Our chief danger arises from the democratic parts of our constitutions. It is a maxim which I hold incontrovertible, that the powers of government exercised by the people swallows up the other branches. None of the constitutions have provided sufficient checks against the democracy" (according to James Henry's notes [May 29], in Farrand, ed. 1966a: 26-27). According to this view, the democratic branch represents the interests of the poorest classes. As Hamilton explained during the Convention, "inequality would exist as long as liberty existed. ... This inequality of property constituted the great & fundamental distinction in Society. ... one branch of the proposed Govt. was so formed, as to render it particularly the guardians of the poorer orders of citizens" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 424). And this branch is the Lower House, that, as we have seen, the same Hamilton held in contempt. Since the people were believed to have "an attachment to Republican Government" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 339) the delegates referred to "republic" rather than "democracy" to present the people with the Constitutional plan that was intended to secure the power of ambitious political actors. This label—"republic"—was consistent with both intellectual definition of the term and political motivations of the majority of the delegates.
Almost all the delegates seem to have considered themselves republicans, or at least to have considered the States of America republican (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 86, 138, 206, 237, 255, 289, 300, 339, 423, 432 and Farrand, ed. 1966b: 188 and 203). Randolph stated, for instance, that “the republican principle” was the “remedy” to the “defects of the confederation” (J. Madison’s notes [May 29], in Farrand, ed. 1966a: 18-19) and he proposed to the Convention, on the May 29, to adopt the principle that “a Republican Government ... ought to be guaranteed by the United States to each State” (Madison’s notes [May 29], in Farrand, ed. 1966a: 22). For the delegates, “republic” was more than a political regime (a moderate regime seeking for the "common good"); it was identified with the new American way of life (jeopardized by an excess of democracy) (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 71). For such delegates, “the Genius” of the American people “is republican” (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 108).

Even though Madison suggested in his records of the debates that Hamilton was against the republic (“He [Hamilton] acknowledged himself not to think favorably of Republican Government”), this did not prevent Hamilton from addressing “his remarks to those who did think favorably of it” (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 424). Hamilton declared, for instance, that "We are now forming a republican government. Real liberty is neither found in despotism or the extremes of democracy, but in moderate governments" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 432). And he added, “The members most tenacious of republicanism ... were as loud as any in declaiming agst. the vices of democracy” (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 288).

Following the closed-door Convention, the debate moved into the public arena. Instead of a referendum (a practice considered by the majority of the delegates to be too “democratic”), State representatives were those who would adopt or reject the Constitutional plan. Before the vote, a strenuous debate arose opposing the so-called Federalists (who were for the ratification of the plan) and the so-called anti-Federalists (who were against the constitutional proposal).
The anti-Federalists

The anti-Federalists generally believed strongly in the philosophical and political superiority of a decentralized federation, more likely to promote and secure liberty than the centralized government advocated by Federalists. The anti-Federalists did not believe that the newly independent States were jeopardized by political and economic turbulence. Patrick Henry remarked, for instance, that “We are told there are dangers; but those dangers are ideals; they cannot be demonstrated” (Ketcham, ed. 1986: 203 and see also 210) adding that there are “no real dangers” (Ketcham, ed. 1986: 210). He furthermore stated (Ketcham, ed. 1986: 201):

The Confederation; this same despised Government, merits in my opinion, the highest encomium: It carried us through a long and dangerous war: It rendered us victorious in that bloody conflict with a powerful nation: It has secured us a territory greater than any European Monarch possesses: And shall a Government which has been thus strong and vigorous, be accused of imbecility and abandoned for want of energy?

It was a common belief even among the ranks of the anti-Federalists that the Federalist side attracted most of the skilled politicians. Individuals such as Hamilton and Madison were Federalists. Federalists were known to have a strong experience of continental political life, while anti-Federalists were more often local politicians with no real knowledge of continental politics. Talking of the anti-Federalists, the historian Forrest Mcdonald (1968: 366) is, however, probably right to suggest that “Their leadership matched that of the Federalists for intelligence, education, experience, and political savoir faire.” As a matter of fact, most of the leaders of the anti-Federalist side were as rich and well-educated as their Federalist foes. Nonetheless, self-perception does not always mirror reality: anti-Federalists felt (or pretended to feel) that they did not belong to the same social class as the Federalists. The anti-Federalists’ inferiority complex even increased their fear of seeing an elite take control of the new federation. Regarding the Federalists, Amos Singletary, from Massachusetts, declared (in Kenyon 1968a: 529 n. 4):
These lawyers, and men of learning and moneyed men, that talk so finely, and gloss over matters so smoothly, to make us poor illiterate people swallow down the pill, expect to get into Congress themselves; they expect to be managers of this Constitution, and get all the power and all the money into their own hands, and then they will swallow up all us little folks like the great Leviathan; yes, just as the whale swallowed up Jonah!

For the Federalist Hamilton, the problem was rather that the anti-Federalists opposed the new Constitution because they were afraid to lose the power they held in their local assemblies. Hamilton claimed that “Among the most formidable of the obstacles which the new Constitution will have to encounter may readily be distinguished the obvious interest of a certain class of men in every State to resist all changes which may hazard a diminution of the power, emolument and consequence of the offices they hold under the State-establishments” (Madison, Hamilton & Jay 1987: 87-88). On the other hand, it was said that Federalists were ambitious politicians primarily concerned with increasing the commercial, military and political strength of the United States—a politics of *grandeur*—while the anti-Federalists stood as the defenders of local liberties. The Federalists’ aim was, indeed, the establishment of a national and centralized government, since for them national political life was clearly more fashionable and glamorous than local politics. It is clear, however, that the anti-Federalists were not genuine democrats. They did not even ask for the right for of the people to directly elect the Senators and the President (Kenyon 1968a: 545-566 [sec. V]). The historians Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick (1968: 381-382) are therefore right to suggest that “the chief difference between Federalists and Anti-Federalists had little to do with ‘democracy’.” The political actors of that time did, however, use the words “democracy” and “aristocracy” in attacking their opponents or promoting their own goals. Once again, references to "democracy" were influenced by the politics of words.
The Anti-Federalists and the Word "Democracy"

The anti-Federalists lost two very important semantic battles, the first when their opponents succeeded in presenting themselves as the "republicans" (Kramnick 1987: 41) and the second when their opponents labelled themselves "Federalists." This was odd, since almost all politicians were republicans, and since it was the so-called "anti-Federalists," not the Federalists, who promoted a genuine federation. No wonder, then, that the anti-Federalists did not use the label "anti-Federalist" to designate themselves. However, as the political scientist Ralph Ketcham states, "By taking the popular word ‘federal’ to denote the new constitution, its backers [of the new Constitution] gained an important ‘image’ victory for themselves" (Ketcham 1986: 12-13). Some anti-Federalists emphasized the fact that the label "Federalist" was deceitful. For an anti-Federalist of Pennsylvania, "The preamble [of the new Constitution] begins with the words, ‘We the people of the United States,’ which is the style of a compact between individuals entering into a state of society, and not that of a confederation of states" (Ketcham, ed. 1986: 246). Similarly, Patrick Henry asked (in Ketcham, ed. 1986: 199):

Have they said, we the States? Have they made a proposal of a compact between States? If they had, this would be a confederation: It is otherwise most clearly a consolidated government. The question turns, Sir, on that poor little thing—the expression, *We, the people*, instead of the States of America. I need not take much pains to show, that the principles of this system, are extremely pernicious, impolitic, and dangerous. Is this a Monarchy, like England—a compact between Prince and people; with checks on the former, to secure the liberty of the latter? is this a Confederacy, like Holland—an association of a number of independent States, each of which retains its individual sovereignty? It is not a democracy, wherein the people retain all their rights securely.

It is noteworthy that at the end of this statement, Henry used "democracy" as a laudatory political epithet. Later in his speech, Henry defined "democracy" in answering his own rhetorical question—"What, Sir, is the genius of democracy?"—as follows: "the language of democracy [is] that a majority of the community have a right to alter their Government when found to be oppressive" (Ketcham, ed. 1986: 149)
204-205). Here again, Henry claimed to be a democrat. For him, "democracy" refers to happiness, safety, good-administration and the right of the majority.

The anti-Federalists also presented the annual elections they were advocating as a democratic idea. Since direct democracy was said to be unfit for large and populous modern States, suffrage was the only tool left to the people to express their will. Patrick Henry, however, believed elections did not allow the people sufficient control over the elected political actors: "those who are to tax us are our representatives. To this answer, that there is no real check to prevent their ruining us. There is no actual responsibility. The only semblance of a check is the negative power of not re-electing them. This ... is but a feeble barrier" (Kenyon 1968a: 544). To call elections every year was a means to increase the control of the electors over the elected. Such an idea was already defended by John Adams (1983: 406) in 1776 although he soon after changed his mind: "elections, especially of representatives and counsellors, should be annual ... 'where annual elections end, there slavery begins.' These great men, in this respect, should be, once a year, 'Like bubbles on the sea of matter borne,/They rise, they break, and to that sea return.'" Similarly, Gerry declared during the Convention that "annual Elections [are] the only defence of the people agst. tyranny" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 214-215). Cato, an anti-Federalist, wrote of "the safe democratical principles of annual" elections. He also held that the Federalists' plan "will lead to the establishment of an aristocracy" partly because they do not want to hold annual elections. Referring again to "democracy," Cato went on, blending a positive view of democracy with the idea of the "supreme command" of the "many" and the creation of a new patriotic man through the educational effects of political participation (Ketcham, ed. 1986 320):

with respect to the first objection [against annual elections], it may be remarked that a well digested democracy has this advantage over all others, to wit, that it affords to many the opportunity to be advanced to the supreme command, and the honors they thereby enjoy fill them with a desire of rendering themselves worthy of them; hence this desire becomes part of their education, is matured in manhood, and produces an ardent affection for their country, and it is the opinion of the great Sidney, and Montesquieu, that this is in a great measure produced by annual election of magistrates.
From the anti-Federalist perspective, the elected political actor must mirror the interests of his constituents. For the anti-Federalist George Mason, "To make representation real and actual, the number of representatives ought to be adequate; they ought to mix with the people, think as they think, feel as they feel,—ought to be perfectly amenable to them, and thoroughly acquainted with their interest and condition" (Kenyon 1968a: 534). Mason also pleaded "for an election of the larger branch by the people. It was to be the grand depository of the democratic principle of the Govt. It was, so to speak, to be our House of Commons" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 48). One of the more influential anti-Federalists, Richard Henry Lee, emphasised in his *Letters of a Federal Farmer* the importance for "professional men, merchants, traders, farmers, mechanics, etc. to bring a just proportion of their best informed men respectively into the legislature", so as to have legislative houses reflective of the common people (Kenyon 1968a: 534). However, to make this possible, the assemblies would have to be enlarged. If not, members of the financial elite, war heroes, and demagogues would monopolize the majority of the seats (Hanson 1985: 68-69; G.S. Wood 1969: 491). For all these reason, the anti-Federalists' claim to be "democrats" appeared justified.

In a nutshell, anti-Federalists like Henry and Cato used the word "democracy" in order to develop their discourse in a very Manichaean manner: on one hand, the bad—and aristocratic—Federalists seeking a strong, centralized and tyrannical State; on the other, the good anti-Federalists, seeking a mere federation where liberty might flourish. According to this discourse, "democracy" is the name of the anti-Federalist political ideal. Philadelphiensis even declared that "America under [a government] purely democratical, would be rendered the happiest and most powerful nation in the universe" (Roberts 1996: 185).

This use of the term "democracy" was consistent with the intellectual roots of the term as well as being politically motivated. Intellectually speaking, the anti-
Federalists felt that a centralized government was less democratic than a federation with multiple centres of decision closer to the people. The anti-Federalists’ nightmare was a tyrannical empire ruled by the Federalist aristocracy, and they tried to undermine their opponents’ position by labelling them “aristocrats.” The idea of giving the central government the right to levy taxes and raise a standing army was, according to the anti-Federalists, the proof that the Federalists’ project was a plot to establish a tyranny (Ketcham 1986: 16). Indeed, in the anti-Federalists’ minds, the new central government would inevitably resemble that of London, St-Petersburg or Versailles. Anti-Federalists generally contrasted the ideal of local self-government with the ideal of a centralized empire (Ketcham 1986: 18). The anti-Federalist Richard Henry Lee, referring to the Constitutional debates, declared that “we must recollect how disproportionately the democratic and aristocratic parts of the community were represented” (G.S. Wood 1969: 485), meaning that at the Philadelphia Convention, the defenders of an aristocratic vision of political organisation were in the majority. Patrick Henry also argued that if the new Constitution were adopted, it would be possible to hold elections for the Congress “at remote distances from those who have the right of suffrage: Hence nine out of ten must either not vote at all, or vote for strangers.” And further, “The natural consequence will be, that this democratic branch, will possess none of the public confidence.” This competition between local and continental politicians came to be seen at that time as a clash between “aristocrats” and “democrats.” Continental politicians were seen as belonging to a kind of aristocracy and as sharing a specific world-view, language, taste, education, etc. Regarding perceptions and discourses, Gordon S. Wood is thus correct when he states that “men in 1787-88 talked as if they were representing distinct and opposing social elements. ... The quarrel was fundamentally one between aristocracy and democracy” (G.S. Wood 1969: 484-485 [emphasis added]).

Even though they praised the sovereignty of local government such as took place in the town meeting or the state legislature, anti-Federalists dismissed direct
democracy. The anti-Federalist Brutus (whose name recalled the Roman who killed the tyrant Caesar), explained his opinion about "pure democracy" and his preference for representation as follows (in New York Journal, Oct. 18, 1787 [emphasis added]):

In a pure democracy the people are the sovereign, and their will is declared by themselves; for this purpose they must all come together to deliberate, and decide. This kind of government cannot be exercised, therefore, over a country of any considerable extent; it must be confined to a single city, or at least limited to such bounds as that the people can conveniently assemble, be able to debate, understand the subject submitted to them, and declare their opinion concerning it. In a free republic, although all laws are derived from the consent of the people, yet the people do not declare their consent by themselves in person, but by representatives, chosen by them, who are supposed to know the minds of their constituents, and to be possessed of integrity to declare this mind.

Despite the fact they did not promote direct democracy, the anti-Federalists would nonetheless use "democracy" as a buzzword in order to present themselves as the real defenders of the rights of the people. In the American context of the time, it was easy for the anti-Federalists to argue that the Lower houses of the states were closer to the people (and therefore more democratic), than a distant centralised government. Despite the gap between real democracy and the anti-Federalist proposal, it was easy for people to equate anti-Federalists with "democracy."

The Federalists

The Federalist propaganda was so powerful that the anti-Federalists themselves acknowledged the strength of their opponents. Some anti-Federalists even passed over to the Federalist side. The Federalists were so conscious of their ascendancy that the Federalist Madison, commenting on the anti-Federalists of Massachusetts, remarked that "There was not a single character capable of uniting their wills or directing their measures. ... They had no plan whatever. They looked no farther than to put a negative on the Constitution and return home" (G.S. Wood 1969: 486). Most of the Federalists were experienced politicians, having being diplomats, officers in the Continental army, and/or members of state assemblies before, during
and after the War of Independence. The Federalists were also generally younger than their anti-Federalist opponents.

The Federalists believed, or at least argued, that they had witnessed during the first ten years of Independence a fragmentation of the social, economic and political structures of the Confederation (Elkins & Mckitrick 1968: 382-383). According to their analysis, the newly independent States were weak and unstable partly because they were too "democratic" (Naess, Christophersen & Kvalø 1956: 107). For the Federalists, America lacked a strong and centralized government, and a political structure of checks and balances—"specious imaginary balances, ... rope-dancing, chain-rattling, ridiculous ideal checks and contrivances," in the words of the anti-Federalist Patrick Henry (in Ketcham, ed.: 208)—that would be strong enough to control the so-called "democratic branch," i.e. the Lower House. The Federalists were not shy to stand as "aristocrats," and they loudly claimed that their constitutional plan would resemble a dam stopping the democratic tide. The constitutional outline they proposed was closer to the conservative 1780 Constitution of Massachusetts than to the more democratic Constitution of Pennsylvania. According to the Federalists, bicameralism must prevail, the Senators and the President must not be directly elected by the people, and the President should enjoy a veto power. The Federalists rejected the idea of annual elections (they established instead a two-year mandate for representatives, a four-year mandate for the President, and a six-year mandate for the Senators). They also proposed that the central government should have the right to levy taxes and to raise a standing army.

**The Federalists and the Word "Democracy"**

The Federalists clearly distinguished their project—a "republic"—from their opponents' ideal—"democracy." "Democracy" was for the Federalist an object of contempt. "O base democracy! Why, it is absolutely worse than street-sweepings, or
the filth of the common sewers," declared William Cobbett, editor of The Federalist Papers (Laniel 1995: 64-65). For Rush, "A simple democracy, or an unbalanced republic, is one of the greatest evils" (Morantz 1971: 93). It is worth noting that the classics (etymology, history and philosophy) were still of great importance for the political actors and commentators of the time. Major William Pierce, a Georgia delegate to the Convention, remarked that all the delegates have had a "complete classical education" (Adair 1968: 406 n. 15). Furthermore, both anti-Federalists and Federalists made extensive use of classical pseudonyms, a proof that the classical world was still an important point of reference for them (Hamilton used no less than twenty-six code names, among which only three were not classical) (Middlekauff 1963; Richard 1994: 40-43). Also emblematic of the spirit of his day was James Madison's work entitled Notes of Ancient and Modern Confederacies, Preparatory to the Federal Convention of 1787. Classical historians as well as classical philosophers provided Federalists with the solid ground upon which to base arguments against the democratic ideal.

In his Defence of the Constitutions of the United States (1787), John Adams wrote, "from the frightful pictures of a democratical city, drawn by the masterly pencils of ancient philosophers and historians, it may be conjectured that such governments existed in Greece and Italy ... [only] for a short space of time" (Adair 1968: 402 [emphasis added]). He added (403), "There can be no free government without a democratical branch in the constitution." Yet, he claimed that "Democracy, simple democracy, never had a patron among men of letters." According to Adams, "democratical mixture" "are annihilated all over Europe, except on a barren rock, a paltry fen, an inaccessible mountain, or an impenetrable forest" (Adair 1968: 403). Adams remarked also that calling a republic a "democracy," or more precisely a "representative democracy," means that the political system has only one assembly holding all the power (legislative, executive and judicial). According to Adams, the fate of these
unbalanced regimes is either to sink into chaos or to be taken over by a tyrant (Lobrano 1994: 65 n. 125).

Similarly, Noah Webster declared (in his Examination into the Leading Principles of the Federal Constitution Proposed by the Late Convention Held at Philadelphia by A Citizen of America, Philadelphia, 1787) that pure democracy had been "practised in the free states of antiquity; and was the cause of innumerable evils" (Rahe 1994: 252). For Webster, "Pure democracy" is "inconsistent with the peace of society, and the rights of freemen" (Rahe 1994: 253). Fisher Ames, for his part, complained that despite "the paltry democracies of Greece and Asia Minor," they were "so much extolled, and so often proposed as a model for our imitation" (Reinhold 1984: 111). For Ames, however, "we know from history, and we might know if we would from scrutiny into the human heart, that every democracy, in the very infancy of its vicious and troubled life, is delivered bound hand and foot into the keeping of ambitious demagogues... ." (Morantz 1971: 29) (Ames regularly hurled thunderbolts at "democracy": "Democracy is a water-spout that bursts from the clouds" [Laniel 1995: 67], it is "a volcano which conceals the fiery materials of its own destruction" [Morantz 1971: 15]).

Meanings of words being rarely totally static, it was still possible to entitle a text "A Democratic Federalist" despite the fact that the Federalist discourse was violently anti-democratic (The Pennsylvania Herald, Oct. 17, 1787). James Madison also wrote during the Convention that he was seeking "the only defense against the inconveniences of democracy consistent with the democratic form of government" (Diamond 1968: 507 n. 3). This may be explained, at least partially, by the fact that despite their agoraphobia, even the Federalists were respectful of the ideal of liberty and individual rights. Gouverneur Morris, for instance, told Lafayette in Paris that his opposition to democracy was "from regard to liberty" (Hazen 1964: 58). If they aim to establish an elected aristocracy, they were not advocates of any kind of traditional despotism (absolute monarchy or hereditary aristocracy). However, the Federalists
used the term "democracy" mainly in a derogatory manner. Madison, for instance, generally stood as a strong opponent of democracy. In his Federalist Paper number XIV, he remarked that American republicanism was quite different from "the turbulent democracies of ancient Greece and modern Italy" (Madison, Hamilton & Jay 1987: 141). Calling history to witness, Madison expressed his agoraphobia in the Federalist Paper number LV, stating that "In all very numerous assemblies, of whatever characters composed, passion never fails to wrest the scepter from reason. Had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates, every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob" (Madison, Hamilton & Jay 1987: 336). Clinching the argument, he continued in the Federalist Paper number LXVIII: "What bitter anguish would not the people of Athens have often escaped if their government had contained so provident a safeguard against the tyranny of their own passions? Popular liberty might then have escaped the indelible reproach of decreeing to the same citizens the hemlock on one day and statues on the next" (Madison, Hamilton & Jay 1987: 371). Thus, contempt toward democracy was informed by strong agoraphobia, i.e., the fear that the people gathering in the agora to deliberate and rule would lead to economic, political and social catastrophes.

The Federalists transposed their normative judgement of Athenian democracy to the so-called "democratic" branch of the American republican political system, despite the very obvious differences between the Athenian agora and the Lower House in a mixed regime. It is important to note that it would have been possible to imagine an agora even within the framework of the republican theory. Indeed, according to the theory of the balance of power, the orders (the crown, the aristocrats, the demos) must check each other. To be consistent with the theory of the mixed constitution, the power of the agora must be counterbalanced by an Upper House (aristocrats) and an executive power (the Crown or the President). Modern republicans, however, claimed that a few men sitting in the Lower House to express the will of the people could favourably replace the agora. Representation inherited
from the Middle Ages (see ch. I, section: "'Democracy' and Politics: Parliamentarism") was then philosophically integrated into the republican discourse through the myth of popular sovereignty (see intro., section: "The Concept of Political Agoraphobia").

According to the Federalists, a Lower House similar to the agora would put too much emphasis on the good of the people—or plebe—instead of on the "common good." Consequently the power of the democratic branch, as well as the power of the agora, is a threat to the minority, i.e. the wealthy and the property-owners. The Federalists claimed that only a "natural aristocracy" could rule the country according to the "common good." Such an aristocracy would counterbalance, and even block, the democratic aspirations expressed on the benches of the Lower Houses, i.e., the legislative branch. As James Wilson explained in 1787, "Where the Executive was really formidable, king and Tyrant, were naturally associated in the minds of the people" but in America, where the legislative was seen as being too powerful, "legislature and tyranny ... were most properly associated" (G.S. Wood 1969: 409). The Federalist plan then was to establish a system in which the legislative houses would be controlled by a Senate. Such a plan fit in with personal career objectives of the Federalists: to hold office at the top of a strong and prestigious nation-state. Federalists themselves acknowledged such motivations. In his Federalist Paper number XV, Hamilton declared that he was suffering from "melancholy" because of the "national disorder." He complained about the "national humiliation" and asked the Americans to "make a firm stand for" their "dignity" and "reputation." He also deplored that "our ambassadors abroad are the mere pageants of mimic sovereignty" (Madison, Hamilton & Jay 1987: 146-147). For Hamilton, a politics of grandeur would obviously help politicians like him in their own quest for glory. Thus, the Federalists' anti-democratic discourse was also part of a self-promoting strategy. As a matter of fact, the three main propagandists on the Federalist side—Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison—all became leading figures of the new nation-state. They were not only evaluating the pros and cons of philosophical concepts when debating
the overly democratic Articles of Confederation. They were also concerned for their own careers.

Legitimating representation: the new aristocratic discourse

The Constitutional debates were a new opportunity for elected political actors to advocate once again the superiority of an elective regime over “democracy.” Once again, the classical world was a good source of examples to strengthen the legitimacy of representation. According to Madison, for instance, the Ancients knew about representing the people. The Ephori in Sparta or the Tribunes in Rome were “two bodies, small indeed in numbers, but annually elected by the whole body of the people, and considered as the representatives of the people, almost in their plenipotentiary capacity” (Madison, Hamilton & Jay 1987: 372-373). Therefore, “it is clear that the principle of representation was neither unknown to the ancients nor wholly overlooked in their political constitutions” (Madison, Hamilton & Jay 1987: 373). However, “The true distinction between these [the ancients] and the American governments lies in the total exclusion of the people, in their collective capacity, from any share in the latter, and not in the total exclusion of the representatives of the people from the administration of the former” (Madison, Hamilton & Jay 1987: 373). Here, the agoraphobic bias is obvious: the American people are totally excluded from any share in their government. Of course, anti-democratic arguments were not entirely the result of self-interest. There were practical as well as philosophical considerations involved in these discussions regarding democracy. However, self-interested motivation is very obvious when one analyses the use of the term “democracy” in their discourse on representation.

Unwilling to legitimate their authority in the name of God, or in the name of blood (hereditary), the elected political actors made a pretence of taking their legitimacy from the “popular sovereignty,” a very broadly used concept in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Morgan 1989). Hence, while blaming the poor
and "democracy" on the one hand, the delegates in Philadelphia praised the people on the other. This "fiction" or "myth" (Morgan 1989: 13-15) of popular sovereignty was some time used in order to establish the legitimacy of every element of the new political system. "Please take notice", asked Benjamin Rush to John Adams, in a letter written in 1789, "that when I speak of a republic I mean a government consisting of three branches, and each derived at different times and for different periods from the PEOPLE" (Morantz 1971: 57). Thus, even the Senate, which was according to classical understanding an aristocratic institution, represented popular sovereignty. References to the sovereignty of the people became the legitimating force (the first line of the federal Constitution is not "We the states," but "We the people"). James Wilson claimed that "the ultimate power of government must of necessity reside in the people" (Laniel 1995: 57). In the same spirit, John Jay declared: "the only source of just authority — THE PEOPLE" (Morantz 1971: 20). Yet, as Lambert declared in Paris in 1794, such a "sovereign people [is] a purely metaphysical being" (Soboul 1979: 22). If the people are the metaphysical source of legitimacy for the politicians at the top, the people do not rule, i.e. the people are politically alienated.14 Hence, these philosophical references to the people seem to be, at least partially, propaganda.

Of course, some argued that the people have to be represented in modern States because of their demographic and geographic size. James Wilson suggested, for instance, that although "The legislature ought to be made the most exact transcript of the whole society. Representation is made necessary only because it is impossible for the people to act collectively" (Pasal 1991: 170 and see also G.S. Wood 1969: 164). This geographic and demographic argument is puzzling. While dismissing democracy for demographic and geographic reasons, Wilson and his fellows state-builders were seeking to create a new State ruling over a very large and populous territory, proof that, despite Wilson's statement, downsizing political communities was not only an option, it was an option that might have made possible the establishment of democracy.
Thus, notwithstanding their alleged concern for the people, the elected political actors assembled in Philadelphia shaped the political institutions in order to keep control over the decision-making process and to clearly limit the participation of the people. Hence, Jerry Z. Muller (1997: 146 [emphasis added]) comments that

American conservatism has always been republican and constitutional in its emphasis. Indeed in an important sense, the Constitution itself is the characteristic expression of early American conservatism. For in a republic founded upon the principles of popular sovereignty ... American conservatism stressed the limitation of popular sovereignty.

Despite significant differences, the concept of "the people" plays a role within republican discourse similar to that of the concept of "the proletariat" within official communist discourse: communist States are not ruled by the workers, but by members of an oligarchy who claim that the source of their legitimacy is to represent the proletarians' interests and will (Barrillon 1999 and see also Castoriadis' works). Such a discourse meets both personal and popular needs. Indeed, it comforts elected political actors to know that they are not pure tyrants, like a king or aristocrats. Moreover, it makes the people believe that politicians are no longer privileged people promoting the interests of a specific order, but that they work for the "common good."

Some delegates even expressed themselves as if they believed in the fiction of representation. In Paterson's own notes, one may read: "we must follow the People; the People will not follow us—The Plan must be accommodated to the public Mind—consult the Genius, the Temper, the Habits, the Prejudices of the People. ... the Approbation of the People—their Will must guide." We must "not militate agt. the democratick Principle when properly regulated and modified—The democratick Spirit beats high" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 186). Wilson made a subtle distinction, stating that "Election is the exercise of original sovereignty in the people—but if by representatives, it is only relative sovereignty" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 365). Wilson also declared that "The Govt. ought to possess not only Ist. the force but 2ndly. the mind or
sense of the people at large. The Legislature ought to be the most exact transcript of the whole Society. Representation is made necessary only because it is impossible for the people to act collectively” (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 186). Yet, no serious debates dealt with the rule of the people. Politically speaking, the delegates did not intend to offer the people any real means to rule. Although both chambers of the federal Congress were finally said to be representing the people (G.S. Wood 1992: 95), the power of the people was strictly limited.

To praise the people publicly was obviously an efficient way to seduce the people. With this in mind, it is noteworthy that political actors dwelt on the idea that the people were mainly moved by emotions. Delegates in Philadelphia often talked of “the sentiment of the people” (Farrand. ed. 1966a: 253, 329), “the popular intemperance” (360), the "feelings & views of the people" (373), “the confidence of the people” (49), "The happiness of the people" (407), “the antipathy of the people” (96), “the Temper, the Habit, the Prejudices of the People” (186, 281). That the people are so emotional means that they are easy to seduce. For Gerry, it was “necessary ... that the people should appoint one branch of the Govt. in order to inspire them with the necessary confidence” (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 132 [emphasis added]). One of the arguments, therefore, for direct election by the people was not to give more power to the people, but to "manufacture consent" (to “inspire confidence”). Gerry’s opinion was not isolated. Madison similarly suggested that (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 50 [emphasis added] and see also 80)

the popular election of one branch of the national Legislature [i]s essential to every plan of free Government. ... That if the first branch of the general legislature should be elected by the State Legislatures, the second branch elected by the first—the Executive by the second together with the first; and other appointments again made for subordinate purposes by the Executive, the people would be lost sight of altogether; and the necessary sympathy between them and their rulers and officers, too little felt.

In the same vein, several delegates discussed measures “to secure the popular Confidence,” to “inspire ... affection” (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 56), to “inspire confidence”
(57), to attract "the Confidence of the people" (97). Delegates debated which kind of political institutions would be "the idol of the people," would be the "favorite of the people" (269), or would be "more flattering to their [the people's] pride" (133). Such a view of the people led politicians to try to please the people. This might explain why the political scientist Bernard Manin maintains that both Federalists and anti-Federalists developed a populist discourse. According to Manin, the Federalists using the doctrine of the separation of power argued that the people would be represented in every branch of the government. On the other hand, the anti-Federalists, in making reference to the theory of checks and balances, appeared to side with the people while advocating more power for the legislative branch, i.e., the only representative of the democratic order (Manin 1994: 32-33). Yet, a systematic reading of delegates' statements on the sovereignty of the people reveals an agoraphobic and elitist spirit, very scornful of the ordinary people.

Pompous declarations about the sovereignty of the people in fact hid the firm intention to keep the people out of real politics, the decision-making process. Sherman's statements quite aptly encapsulate the fiction of representation. While he declared that "What a man does by another, he does by himself is a maxim" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 234), Sherman also stated that "The people ... should have as little to do as may be about the Government. They want information and are constantly liable to be misled" (48). Going even farther, Martin declared that "the people have no right to do [certain things] without the consent of those to whom they have delegated their power for State purposes; through their tongue only they can speak, through their ears, only, can hear" (437). According to Martin's analysis, the relation of consent had been turned up side down: it is no more the people who consent, but their representative. Madison declared he was convinced of the "great importance that a stable & firm Govt. organized in the republican form should be held out to the people" (219). In the same vein, James Belknap, father of New England, declared: "Let it stand as a principle that government originates from the people; but let the people
be taught that they are not able to gouvern themselves” (Laniel 1995: 73 n. 1). In France, as we shall see, the representative Emmanuel Sieyès expressed the same opinion (Sieyès 1989 [1789]: 1025). Similarly, the Federalist William Livingston declared that “It is necessary that a check be placed somewhere in the hands of a power not immediately dependent upon the breath of the people, in order to stem the torrent, and to prevent the mischiefs which blind passions and rancorous prejudices might otherwise occasion” (Laniel 1995: 152).

In fact, representatives were bold enough to praise "representation" as the greatest political idea. Noah Webster, in his *Examination into the Leading Principles of the Federal Constitution Proposed by the Late Convention Held at Philadelphia by A Citizen of America* (Philadelphia, 1787), claimed that “the doctrine of representation ... seems to be the perfection of human government” (Rahe 1994: 252; Morantz 1971: 25). Such comments seem to have the same self-legitimating function as the statement, *the doctrine of monarchy seems to be the perfection of human government*, written by a Louis XIV, or *the doctrine of communism seems to be the perfection of human government*, uttered by Fidel Castro, Joseph Stalin or Mao Zedong.

Although the legitimacy of representation rests on the myth of representing popular sovereignty, elected politicians also claimed to be superior to the common people. Their superiority was the result neither of a divine gift nor of superior blood running in their veins. It was instead the consequence of excellent intellectual (cultural and academic) training. Thomas Jefferson called this elite the “natural aristocracy” (Robespierre talked of a "representative aristocracy"—“aristocratie représentative”—, and Rousseau explained that “there are ... three sorts of aristocracy—natural, elective, and hereditary. ... the second [the elective] is the best, and is aristocracy properly so called”) (G.S. Wood 1993: 180; Lobrano 1994: 56 n. 19; McNeil 1965: 148; Rousseau 1993: 241 [*Social Contract*, bk. III, ch. 5]). According to Jefferson, every society produces individuals more gifted than others. Merit, virtue, and political skills were what characterized this natural aristocracy. Even anti-Federalists such as Melancthon
Smith, from New York, believed that societies were divided between a natural aristocracy and the common folk: “it is our singular felicity that we have no legal or hereditary distinctions ...; but still there are real differences. ... Every society naturally divides itself into classes. ... Birth, education, talents, and wealth, create distinctions among men as visible, and of as much influence, as titles, stars, and garters” (G.S. Wood 1969: 488-489). Enlightened representatives claimed to be like famous legislators of ancient times. For John Adams: “The system of legislators are experiments made on human life, and manners, society and government. Zoroaster, Confucius, Mithras, Odin, Thor, Mohamet, Lycurgus, Solon, Romulus and a thousand others may be compared to philosophers making experiments on the elements” (Adair 1968: 402). And both in his Diary and in letters to his wife, Adams openly identified himself with these philosopher-legislators, a fair comparison, since he wrote the Constitution of Massachusetts (1779).

According to this elitist world-view, the Senate was understood as a means to secure the beneficial influence of the natural aristocracy. With regard to the Senate the Federalists wanted to establish, Centinel declared, “I suppose [the Senate] will be composed of the well born, the better sort” (Manin 1994: 37 n. 33). In the same spirit, Richard Henry Lee said that the Senate planned by the Federalists had a “strong tendency to aristocracy.” This fact was acknowledged by Madison himself in his Federalist Papers numbers LXII and LXIII, when he wrote that the Senate would defend “aristocratic virtues.” Hamilton similarly declared “Gentlemen say we need to be rescued from the democracy. But what the means proposed? A democratic assembly is to be checked by a democratic senate, and both these by a democratic chief magistrate. The end will not be answered—the means will not be equal to the object. It will, therefore, be feeble and inefficient” (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 310) (according to Yates’s notes, Hamilton might then have said: “you cannot have a good executive upon a democratic plan” [Farrand, ed. 1966a: 299]). Echoing Hamilton, Morris declared: “The first branch originating from the people, will ever be subject to
precipitancy, changeability, and excess. ... This can only be checked by ability and virtue in the second branch. ... Such an aristocratic body will keep down the turbulencey of democracy" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 517 and 512). Morris added a populist touch to his comment, stating that "a pure democracy is equally oppressive to the lower orders of the community" (518). Morris stressed, however, that "there never was, nor ever will be a civilized Society without an Aristocracy" (545). Randolph also declared that the Senate would be "a check ... to keep up the balance, and to restrain, if possible, the fury of democracy" (58) (Randolph expressed the same idea over and over again: "The Democratic licentiousness of the State Legislatures proved the necessity of a firm Senate. The object of this 2d. branch is to controul the democratic branch of the Natl. Legislature" [218]). For Dickerson also, the Senate is "a balance that will check the Democracy" (159). Similarly, Morris said that a Senate constituted of members of the well-to-do aristocracy would "keep down the turbulence of democracy" (Naess, Christophersen & Kvalø 1956: 107). This defence of the Senate was not motivated by political considerations alone, since fear of "democracy" also evoked the fear of the poor and of a dramatic class struggle.

"Democracy" as the Egalitarian Rule of the Poor

Political actors took advantage of the Constitutional debates to systematize their legitimating discourse on representation, but also on the relation between wealth and political superiority. In his famous An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution, Charles A. Beard argued that the Federalists' first goal was to protect property rights against the egalitarian and democratic spirit growing among the common farmers and the proletariat (Beard 1986; for critics, see Brown 1956 and McDonald 1958). It is certainly not that there was a single cause or motivation that could explain the War of Independence or the Constitutional debates. Moreover, it would be accurate to remark that the Federalists were generally not rich capitalists involved in a class
struggle but rather elected politicians with a background in law. Moreover, those who participated in revolt during the confederation era were not the poor or workers but farmers and property-owners (Morone 1990: 60). However, several historical texts clearly reveal that the Founders of the modern United States firmly believed that their society was divided into economic classes. The Founders claimed that the rich were skilled natural aristocrats and that they must be in charge of politics. Accordingly, "democracy" was identified with the lower class. On June 18, 1787, Hamilton delivered a speech very representative of this view (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 299):

All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well born, the other the mass of the people. The voice of the People has been said to be the voice of God; and however generally this maxim has been quoted and believed, it is not true in fact. The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class a distinct, permanent share in the government. They will check the unsteadiness of the second, and as they cannot receive any advantage by a change, they therefore will ever maintain good government. Can a democratic assembly, who annually revolve in the mass of the people, be supposed steadily to pursue the public good? Nothing but a permanent body can check the imprudence of democracy. Their turbulent and uncontrolying disposition requires checks.

Here, Hamilton claims, first, that the rhetorical emphasis on the "voice of the people" is only a false maxim ("it is not true in fact"); next, that the people is irrational and turbulent; subsequently, that "democracy" is synonymous with the irrational and turbulent people; finally, that the people have to be controlled by an elite—the "few" who are "the rich and well born," the "first class" to which Hamilton himself belonged. Hamilton elsewhere stated "That power which holds the purse-strings absolutely must rule" (Laniel 1995: 129). Hamilton also spoke of the "democratical jealousy of the people," to express the idea that democracy and attacks on property are the two sides of the same coin (Laniel 1995: 131). Finally, in his Federalist Paper number I, Hamilton openly declared that the adoption of the new Constitution would afford additional security "to the preservation ... to liberty, and to property" (Madison, Hamilton & Jay 1987: 90).
Hamilton's views regarding the political skills of the rich and the poor were shared by several delegates. For John Adams, "the poor are destined to labor, and the rich, by the advantage of education, independence and leisure, are qualified for superior stations" (Laniel 1995: 120). As in the previous era, delegates also maintained that a crucial problem with the poor is that they are easily corrupted. As Gouverneur Morris declared: "Give the votes to people who have no property, and they will sell them to the rich who will be able to buy them" (Farrand, ed. 1966b: 202). Intellectual and financial wealth were thus linked. The promotion of the rule of natural aristocrats was therefore the promotion of the rule of the wealthy. This view was consistent with the attack on the excessively democratic confederation, the scene of such unacceptable economic struggles as Shays' rebellion. Shays' followers were not from the lower class, although they were ruined farmers resentful and disrespective of financial rules (debts) that had ruined them. Moreover, as we have seen, some radical states such as Pennsylvania brandished the threat of egalitarian policies which were labelled "democratic" by both their advocates and opponents.

Martin Diamond (1968: 518) is therefore right to emphasize that a large proportion of The Federalist deals with the improvements in 'commerce' made possible by the new Constitution. For example, in a list of the four 'principal objects of federal legislation,' (Fed n° 53) three (foreign trade, interstate trade, and taxes) deal explicitly with commerce. The fourth, the militia, also deals with commerce insofar as it largely has to do with prevention of 'domestic convulsion' brought on by economic matters.

The Constitutional debates offered a good opportunity for several political actors and commentators to reaffirm that a strong government is necessary to secure private property. It was, in part, John Locke's theory which taught them this. Such belief led Perez Fobes (1983: 1002) to explain, in 1795, that "Savages live in tolerable peace almost without government, because they feel not, as we do, the power of wealth." Hence, non-native Americans needed a government because they did feel the power of wealth. Madison, for instance, acknowledged that "the most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property"
Then, he stated that "democracies have ever been found incompatible with personal security, or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths" (Madison, Hamilton & Jay 1987: 126) (He made the same statement during the Virginia Convention, on June 5, 1788. Yet, oddly he used the term "republic" rather than "democracy." 20) Madison’s opinion was shared by Gouverneur Morris, a strong defender of the security of property, for whom “The engine by which a giddy populace can be most easily brought to do mischief is their hatred of the rich” (Hazen 1964: 57-58).

Benjamin Franklin was one of the rare influential political actors to oppose such a view. In his On the Legislative Branch, published in 1789, he explained that “Is it supposed that wisdom is the necessary concomitant of riches and that one man worth a thousand pounds must have as much wisdom as twenty who have each only nine hundred and ninety-nine; and why is property to be represented at all.” For Benjamin, such practices are “contrary to the spirit of democracy” and unveil a “disposition among some of our people to commence an aristocracy, by giving the rich a predominancy in government” (Laniel 1995: 129-13). Going even farther, Mercer made a very original statement to the Convention on August 14, when he declared (Farrand, ed. 1966b: 285; see also 202)

> It is a first principle in political science, that whenever the rights of property are secured, an aristocracy will grow out of it. Elective Governments also necessarily become aristocratic, because the rulers being few can & will draw emoluments for themselves from the many. The Governments of America will become aristocracies. They are so already. The public measures are calculated for the benefit of the Governors, not of the people. The people are dissatisfied & complain. They change their rulers, and the public measures are changed, but it is only a change of one scheme of emolument to the rulers, for another.

Here, Mercer sheds light on the links between wealth, political power and the political alienation of the people. Yet Franklin’s and Mercer’s comments were quite isolated. Even the anti-Federalists did not commonly condemn the new Constitution for giving too much power to the rich (Kenyon 1968: 545-566 [sec. V]; Elkins & Mckitrick 1968: 169
395). To give more weight to his advocacy of a strong Senate, Madison's sixty-third Federalist Paper mentioned the historical examples of Carthage, Rome and Sparta. In the opinion, once again, of Martin Diamond, Madison hoped that "The struggle of classes is to be replaced by a struggle of interests. The class struggle is domestic convulsion; the struggle of interests is a safe, even energizing, struggle which is compatible with, or even promotes, the safety and stability of society. But how can this be accomplished?" (Diamond 1968: 522). Opposing the consensus of his day, Madison went on advocating the establishment of a very large and populous republic because such a political entity would embody enough distinct interests and factions to produce a balance not related solely to wealth. For Madison, "to enlarge the sphere" of government is (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 134-136)

the only defence agst. the inconveniences of democracy consistent with the democratic form of Govt. All civilized Societies would be divided into different Sects, Factions, & interests, as they happened to consist of rich & poor, debtors & creditors, the landed the manufacturing, the commercial interests, the inhabitants of this district, or that district, the followers of this political leader or that political leader, the disciples of this religious sect or that religious sect. In all cases where a majority are united by a common interest or passion, the rights of the minority are in danger.... In Greece & Rome the rich & poor, the creditors & debtors, as well as the patricians & plebeians alternately oppressed each other with equal unmercifulness. ... The only remedy is to enlarge the sphere, & thereby divide the community into so great a number of interests & parties, that in the 1st. place a majority will not be likely at the same moment to have a common interest separate from that of the whole or of the minority; and in the 2nd place, that in case they shd. have such an interest, they may not be apt to unite in the pursuit of it.21

Madison's quest for diversity reveals at the same time a real will to prevent a tyranny of the majority as well as a very pessimistic understanding of human nature. As Madison declared: "If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary" (Madison, Hamilton & Jay 1987: 302 and 319-320). Thus, the political system must be shaped in such a way that personal interests would be checked and counterbalanced by institutions promoting opposing interests (Pocock 1975: 521-523). By having several minorities within a large republic, it would be very unlikely that a stable majority would be able to exercise its tyranny. This concern for minority rights
implies that Madison was not totally confident of the virtue of the natural aristocracy. Governeur Morris is also quite cynical about human nature, stressing that "The Rich will strive to establish their dominion & enslave the rest. They always did. They always will." He added, "Vices as they exist, must be turned agst. each other." Morris's solution, then, is that "The aristocratic body, should be as independent & as firm as the democratic. If the members of it are to revert to a dependence on the democratic choice. The democratic scale will preponderate. ... If the 2d. branch is to be dependent we are better without it" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 512 and see also 517). Despite his sophisticated theory about factions, Madison like Morris and other mainstream politicians of this period, are primarily preoccupied by the clash between the rich and the poor. Writing to Jefferson (Oct. 24, 1787), Madison referred to the dangers of a "simple Democracy, or a pure republic" stating that "In all civilized societies distinctions are various and unavoidable," and that there "will be rich and poor; creditors and debtors" (Padover, ed. 1971: 41). "Simple democracy" must be avoided, according to Madison, precisely because it does not offer sufficient protection for the rights of the minority, i.e. the rich. Congressman Pinkney presented to the Convention of Philadelphia a more subtle sociological picture of the upper class. For Pinkney, the American upper class was actually composed of three "classes": the professionals, the merchants and the landholders, all sharing nonetheless common interests (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 402-403):

The people of the U.S. may be divided into three classes—Professional men who must from their particular pursuits always have a considerable weight in the Government while it remains popular—Commercial men, who may or may not have weight as a wise or injudicious commercial policy is pursued. ... The third is the landed interest, the owners and cultivators of the soil, who are and ought ever to be the governing spring in the system.—These three classes, however distinct in their pursuits are individually equal in the political scale, and may be easily proved to have but one interest. The dependence of each on the other is mutual. The merchant depends on the planter. Both must in private as well as public affairs be connected with the professional men; who in their turn must in some measure depend on them.

Probably because of the connection between members of the elite, Madison sided openly with the landholders—"the minority of the opulent"—as shown by the
following passage drawn from the Constitutional debates. First, Madison seems to be on the side of the "day laborer": "The man who is possessed of wealth, who lolls on his sofa or rolls in his carriage, cannot judge of the wants or feelings of the day laborer." However, he then explained that (Farrand, ed. 1966: 431)

The government we mean to erect is intended to last for ages. The landed interest, at present, is prevalent; but in the process of time, when we approximate to the states and kingdoms of Europe; when the number of landholders shall be comparatively small, through the various means of trade and manufactures, will not the landed interest be overbalanced in future elections, and unless wisely provided against, what will become of your government? In England, at this day, if elections were open to all classes of people, the property of the landed proprietors would be insecure. An agrarian law would soon take place. If these observations be just, our government ought to secure the permanent interests of the country against innovation. Landholders ought to have a share in the government, to support these invaluable interests and to balance and check the other. They ought to be so constituted as to protect the minority of the opulent against the majority. The senate, therefore, ought to be this body.

For Pinkney too, the senatorial "branch was meant to represent the wealth of the Country, it ought to be composed of persons of wealth" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 426). Baldwin also declared that "the first branch [in Massachusetts] represents the people, and the second its property" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 475). Finally, Madison explained that "The use of the Senate is to consist in its proceeding with more coolness, with more system, & with more wisdom, than the popular branch" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 151).

This debate on the power of the Senate clearly demonstrates how people at the time understood the meaning of the terms "democracy" and "aristocracy." Delivering a speech at the Federal Convention, Gouverneur Morris stressed that (Ketcham, ed. 1986: 106-107)

Every man of observation had seen in the democratic branches of the State Legislature, precipitation—in Congress changeableness, in every department excesses against personal liberty, private property and personal safety. ... The aristocratic body, should be as independent and as firm as the democratic. ... The two forces will then control each other. Let the rich mix with the poor and in a Commercial Country, they will establish an oligarchy. Take away commerce, and the democracy will triumph. Thus it has been all the world over.
Oddly enough, the Federalists legitimized their desire for a Senate by reference to the British constitution itself. Indeed, in Madison's records of Hamilton speech of June 18, 1787, one reads (Ketcham, ed. 1986: 75):

The members most tenacious of republicanism ... were as loud as any in declaiming against the vices of democracy. This progress of the public mind led him to anticipate the time, when others as well as himself [Hamilton] would join in the praise bestowed by Mr. Necker on the British Constitution, namely, that it is the only Government in the world 'which unites public strength with individual security.' In every community where industry is encouraged, there will be a division of it into the few and the many. Hence separate interests will arise, there will be debtors and creditors etc. Both therefore ought to have power, that each may defend itself against the other. ... To the proper adjustment of it the British owe the excellence of their Constitution. Their house of Lords is a most noble institution. Having nothing to hope for by a change, and a sufficient interest by means of their property, in being faithful to the interest, they form a permanent barrier against every pernicious innovation, whether attempted on the part of the Crown or of the Commons. No temporary Senate will have firmness enough to answer the purpose.

For Hamilton (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 362), Pinkney (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 398) and others, the British Constitution is so highly considered ('the best constitution' in the world, according to Hamilton and Pinkney) because it concides perfectly with Aristotle's, Cicero's, Montesquieu's and Necker's idea of a perfect political regime (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 308). Yet, there was a Crown at the head of the British political system. Hence, some opponents to the Federalist plan suggested that it would open the door to the establishment of a monarchy. The anti-Federalist Patrick Henry, for instance, declared that if the Federalist Constitution was adopted, "there is to be a great and mighty President, with very extensive powers; the powers of a King" (Ketcham, ed. 1986: 211). Because "This Constitution ... squints towards monarchy," explained Henry, "... Your President may easily become King" (Ketcham, ed. 1986: 213). Thomas Jefferson, in discussing the elective Presidency declared that "An elective despotism was not the government we fought for" (Laniel 1995: 107 n. 37). Expressing a similar concern, Randolph referred to the Constitution as a "fœtus of monarchy" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 66) and Mason declared, on June 4th, "We are not constituting a British Government, but a more dangerous monarchy, an elective one. ... Do gentlemen mean to pave the way to hereditary Monarchy?" (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 101).
In fact, some mainstream politicians were seriously considering the establishment of an American monarchy. According to John Adams' *Defence of the Constitutions of the United States*, the United States needed both a Crown and a hereditary Senate. Some Federalists went so far as to try to convince George Washington to proclaim himself King of the United States. Washington declined. Madison predicted nonetheless that around 1930, an overpopulated United States would need a king to enforce law and order (Palmer 1959: 204; Adair 1968: 408). Madison's opinion was shared by others such as Williamson, a delegate of North Carolina, who declared on June 24, at the Convention of Philadelphia, that "it was pretty certain ... that we should at some time or other have a king" (Adair 1968: 409). Similarly, Morris stated that "we must have a Monarch sooner or later ... and the sooner we take him while we are able to make a Bargain with him, the better" (Adair 1968: 410). More critical of the idea of an American king, Franklin wrote a speech delivered on his behalf by Wilson before the Federal Convention, on June 2 (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 83):

> It will be said, that we don't propose to establish Kings. I know it. But there is a natural inclination in mankind to Kingly Government. ... I am apprehensive therefore, perhaps too apprehensive, that the Government of these States, may in future times, end in a Monarchy. But this Catastrophe I think may be long delayed, if in our proposed system we do not sow the seeds of contention, faction & tumult, by making our posts of honor, places of profit. If we do ... it will only nourish the foetus of a King ... and a King will the sooner be set over us.

On July 1792, Washington wrote a private and confidential letter to his secretary of the treasury, Alexander Hamilton. Washington's goal was to recall what he had learned "from sensible and moderate men" with whom he had discussed the Federal system of the United States. According to Washington, several of them believed "that the ultimate object of all this is to prepare the way for a change, from the republican form of Government, to that of a monarchy." He went further, stating (Allen, ed. 1988: 572 and 574-575)
that the antifederal champions are now strengthened in argument by the fulfilment of their predictions, which has been brought about by the Monarchical federalists themselves; who, having been for the New government merely as a stepping stone to Monarchy, have themselves adopted the very construction, of which, when advocating its acceptance before the tribunal of the people, they declared it insusceptible.


The essence, and almost the quintessence, of good government is, to protect property and its rights. When these are protected, there is scarcely any booty left for oppression to seize; the objects, and the motives to usurpation and tyranny are removed. By securing property, life and liberty can scarcely fail of being secured: where property is safe by rules and principles, there is liberty.

Ames also expressed his satisfaction regarding the “sages in the great Convention” who chose to establish a republic “which differs more widely from a democracy, than a democracy from despotism” (Morantz 1971: 13). In fact, the “sages in the great Convention” not only established a regime which differs from a democracy, but they used the word "democracy" as a tool to justify a centralized union ruled by an elective aristocracy (some even said by a quasi-monarchy). "Democracy" happened to be the word used to incarnate the anti-model, the evils they were trying to liberate America from. Thus, after a War of Independence by which American Patriots got rid of the Crown, the Patriot’s created a union by which they got rid of democracy. They were openly and proudly anti-democrats. That fact raises a serie of questions: when, why and how did the United States come to be called a “democracy”? These questions I shall try to answer in the last part of this dissertation.
Slightly different in Yates’s records: “the people are gradually ripening in their opinions of government—they begin to be tired of an excess of democracy” (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 301).

From Madison’s notes, May 31th. Though Pierce’s recollection of Randolph’s exact wording may differ slightly from Madison’s—“the fury of democracy” rather than “follies”—one thing is clear: Randolph used very derogatory words to talk about democracy (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 58).

For Charles Pickney, democracy and anarchy are the same (Morantz 1971: 14); for Gouverneur Morris, democracy was “that disease of which all republics have perished except those which have been overturned by foreign force” (Hazen 1964: 58) and “precipitation” is common “in the democratic branches of the State Legislatures” (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 512). According to George Mason, democracy equals “oppressions and injustice” (idem.: 101). Yet, Mason also declared: “I am for preserving inviolably the democratic branch of the government—True, we have found inconveniences from pure democracies; but if we mean to preserve peace and real freedom, they must necessarily become a component part of a national government” (idem.: 364.).

According to Yates’s notes of June 29 (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 473). It is worth noting that in France, Maury explained that after the death of Charles the First, Mazarin might have encouraged the British to establish a republican government knowing that such a regime “affaiblirait, par ses lenteurs et par ses divisions intestines, la puissance politique” of England (Maury 1989b [1790]: 579).

Madison’s recollection of Wilson’s words is a bit different: “the manners [are] so republican, that nothing but a great confederate Republic would do for it” (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 66).

The label “anti-Federalists” had diverse spellings: Antifederalists, Anti-Federalists, Anti-federalists, anti-Federalists (McDonald 1968: 365 n. 1). Note also that anti-Federalists did not use this expression to talk about themselves. See also G.S. Wood (1969: 485 n. 22).

As Gordon S. Wood (1969: 483-484) stresses, “It is difficult, as historians have recently demonstrated, to equate the supporters or opponents of the Constitution with particular economic groupings.”

The standing army was a very sensitive issue after centuries of monarchic armies and troops of mercenaries who were tied not to the people, but to the Crown or to the aristocrats who hired them. Henry wrote: “a riot act in a country which is called one of the freest in the world, where a few neighbours cannot assemble without the risk of being shot by a hired soldiery, the engines of despotism. ... A standing army we shall have also, to execute the execrable commands of tyranny: And how are you to punish them? ... What resistance could be made? The attempt would be madness” (Ketcham, ed. 1986: 205-206).

It is interesting to note with regard to the similarity of the political experience of the Federalists and the anti-Federalists (despite their own claims), that Lee was a delegate of Virginia to the Congress (1774-1779; 1784-1787), president of the Congress (1784-1785), a member of the Virginia House of Delegates (1780-1784) and he became a Senator (1789-1792) (Greene & Pole, ed. 1991: 745).

Speech before the Virginia Ratifying Convention, June 7, 1788 (Ketcham, ed. 1986: 215).

This seems to confirm the hypothesis that what really mattered for many of these politicians was their careers. For instance, Governor Edmund Randolph, from Virginia, joined the Federalist ranks in exchange for the office of attorney-general. Less happily, Governor John Hancock, from Massachusetts, was enticed with the promise of the vice-presidency. He turned from an anti-Federalist position to a pro-Federalist one, but in the end, did not achieve his goal (McDonald 1968: 374 and G.S. Wood 1969: 486).

People like Washington, Knox and Hamilton were involved in the military struggle against the British; Robert Morris was Superintendant of Finance; John Jay was president of the Continental Congress; Wilson, Duane and Gouverneur Morris, were all members of the Congress and of war committees.
Ellen Meiksins Wood (1994: 63) wrote: “The Americans, then, though they did not invent representation, can be credited with establishing an essential constitutive idea of modern democracy: its identification with the alienation of power.” See also G.S. Wood (1969: 56).

See also Mason’s position, according to Madison’s notes: “The people will be represented; they ought therefore to choose the Representatives. The requisites in actual representation are that the Reps. should sympathize with their constituents; shd. think as they think, & feel as they feel; and that for these purposes shd. even be resident among them. Much he sd. had been alleged agst. democratic elections. He admitted that much might be said; but it was to be considered that no Govt. was free from imperfections & evils; and that improper elections in many instances, were inseparable from Republican Govts” (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 134). And Mason, according to King’s notes of the Convention, stated, June 6: “at present the representation in congress are not representatives of the people, but of the States—now it is proposed to form a Govt for men & not for Societies of men or States, therefore you shd. draw the Representatives immediately from the people. it shd. be so much so, that even the Diseases of the people shd. be represented—if not, how are they to be cured—?” (Idem.: 142).

In Hamilton’s notes of the Convention, one may read: “A free government to be preferred to an absolute monarchy not because of the occasional violations of liberty or property but because of the tendency of the Free Government to interest the passions of the community in its favour beget public spirit and public confidence” (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 145).

Separation of power concerns the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government, each of which must have a specific function. Individuals from one branch must not be allowed to belong simultaneously to another branch. Moreover, each branch is limited in its power.

The idea of checks and balances refers to the concept of a mixed constitution (Aristotle and Polybius). Without mentioning the three functions per se, the checks and balances doctrine implies that the power must be divided among various bodies representing distinct social groups or orders (demos, aristocrats, crown), each body having enough power to counterbalance the power of the others.


On a candid examination of history, we shall find that turbulence, violence, and abuse of power, by the majority trampling on the rights of the minority have produced factions and commotions, which, in republics, have more frequently than any other cause, produced despotism. If we go over the whole history of ancient and modern republics, we shall find their destruction to have generally resulted from those causes” (Padover, ed. 1971: 46-47).

See also Hamilton and again Madison on the same issue (Farrand, ed. 1966a: 288 and 424), although Hamilton advocated a somewhat different view (p. 299). See also pp. 422-423 and 431.
CHAPTER V

France 1791-1797

Introduction

From September 1791, when the first Assemblée Nationale was dissolved, to Napoléon Bonaparte's coup d'état in 1799, France went through a succession of dramatic events, including riots, mass murders (republican Terror and white Terror), international and civil wars, the execution of a king and a queen, the establishment of a republic, the adoption of a new calendar, and the proclamation of no less than two additional constitutions (one in 1793 known as the "democratic Constitution", and the next following the Thermidorian revolution of 1795).

On September 20, 1792, at Valmy, the French army for the first time won an important battle. On September 21, a new Assembly, known as the Convention, began its session. It was an assembly elected through universal (for males only) suffrage. On the first day of the Convention, the monarchy was abolished. The next day, a republic was proclaimed. The radicalization of the revolution coincided with the disappearance of defenders of constitutional monarchy: Mirabeau was dead, the king and Barnave were in jail in France, Lafayette was in jail in Austria, the Comte d'Antraigues, Maury, Malouet, Mounier, and Lally-Tollendal were in exile. In sum, almost every political actor encountered in chapter 3 was gone.

Yet, the Revolution did not end with the proclamation of the republic. From December 1792 to January 1793, the king stood on trial. He was beheaded on January 21 1793. Civil war broke out in the Vendée in March, and in the same month the
Tribunaux révolutionnaires were established in Paris, Strasbourg, Brest, Toulon and Nancy. On April 9, the Comité de salut public was established. Although the Convention had to approve the decisions of the Comité, the latter, a nest of radical political actors, would become more and more influential. Such radicalization was generally accomplished in the name of the people, or for the sake of the republic. However, and as in America, the most radical revolutionaries did not sit on benches of elected bodies. They were in the street and even radical elected political actors worried about the power and the political actions of the people. Some elected political actors such as Danton and Robespierre tried nonetheless to manipulate "the street" to further their own interests. Yet commoners—the term sansculottes refers to the sectionmen and enragés (literally "madmen") to the most radical of them—had their own agenda: in May 1793, the enragés advocated egalitarian policies and special taxes for the rich. Still in May, the Convention was invaded by the sansculottes and the Commune de Paris was declared to be in a state of insurrection. Thus, factions and individuals competed in Paris through institutions—Convention, Commune, Comité de salut public, sections populaires—and in the street. In the meantime, people from outside Paris expressed more and more loudly their dissatisfaction with the radicalism and violence going on in the capital. Marseilles, Lyon, Bordeaux and Caen began to be in open revolt against Paris (a movement that was called "federalism").

It is against this background that one must analyse the use of the term "democracy" and its cognates. As we shall see, the term was used mainly in debates between elected political actors seeking to consolidate the elective regime they were part of. The so-called “Democratic Constitution of 1793,” proclaimed on June 24, 1793, established universal suffrage, the right for the people to approve or reject laws through referendum, and the right and even the duty of insurrection. Thus, with this constitution, elected political actors offered the people the means to participate directly in the law-and decision-making process. It might be said, therefore, that members of the Convention who adopted such a constitution cherished democracy.
Yet, this constitution would never be implemented. Meanwhile, Terror targeted not only royalists but also leaders of the enragés such as Jacques Roux, and women’s political clubs (closed and forbidden at the end of September). The radical elected political actors who had defeated almost all their foes (in Paris, between October and November 1793, Marie-Antoinette was executed as were Mme Roland, Barnave and several Girondins), were now competing amongst themselves. In the first months of 1794, the radical Hébertistes who aimed to push the revolution further (Guérin 1973: ch. 7), the “indulgents” such as Danton and Desmoulins who wished to stabilize the situation and protect freedom of expression, were all neutralized by Robespierre and his Comité and beheaded. Condorcet committed suicide. As we shall see, the term “democracy” and its derivatives would be extensively used in a laudatory manner by Robespierre, Saint-Just and their allies in order to legitimate their policies and their decisions to eliminate their former allies.

From March 1793 to January 1794, 381 people were guillotined, but this increased to 2,500 during the summer of 1794 (moreover, 5,000 were deliberately drowned in Nantes and 2,000 shot to death in Lyon) (Tulard 1985: 125). Among the victims of this bloody summer were Robespierre himself and his ally Saint-Just, both guillotined on July 28, victims of the Thermidorian Reaction (also known as the “bourgeois revolution”). This new bourgeois power would last until Napoléon Bonaparte’s coup d’état in 1799.

“Democracy” and Economic Struggle

Despite economic reforms and egalitarian policies, the elected political actors, whether Jacobins or Girondins, were all against any significant reform regarding private property. Their attitude was summarized by Pierre Vergniaud’s reply to Robespierre, who accused him and the Girondins of being "moderates":

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Since the abolition of the monarchy, I have heard much talk of revolution. I said to myself, there are two more revolutions possible: that of property or the Agrarian Law, and that which would take us back to despotism. I have made a firm resolution to resist both the one and the other and all the indirect means that might lead us to them. If that can be construed as being a 'Moderate,' then we are all such; for we all have voted for the death penalty against any citizen who would propose either one of them.²

In June 1791, the Assemblée Nationale adopted Le Chapelier's law, prohibiting workers' associations. Elected political actors such as Robespierre and Marat did not try to stop the adoption of this bill. Le Chapelier, drawing upon Rousseau's idea that the general will should not be divided, claimed that workers' associations would result in the fragmentation of the nation (Barny 1978: 109). Even the Constitution of 1793 considered private property as a natural and inalienable right (Sartori 1987: 343).

Yet, several participants in the assemblies of the sections (Parisian districts) and pamphleteers asked for more egalitarian laws and actions (Dousset 1995: 149-163; Tissier 1995: 203-218). Hébert (the leader of the Hébertistes), for instance, siding with the poor, declared in his newspaper Le Père Duchesne (no. 233, Spring 1793): "For four years now we have suffered. What have we gained from the Revolution?" Expressing a similar idea, Thibaudeau stated in his memoirs that "When the Third Estate overthrew privileges, it took, in the eyes of the people, the place of the aristocracy" (Hardman, ed. 1973 [II]: 79).³ In January 19, 1793, Saint-Etienne signed an article in La Chronique de Paris entitled "De l'Égalité," in which he equated equality with democracy, making it clear that the egalitarian spirit of the people might lead to tyranny. Yet, in such a case, there is no longer any "democracy" (Kessel, ed. 1969: 74-75):

Equality is the soul of the republic; nothing characterizes democracy better than the tendency to equality, than the passion, and even the violence to bring it about. In a nation that is being born equality exists, and we do not take enough precautions to maintain it; in a nation that is reforming itself, equality does not exist, and we employ overly violent methods to establish it. the people often imitate the tyrant who laid men on an iron bedstead and cut them down to fit; he does not equalize, he mutilates, he kills; this is not democracy, it is ochlocracy, in other words, the dawn of tyranny.⁴
With regard to equality and democracy, Rabaut declared, “First I must observe that, by republic I mean a purely democratic government: all the others who use the name republic are aristocratic or mixed.” Then, Rabaut explained why he believes that economic inequality could not accommodate a real “democracy” (Kessel, ed. 1969: 78):

Democratic government will not last long alongside a huge inequality in fortunes, because it produces other inequalities in ever increasing numbers, and to an unlimited extent: thus, in a more or less distant time, the nation finds itself divided into two classes. The people end up being nothing, or they become the mass, the rabble. Then the democratic government is destroyed, the republic no longer exists; aristocracy arises.⁵

For Rabaut, economic inequality would lead to two classes (the rich and the poor) with the result that the economic superiority of the rich results almost naturally in political superiority. The so-called “republic” would be transformed into an aristocratic regime, in both the economic and political sense, and the people would become a rabble, the exact word commonly used by the members of the elite to describe the people.

Jacques Roux also believed that economic and political power were intrinsically linked (Wolikow 1995: 219-236). In the address he presented to the Convention on June 25, 1793, on behalf of the Granvillers and Bonne-Nouvelle sections and the Cordeliers Club (Hardman, ed. 1973: 135-13), he declared that: “laws have been cruel towards the poor, because they were only made by the rich and for the rich” (Hardman, ed. 1973: 137).⁶ Echoing Hébert's idea, Roux explained that “for the past four years, the rich alone have profited from the advantages of the Revolution. The merchant aristocracy, more terrible than the noble or religious aristocracy, has made a cruel game of overturning individual fortunes and the treasures of the Republic” (Kessel, ed. 1969: 260).⁷ For Sylvain Maréchal (in Révolutions de Paris, no. 87, Mar. 5-12), who was even more radical than Roux, “the bourgeois is not a democrat, he cannot be; he is a monarchist by instinct ... it is thus the bourgeois that we face now: they alone openly make war on us.”⁸
"Democracy" referred clearly, at that time, to the poor but also to the sections and direct democracy because it was the sectionmen who fought at once for economic equality and direct democracy. According to Albert Soboul's research, the sections were composed of small independent producers and workers (see also Resnick 1997: ch. 5). The sansculottes and the enrâgés shared the ideal of direct democracy and an anti-capitalist spirit. They held in contempt the concept of a free market and they sought to enforce control over trade and production (regulations, taxes, etc.), they advocated strict price control on essential goods (bread, meat, candles) and they did not hesitate to use violence against speculators. Théophile Leclerc, one of the enrâgés, spoke violently against the "mercantile aristocracy" (Slavin 1995: 3).

Anti-democratic Elected Political Actors and the First Attempts at Pro-democratic Propaganda

Sectionmen not only asked for egalitarian reforms, they were also very critical of the elected political actors, whether those in the Convention or at the head of the Commune. Echoing Rousseau, the enrâgé Leclerc stated (in L'Ami du peuple, Aug. 21, 1793) "You, remember above all, that a people represented is not a free people, and do not use this epithet of representative ... ; the will cannot be represented ... ; your magistrates are nothing but those whom you have mandated."9 A few weeks later, the same Leclerc declared in L'Ami du peuple: "Officers of the sovereign, step off the Tiers, for they belong to the people; take up the floor of the amphitheatre" (Soboul 1979: 29; English trans. in Bouloiseau 1972: 76).10 François Chabot (in Le Moniteur universel, vol. 16, no. 168, June 17, 1793; English trans. in Slavin 1995: 74), openly referred to "democracy": "One great principle must never be ignored in a democratic Constitution: It is that the people must do for themselves all that is possible for them to do." These pro-democratic and anti-representation declarations were followed by concrete action and democratic organization. To bypass other elected bodies, to protect their autonomy and to structure their actions and decisions, the sections
established, for instance, a *Comité Central de Correspondance*, which allowed them to communicate laterally rather than being forced to pass through City Hall (Genty 1985: 8-24; Soboul 1979: 15-31). Moreover, the sectionmen did not hesitate to express through violence their distrust of the elected politicians. Riots broke out on May 31 and on June 2, 1793. In fact, from 1789 to 1793, the commoners of Paris stormed the Bastille, Versailles, and the Tuileries (twice), invaded the Convention, stormed jails to murder prisoners, etc. On September 4, 1793, the commoners invaded the room where the members of the *Commune* of Paris debated. In 1st Prairial Year III (20 May 1795), the *sans-culottes* invaded the Convention and sat among the elected members. According to *Le Moniteur*, one demonstrator cried: “Get out of here all of you; we are going to form the Convention ourselves” (Soboul 1979: 22). Moreover, universal suffrage was established at the end of July 1792 by the Parisian *section* of the Théâtre-Français and 47 of 48 sections declared that they wanted the monarchy abolished.

It should be pointed out that the *sans-culottes* themselves only rarely referred to "democracy" (Rosanvallon 1993: 22 n. 36). A survey of more than 120 popular political songs reveals that “Republic,” “Patriot” and "French people" were honourable widely used terms, "aristocrat" an expression of disgrace, and "democracy," a word rarely used (Delon & Levayer 1989; Slavin 1995: 58-80 and 65). Nevertheless, “democracy” was sometimes used in a positive manner by sectionmen. One young man maintained that he heard “Long live democracy!” being shouted by the crowd when Louis XVI was guillotined (Palmer 1959: 16). In May 1793, the *sections* of Marseilles revolted against what they perceived as the undemocratic control of Paris over the country. Such riots were part of what Parisians had named the "federalist" rebellion. Yet, in Marseilles, the motivation of the *sections* was primarily to bring the decision-making process back to the *sections*. During this period, *section* 28 in Marseilles spoke in a laudatory manner about “a democratic government” (Guilhaumou 1995: 339).
Nevertheless, and not surprisingly, the political goals and actions of the men of the sections collided violently with the agoraphobic state of mind of the elected political actors and their desire to rule in the name of "the people." Indeed, even in the radical period of the revolution, elected political actors were by a very large majority against direct democracy. Even those favourable to egalitarian policies were concerned about what they believed to be the "too" egalitarian goals of the enragés. Their opposition to democracy rested on philosophical, political and personal beliefs. Philosophically speaking, direct democracy was said to be unfit for a country such as France. Politically speaking, direct democracy threatened the political function and power of elected bodies. Personally speaking, elected political actors obviously enjoyed much more power and honour in a elective regime than in a direct democracy where they would have been lost among the masses.

Even Danton, Marat and Robespierre, who were known to be radical leaders, tried to use and to manipulate the sansculottes according to their own interests. Robespierre's case is interesting since his attitude toward representation, the Convention and the people changed depending on the political winds and his own political situation. The political scientist Pierre Rosanvallon explains that representatives in general, and Robespierre in particular, seem to have been extremely confused with respect to the proper use of the term "democracy" (Rosanvallon 1995: 146-147). Similarly, Jens A. Christophersen (1968) is puzzled by Robespierre's use of the term "democracy." For my part, I suggest that Robespierre's use of the term "democracy" was neither extremely confused nor so hard to explain. Robespierre was known as a radical belonging to the Jacobin club and the so-called Montagne, the leftist faction of the Parisian elected political actors sitting in the Convention. However, when the time came to anchor his own power, Robespierre himself sought to neutralize the sections. In order to do so, he started to use the word "democracy" in a positive manner. Let us first recall the most dramatic and important events of the time: the king had been beheaded only a few months earlier, the
Republic was involved in a Civil War, in April the Comité de salut public was established, in May the enragés began demanding egalitarian laws and special taxes over the wealthy, and the Convention was invaded by the commoners at the end of the month. On June 24, the “democratic constitution of 1793” was approved. On June 25, Jacques Roux brought to the Convention the petition of the enragés. It is in this context that members of the Convention clashed over issues such as the people’s right to recall elected political actors, the nature of a representative regime and its label. Robespierre was well aware that words could be a tool for pursuing political strategies. Even if he declared that “Wise legislators do not bind themselves to words, but to deeds” (Hardman, ed. 1973 [II]: 184-185),18 he nevertheless accused Condorcet and Brissot of using the term “republic” to give themselves the common touch.19 Regarding “democracy,” Robespierre stated in his speech entitled “Sur le gouvernement représentatif,” delivered on May 10, 1793, that the republic must be organized in such a manner that it would be “equally removed from the tempests of absolute democracy and the perfidious tranquillity of representative despotism” (Christophersen 1968: 9; English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 147).20 A few weeks later, on June 14, Robespierre attacked those who wished to establish a “pure democracy, and not that type of democracy which, for the sake of the general happiness, is tempered by laws” (Rosanvallon 1993: 21; English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 147).21 “Absolute democracy” and “pure democracy” probably evoked the radical sansculottes and the enragés, in the minds of the people of these dramatic days. As a matter of fact, other elected political actors such as Ch. Lambert equated “democracy” with the people's right to recall elected politicians, an idea very popular among the sansculottes (Genty 1995: 41; Guilhaumou 1994: 91; Resnick 1997: 78; Soboul 1958). In May 1793, Lambert suggested that “The ability to recall the representatives of the people, and in general all public functionaries, is the only way to have true democracy, with a representative government, and to prevent popular insurrections” (Wolikow 1995: 68 n. 29).22 In this case, Lambert obviously equates “democracy” with
the kind of direct democracy supported by the *sections* and the *sansculottes*. Thus, when Robespierre referred to "absolute democracy" in a derogatory manner, it was probably obvious to all that he was condemning the political ideal of the *sansculottes*.

Interestingly, it is precisely at that time that French elected political actors made their first serious attempt to merge the notion of representation with "democracy" (tempered by laws). By adopting this strategy, the elected political actors sought to embellish the elective regime with the aura of honour surrounding the "democratic" label in the eyes of the sectionmen, knowing that it would help to win and solidify the adherence of the people to such a regime. This is why elected political actors started to condemn what Robespierre called "absolute democracy" while simultaneously praising a "democracy" "tempered by laws" (these laws being the ones proposed and voted by the elected political actors themselves). Robespierre's semantic strategy was not exceptional. For instance, Thirion made it clear as well that it was important to distinguish between "pure democracy" and "representative democracy" (Wolikow 1995: 61). This concept of representative democracy was totally alien to any relevant traditions (etymology, history, classical and modern republicanism) and even to the French revolutionary tradition. Declarations merging representation and democracy were almost non-existent in France before 1793: we saw that Sièyes, for instance, argued in favour of a representative regime and against democracy (Sieyès 1989). In early 1793, however, political actors began to use the notion of representative democracy. In April 1793, Harmand declared that "The French nation ... is composed of a democratic Republic, one, indivisible and representative." In June 1793, Gondelin referred to the "democratic and representative government that the Convention wanted to adopt in France." In May 1793, Rabaut-Pommier went so far as to openly acknowledge the transformation of the French political vocabulary with respect to "democracy" and "representation": "We cannot decree, before having established it, whether our government will be representative or democratic. The ordinary sense of these words is meaningless to us: our government will be one as well as the other."
The elected politician Guyomar (Le Moniteur Universel, no. 25, July 15, 1795: 254-255) also spoke of "representative democracy," explaining that “Representative democracy, founded on the equality of rights, demands that all citizens be given a voice in the election of their representatives.” In Hérault-Séchelles’ Rapport sur la constitution du peuple français, fait à la Convention au nom du comité de salut public of June 10, 1793, one may read that from the “democratic principle of representation” it follows that “the French Constitution cannot be called representative exclusively, because it is no less democratic than representative” (Le Moniteur Universel, no. 16, June 10, 1793, p. 617).

On August 14, 1793, Barère declared that the Constitution approved on June was “a democratic constitution” (Le Moniteur Universel no. 17: 403). A memorandum of the Comité de Salut public sent to the Sociétés populaires, on Brumaire 23, Year II (November 13, 1793), equated republic with democracy: “The Committee of Public Safety ... perceives the need for the Republic ... to improve the public democratic spirit” (Hardman, ed. 1973 [II]: 358). Hence, Bresson is quite isolated when he expressed scepticism in his Réflexions sur les bases d’une constitution (Lobrano 1994: 63 n. 113):

> Every day the constitution, allegedly of 93, is called a democratic constitution; I know full well what a democratic republic is; but I cannot imagine a democratic constitution for a country that cannot be a democratic republic. In a democratic republic, the people as a body can debate laws, adopt or reject the proposed law, decide peace or war, even adjudicate, in some circumstances; thus France cannot be a democratic republic.

Of course, it might be argued that there was a “democratic constitution” giving rights and power to the people consistent with the traditional meaning of democracy. Garat said in his Mémoires that “this constitution of 1793 ... must be the first model of a democracy of twenty-five million men” (Hardman, ed. 1973 [II]: 213). The opponents to the constitution of 1793 highlighted its democratic nature: in Durand-Maillane’s opinion, “This Constitution was extremely democratic. ... Most of the articles were prerogatives for the commons [that were] completely outrageous and dangerous. The last, for instance, granted an unlimited right of insurrection ...
[something that] exposed the State to anarchic and daily upheavals" (Hardman 1973: 134). This Constitution had quite an ambiguous political function, since on one hand it made the regime look like a quasi-democracy, but on the other was never enforced. Garat suggested, in his Mémoires, that the goal of the advocates of the democratic constitution was in fact to limit the power of the sansculottes: “Danton’s sole ambition at this time was to repair for mankind, with an immense and lasting good, the terrible and transient wrongs that he had done to France; to smother under an organized democracy, and with a high and noble wisdom, the frenzy and the disasters of the sansculottism” (Hardman, ed. 1973 [II]: 214). Very interesting also is the comment uttered by one of the author of the constitution of 1793, Hérault de Séchelles, who opened his heart to Barère in Fall 1793 in an after-dinner conversation, asking, "will the excess of democracy be contained?" (Hardman, ed. 1973 [II]: 133).

In February 1794, Robespierre delivered a speech (“Rapport sur les principes de morale politique qui doivent guider la Convention nationale dans l’administration intérieure de la république”) in which he referred several times to “democracy” in a positive manner. In his address, Robespierre defined Virtue and Terror, but he also used the term “democracy” eleven times in about five minutes (the entire speech is around 700 words long). At that time, the political context was quite different from what it had been during the summer of 1793. The Queen as well as Mme Roland, Barnave and several Girondins had been executed. Condorcet had killed himself. The women’s clubs (Société des Citoyennes Patriotes, founded in 1791 by Etta Palm d’Aelders, and the club of the Citoyennes républicaines révolutionnaires, founded in May 1793) had been abolished. D’Aelders had been accused of being a "rabid democrat" in a review of her book (Appel aux Françaises) published in the Gazette Universelle (Slavin 1995: 101 and 273 and see also Le Cour Grandmaison 1992: 288). After the prohibition of the women’s clubs, Olympe de Gouges, was guillotined along with two of her allies. The Republican army had defeated the Vendeans and the red coats several times. Egalitarian laws such as the maximum (control on prices) had been enforced. On the
international scene, the war was going well for France. With their power more consolidated than ever, friends and allies such as Robespierre, Danton, Desmoulins and Hébert were now competing against each other (see Soboul 1989: 338-362). Robespierre at the head of the Comité de Salut public was the most powerful political actor. He had Hébert beheaded on March 24, 1794, and Danton and Desmoulins on April 5, 1794. In fact, from early 1793 to early 1794, no fewer than thirty-five members of the Convention resigned and about a hundred were executed (Bouloiseau 1972: 86).

Now, let us return to Robespierre's speech delivered at the Convention (on Pluviôse 18, Year II, [February 5, 1794]).

First, Robespierre refers to "democracy" as an honorable term, equating it with "republic" and expressing some wishful thinking about the ongoing war against foreign monarchies: "But the French are the first people in the world to establish a true democracy, by calling all men to enjoy equality and full civic rights; and that, in my opinion, is the real reason why all the tyrants allied against the Republic will be defeated" (Robespierre 1974c; English trans. in Palmer 1959: 16-17).37 Yet, the elected political actor Robespierre made it clear that he supported only a formal "democracy," and that France must be a elective regime: "Democracy is a state in which the people, as sovereign, guided by laws of its own making, does for itself all that it can do well, and through its delegates, what it cannot do itself" (an idea recalled by one of Robespierre's partisans, Payan, in May 1794 [see Soboul 1979: 22]). Curiously, Robespierre acknowledges then that "democracy" is simply a synonym for "republic," dismissing at the same time what he calls the "abuses found in vulgar parlance": "Democratic government or republican government—these two terms are synonymous, despite the abuses found in vulgar parlance" (English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 146).39 Then, he heaps scorn on direct democracy, openly expressing his agoraphobia: "Democracy is not a state where the people, continually gathered, govern all public affairs by themselves, even less is it [a state] where a hundred thousand factions, through isolated measures, both hasty and contradictory,
decide the fate of the whole society; such a government has never existed, and it could exist only to return the people to despotism.”

Robespierre then goes on to explain, apparently somewhat confusedly, what the central principle of “democracy” is: “what is the fundamental principle of democratic or popular government, that is to say, the essential spirit on which it is founded and which makes it move? It is virtue; I speak of public virtue ... that virtue that is nothing other than the love of the country and her laws.” He states further: “But even as the essence of the republic or democracy is equality, it follows that love of country necessarily embraces love of equality.”

Thus, using “democracy” and “republic” without distinction, Robespierre declares that both virtue and equality are the central principles of “democracy.” Can a regime have two central principles? It cannot according to political philosophy, but it can according to political philosophy. Indeed, Robespierre cleverly appropriated for himself the core values traditionally associated with both labels: Democracy evokes equality; Republic evokes virtue. In Robespierre's discourse, democracy and republic are synonymous. Consequently, the value of one may easily be declared to apply also to the other. Thus, Robespierre explains that “Not only is virtue the soul of democracy, but it cannot exist except in this government.”

Robespierre claimed to embody both the democratic and the republican ideals, a strategy that allowed him to legitimize his deadly attacks against both his radical (Hébert) and moderate (Danton, Desmoulins) allies. Having monopolized glamorous labels, he then strangely accused Hébert, Roux, Leclerc and the radical enragés of being monarchists (!) and of working for foreign powers such as England and Austria. By labelling them “monarchist,” he tried to ruin their credibility (further proof that for French revolutionaries, words and labels were not only mere philosophical concepts, but deadly weapons). In a nutshell, he accused them of being “counter-revolutionaries” (Slavin 1995: 51). This strategy seems to have been quite effective since even a radical and self-proclaimed "democrat" such as Babeuf forgave
Robespierre for Hébert's death, maintaining in a personal letter written in 1796 that "Robespierrism is democracy, and these two words are perfectly identical: therefore, in raising Robespierrism you are certain to raise democracy" (Christophersen 1968: 17).  

Here, a study of Saint-Just's and Camille Desmoulins' use of the term "democracy" proves insightful. At that time, Saint-Just was a member of the Comité de salut public and undoubtedly Robespierre's closest ally. Christophersen (1968: 13) states that Saint-Just's understanding of "democracy" seemed unclear. I believe it to be, on the contrary, extremely clear if put into perspective. We have seen that in the first years of the Revolution Saint-Just used "democracy" according to the classical typology. However, on April 24, 1793, in his Discours sur la Constitution de la France, delivered before the Convention Nationale and published on its order, Saint-Just (1976: 184; 190; 192) praised "democracy." At the same time, he expressed his agoraphobia by stating that the people must not rule: "The French individual is easy to govern, he needs a constitution that is gentle without losing any of its integrity. These people are keen and suited to democracy; but they must not be wearied by the burden of public affairs" (Saint-Just 1976: 184). By the Spring of 1794, the political situation had changed and so had Saint-Just's political position. Saint-Just used "democracy" on Ventôse 24, Year II (March 13, 1794) as well as on the 26 Germinal, year II (April 15, 1794), while attacking his opponents' "factions." Using a strategy similar to Robespierre's, he declared: "You, the senseless, who wish to destroy the harmony of democracy in order to accomplish your blameful plans" (Christophersen 1968: 13-14). Like his ally Robespierre, Saint-Just claimed to support "democracy." Pretending that the Revolution had established a "democracy," he asked the moderate members of the Assemblée Nationale, "Will you be the friends of kings, O, you who have made them blanch on the throne, you who have founded democracy" (Christophersen 1968: 13).
Other members of the Comité de salut public, such as Billaud-Varenne, also referred positively to "democracy." In his address to the Convention entitled Sur la théorie du gouvernement démocratique (Floréal 1, Year II - April 20, 1794), he used "democracy" and "republic" synonymously, and he equated Terror with "democracy" (Jaume 1989: 116-117). David, who also belonged to the committee, suggested in the eighth issue of the Livre du républicain that "democracy" and revolutionary government are identical (Jaume 1989: 247). Despite this pro-democratic discourse, Billaud-Varenne betrayed his agoraphobia clearly in another speech (Le Moniteur universel, no. 212, Apr. 21, 1794 [Floreal 2, II]: 860), when he declared that "If the revolution is of the people, its success depends on the moral courage, on the energy, on the wise politics of those who control the tiller of the enterprise." He ended his speech (p. 862) with a proposition: "Here is the outline of the decree that I am charged with presenting to you. The National Convention, having listened to the report of the Committee of Public Safety, declares that, relying on the qualities of the French people, it [the National Convention] will ensure the triumph of the democratic republic and punish all her enemies without mercy." The Convention voted and adopted the proposition. It seems that as a consequence of the pro-democratic propaganda of the Comité de salut public, various people writing to the committee started to refer in an honorable manner to "democracy." The Moniteur Universel (Vendemaire 13, Year III [1794]: 66) published a copy of a letter by Gillet addressed to the Comité de salut public. In his letter, Gillet the "People's representative" on a mission to the army of Sambre and Meuse wrote that "the French republic is one and democratic" (emphasis added), although in the traditional expression,—"The French republic, one and indivisible"—"democracy" was not mentioned. To sum up, according to Robespierre, Saint-Just and their allies, France was now a democracy, that is a virtuous and egalitarian regime. On Floréal 18, Year II (May 7, 1794), Robespierre in a speech to the Convention referred again to "democracy": "You can show the world the new spectacle of democracy made firm within a vast empire"
Those who sought to change the French political structure—controlled by Robespierre and his allies—were condemned for their lack of democratic faith. In terms of legitimacy, it was important for the Comité de salut public to be seen as representing popular sovereignty. And of course, for quasi-dictators wanting to be known as men ruling in the name of the people, laudatory references to "democracy" were an important means of reaching their goal (Bouloiseau 1972: 10 and 84). Yet, some were not fooled. Ronsin, a member of the Cordeliers Club and an ally of Hébert, rightly blamed Robespierre for his manner of using the expression "ultra-révolutionnaire." According to Ronsin, that "word ... has served new sedition-mongers with a pretext for oppressing the most ardent patriots" (Soboul 1989: 351).

Interestingly, Robespierre’s and Saint-Just’s foes tried to defend themselves by expressing their respect for "democracy." Although Camille Desmoulins had in the past widely referred to "republic," by the end of 1793 and in 1794 he was talking more and more in terms of "democracy." Desmoulins, however, had already referred to "democracy" in a laudatory manner before 1794. For instance, he had suggested that "the Athenians" were "the most democratic people who ever lived" (Le Vieux Cordelier, n°4 [Desmoulins 1987: 67]). Desmoulins (Le Vieux Cordelier, n° 5 [1987: 73]) also equated liberty and democracy and had explained (p. 49):

One difference between the monarchy and the republic which by itself would be enough for men of good will to thrust aside with horror the monarchical government and to make them prefer a republic, however much it may cost them to establish it, is that if, in a democracy, the people can be deluded, at least it is virtue that they love, it is merit that they believe to be raising up in the public places, whereas rogues are the essence of monarchy. ... Therefore it is only in a democracy that the good citizen can reasonably hope to see the end of the triumph of intrigue and crime.

Yet, Desmoulins went on to discuss ongoing deadly struggle between "monarchy" and "republic," an idea that resurfaced in his Vieux Cordelier n° 4. Hence, Desmoulins' use of the term "democracy" is somewhat puzzling: it seems that Desmoulins sometimes understood "democracy" as synonymous with "republic." Yet, it appears that when threatened by Robespierre and the Comité de salut public, who accused him
of being too moderate, Desmoulins changed some of the positive statements he had made about "republic" in such a way that "democracy" now replaced the term "republic." In order to prove his democratic faith, Desmoulins quoted his own texts—even specifying the exact page—in which he had used the term "democracy" favourably. In the sixth issue of the *Vieux Cordelier*, Desmoulins wrote that "in the month of July, 1789, I dared to print on all letters, in my *France libre*, on page 57, 'that popular government and democracy is the only constitution which is appropriate for France and for all those who are not undeserving of the name of man'" (Desmoulins 1987: 96). Such a statement is interesting since in the second issue of the *Vieux Cordelier*, Desmoulins said exactly the same thing, but he substituted "republic" for "democracy": "the republican government, the only constitution which is appropriate for whomever is not undeserving of the name of man." (Desmoulins 1987: 41). Why are these two texts identical except for the terms "republic" and "democracy"? Why is it that Desmoulins who had used "republic" in the previous text used "democracy" in its place in the latter? It is because in 1794, it was more useful for Desmoulins to recall the defence of "democracy" he made in 1789 than to refer to the *Le Vieux Cordelier* no 2 in which he used exactly the same words, but with "republic" instead of "democracy." What is even more telling is Desmoulins' strategy to equate freedom of speech with "democracy." Hitherto, "democracy" and freedom of speech were never in any way connected. Yet, in early 1794, Desmoulins clashed with Robespierre on the issue of freedom of speech. And it would be Desmoulins' critical texts that offered Robespierre the excuse to send Desmoulins to the guillotine. To defend himself, Desmoulins asked rhetorically: "What distinguishes republic from monarchy? Only one thing: the freedom to speak and to write" (Desmoulins 1987 : 108). While he referred to "republic," he also equated "liberty" with "democracy" (p. 111). And, referring to Hébert's *Père Duchesne* (another victim of Robespierre), Desmoulins stated that he enjoyed the harsh language of Hébert, concluding: "Better to have the intemperance of the language of democracy" than an elaborate and cold language (p.
Desmoulins was arrested with Danton on the night of Germinal 10-11 (March 30 - April 1, 1794), six days after Hebert's execution, and they were guillotined on Germinal 16 (April 6). Robespierre's former friends such as Desmoulins had to adapt their own language in a desperate attempt to save their lives. Of course, the way Robespierre and Saint-Just changed from a derogatory use of the term "democracy" to a laudatory one was far removed from the political institution and the traditional typology of regimes provided by history and political philosophy. In the same vein, Desmoulins' confusion of "republic" and "democracy" revealed how the dramatic political events of the time blurred the meaning of words.

Robespierre's use of the term "democracy" is, therefore not extremely confused, to recall Rosanvallon's comment, but extremely artful from a political point of view. Robespierre, a talented and skilled political actor, knew how to accomplish political aims with words. Even Robespierre's allies such as Saint-Just copied his manner of using "democracy" as a political weapon. Robespierre shifted from a derogatory to an honorable use of the term because it was a means for him to increase his own political power. In February 1794, Robespierre needed to find terms capable of legitimizing his dictatorship. At that time, he believed that his former allies (Hébert, Danton, Desmoulins) and the sections were major threats to his own power. As we have seen, Robespierre dismissed direct democracy, while claiming to be a staunch democrat in order to delude both his former allies and the people of the sections. Although claiming to embody "democracy," Robespierre did not support the participation of the sansculottes in the decision-making process. On the contrary, he centralized power in his own hands and within the Comité de salut public that was under his control. Then, he enforced his politics of Terror (Robespierre 1974c: 118).

Moreover, Robespierre was so sure that one could accomplish politics with words that he spoke as if his political authority extended to language. Indeed, he openly condemned rival definitions ("abuses found in vulgar parlance") of the words he was using. At the peak of his power, he openly equated "democracy" with "Terror" when
he declared that "Terror is nothing else than justice ... It is, therefore, an emanation of virtue; it is less a particular principle than a consequence of the general principles of democracy, applied to the most urgent wants of the country" (English trans. in Robespierre 1995: 184). Then Robespierre concluded: "We must crush both the interior and exterior enemies of the Republic, or perish with her" (p. 183). Robespierre did both: he crushed almost all his enemies, then he perished along with the Republic of 1793, which was replaced by the Thermidorian bourgeois constitution.

A "Democratic" Bourgeoisie

According to the historian Jens A. Christopherson (1968: 15), "The execution of Robespierre and Saint-Just on Thermidor 9, Year II (July 27, 1794) marks the end of the honorific use of 'democracy' by central political leaders in the first French Republic." Such a statement is the result of an analytical shortcut, even though it is true that the Thermidorian Reaction aimed to erase every democratic element from the French political structure. In other words, it sought to end the socio-economic revolution, and to establish a bourgeois republic. The Constitution of Year III was adopted in August 1795: universal suffrage was abolished, an Upper House was created (the Chambre des Anciens) and the executive power was shared by 5 individuals sitting in what was called the Directoire (Oct. 1795). Moreover, the office of the mayor of Paris—traditionally a nest for radicals—was abolished. On the economic level, the maximum was abolished and liberalisation of the market was enforced. Robespierre's Terror was replaced by a White Terror. Massacres were perpetuated in Lyon and Nîme. In Paris, the Jeunesse dorée, i.e. rich young men called the Muscadins (Gendron 1979), took control of the streets and attacked the surviving Jacobins, even though their club had already been closed. Finally, the new leaders of France abolished the tribunaux révolutionnaires (although this does not mean that no one else
was guillotined: ironically, the chief justice of the revolutionary tribunal in Paris, Fouquier-Tinville, was beheaded) and several prisoners were liberated.

While the bourgeois government had to face royalist riots in Paris (defeated by troops led by Bonaparte), the new national power also crushed egalitarian activists such as Gracchus Babeuf. As a matter of fact, despite the demoralizing struggle among the radical leaders and the deaths of many of them, the sansculottes continued to be politically active. Although the bourgeois Constitution was approved by the people through a referendum, all but one of the Parisian sections voted against it. The sansculottes stormed the Convention in April and in May 1795, asking for “bread and the 1793 constitution” (Furet 1995: 545; Guérin 1973: 300-309). Yet, the Muscadins violently counter-attacked with the help of the Garde nationale. They took control of the lower-class districts: the Parisian sections were disarmed, 36 people from the sections were executed and 1,200 were arrested (Tulard 1985: 143). No wonder then that in 1796, Sylvain Marechal wrote a song entitled Chanson nouvelle : à l’usage des faubourgs (A new song: for the faubourgs) condemning the rule of the Directoire. In his song, “republic” is clearly opposed to “democracy”: “the democrat is crushed:/Here is the Republic” (Delon & Levayer 1989: 215).

Maréchal was close to Babeuf, the unlucky leader of the Conspiration des Égaux (Conspiracy of the Equals) (Guérin 309-313; Walet 1980). Babeuf was an egalitarian, who, having changed his first name from François Noël to Camille, changed it again to Gracchus when he discovered that Camille was, historically speaking, a Roman who had concluded an agreement between the plebeians and the hated patricians. Gracchus, in contrast, promoted land reform in the Roman Empire and was murdered because of it. Highly aware of the political significance of names and labels, and to highlight his radicalization, Babeuf also changed the name of his newspaper from Journal de la liberté de presse (the Free Press Journal) to Tribun du Peuple (the People’s Tribune). When explaining these shifts, Babeuf referred to “democracy”: “I declare, indeed I renounce, for my new disciples, Camille, with whom I assumed authority at

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the beginning of the revolution because, since then my democratism has become more pure, has become more austere” (Christopersen 1968: 15).

Like Rabaut, Babeuf believed that France was divided into two factions, that of the elite and that of the common people. In Babeuf’s view, they both strived for a republic, although “one wanted a bourgeois and aristocratic one, the other believes to have made one and that it remains althogether popular and democratic” (Nivôse 1, Year III - December 21, 1794) (Christophersen 1968: 16). Like Maréchal, Babeuf made a great point of distinguishing “republic” from “democracy.” In Le Tribun du Peuple no. 35, published on the 9th Frimaire Year IV (November 29, 1795), Babeuf replied to Charles Duval, editor of the Journal des hommes libres (Journal of the Free Men), explaining that “You can gather around you none but republicans, a banal and strongly ambiguous title: therefore you preach only an ordinary republic. We gather together all democrats and plebeians, designations which undoubtedly give a positive feeling: our dogmas are pure democracy, unblemished and unreserved equality” (Schiappa 1994: 254; Christophersen 1968: 16). The same day, in the same newspaper, one could read (Christophersen 1968: 16):

Let the people proclaim their manifesto. Let them define in it democracy as they intend to have it, and as, according to pure principles, it must exist. Let them prove that democracy is the obligation to fulfil, by those who have too much, all that is lacking to those who do not have enough! That all the deficit found in the fortune of the latter is only the result of that which others have stolen from them.

Babeuf wished to overthrow the Thermidorian power and to establish a provisional dictatorship. The final goal was the enforcement of the Constitution of 1793 and the abolition of private property (Cappiello 1994: 171-172). Babeuf’s friend and ally Marechal expressed an even more radical idea in the unpublished Manifeste des Égaux (Equals’ Manifesto): “Erase finally, revolting distinctions between rich and poor, large and small, masters and servants, the governors and the governed” (Walter 1980: 192).

However, Babeuf’s plot failed utterly when he was arrested with 47 others in May 1796. Two days after his arrest, Babeuf wrote to the members of the Directoire,
explaining to them that by arresting him, they attacked "all democracy of the French republic." Then, he stated: "you must acknowledge that it is not only in Paris that [democracy] lives strong; you see that there is no parcel of the departments where it is not powerful." Finally, Babeuf concluded: "my proscription [as well as] that of all the democrats will get you no further and will not assure the safety of the republic" (Mazauric 1994: 293). During the trial, the public prosecutor openly expressed his agoraphobia (Walter 1980: 230-231) and he also accused Babeuf of being an "anarchist" (Deleplace 1992: 31).

In his defence, Babeuf spoke of both the "republic" and "democracy." Apparently on a positive note, he used the line "republican jurors" (Walter 1980: 245) while referring to the members of the jury. Yet, Babeuf also explained that he was carrying out a "democratic mission" and he declared that the Conspiracy of Equals was in fact a "reunion of democrats" (Mazauric 1994: 294). Babeuf was found guilty and executed in 1797. Yet, despite his appraisal of "democracy," it is important to note that Babeuf suffered from agoraphobia: indeed, he had planned to established a kind of dictatorship to impose equality. He had not planned to establish direct democracy. Therefore, it may be maintained that such references to "democracy," although consistent with the historical and philosophical meaning of the term, stemmed, at least partially, from strategic political needs.

In the meantime, some republican bourgeois tried to appropriate the term "democracy" and its legitimating power. Emmanuel Sieyès, for instance, in his speech on Thermidor 2, Year III, spoke of the "crass ignorance" of the friends of the people who "believe the representative system incompatible with democracy, as if a building were incompatible with its natural foundation" (Rosanvallon 1993: 22; English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 148; see also Roels 1969: 114). Was this Sieyès the same learned man who only few years earlier was arguing against "democracy," stating that France could not be a democracy, and making a clear distinction between representation and
democracy (Sieyès 1989 [1789]: 1025)? Yes. The dramatic change in Sieyès's discourse reveals how deep an impact recent years had made on French political vocabulary.

This semantic strategy was applied via two new publications having the term "democrat" in their title: *Le Démocrate constitutionnel* (The Constitutional Democrat), a poster-newspaper, and *Le Démocrate* (The Democrat), a daily newspaper. Nevertheless, it was clear that "absolute democracy" ("démocratie absolue") still referred to anarchy (Deleplace 1992: 24).

*Le Démocrate constitutionnel* was published as a poster put on walls. Poster number 1, posted on the 7th or 8th Fructidor Year V (1797), was signed by Antoine who declared: "I carry democracy in my heart, and the Constitution in my conscience. I believe my feelings match my duties. Democracy and Constitution are not incompatible. I will prove that, returned to their reasonable meanings, they must walk abreast, like two inseparable twins" (Dautry 1950: 143).²¹ Cleverly, Antoine tried to equate the bourgeois order—the Thermidorian Constitution—with democracy. From Antoine's point of view, it was a democratic duty for people to defend the bourgeois constitution against the attacks of the radicals and the royalists. Yet, linking "democracy" to the constitution was intended to make it clear that "democracy" no longer had anything to do with extra-parliamentary direct action and violence. This of course was quite a linguistic innovation. Indeed, for thousands of years, democracy had been associated with the poor and the commoners. Moreover, while democracy evoked the direct rule of the people which resulted in perpetual change and adjustments, constitution referred to stability and order (Wolin 1994: 29-58). In the French context, "democracy" had usually been associated with "anarchy" or with radical leaders such as Robespierre and his Constitution of the year 1793—very much more radical than the Thermidorian Constitution—and with egalitarians such as Babeuf. Now, for the bourgeois to associate the Thermidorian constitution with "democracy" was clearly at odds with the ideas of the time. There was neither etymological, nor (ancient or recent) historical or (classical or modern) philosophical
grounds for such a linguistic innovation. It was in fact a political strategy to manufacture consent and to win the support of the people for the Thermidorian constitution. With regard to this linguistic strategy, it is highly significant that *Le Démocrate Constitutionnel* acknowledged that words may be used as weapons in political struggles, and that bad words and odious labels were used to "defame the patriots and to assassinate them." Interestingly, and despite its repeated pro-democratic declarations, on the day of Bonaparte's *coup d'état, Le Démocrate Constitutionnel* rejoiced, obviously relieved to see that France was now under Bonaparte's strong control (Dautry 1950: 145).\(^2\)

The first issue of *Le Démocrate*, a daily newspaper founded by self-proclaimed patriotic writers (*écrivains patriotes*), was released the same month as the first issue of *Le Démocrate constitutionnel*. In its first issue (Fructidor 24, V), *Le Démocrate* explained that "a democrat is a man who acknowledges the sovereignty of the people; and because this sovereignty is not contested today, there are as many democrats as there are men who swear by this principle and abide by it." Then, comes this rather incongruous statement: "Let us prove that a democrat is a friend of sane liberty, and implacable enemy of disorder and anarchy, a defender of laws, of people and of property" (*Le Démocrate*, Fructidor 24, V, no. 1 [emphasis added]).\(^3\) True, a self-proclaimed "democrat" usually did not claim to be an anarchist, but the respect for property was certainly not a part of the definition of a "democrat," according to the historical and philosophical tradition. Furthermore, perfectly in step with *Le Démocrate constitutionnel*, *Le Démocrate* associated the Thermidorian constitution with "democracy": "democrats know that the constitution is the work of men; that it must have imperfections; but they also know that it has shown a quiet and sure means of smooth correction, when these imperfections or these faults are recognized and their removal asked for in the prescribed way."\(^4\) The newspaper goes on to openly state that the advocates and defenders of the Constitution are the genuine democrats: "If, therefore, the government be attacked anew by implacable enemies, it is by the true
democrats that it will be defended and saved." Who are the foes? They are of two types: the radicals such as Benjamin Constant, a "new Robespierre" (Le Démocrate, no. 5) and the royalists. According to Le Démocrate, "Terrorists, anarchists, or if one wishes, Jacobins" are to be blamed for the bad reputation surrounding the term "democracy" (Dautry 1950: 149).

Although the two publications shared similar political goals and linguistic strategies, Le démocrate condemned Le Démocrate constitutionnel for being too soft in its linguistic innovation: "A Republican has begun a journal entitled Le Democrat Constitutionnel; we applaud his intention, but we think that the word 'Democrat' had no need of softening ... we will be as constitutional as he, but this condition is an obligation and does not form a 'characteristic'" (Dautry 1950: 147; Suratteau 1985: 83).

These two examples of bourgeois publications claiming to be democratic are at once quite interesting and extraordinary. Indeed, they openly acknowledge the relevance of using words in political struggles. They also practice linguistic innovation, giving the word "democracy" a meaning completely opposite to its historical and philosophical definition. However, these two newspapers were simply the forerunners of the mainstream political actors who, around 1848, would use the term "democracy" in a highly laudatory manner in order to legitimate the elective regime.

But in September 5, 1797 (18 Fructidor Year 5), an anti-parliamentary coup d'état made such linguistic work unnecessary. In its 1798 edition, the Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française, defined the term "Republic" as follow: "The term, Republic, is made up equally of the popular estate and the aristocratic estate." No need anymore to refer to "democracy." However, the Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française specified, regarding the manipulation of words and labels, that "The Caesars may have destroyed the Roman Republic, but they kept the label." As will do Bonaparte after his own coup d'état (9-10 November 1799/18-19 Brumaire Year VIII). Under Bonaparte, both the popular and the aristocratic elements of the society were reunited under his throne. And indeed, the label of "republic" suited Bonaparte's dictatorship.
perfectly. On Floréal 28, Year XII, it was proclaimed necessary “to entrust an emperor with the government of the Republic; the emperor taking the title of Emperor of the French” (Nicolet 1982: 26 n. 2).80

1Regarding how the Comité de Salut Public was organized, see Bouloiseau (1972: 87-88).
3“Quand le tiers-état eut renversé les privilèges, il prit aux yeux du peuple la place de l’aristocratie.”
4“L’égalité est l’âme de la république; rien ne caractérise mieux la démocratie, que la tendance à l’égalité, et que les passions et même les violences pour l’opérer. Dans une nation qui naît, l’égalité existe, et l’on ne prend pas assez de précautions pour la maintenir: dans une nation qui se réforme, l’égalité n’existe pas, et l’on prend des moyens trop violents pour l’établir. Le peuple imite souvent ce tyran qui couchait les hommes sur un lit de fer, et les raccourcissait de tout ce qui passait cette mesure: il n’égalise pas, il mutilé, il tue; ce n’est pas la démocratie, c’est l’ostracocratie, c’est-à-dire, le point du jour de la tyrannie.” In his reflections on equality, Rabaut Saint-Etienne referred to “Athens, where the government was democratic” (“Athènes, où le gouvernement était démocratique”) (Kessel, ed. 1969: 80).
5“Je dois d’abord observer que, par la république, j’ai entendu le gouvernement purement démocratique: tous les autres qui portent le nom de république sont aristocratiques ou mixtes. ... le gouvernement démocratique ne peut subsister longtemps avec l’immense inégalité des fortunes, parce qu’elle produit d’autres inégalités en nombre toujours croissant, et dans une proportion indéfinie: en sorte que, dans un temps plus ou moins éloigné, la nation se trouve divisée en deux classes. Le peuple finit par n’être plus rien, si même il ne devient de la populace, de la canaille. Alors le gouvernement démocratique est détruit, la république n’existe plus; c’est de l’aristocratie.”
6“les lois ont été cruelles à l’égard du pauvre, parce qu’elles n’ont été faites que par les riches et pour les riches.”
7“Les riches seuls, depuis quatre ans, ont profité des avantages de la Révolution. L’aristocratie marchande, plus terrible que l’aristocratie nobilière et sacerdotale, s’est fait un jeu cruel d’envahir les fortunes individuelles et les trésors de la république.” However, while Roux violently attacked the wealthy, calling them “sang-sues du peuple” and “vampires,” the label he cherished was “république” rather than “démocratie”: “Le peuple veut la liberté et l’Égalité, la république ou la mort” (Kessel, ed. 1969: 266).
8“Le bourgeois n’est point démocrate, il s’en faut; il est monarchiste par instinc ... . C’est donc aux bourgeois que nous avons à faire en ce moment: eux seuls nous font ouvertement la guerre.”
"Rappelle-toi surtout qu'un peuple représenté n'est pas un peuple libre et ne prodigue pas cet épithète de représentant ... ; la volonté ne peut se représenter ... ; tes magistrats ne sont que tes mandataires."

"Souverain, mets-toi à ta place; préposés du souverain, descendez des gradins, ils appartiennent au peuple, occupez la plaine de l'amphithéâtre."

According to Journal de la Montagne: "La salle des séances étant pleine et le peuple se trouvant mêlé à ses magistrats a délibéré avec eux" (Soboul 1979: 19).

"Allez-vous-en tous; nous allons former la Convention nous-mêmes."

This footnote does not appear in the English version of the text (Rosanvallon 1995).

After 1793, several mainstream political actors would use the term "republic" and the tag "republican" to identify themselves and their political goals. This was a major shift, since during the first wave of the French revolution (1789-1791), the republican ideal was still seen as far too radical. François Robert's early republicanism, for instance, fuelled violent debates. Robert advocated republicanism in his Le Republicanisme adapté à la France, released in Paris in 1790. Robert was not only a radical, he also identified himself with tags known to refer to radical ideas, such as "Démocratique" and "Républicanisme" (Cornu 1990: 72). His pamphlet about republicanism had been violently criticized by the Jacobins who were not yet ready to embrace republicanism. Brissot, commenting on Robert's book, declared: "I hate monarchy, and I have hated it since the time I began to think; ... I cherish republican government; yet, I do not believe that the French people are as yet worthy of such a regime." ("Je hais la royauté, et je l’ai haï du moment où j’ai commencé à réfléchir; rien ne m’a paru plus dégradant pour l’homme; j’adore le gouvernement républicain; mais je ne crois pas les Français encore dignes de ce régime" (Dorigny 1994: 116). Condorcet, with his De la République, ou Un roi est-il nécessaire à la conservation de la liberté?, was also one of the first advocates of republicanism in France. Marchant, the writer of plays and songs, explained in his song Le grand projet, written in 1791, how Condorcet tried to convince some of his friends to establish a unique kind of "République" in which everything is shared, even wives. According to Marchant's song, Condorcet named this regime "Une république/Bien démocratique" (a line repeated three times) (Delon & Levayer 1989: 80-81). But by 1793, the wind had turned. Olympe de Gouges, who a few months earlier had declared herself a constitutional royalist, changed her label, stating in a text sent to the Convention on March 20, 1793, that she was a "real republican" ("une vraie républicaine," in de Gouges [1993b: 212-222]). Danton declared in November 1793: "I am a republican, a diehard republican" ("je suis républicain, républicain impéissable") (Convention, 6 Frimaire year II, 26 Nov., 1793, in Hardman, ed. 1973 [II]: 183). Saint-Just, while demanding the death penalty for the king often referred to "republic," but not once to "democracy" (in Les Orateurs de la révolution: 160-167). The list of similar examples is endless.

"un gouvernement démocratique."

Section assemblies were no longer allowed to be permanent, because it was said to be to the advantage of the "aristocrates" who too easily manipulated sectionmen. This decision to prohibit permanency was taken on September 5, the very day of the beginning of the repression against the enrâgés (Jacques Roux was arrested that day, Varlet on Sept. 18). With the elimination of the enrâgés, the hétérístes were now on the extreme left. They were accused of planning to murder the representatives of the people. After the execution of Hébert, about 150 officers of the sections were dismissed or arrested (Bouloiseau 1972: 79; David & Prieur 2000: 222; Guérin 1973: 228-230).

When the Republic was proclaimed, the Montagne was very strong in the new assembly, with 200 members such as Robespierre, Danton, Marat, Billaud-Varenne, Saint-Just, Camille Desmoulins, Hérauld de Séchelles, David, the painter, and the writer Fabre d’Églantine. Among the 160 Girondins were Buzot, Lanjuinais, Barbaroux and the most important, Brissot, who was formerly a Jacobin but who turned moderate. It is important to remember that the Girondins had been quite radical according to the standards to 1789, 1790 and 1791. Yet, with the radicalization of the Revolution, they now stood as conservatives at least with regard to property and wealth. However, for the historian Jean Tulard, it was personnal rivaleries among the members of the revolutionary elite rather than real philosophical disputes that determined the life of the new Convention. Between the Montagne and the Gironde, there was the Marais, which included the moderates or undecided (400 members including Sieyès) (Tulard 1985: 108-111).
18 "Des législateur sages ne s’attachent pas aux mots, mais aux choses."

19 In his *Défenseur de la constitution* (April-May 1792), Robespierre declared that "Brisot répand un journal intitulé *Le Républicain*, et qui n’avait de populaire que le titre" (Christophersen 1968: 11-12).

20 "C’est à chaque section de la République française que je renvoi la puissance tribunicienne; et il est facile de l’organiser d’une manière également éloignée des tempêtes de la démocratie absolue et de la perfide tranquillité du despotisme représentatif."

21 "la démocratie pure, et non pas cette démocratie qui, pour le bonheur général, est tempérée par des lois."

22 "De la révocabilité des représentants du peuple, et en général de tous les fonctionnaires publics, seul moyen d’avoir une véritable démocratie, avec un gouvernement représentatif, et de prévenir les insurrections populaires."

23 "Puisque nous avons rejeté avec raison ces formes de gouvernement, toutes plus ou moins oppressives, et que nous voulons la liberté toute entière, qui n’existe réellement que dans la démocratie; si notre masse nous empêche d’avoir la démocratie pure, ayons au moins la démocratie représentative, c’est-à-dire un véritable peuple de représentants, assemblés sans cesse pour veiller à nos intérêts qui seront les siens."

24 "La nation française ... se constitue en République démocratique, une, indivisible, et représentative. "gouvernement démocratique et représentatif que la Convention veut faire adopter à la France" *Archives parlementaires* n.67 (in Wolikow 1995: 68 n. 33).


26 "La démocratie représentative, fondée sur l’égalité des droits, exige que tout citoyen donne sa voix pour l’élection des représentants."

27 "From the "principe démocratique de la représentation" it follows that "la Constitution française ne peut pas être exclusivement appelée représentative parce qu’elle n’est pas moins démocratique que représenative."

28 "une constitution démocratique."

29 "Le Comité de salut public ... sent le besoin de la République ... pour l’amélioration de l’esprit public démocratique."

30 "On appelle tous les jours la constitution, prétendue de 93, constitution démocratique : je sais fort bien ce que c’est qu’une république démocratique; mais je ne peux concevoir une constitution démocratique pour un pays qui ne peut être une république démocratique. Dans une république démocratique, le peuple en corps a le débat des lois, adopte ou rejette la loi proposée, décide la paix ou la guerre, juge même dans certaines circonstances; ainsi la France ne peut être une république démocratique."

31 "cette constitution de 1793 ... doit être le premier modèle d’une démocratie de vingt-cinq millions d’hommes."

32 "Cette constitution était extrêmement démocratique. ... La plupart de ces articles étaient des prérrogatives populaires tout-à-fait outrées et dangereuses. Le dernier, par exemple, rendait le droit d’insurrection illimité ... [ce qui] exposait l’État à des bouleversements anarchiques et journaliers."

33 "l’unique ambition de Danton, à cette époque, fut de réparer, par un bien immense et durable fait au genre humain, les maux terribles et passagers qu’il avait faits à la France; d’étouffer, sous une démocratie organisée et avec une haute et profonde sagesse, le délire et les désastres de la sans-culotteire."

34 "La démocratie sera-t-elle contenue dans ses écarts?"

35 "une démocratie outrée."

36 Although radical on women’s issues, de Gouges was afraid of the sansculottes, and she was close to the Girondins. Among the arguments against political equality for women, one may read in *Le Moniteur Universel* (18, no 59, 17 nov. 1793) that "Each sex is meant for a type of occupation which is proper to it" and that "a woman should not leave her family to embroil herself in the affairs of government." The *Commune de Paris* condemned women "who run in the streets in red hats and who want to govern the Republic in place of occupying themselves with their housekeeping" (Slavin 1995: 17).

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"Mais les Français sont le premier peuple du monde qui ait établi la véritable démocratie, en appelant tous les hommes à l'égalité et à la plénitude des droits du citoyens; et c'est là, à mon avis, la véritable raison pour laquelle tous les tyrans ligues contre la République seront vaincus."

"la démocratie est un état où le peuple souverain, guidé par les lois qui sont son ouvrage, fait par lui-même tout ce qu'il peut bien faire, et par des délégués tout ce qu'il ne peut faire lui-même."

"un gouvernement démocratique ou républicain: ces deux mots sont synonymes, malgré les abus du langage vulgaire; car l'aristocratie n'est pas plus la république que la monarchie."

"La démocratie n'est pas un état où le peuple, continuellement assemblé, règle par lui-même toutes les affaires publiques, encore moins celui où cent mille factions du peuple, par des mesures isolées, précipitées et contradictoires, décideraient du sort de la société entière: un tel gouvernement n'a jamais existé, et il ne pourrait exister que pour ramener le peuple au despotisme."

"quel est le principe fondamental du gouvernement démocratique ou populaire, c'est-à-dire le ressort essentiel qui le soutient et qui le fait mouvoir? C'est la vertu; je parle de la vertu publique ... cette vertu qui n'est autre chose que l'amour de la patrie et de ses lois." He further states: "Mais comme l'essence de la république ou de la démocratie est l'égalité, il s'ensuit que l'amour de la patrie embrasse nécessairement l'amour de l'égalité."

"Non seulement la vertu est l'âme de la démocratie, mais elle ne peut exister que dans ce gouvernement."

"le robespierrisme est la démocratie, et ces deux mots sont parfaitement identiques: donc en relevant le robespierrisme, vous êtes sûrs de relever la démocratie."

"Le Français est facile à gouverner; il lui faut une Constitution douce, sans qu'elle perde rien de sa rectitude. Ce peuple est vif & propre à la démocratie; mais il ne doit pas être trop lasse par l'embarras des affaires publiques."

"le peuple françois une et democratique.

"Vous pouvez montrer au monde le spectacle nouveau de la démocratie affermie dans un vaste empire."
57"Qu'est-ce qui distingue la république de la monarchie? Une seule chose: la liberté de parler et d'écrire."
58"Mieux vaudrait l'intemperance de langue de la démocratie."
59"Si le ressort du gouvernement populaire dans la paix est la vertu, le ressort du gouvernement populaire en révolution est à la fois la vertu et la terreur: la vertu, sans laquelle la terreur est funeste; la terreur, sans laquelle la vertu est impuissante." The historian R. R. Palmer (1959: 370), taking a broader view, remarks that "terror—meaning forced oaths, legal proceedings against political offenders, repression of the press and the right of assembly, imprisonment, banishment, exile—had been employed for more conservative purposes, in the little 'terror at Geneva at the end of 1782, the 'rod of terror' that Harris advised for the Dutch in 1787, the very real terror against the Belgian democrats in 1790."
60"le démocrate écrasé:/Voilà la République" (bis).
61"je déclare même je quitte, pour mes nouveaux apôtres, Camille, avec lequel je m'étais impatronisé au commencement de la révolution; parce que, depuis mon démocratisme c'est épuré, est devenu plus austère."
62"L'un la désir e bourgeoise et aristocratique, l'autre entend l'avoir fait et qu'elle demeure toute populaire et démocratique."
63"Vous ne paroissez réunir autour de vous que de républicains, titre banal et fort équivoque: donc vous ne prêchez que la république quelquonque. Nous, nous rassemblons tous les démocrates et les plébéiens, dénominations qui, sans doute, présentent un sens plus positif: nos dogmes sont la démocratie pure, l'égalité sans tâche et sans réserve."
64"Que le peuple proclame son Manifeste. Qu'il y définisse la démocratie comme il entend l'avoir, et telle que, d'après les principes purs, elle doit exister. Qu'il prouve que la démocratie est l'obligation de remplir, par ceux qui ont trop, tout ce qui manque à ceux qui n'ont point assez! que tout le déficit qui ce trouve dans la fortune des derniers ne procède que de ce que les autres les ont volé."
65"Disparaîsez enfin, révoltantes distinctions de riches et de pauvres, de grands et de petits, de maîtres et de valets, de gouvernant et de gouverné." Already in 1793, in his "Correctif à la Révolution," Marechal declared that "Tant qu'il y aura des valets et des maîtres, des pauvres et des riches, point de liberté! point d'égalité! La Révolution n'est point faite!" (Walter 1980: 190).
66"toute la démocratie de la république française ... reconnaissez que ce n'est pas seulement à Paris qu'elle existe fortement; voyez qu'il n'est pas un point des départements où elle ne soit puissante. ... ma proscription, ... celle de tous les démocrates ne vous avancerait point et n'assurerait pas le salut de la république."
67"Qui oserait calculer tous les terribles effets de la chute de cette masse effrayante de prolétaires, multipliée par la débauche, par la finançantise, par toutes les passions, et par tous les vices qui pullulent dans une nation corrompue, se précipitant tout à coup sur la classe des propriétaires et des citoyens sages, industriels et économistes? Quel horrible boulversement que l'anéantissement de ce droit de propriété, base universelle et principale d'ordre social! Plus de propriété! Que deviennent à l'instant les arts? Que devient l'industrie?"
68"jurés républicains" (in Walter 1980: 245).
69"apostolat démocratique" et "réunion de démocrates."
70"ignorance crasse" ... "croyaient le système représentatif incompatible avec la démocratie, comme si un édifice était incompatible avec sa base naturelle" (in Opinion de Sieyès sur plusieurs articles des titres IV et V du projet de Constitution [Paris, Thermidor 2, III]).
71"Je porte la Démocratie dans mon cœur, et la Constitution dans ma conscience. Je crois mes sentiments d'accord avec mes devoirs. Démocratie et Constitution ne sont point incompatibles. Je prouverai que, rendues à leur sens raisonnable, elles doivent marcher ensemble, de front, comme deux jumelles inséparables."
72"anarchistes" is the "prototype des qualifications odieuses mises en avant depuis la Révolution pour diffamer les patriotes et pour les assassiner."
73"un démocrate est un homme qui reconnaît la souveraineté du peuple; et puisqu'aujourd'hui cette souveraineté n'est pas contestée, il y a autant de démocrates que d'hommes qui avouent ce principe et s'y conforment." "Prouvons qu'un démocrate est un ami de la saine liberté, un adversaire implacable du désordre et de l'anarchie, un défenseur des loix, des personnes et des propriétés."
"les démocrates savent que la constitution est l'ouvrage des hommes; qu'elle doit avoir des imperfections; mais ils savent aussi qu'elle a indiqué des moyens doux et sûrs de la corriger sans secousses, lorsque ces imperfections ou ces défauts auront été reconnus et leur suppression réclamée dans les formes indiquées."

"Si donc le gouvernement étoit de nouveau attaquéd par des ennemis implacables, c'est par les véritables démocrates qu'il seroit défendu et sauvé."

"les terroristes, les anarchistes, ou si l'on veut les jacobins."

"Un républicain a entrepris un journal intitulé Le Démocrate Constitutionnel; nous applaudissons à son intention, mais nous pensons que le mot 'Démocrate' n'avoit pas besoin d'être adouci ... nous serons constitutionnels comme lui, mais cette condition est un devoir et ne constitue pas un 'caractère'."

"Le terme de République comprend également l'état populaire et l'état aristocratique."


"Le gouvernement de la République est confié à un empereur qui prend le titre d'Empereur des Français."
CONCLUSION: PART II

As we saw in Part I, the American as well as the French Founders commonly used "democracy" as a counter-model. They used the term "democracy" in referring to the people's direct rule and economic equality—considered evils—and they labelled egalitarian elected political actors and activist "democrats" in order to undermine their legitimacy. Later, when the victorious Founders were competing amongst themselves in order to assure the primacy of their views and their interests in the new political system, the term "democracy" and its cognate continued to evoke negative images. Some political actors, however, began to identify themselves and the regime with "democracy." They generally did so in complete inconsistency with the intellectual roots of the term "democracy."

During the Constitutional debates in America, the term "democracy," generally uttered in a derogatory tone, commonly referred to the threat of the rule of the poor. Rare were the pro-democratic people such as the one who suggested in the Gazette of the State of Georgia (Savannah, January 1, 1789) that the state of Georgia is "perhaps the most complete democracy in the known world" and that only economical equality may preserve it (Main 1968: 337). Even though this was exceptional, some influential political actors such as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and also a number of anti-Federalists, began to refer to "democracy" in a laudatory fashion. They suggested that it was legitimate to identify the elective regime of the United States with democracy.¹ In 1787, Perez Fobes (1983 [1795]: 1000) even spoke of "a democratical aristocracy, resting on the free election of the people, and revocable at pleasure." Such a concept as a "democratical aristocracy," strange at first glance, probably encapsulated in Forbes's opinion the idea of a democracy ruled by a natural
aristocracy. Moreover, we have seen that elections and elected representatives were considered by almost every classical and modern republican philosopher as alien to democracy.

In France also, some victorious revolutionaries began to identify themselves and the regime with "democracy" in an attempt to increase their political strength. Of course, the most conservative opponents to the revolutionary process heaped scorn on "democracy." The conservative Joseph de Maistre (1891: 205) rarely referred to "democracy," except to say that French "democracy" must fall.2 Bonald (1859 [1796]: 351), in his Théorie de pouvoir politique et religieux, suggested that French "democracy" is nothing else than "despotism" and "chaos."3

"Democracy" was however used by republicans as a way of distinguishing genuine republicans (Robespierre, Saint-Just) from so-called counter-revolutionary republicans (Hébert, Danton, Desmoulins). This is confirmed by Rosanvallon's analysis of the newspapers and dictionaries (1995: 143-144):

Of the many revolutionary newspapers, not one used the word "democracy" or "democratic" in its headlines between 1789 and the Year IV. The adjectives "national," "patriotic," and "republican" (the last beginning in 1792) appear most often on the front pages of papers from this period. Moreover, the word "democracy" was not used a single time during the debate over the right to vote that took place from 1789 to 1791. This absence of the word "democracy" from revolutionary discourse is confirmed by an examination of dictionaries dating from that era. Of the ten socio-political lexicons published between 1789 and 1801, only one contained an entry for "democracy." On both the right and the left, the concepts seems to have been largely ignored.

Rosanvallon concludes (144-145) that "In this context, 'democrat' designated not so much the partisan of a specific political regime (democracy) as an adversary of the ancien régime and a supporter of the revolutionary process" (see among others Saint-Just attacking Carnot in the Comité de salut public [Hardman, ed. 1973: 250] and Robespierre for whom "aristocracy" meant "seeds of division" [Hardman, ed. 1973: 5, 152, 182]).

It is worth repeating again that the efficacy of the term "democracy" as a political weapon—to delude, to condemn, to legitimate, etc.—was acknowledged by
political actors themselves, and the term "democracy" was not the only one uttered with the intent of branding foes. Words are not only "deeds," as Wittgenstein states, but "mighty swords," to paraphrase James Tully (1988b: 7). And, in fact, to be called a "democrat" or an "aristocrat" in France was sometimes enough to get you guillotined. Rosanvallon concurs with our own finding, in particular our analysis of Robespierre's use of the term "democracy." But Rosanvallon's discussion remains general. It was more specifically the leaders at the head of the Comité de salut public who monopolized the label of "democracy" for their own sakes. It is significant that such a linguistic strategy was never linked to real democratic institutional transformation. With Robespierre, power was monopolized by the few sitting with him at the Comité de salut public; with Babeuf, the idea was to establish a dictatorship; with the Thermidorian revolution, the "bourgeois" order was reinforced, universal suffrage abolished and the elective regime secured. This label helped each of them and their own dictatorships gain legitimacy, and thus "democracy" was associated with a very undemocratic power.

It would be quite naive to argue that such changes in the meaning of the word had anything to do with political philosophy. These modifications were determined mainly by the political context, although this analysis may seem quite cynical, especially for those like François Furet who focus on the role of ideas and philosophy within the revolutionary process. I do not want to downplay the central role of ideas within such a process. However, I am arguing that political actors were less concerned with philosophy than with politics. When they were inspired by political philosophy, it was because they believed it to be politically relevant. They practiced political philosophy, not political philosophy. Hence, philosophical works were interpreted and used in relation to specific issues by factions seeking legitimacy. This explains, in part, why it was possible for Le Chapelier and for Robespierre and for the sansculottes to draw upon Rousseau's work in order to legitimize totally different policies and actions.
With regard to "democracy," it seems that it was mainly its political efficacy that determined whether or not the word was worthy of being used. While the official political actors competed for the control of the legitimating potential embodied by the term "democracy," the commoners preferred "republic." The term "republic" was so sacred that one inhabitant of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine was put into jail for having yelled in the street, with a touch of irony, "Before, soap only cost 12 sols, today it costs 40. Long live the Republic! Sugar [was] 20 sols, today, 4 pounds. Long live the Republic!" (Tulard 1985: 122). The ideas of republic and of representation were so appealing that even the République des lettres had its representative body, the Institut national (opened in 1795 and closed by Bonaparte in 1803) (Hartog 1993: 42).

Thus, though the term "democracy" had been used sometimes in a positive manner both in the United States and in France, it was still the term "republic," and more importantly, the elective regime, that enjoyed greater legitimacy. In France, the sansculottes' dream of direct democracy, or at least of a real participative political life was violently destroyed. The republican ideal, however, was so strong that it would survive Bonaparte's reign. Napoleon Bonaparte came to power in a coup d'État (1799). In 1802, Bonaparte was elected for life, a clear victory for the neo-monarchists, i.e. conservatives wanting law, constitutional order and protection of property. On Ventôse 13, Year IX, Roederer delivered a speech in which he declared that "The elective aristocracy of which Rousseau spoke for fifty years, is that which we today call representative democracy" (see Rousseau's Social Contract, bk. III, ch. 5 and Genty 1995: 38). Roederer concluded that "Elective aristocracy, and representative democracy therefore [are] one and the same thing" (Genty in Soboul, ed. 1989: 342). Roeder's speech seems to prove the relevance, even under Bonaparte's reign, of legitimizing power by calling it "democracy." Yet, Bonaparte's regime was certainly not a democracy, according to any etymological, historical or philosophical understanding of the concept. Moreover, hierarchical traditions such as formal etiquette and livery were re-established, and the distinction of the Légion d'Honneur
created. Nevertheless, both in the United States and France, the first half of the 19th
century witnessed the increasing popularity of the term "democracy." But the
intellectual mainstays of the term "democracy" had probably already been shaken
both by recent dramatic political events and eccentric statements about "democracy."
Words and their meanings are never entirely stable. It would take only a few decades
for politicians to realize how useful the word "democracy" could be to legitimize a
political system and to win support for a political platform. And, as we shall see, the
new political context would provide good reasons for political actors to identify
themselves as "democrats."

1Jefferson talked of a "democracy of equality and independence" in his Notes on the State of Virginia
2"La démocratie ne porte sur rien: il faut qu'elle tombe."
3"La France, s'érite en démocratie, et s'élève en un instant au plus haut période des désorganisations
auquel une société puisse atteindre." Edmund Burke, declared in his Reflections on the Revolution in France,
released in 1790 and widely read amongst the French conservatives, that revolutionary
France "affects to be a pure democracy, though I think it in direct train of becoming shortly a
mischievous and ignoble oligarchy." Then, the common conservative attack on democracy: "in a
democracy, the majority of the citizens is capable of exercising the most cruel oppressions upon the
minority, whenever strong divisions prevail in that kind of polity, as they often must, and that
oppression of the minority will extend to far greater numbers, and will be carried on with much
greater fury, than can almost ever be apprehended from the domination of a single sceptre" (Burke
1886: 365 and 396-397).
4"Le mot démocratie est un épouvantail dont les fripons se servent pour tromper les ignorants"
(Rosanvallon 1993: 15; English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 143).
5Indeed, witnesses maintained that the spectators seated in the gallery of the Assemblée Nationale
habitually cried "Long live the Republic!" ("Vive la république!") Thibaudel's Mémoires of
Vendémaire 13 (1795) (Hardman, ed. 1973 [II]: 275). In the town of Samoy, the crowd apparently
cried "Long live the Republic! Long live the Convention! Long live the Montain! Long live the
Sansculottes!" ("Vive la République! Vive la Convention! Vive la Montagne! Vivent les Sans­
culottes!"), while planting the Liberty tree in 1793 (Kessel, ed. 1969: 215).
6"Autrefois le savon ne valait que 12 sols, aujourd'hui il en vaut 40. Vive la République! Le sucre 20
sols, aujourd'hui 4 livres. Vive la République!"
7"L'aristocratie élitique dont Rousseau a parlé il y a cinquante ans, est ce que nous appelons
aujourd'hui démocratie représentative."
8"aristocratie élitique, démocratie représentative donc une seule et même chose."
PART III
The Birth of a Pro-Democratic Discourse
CHAPTER VI

The Birth Of A Pro-Democratic Discourse in The United States

Introduction

In America, in the context of the quasi-oligarchic reign of the Federalists during the 1790s and the passionate debates about the French Revolution, several political actors and commentators tried to gain political prestige by using the term "democracy" in a new way. As we shall see, attempts to legitimate a favourable connotation for the term "democracy" generally failed. It was only when the union was enlarged by new States where the inhabitants shared a distrust of elitism that politicians such as Andrew Jackson understood how the word "democracy" used in a laudatory fashion might be helpful for their careers. Yet, the creation of a huge partisan machinery is even more important in explaining when, how and why "democracy" came to be used in a positive way by political actors. The term "democracy" was at the core of Jackson's propaganda during his victorious presidential campaign of 1828. Moreover, Jackson's "democratic" propaganda was so highly effective that his opponents quickly decided to appropriate for themselves the word "democracy." Since that time, almost no one in the United States has ever taken an anti-democratic stance. As a result, the regime itself became known as a "democracy," even though no major institutional reform occurred. This semantic shift—"democracy" becoming not only a laudatory term but the very label of the system—was the consequence of political strategy. As we shall see, it is only because this label happens to be more effective than others in gaining the support and the
votes of the people that the modern political regime of the United States is named "democracy."

The French Revolution and the American “Democratic Societies”

Before analyzing in depth how the French Revolution influenced the understanding and use of the word "democracy," we must analyze how the French Revolution was understood by the Americans. The French Revolution had two major impacts on the United States: (1) it was used as a reference in national political debates; (2) it offered a tremendous source of self-gratification to the American political actors. In other words, the French Revolution played a role in the construction of the American political identity (Elkins & Mckitrick 1993: 309). Whereas the Americans had for a long time suffered from a kind of inferiority complex regarding Europe, they now suddenly had the feeling that they were the model to be emulated. Moreover, certain actions of the French revolutionaries reinforced this feeling. For instance, Lafayette gave George Washington the key to La Bastille,\(^1\) emblematic of France's recognition of the importance of American heroes for the French revolutionaries. Similarly, in 1792, the Assemblée Nationale awarded French citizenship to George Washington, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton (although the titles were delivered to Georges [sic] Washington, Jean [sic] Hamilton, and N. [sic] Madison\(^2\)). It seems that even the American commoners—at least in the cities—were very enthusiastic about the French Revolution. Indeed, the bells of the city of Philadelphia rang on December 14, 1792, when the news spread that the French army had triumphed against the Austrians and the Prussians at Valmy on September 20, and that the French had established a Republic on September 22. Public celebrations with food, music and fireworks were held in Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, Charleston, Savannah, and Boston. However, a few months later, the disgrace of
Lafayette, the execution of the King, the September massacres and the declaration of war by France against England and Holland produced a partisan split in America concerning the French Revolution. But even before these dramatic events, some Americans had already expressed harsh criticisms against the French revolutionaries.

The French Revolution increased the tension between George Washington's cabinet members, Hamilton and Jefferson. In the first years of Washington's presidency, a conflict arose between Hamilton and Jefferson. This struggle was in a certain sense similar to the debate between the Court and the Country which had shaken England a century before. The American Court (Elkins & Mckitrick 1993: 13-30)—represented by Hamilton and Rufus King—dreamt of wealth and power. In Hamilton's view, the central government's duty was to serve the interests of wealthy Americans (or, as John Jay declared, "Those who own the country ought to govern it" [Foner, ed. 1976: 5]). In order to reach his goals, Hamilton wanted to create a central Bank in the United States and to establish a standing army. For students of British history such as Jefferson, Hamilton represented a new Walpole, the man who corrupted the British regime. On the other hand, the discourse of the American Country—represented by Jefferson, Madison and Monroe (Elkins & Mckitrick 1993: 18-21)—mirrored the discourse of the spokespersons of the historic British Country. According to Jefferson, Hamilton was wrong to promote commerce rather than virtue, wrong to favour the cities and merchants rather than the countryside and its yeomen, and wrong to seek an executive power that would control the legislative branch. In Jefferson's opinion, Hamilton's plan was doomed to make the new Union resemble a corrupt parliamentary monarchy rather than a just Republic. The debate between the American Court and Country had as its main rhetorical background the republican corpus and English history, in which the term "democracy" had no resonance.
It was around 1793, in this heated climate, that political parties made their appearance in American political life, despite the traditional view that political parties were the consequence as well as the cause of a fragmented society. However, political parties were not yet permanent and well structured organisations, but rather heterogeneous and fluid coalitions backed by the first partisan newspapers. On July 31, 1793, Jefferson resigned from Washington’s cabinet. He organized a new political party named “Republican.” His goal: to become President. His allies: the farmers of the South and the poor of the North. He stood as a genuine republican guided by virtue, who wanted to defeat the corrupt urban aristocrats of the Court. On the other hand, Hamilton and the “Federalists” were openly elitist and used the example of the French Revolution as an anti-model. For them, the French revolutionaries were wrong mainly because of their egalitarian goals. Such a position was nothing new. As early as August 3, 1791, Noah Webster had declared: “Americans! be not deluded. In seeking Liberty, France has gone beyond her. You, my country men, if you love liberty, adhere to your constitution of government” (Morantz 1971: 118). With specific reference to “democracy,” Webster had also stated in a disparaging tone: “Look at France! There you have a picture of real democracy” (Morantz 1971: 149). Jefferson and the “Republicans” nonetheless took the side of French revolutionaries, or at least the moderate revolutionaries. They even contended that violence was legitimate in the specific context of the French Revolution because of the strength of the structures of the Ancien Régime. In a real pamphlet war, the Hamiltonian-Federalists accused the Jeffersonian-Republicans of being financed by France and of secretly wishing to destroy the Christian faith in the United States. The Jeffersonian-Republicans counter-attacked by accusing their opponents of seeking to establish a monarchy in the United States and to put the new country under the control of Great Britain.

Regarding politics and words, when the news of the French Revolution reached the American shore (Dormois & Newman 1989; Hazen 1964), the shock was so violent that it opened the door for a reinterpretation of old and relatively stable political
terms and ideas. It is important here to again underline a crucial fact: American political actors and commentators were conscious that politics and words are interwoven. With respect to the French Revolution, Americans were fully aware that their political vocabulary—and even more especially words such as "democrat"—was influenced by the French political situation. For the *Monthly Anthology and American Review* (Morantz 1971: 143),

Changes take place in the political circumstances of the nation, and the general opinion of the people, by which meaning attached to a name becomes enlarged, or restrained, or modified to suit the new ideas which have been introduced, while the original name continues the same, or experiences some slight modification. Thus the political discussions of the latter years, produced by the French revolution, have introduced among us the terms *aristocrats* and *democrats, monarchist* and *republican*. These have been bestowed or assumed by the respective parties according as they supposed their political principles favored the one or the other or those characters.

Noah Webster expressed the same idea in a letter to Joseph Priestly. Comparing "republic" with "democracy" in order to clarify the definition of the former concept, Webster began with a quite traditional reference to the ancient world (Hanson 1989: 78):

By democracy is intended a government where the legislative powers are exercised directly by all the citizens, as formerly in Athens and Rome. In our country this power is not in the hands of the people but of their representatives. The powers of the people are principally restricted to the direct exercise of the rights of suffrage. Hence a material distinction between our form of government has acquired the appellation of a republic, by way of distinction, or rather of a representative Republic.

Next, Webster commented upon the influence of France on political labels in the United States:

Hence the word *Democrat* has been used as synonymous with the word *Jacobin* in France; and by an additional idea, which arose from the attempt to control our government by private popular associations, the word has come to signify a person who attempts an undue opposition to or influence over government by means of private clubs, secret intrigues, or by public popular meetings which are extraneous to the constitution. By *Republicans* we understand the friends of our Representative Governments, who believe that no influence whatever should be exercised in a state which is not directly authorized by the Constitution and laws.
Hence, Hamiltonian-Federalists referring to France widely used "Jacobins" and "Marat" as pejorative terms when they talked about the Jeffersonian-Republicans. The term "Jacobin" was often linked to "democrats," probably to make sure that the words "democracy" and "democrats" would clearly evoke bloody and chaotic images. John Adams declared, for instance, that "There will always be giants as well as pygmies, the former of which will have more influence than the latter ... the former will be aristocrats, and the latter democrats, if not Jacobins or sans culottes ... Some will always be aristocrats, and other democrats" (Laniel 1995: 174). John Adams wrote also, with regard to the French Revolution, "I was always for a free republic, not a democracy, which is as arbitrary, tyrannical, bloody, cruel, and intolerable a government as that of Phalaris with his bull is represented to have been. Robespierre is a perfect exemplification of the character of the first bellwether in a democracy" (Bailyn 1967: 282 n. 50).

In fact, to Americans who were feeling unsatisfied with the new federal State controlled by the Federalists, the French Revolution offered the first serious opportunity to use the word "democracy" as a battle cry. Some Jeffersonian-Republicans began to refer to themselves as "Democratic-Republicans," although this label did not became the official name of their political organization until 1840. This attempt to make the term "democracy" sound glorious and prestigious was, however, institutionalized through the creation of what were called the "Democratic societies." According to Eugene Perry Link (1965) and Philip S. Foner (1976), the first of these was the "German Republican Society," founded in Philadelphia in the early Spring of 1793. It was followed shortly by the "Democratic Society of Pennsylvania," also based in Philadelphia. That was only a few days after the French Edmond Charles Genet, who was sent to the United States with the mandate to represent France, arrived in Philadelphia. Actually, Genet was the one who suggested the use of the
term "Democratic" as a name for the club (Elkins & Mckitrick 1993: 456). According to its "Principles, Articles and Regulations," the club was founded (Hazen 1964: 190)

With a view ... to cultivate a just knowledge of rational liberty, to facilitate the enjoyment and exercise of our civil rights, and to transmit, unimpaired, to posterity, the glorious inheritance of a free republican government, the DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY of Pennsylvania is constituted and established. ... The public good is indeed its sole object ... a REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT is the most natural and beneficial form, which the wisdom of man has devised. That the republican constitutions of the STATE of PENNSYLVANIA, being framed and established by the people, it is our duty, as good citizens, to support them

Despite its name, the "Democratic Society of Pennsylvania" seems to have been more concerned with republicanism than "democracy." While "Republican government" is defined and glorified, the concept of "Democracy" is not discussed. "Democracy" seems then to have been an empty catchword. About ten more "Democratic Societies" were founded in the same year, and around twenty appeared the year after (Elkins & Mckitrick 1993: 457). Around sixteen of these American political clubs used the name "Republican," a few named themselves "Committee of Correspondence," "Constitutional Society," "Patriotic Society," "Society of United Freemen" or even "French Society." But at least sixteen of them chose to use the term "Democratic," and two used both "Republican" and "Democratic" in their name (Hanson 1985: 85 n. 32; Laniel 1995: 187). After two thousand years of disgrace, the word "democracy" was suddenly seen by some to carry such prestige that they decided to use the name for their clubs. In general, the persons more inclined to choose "Democratic" in naming their associations were those who lived close to frontier areas where social life was more egalitarian than in the Eastern States (Laniel 1995: 187-188).

Who were the members of these democratic clubs? Apparently almost all of them were Republicans opposed to Federalists, but only a few were prestigious politicians and almost none of them reached the top of the American political system. Yet, they were members of the upper classes, and only very few of them were "laborers." Their goals in founding these clubs were not only to stimulate discussion, to increase the flow of information, and to stand behind French republicanism but
also to scrutinize, discuss and criticize American political life. They were particularly concerned with the protection of the Constitution and the mal-administration of the central government. They promoted the enlargement of the suffrage and more frequent elections, more power for the Lower House and for the individual States within the Union (Elkins & Mckitrick 1993: 457-460). To sum up, their concerns embodied the "democratic spirit" as defined during the Constitutional debates. Finally, the "Democratic Societies" cherished the cosmopolitan ideal, as demonstrated by the toast proposed in Boston in 1795 to the establishment of "one democratic society comprehending the human race" (Laniel 1995: 186). Members of "Democratic Societies" were clearly "implicated in the fate of the French republic" (from the "Constitution of the Republican Society of Baltimore," May 24, 1794 [cited in Foner, ed. 1976: 335]) as well as in the fates of other nations. With regard to France, they backed the moderate revolutionaries such as the Girondins and the elected politician Brissot. When the Montagnards and Robespierre took control over France, the American Democratic societies reacted prudently. "Democratic Societies" were nonetheless associated, in public debate, with the most radical French revolutionaries and these clubs were regularly accused of being nests of foreigners. Here, xenophobia and hatred for democracy were closely interwoven (a Federalist from New England complained, for instance, that the Irish he had encountered in Pennsylvania were "the most God provoking Democrats on this side of Hell" [in Rutland 1995: 14]). The "Democratic Societies" were said to be part of the "dark and silent system of organized treason and massacre, imported by the UNITED IRISHMEN", or they were controlled by Jews, the members of the "tribe of Israel" seeking to take over American politics (Foner, ed. 1976: 39). In 1797, when Israel Israel from the "Democratic Society of Pennsylvania" ran under the Republican banner to become State senator, William Cobbett wrote that "Since the Jews obtained such a complete triumph over the Gentiles, it is said they have conceived the idea of imposing on us a general circumcision. Ah! poor Pennsylvania" (Foner, ed. 1976: 40). A poem written by
the Reverend John Sylvester John Gardiner entitled *Remarks on the Jacobinad* attacked the "Democratic Societies" for being a lurking-place of "French, Irish, Scotch, [completing] the 'rabble rout'" (Foner, ed. 1976: 24).

There was, actually, a real network of French and American political actors. Indeed, Genet was not only the representative of France in the United States, but he had also the mission of influencing American politics. It is therefore not very surprising that Americans critical of French revolutionaries began to simultaneously condemn "foreigners," "Jacobins" and "democrats." In 1798, for instance, John Thayer (1991: 1356 [emphasis added]) delivered a discourse at the Roman Catholic Church in Boston stating that

The despots of France have continually interfered in the concerns of our government ... they have persuaded the people to despise and vilify their rulers, to controll the authorities constituted by themselves to act in their behalf, and to establish a system of disorganization and a wild, unprincipled, democracy, in place of our present rational liberty, which is supported by law and order.

In 1796, William Cobbett, under the pseudonym of Peter Porcupine, published in Philadelphia the *History of the American Jacobins Commonly Denominated Democrats*. Cobbett, adopting a xenophobic attitude, wrote that "two thirds of the Democrats are foreigners, landed in the United States since the war" (Laniel 1995: 182). In the same vein, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Oct. 18, 1797) wrote that American Jacobins are "vile organs of a foreign democracy" (Laniel 1995: 182). These references to "foreigners" interwoven with attacks against "democracy" reveal an interesting aspect of Federalist propaganda: the Federalists wanted to discredit their opponents by convincing people that there was a difference in nature between the French and the American revolutions. In the *Gazette of the United States*, January 16, 1793, one may read, for instance, that "The American Revolution, it ought to be repeated, was not accomplished as the French has been, by massacres, assassinations, or proscriptions: battles, severe and honorable, were fought, and the chance of war left to decide" (Morantz 1971: 105). Likewise, George Cabot declared that "French principles would
destroy us as a society” (Morantz 1971: 113). Because “democracy” was associated with critical positions and French radicalism, the term evoked a two-fold anti-patriotism (Reichley 1992: 17-37). In 1798, following the skirmish between French and American battleships, the Alien and Sedition Act was adopted by a Congress controlled by the Federalists. The authorities jailed about twenty-five people who had criticized John Adams’ policies. Referring to this law, Adams himself declared in 1800 that “There is a danger of proscribing, under imputations of democracy, some of the ablest, most influential, and best characters in the Union” (Laniel 1995: 183 [emphasis added]), evidence that democracy was linked to aliens and sedition and that it was a common practice to make someone out to be a criminal simply by stating that he was a “democrat.”

The concern expressed by Federalists about French “democracy” seems to have been genuine, since it was expressed not only in public declarations, but even in personal letters. For instance, George Cabot wrote to Rufus King, on August 14, 1795, that “It cannot be sufficiently regretted that some of our respectable men have ... joined the Jacobins. ... After all, where is the boasted advantage of a representative system over the turbulent mobocracy of Athens, if the resort to popular meetings is necessary? Faction ... will be too strong for our mild and feeble government” (Morantz 1971: 114-115). Foes of the “Democratic Societies”—or “Demonical societies,” as Oliver Wolcott Sr. wrote to his son: “The democratical, or as some call them, the demonical societies ... are evidently nurseries of sedition” (Morantz 1971: 115 [emphasis added])—limited their attacks neither to private letters nor to semantic considerations. Anti-democrats condemned “democracy” in personal letters, newspapers, public speeches and even poems. The son of the Governor of New Jersey published in 1794 a poem entitled “Democracy” in which he equated democracy with anarchy and chaos. An angry Bostonian complained in the Columbian Centinel: “We read their [members of the Democratic Societies] production in every democratic newspaper. ... They are the Ciceros of the mob. They harangue the gaping Mechanic and the admiring Truckman.
... They are the vapors of putrefying democracy" (Foner, ed. 1976: 39). The
"Democratic Society" of Kentucky was also violently condemned in the *Virginia Chronicle*, on July 17, 1794: "But in Kentucky you have a Democratic Society—that horrible sink of treason,—that hateful synagogue of anarchy,—that odious conclave of tumult,—that frightful cathedral of discord,—that poisonous garden of conspiracy,—that hellish school of rebellion and opposition to all regular and well-balanced authority" (Foner, ed. 1976: 27). We may note here a real agoraphobia: writers insisted on the importance of the representatives keeping the decision-making process under their control and seeking the "common good." "Popular meetings" were condemned because they embodied all the ills of the agora: irrationality, factions, demagogues, egalitarian spirit. These debates about the "Democratic Societies" and the French Revolution were the occasion to reaffirm the superiority of representation over direct democracy. Traditionally, the "representative system" was named "Republic" and it was the term "democratic" that what used in attacks against the political clubs, although there were roughly as many clubs using the label "Republican" as those using "Democratic." On October 25, 1810, John Jay writing to William Wilberforce stated that "The French revolution has so discredited democracy ... that I doubt its giving you much more trouble" (Morantz 1971:149).

As with the Shays rebellion in the late 1780s, it was a rebellion that more seriously discredited the "democratic spirit" in the 1790s. In 1794, the so-called Whisky Rebellion—mainly organized by farmers who refused to pay taxes on alcohol, but who also complained about land speculation, trials held in distant federal courts, and lack of support from the central government regarding their right to navigate on the Mississippi river—was presented as proof that a "democratic" tide was going to overrun and disrupt the political life of the United States. President Washington claimed that the "Democratic Societies" of Pennsylvania were responsible for the Whisky rebellion. Washington wrote to Governor Henry Lee, on August 26, 1794: "I consider this insurrection as the first formidable fruit of the Democratic Societies;
brought forth I believe too prematurely for their own views, which may contribute to the annihilation of them” (Allen, ed. 1988: 593). The same kind of statement may be found in Washington’s letter to Burgess Ball, September 25, 1794 (Allen, ed. 1988: 597). Moreover, Monroe sent letters from France in which he made clear how dangerous the Jacobin clubs were. Although members of the “Democratic Societies” tried to justify the existence of such clubs, and despite the fact that some new Societies were founded after these dramatic events, the “Democratic Societies” slowly disbanded.

Thomas Jefferson's republicanism and town-hall meetings

At first glance, Thomas Jefferson might seem to be the first democratic political actor. Jefferson did, indeed, sometimes use the terms "democracy" or "democrat" in a neutral or even positive manner. For instance, Jefferson obviously identified himself as a "democrat" when he explained that societies are "naturally divided into two parties: aristocrats and democrats" (see Rutland 1995: 18 and 47 and Wilstach, ed. 1925: 59). In another letter (to P.S. Dupont de Nemours, April 24, 1826), he declared: "We of the United States ... are constitutionally and conscientiously democrats." Yet, Jefferson made much more frequent use of expressions such as "free government," "self-government," "representative government," "republic," "republican" and "republicanism" rather than "democracy" to identify his political ideal (see, for instance, his letter to John Dickinson, March 6, 1801 [in Padover, ed. 1965: 120] as well as Padover, ed. 1965: 120-121, 123, 125, 145, 156. For Jefferson's republicanism, see Koch 1964: 149-161). Note that in the above sentences, the term "republic" stands at the core of Jefferson's political discourse. In fact, for Jefferson, that term was so important that he took the time to craft his own definition of it (in a letter to John Taylor, May 28, 1816, [Padover, ed. 1965: 157-158]):

it must be acknowledged, that the term republic is of very vague application in every language. Witness the self-style republics of Holland, Switzerland, Genoa, Venice, Poland. Were I to
assign to this term a precise and definite idea, I would say, purely and simply, it means a
government by its citizens in mass, acting directly and personally, according to rules
established by the majority; and that every other government is more or less republican, in
proportion as it has in its composition more or less of this ingredient of the direct action of the
citizens. Such a government is evidently restrained to very narrow limits of space and
population. I doubt if it would be practicable beyond the extent of a New England township.
The first shade from this pure element ... would be where the powers of the government, being
divided, should be exercised each by representatives chosen either pro hac vice, or for such
short terms as should render secure the duty of expressing the will of the constituents. This I
should consider as the nearest approach to a pure republic, which is practicable on a large scale
of country or population ... The purest republican feature in the government of our own State
[Virginia], is the House of Representatives. ... In the General Government [federal gov.], the
House of Representatives is mainly republican; the Senate scarcely so at all ... the term
republic, instead of saying, as has been said, 'that it may mean anything or nothing,' we may
say with truth and meaning, that governments are more or less republican a they have more or
less element of popular election and control in their composition.

Oddly, Jefferson did not use the term "democracy" to speak of the purest form of a
"republic" (i.e. "a government by its citizens in mass, acting directly and personally").
Despite this slight difference, Jefferson's republicanism was very similar to the political
ideal of people like Emmanuel Sieyès. For instance, Jefferson stated: "I believe ... that
action by the citizens in person, in affairs within their reach and competence, and in all
others by representatives, chosen immediately, and removable by themselves,
constitutes the essence of a republic" (Padover, ed. 1965: 148-149 [emphasis added]).
Although the people is the source of any legitimate political power, Jefferson was a
partisan of elections and "representative" government which are both central to its
understanding of republicanism. In a letter to the priest Francois Arnaud (July 19, 1789
[in Padover, ed. 1965: 152]), Jefferson explained

We think in America that it is necessary to introduce the people into every department of
government as far as they are capable of exercising it ... 1. They are not qualified to exercise
themselves the Executive department; but they are qualified to name the person who shall
exercise it. ... 2. They are not qualified to legislate. With us, therefore, they only choose the
legislators. They are not qualified to judge questions of law; but they are very capable of
deciding questions of facts. In the form of juries, therefore, they determine all matters of fact,
leaving to the permanent judges to decide the law resulting from those facts.

The use of the word "republic" and its derivatives was not limited to Jefferson's
discourses about the form of government. While writing with Benjamin Rush A Plan
for the Establishment of Public Schools (published in 1786), Jefferson emphasized the need "to inculcate republican duties," "to inspire the pupil with republican principles," to organize "republican seminars" which are "the surest protection against aristocracy." Jefferson also stated: "I consider it is possible to convert men into republican machines" (Laniel 1995: 111-112 [emphasis added]).

The fact that the party Jefferson founded was named the Republican Party is another mark of Jefferson's appraisal of the word "republic" and its cognates. Despite differences in names and labels, it is interesting to note that John Adams, who had been a Federalist President, did not believe that there was any fundamental difference between his political philosophy and Jefferson's. Writing to Benjamin Rush about Thomas Jefferson (Dec. 25, 1811), Adams remarked: "I know of no difference between him and myself relative to the Constitution, or to forms of government in general. In measures of administration [taxes and national defense], we have differed in opinions" (Wilstach, ed. 1925: 27). Then, Adams mentioned others differences that were only "miserable frivolities" (Wilstach, ed. 1925: 29):

In point of republicanism, all the difference I ever knew or could discover between you and me, or between Jefferson and me, consisted, 1. In the difference between speeches and messages. ... 2. I held levees once a week ... Jefferson' whole eight years was a levee. ... 3. I dined a large company once or twice a week. Jefferson dined a dozen every day. 4. Jefferson and Rush were for liberty and straight hair. I thought curled hair was republican as straight.

It is true, however, that Jefferson promoted a kind of local democracy inspired by the American tradition of town hall meeting. During the colonial era, what was known as a "town" often included several villages and their vicinity (woods, fields, rivers, hills). Legally speaking, a town was an area incorporated by an act of the state or colonial legislature. Around 1750, in the 550 towns of New England, all the officials were elected (the clerk and the treasurer of the town, constables, grand-jurymen, tax-collectors, fence viewers, highway surveyors, leathers sealers, pound keepers, bridge keepers and dealers of weights and measures). The turnout at the town meetings was not always very high, especially during winter. In March 25, 1776, only 5 people
shown up at a meeting called at Plymouth. The meeting was cancelled. Not only the
winter, but also too much political activity may also have resulted in a lower turnout.
For example, 11 town meetings were called in the town of Topsfield in 1776 and 18 in
1777; 40 in Boston in 1781. Since some people had to travel to get to the meeting point,
regular attendance for some was difficult in light of the poor condition of the roads.
The way the meetings were announced did not always help to increase the turnout.
There were only occasional notices in the newspapers. Sometimes, town constables
advised the citizens verbally. Each meeting assembly was free to decide how to advise
the citizens about future meetings (for instance, in some cases meeting notifications
were posted directly on citizens' doors).

The town meeting assembly had a wide range of powers including deciding tax
rates, debating the construction and maintenance of public roads and bridges, the
caring of the poor, and how to deal with extraordinary situations such as a smallpox
epidemic. The town meeting was also a forum for examining licenses, fines, property
lines, the exchange of public and private lands, and the cases of new individuals who
wanted to be admitted into the community (Syrett 1964; Ward 1991: 200-203;
Willingham 1973: 402-403). The historian Michael Schudson talking about the "mythic
town meeting" remarks that "the object of the meeting was order, not
representation" (Schudson 1998: 16 and 18). Schudson also notes that generally
speaking, the town meeting was under control of the general court or the assembly.
Nevertheless, Americans had the feeling that they were living in a quite unusually
free regime. According to the standards of the time, they were.

Jefferson's theory of "wards" (Koch 1964: 162-165) was obviously influenced by
such a tradition of local political participation, but it was also related to Jefferson's idea
that the yeoman were more virtuous than any other citizens. According to Jefferson,
"Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are ... the most virtuous"
and "corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age
nor nation has furnished an example" (Padover, ed. 1965: 111). Yet, Jefferson did not
abolish the federal or states governments. In fact, he himself became president of the federal government. While explaining his political vision regarding the wards to Joseph Cabell (in a letter, Feb 2, 1816, in Koch 1964: 163), Jefferson declared: "let the National government be entrusted with the defense of the nation, and its foreign and federal relations; the state governments with the civil rights, laws, police and administration of what concerns the state generally; the counties with the local concerns of the counties; and each Ward direct the interests within itself." In an other letter (to Major John Cartwright, June 5, 1824, in Koch 1964: 163), Jefferson became even more specific:

In each of these might be, first, an elementary school; second, a company of militia, with its officers; third, a justice of the peace and constable; fourth, each ward should take care of their own poor; fifth, their own road; sixth, their own police; seventh, elect within themselves one or more jurors to attend the courts of justice; and eight, give in at their folk-house, their votes for all functionaries reserved to their election.

According to Hannah Arendt (1990: 250), however,

It is perhaps noteworthy that we find no mention of the ward system in any of Jefferson's formal work, and it may be even more important that the few letters in which he wrote of it with such emphatic insistence all date from the last period of his life. ... the point of the matter is that the whole idea seems to have occurred to him only at a time when he himself was retired from public life and when he had withdrawn from the affairs of state.

Arendt also rightly remarks (1990: 239) that the Constitution of the United States failed "to incorporate the townships and the town-hall meetings, the original springs of all political activity in the country, [which] amounted to a death sentence for them." Thus, and despite its obvious democratic essence, Jefferson's theory of "wards" as well as the tradition of town-hall meeting did not influence significantly either the political institutions of the United States or the political discourse of the beginning of the 19th century.
An Era of Semantic Confusion

From the last years of the 18th century until the mid-1820s, the United States was the scene of semantic confusion regarding the word "democracy." This confusion was acknowledged by people like Abraham Bishop, who wrote in his *Oration on the Extent and Power of Political Delusion*, published in 1800, that "The terms 'republican and democrat' are used as synonymous throughout: because the men who maintain the principles of 1776, are characterised by one or the other of these names in different parts of the country" (Morantz 1971: 157 n. 32). Some political actors and commentators began to equate "democracy" with the republican mixed and elective regime. Thomas Paine, for instance, was not only willing to use "democracy" in a positive way, but he also declared that the American regime was founded on democracy. In his *Rights of Man*, published in 1791, Paine first recalled the classical typology of political regimes: "the only forms of government are the democratical, the aristocratical, the monarchical, and what is now called the representative" (Naess, Christophersen & Kvalø 1956: 102). Paine then suggested that the American type of government is "representation ingrafted upon democracy" (Naess, Christophersen & Kvalø 1956: 102) which is, according to Paine, "preferable to simple democracy even in small territories. Athens, by representation, would have outrivalled her own democracy" (Lokken 1959: 573). More striking still is the statement of a correspondent for the *Independent Chronicle*, who wrote in 1793 that "There was scarcely any but Democrats to be found. For we ought to have done with the trumpery of mere republicanism. ... Monarchies have been called Republics—aristocracies are Republics— ... he that is not a Democrat is either an aristocrat or a monocrat" (Morantz 1971: 153-154). On May 2 of the same year, in the same newspaper, an article was signed "A Democrat." Someone wrote in the *National Gazette*, on February 16, 1793, that the American government was a Democracy. Two years later, another writer stated that the Americans had formed a "federal democracy" from their
revolution (Fobes 1983: 1003). John Taylor, furthermore, explained in *An Inquiry Into the Principles and Tendencies of Certain Measures* that it was important to prevent the Federalists from “chang[ing] its [Constitutional] nature ... in an attempt to transplant the Constitution from democratic ground in which it might flourish to an aristocratical soil in which it must perish” (Laniel 1995: 202). “Democracy” was gaining in popularity to such an extent that William Duane wrote to Washington, complaining that the supporters of the President had tried “to persuade unlettered men, that our constitution is not a democracy. ... Those professed friends of yours never cease railing at democracy” (Morantz 1971:154).

Concerned by such intellectual confusion, Fisher Ames took the time to provide clear political definitions of a “republic” and a “democracy.” Respectful of etymology, history and philosophy, Ames explained (Hanson 1985: 86):

A republic is that structure of an elective government, in which the administration necessarily prescribe to themselves the general good as the object of all their measures; a democracy is that, in which the present popular passions, independent of the public good, become a guide to the rulers. In the first, the reason and interests of society govern; in the second, their prejudices and passions.

Similarly, the historian Samuel Williams, in his *The Natural and Civil History of Vermont*, published in 1794, explained why the regime of the United States is not a democracy. Williams (1983: 963) first recalled the demographical and geographical arguments against the suitability of “democracy” for large societies:

In the ancient democracies the public business was transacted in the assemblies of the people: The whole body assembled to judge and decide, upon public affairs. Upon this account, the ancient democracies were found to be unfit, and inadequate to the government of a large nation. In America this difficulty never occurs: All is transacted by representation.

Continuing, the historian argued that as the Americans “were too numerous to attempt to carry on their governments in the form of the ancient democracies, they naturally adopted the system of representation” (p. 964). Williams insisted (p. 963) that “The principle on which all the American governments are founded, is
representation." With honesty, Williams highlighted (in the following quotation, already cited in the theoretical chapter) the fact that the representative system was a legacy from Medieval times and that it was not established in the name of the people (p. 964):

"a government founded in representation ever was adopted among the ancients, under any form whatever.—Representation thus unknown to the ancients, was gradually introduced into Europe by her monarchs; not with any design to favour the rights of the people, but as the best means that they could devise to raise money."

Ames and Williams were not the only ones to make serious attempts to define "democracy," "republic," and "representative regime" in a manner respectful of etymology, history and philosophy. For instance, the New England Palladium, quoted in the Gazette of the United States (October 28, 1801), violently condemns the confusion: "The time may come ... that the tremendous difference between republicanism and Democracy shall be intelligible to the stupid, and when even the seekers of popularity shall discern that the uncontroled power of the multitude is the slavery of all, of the blind multitude" (Morantz 1971:147). One may also read in John Leland's The rights of conscience inalienable, published in 1791, that a "government would be perfectly democratical" with "every citizen being a legislator." For Leland, such could be the case only in a very small community. When the community is composed of several thousand of individuals, "their government can be no longer democratical, prudence would forbid it. Each tribe or district must chose their representative" (Leland 1991:1084). Similarly, in his Sermon before the general court of New Hampshire at the annual election, delivered in Concord, 1797, Stephen Peabody took the time to clarify the differences between a democracy and a republican government. To do so, he referred to Athens and to Montesquieu. He explained that (Peabody 1991:1327)

A republican government, as defined by an eminent writer, "in which all men, rich and poor, magistrates and subjects, officers and people, masters and servants, the first citizen and the last, are equally subject to the laws," is doubtless the most unexceptionable. This is the general principle which supports the government of united America, happily removed from that
monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy, which have injured mankind. This form has the public
good for its principle object

Enos Hitchcock, in “An oration in commemoration of the independence of the United
States of America” (Providence, 1793), declared that “Every good government must
exist somewhere between absolute despotism, and absolute democracy. In either of
these extremes, neither liberty nor safety can be enjoyed” (Hitchcock 1991: 1176
[emphasis added]). The author repeated the term “American Republic.” However, he
suggested a few lines later that the United States is a democracy: “The state where the
people choose their magistrates for a fixed period, and often assemble to exercise the
sovereignty, is a democracy, and is called a republic; such were Athens and Rome, and
such are the United States of America” (Hitchcock 1991: 1177). Despite the rising
confusion about democracy, numerous were those who still believed that it refers to
turbulence and chaos. In fact, “democracy” was even thought of as the political ideal
of adolescents, just as anarchy today is thought by many to be an ideology which
appeals to the dreams of youth. In January 1799, Jefferson recorded in his personal
papers a conversation that occurred between Dr. Ewen and the President Adams. The
“former said”, according to Jefferson’s note, that “one of his sons was an aristocrat,
the other a democrat. The President asked if it was not the youngest who was the
democrat. “Yes”, said Ewen. “Well,” said the President, “a boy of fifteen who is not a
democrat is good for nothing, and he is no better who is a democrat at twenty”
(Padover, ed. 1943: 1276). “Democracy” was thus obviously regarded by the President
as something related to the turbulent spirit of youth.

Political actors nevertheless knew that such important variations in the political
vocabulary of their time was politically relevant. The Federalists, for instance, felt the
need to determine the meanings of words and to make sure they could control
political language, so as to give themselves a shining image and their opponents a
tarnished one. Stimulated by this mobility in the meaning of political words, Fisher
Ames made some interesting comments about the use of words in politics. Writing to
John Rutledge in a private letter, Ames declared that Federalists needed to “wrench the name republican from those who have unworthily usurped it. ... Names and appearances are in party warfare arms and ammunition. It is particularly necessary to contest this name with them now” (Hanson 1985: 85). Hamilton went even further, arguing that “We [the Federalists] must renounce our principles and our objects and unite in corrupting public opinion” (Laniel 1995: 192). A possible explanation for such cynicism is that with elections—supposedly allowing the “natural aristocracy” to rule—the candidates must seduce the voters, a problem the Founders had not considered seriously when shaping the new regime of the United States. With time, political actors became more and more aware of that fact.

Comments regarding the use of words as political weapons were not rare around 1800. Thomas Jefferson’s success in the presidential elections of 1800 fuelled thinking on how to use words in the public realm in order to win over supporters or to discredit opponents. Even more than words, it was on political tags that political thinkers and actors focused. Of course, the United States at that time had an extraordinary political system: a new party—the Jeffersonian-Republicans—defeated its opponents and took power without violence, and the Constitution appeared to be respected and considered as the highest law by both parties. Hence, 1800 was the ultimate test that proved that the War of Independence and the Union led to a state of law. In comparison, France had no fewer than four Constitutions in a decade, and several bloody conflicts and was now ruled by Napoléon Bonaparte, who led a coup d’État to take power.

American politics was nevertheless a power game, and words such as "republic" and "democracy" were effective weapons. With regard to the word "republican," Alexander Graydon complained that Jeffersonians usurped it. Graydon stated that “Nothing is more conducive to a successful cajolery of the people, then a well chosen appellation” (Morantz 1971: 145 [emphasis added]). The Jeffersonian-Republicans gave their Federalist opponents derogatory names such as “anti-
republicans," "federal monarchists," "monocrats." Similarly, the Federalists called the Jeffersonian-Republicans "anarchists," "fanatics," "radicals," "pagans." As the historian Robert Allen Rutland remarks (1995: 18-19, 25), the Federalists also used the word "democrat" as a weapon to attack Jefferson and his party. Rutland gives several examples of this strategy. Talking of the elected Republicans of Massachusetts, a federalist declared: "The democratic delegation with one or two exceptions is close to the fag end of democracy" (p. 25). In 1812, the Federalist Massachusetts Spy complained that "The democratic political pot has been boiling furiously ... and we are sorry to find that an addition of scum has risen to the surface" (in Rutland 1995: 37). Federalist Gouverneur Morris talked of the "Democrats and their demagogues" (p. 19) and he suggested that Jefferson's opinions were "too democratic" (Hazen 1964: 58). Another historian, S.K. Padover, gives as "example of a federalist attack on Jefferson" a passage of Theodore Dwight's pamphlet Oration (1801): "We have a country governed by blockheads, and knaves; the ties of marriage, with all its felicities, are severed, and destroyed; our wives and our daughters are thrown into the stews; our children are cast into the world from the breast, and forgotten; filial piety is extinguished," and all of this because "We have now reached the consummation of Democratic blessedness" (Padover, ed. 1965: 126). During the presidential campaign of 1800, Olivier Ellsworth expressed his fear that Jefferson would establish a "Jacobinal democracy" if he were elected (Laniel 1995: 174). For Hamilton, Jefferson is "too much in earnest with his democracy" (Laniel 1995: 182).

The so-called "Democrats" counter-attacked not only by suggesting that the Federalists were "aristocrats," but also by claiming that they were seeking an attractive label to delude the people. In the Eastern Argus (September 27, 1803), it was stated for instance that "The aristocratical party in America having their system organized, and their leaders pledged, they next looked for a popular name which they might usurp, under which they might hide their designs against the liberty of the country." The Federalists were accused of having discredited those who "had
assumed to themselves the name of Republicans” by calling them “Jacobins,” the “next step of the aristocrats was to attempt to couple with the name Jacobin, the word Democrat. ... When the Federalists saw that their disguise was likely to be seen through, they began to denominate themselves Federal Republicans” (see also the Aurora [Sept. 8, 1806] and the Independent Chronicle [Feb. 23, 1797]).

In 1801, the Federal-Republicans of Pennsylvania even dropped the term “Federal.” Presenting themselves as “Republicans,” the former “Federalists” and their partisans tried to discredit their opponents by labelling them “Democrats,” as shown in the following quotation from the Gazette of United States, October 19, 1801: “The Republicans, with all that urbanity, moderation, and love of truth, which has ever distinguished them from their adversaries, the Democrats” (Morantz 1971: 145 n. 12). Similarly, John Page wrote to James Madison on April 7th, 1801, referring to “the Anti-Feds or Democrats” (Brugger, Crout, Rutland, Sisson, eds. 1986 [I]: 74). In Baltimore in 1801, a group of Federalists led by Robert Goodie Harper founded The Republican or Anti-Democrat. In a violent editorial, the Aurora responded (Sept. 18, 1802), to the foundation of the anti-democratic newspaper: “Republic does not so precisely define the nature of our government, as democracy.” Then, the editorial went on: “Democracy therefore more especially designates our government than republic—as it literally declares ... that all power is derived from, and all sovereignty centres in, the people, the democracy.” Here the political-linguistic strategy of the Aurora was not only to stand as “Democrats,” but even to label the regime of the United States with the name “Democracy.” Taking the matter seriously, the Anti-Democrat replied to the Aurora in a text entitled “The Government of the United States Not a Democracy” (reprinted in the New York Evening Post [August 2, 1803]). The author of the text declared that “It must be repeated that a democrat cannot be a republican. Republicanism is only a cloak the democrats assumes [sic] the best to conceal their views.” The writers of the Anti-Democrat seem to have felt that it was very important not to let their opponents succeed in labelling the regime of the United States a
"Democracy." They also declared that in using the term "democracy," the "democrats" were in fact deluding the people. The Anti-Democrat explained, for instance, that

Those who attempt to convince the people of the United States that they already live under a democracy, that curse of republics, that volcano of licentiousness, that gulph of liberty, that prolific mother of faction, cruelty, injustice, sedition ... and tyranny ... do nothing but harm ... The Constitution of the United States is far removed from a democracy ... it is a republic.

Thus, it must be clear that the political motivation to use "democracy" in a positive manner was acknowledged at the time by people, such as Hugh Henry Brackenridge who in 1804 analysed Jeffersonians' linguistic attitude about words such as "republican" and "democracy." Brackenridge started by analysing the consequence of the disgrace of the "Democratic Societies" resulting from the use of the term "democracy":

Societies were instituted about the years, 1791-2-3, under the denomination of "democratic societies". It was the intemperance of some of these bodies, and the insurrection of 1794 [Whisky Rebellion], which brought a cloud upon these societies, and caused them to be discontinued. Prudent men, and patriots, were willing to avoid a name which had incurred disreputation from the excesses of those attached to it.

Brackenridge went on to prophesy: "The name 'Republican', which alone had been vented on for some time, is now considered cold, and equivocal, and has given way, pretty generally, to that of 'Democratic-Republican.' In a short time, it will be simply, the 'democracy,' and a 'democrat'" (Laniel 1995: 197). According to Brackenridge political labels are chosen only for their efficacy and when not efficacious enough (when "considered cold"), it seems logical to simply adopt a new label. Brackenridge wrote that "The term 'democrat' has ceased to be a stigma; and begins to be assumed by our public writers, and claimed by our patriots, as characteristic of a good citizen" (Laniel 1995: 199). Brackenridge wrote about himself that "I aver myself to be a democrat." "Democrats are to be true brothers, real masons ... I found democracy in virtue; that is, in truth, honor, justice, integrity, reason, moderation" (Laniel 1995: 205
The characteristics of a republic—virtue, justice, reason, moderation—were now those of democracy. More accurately, it was "democracy" that had replaced republic as the label calling to mind virtue, justice, reason, moderation.

Even though Hamilton declared that "the members most tenacious of republicanism were as loud as any in declaiming against the vices of democracy" (in Arendt 1965: 306), which seems to indicate that the word "democracy" was not very popular even among the Republicans, John Quincy Adams remarked that "Republicans" as well as "Democrats" were "appellations which had the advantages of recommending them [those using them] to the special favour of the people and at the same time stigmatizing their adversaries by the implication that they were anti-republicans, monarchists, and aristocrats" (Morantz 1971: 145).

But for those people who wanted to use the term "democracy" in a laudatory way, the first step was to define it clearly in order to make it evident to their audience that they were not using the word pejoratively. The first manoeuvre was to merge the term "democracy" with the idea of "representation." Of course, the traditional understanding of the word "democracy"—informed by etymology, history and political philosophy—referred to a direct democracy, in which the people assembled at the agora to propose, debate and vote on laws. But as we have seen, the Lower House of representatives came to be known by the republicans as the "democratic" branch of a mixed and elective regime. It was therefore easy to go a bit further and to simply talk of "representative democracy," a brand new concept which of course neutralized the ideal of the people truly ruling while at the same time referring to the "demos," the people. Philosophically speaking, representation and democracy are incompatible but the concern here was political effectiveness rather than philosophical coherence. In *To His Fellow Citizens of the United States. Letter II: On Certain Political Measures Proposed to Their Consideration*, published in Philadelphia in 1801, Joel Barlow explained that "The two most consoling principles that political experience has yet brought to light, are those on which we have founded our constitutions—I mean
representative democracy, and the federalizing of States” (Barlow 1983: 1106). Barlow added (Ibidem.)—acknowledging the bad reputation the word “democracy” had in the past—that

Democracy had been disgraced by the pretended experience of some of the states of Greece, though in reality no such things as democracy ever did exist in Greece or Rome. It has been concluded, and very justly, that pure democracy, or the immediate autocracy of the people, is unfit for a great state; it might be added, that it is unfit for the smallest state imaginable, even a little town. But representative democracy is applicable to a state of any size, and under any circumstances where men have the use of their reason.

Thus, Barlow even suggested that “democracy” had never existed in the classical world. There was therefore no reason to argue that “democracy” was a regime suitable only for the classical world. According to Barlow, “democracy,” or more specifically “representative democracy,” is related not to an age or to a specific size, but to “reason,” a quality embodied by the United States themselves. In 1816, Jefferson wrote to Isaac Tiffany that “The introduction of this new principle of representative democracy has rendered useless almost everything written before on the structure of government” (Reinhold 1984: 108). In the space of a few decades, “democracy” as a label had begun to designate a rational and virtuous regime.

Other people preferred to talk strictly about “democracy,” a word they felt did not need to merge with others in order to legitimate it. For instance, William Fessenden, in the Political Farrago, noted in 1807 that “The Federalists, to this day denominate us, by the name of Democrats, while we style ourselves Republicans; but as both names are synonymous it is of little consequence by which we are designated” (Morantz 1971: 157 n. 32). And Elias Smith stated in 1809 that “The government adopted here is a DEMOCRACY. It is well for us to understand this word, so much ridiculed by the international enemies of our beloved country. The word DEMOCRACY is formed of two Greek words, one signifies the people, and the other the government which is in the people... My Friends, let us never be ashamed of DEMOCRACY!” (G.S. Wood 1993: 231-232). Smith added, significantly: “Never think it
is a reproach to be called a DEMOCRAT!!!” (Morantz 1971: 157 n. 32). Jefferson declared in 1816 that “We in America are self-consciously ... democrats” (Roberts 1994: 186). That was two years after John Adams himself had written to John Taylor, member of the “Democratic Republicans,” that

Democracy ... must not be disgraced; democracy must not be despised. Democracy must be respected; democracy must be honored; democracy must be cherished; democracy must be an essential, an integral part of the sovereignty, and have a control over the whole government, or moral liberty cannot exist, or any other liberty. I have been always grieved by the gross abuses of this respectable word. One party speaks of it as the most amiable, venerable, indeed, as the sole object of its adoration; the other, as the sole object of its scorn, abhorrence, and execration.

However, Adams was still wary of a pure regime, and he told Taylor that “democracy never lasts long” (Laniel 1995: 154). Madison himself stated in 1801 in one of his letters, that one might be “honoured ... with the term of Democrat” (Brugger, Crout, Rutland, Sisson, eds. 1986: 89). Affirmations such as these from people like Madison and Adams, strong opponents of democracy a few years earlier, indicate that the word was really gaining a new normative meaning. As a matter of fact, people called “democrats” by their opponents in an attempt to discredit them not only seemed not to care, but even started to bear that title with pride.

Yet this new meaning was far from being stable. Sometimes, the two terms—“republic” and “democracy”—were merged together, as they were in John Taylor’s An Inquiry into the Principles and Policy of the Government of the United States, published in 1814, where one may read that “Wealth, like suffrage, must be considerably distributed, to sustain a democratic republic” (Laniel 1995: 197 n. 6). Others expressed the same violent hostility toward “democracy” that had been shown by the delegates at the Constitutional Congress in 1787. In a letter to Timothy Pickering, in 1804, George Cabot wrote that “I hold democracy in its natural operation to be the government of the worst” (Morantz 1971: 14; Naess, Christophersen & Kvalø 1956: 107). Democracy was also pointed out as a threat to liberty. For instance, Fisher Ames wrote in 1803 that “our country is too big for union,
too solid for patriotism, too democratic for liberty” (Naess, Christophersen & Kvalø 1956: 107). The pro-democratic Aurora, on the other hand, declared (Dec. 9, 1795) that “Democracy glories in reducing all to a natural equality. Upon this principle rests the security of our liberties.” A flyer sent out by the Republican party in Massachusetts on September 24, 1802, made the same link between “democracy” and “liberty”: “In one word, we hold that liberty is the birthright of mankind and a Democracy its only sure preservative” (Morantz 1971: 118). Yet, according to Ames, this was an incorrect way to understand the relationship between “democracy” and “liberty.” Indeed, Ames declared that “A democracy will make every people thoroughly licentious and corrupt! ... The known propensity of a democracy is to licentiousness, which the ambitious call, and the ignorant believe to be liberty” (Laniel 1995: 177). In the same spirit, George Cabot wrote to Oliver Wolcott in August 3, 1801: “We are destined in this country, as in all the free states who have gone before us, to sacrifice the essence of liberty to the spirit of democracy” (Morantz 1971: 118).

In 1805, Fisher Ames published The Danger of American Liberty, in which he stated that “A government by the passions of the multitude, or, no less correctly, according to the vices and ambitions of their leaders, is a democracy.” Ames also complained about the “licentious democracy”, and “the evils of an American democracy,” and he claimed that “simple governments are despotisms; and of all despotisms a democracy, though the least durable, is the most violent” (Laniel 1995: 66). In words as violent as those used during the Constitutional debates, Ames declared that “Democracy is an illuminated hell, that in the midst of remorse, horror, and torture, rings with festivity” (Laniel 1995: 66-67).

In a memorial to his friend Fisher Ames, James T. Kirkland (who later became President of Harvard College), summarized Ames’s opinion about democracy as follows:

Mr. Ames was emphatically a republican. He saw, that many persons confounded a republic with a democracy. He considered them as essentially distinct, and really opposite. According to his creed, a republic is that structure of an elective government, in which the administration
necessarily prescribe to themselves the general good as the object of all their measures; a
democracy is that, in which the present popular passions, independent of the public good,
become a guide to the rulers. In the first, the reason and interests of the society govern; in the
second their prejudices and passions. The frame of the American constitution, supposes the
dangers of democracy.

Kirkland added that in “a democracy ... the public liberty is no longer safe” (Morantz
1971: 150-151). Similarly, Hamilton, writing to Theodore Segdwick in 1804, stated:
“That dismemberment of our empire will be a clear sacrifice of great positive
advantages without any counterbalancing good, administering no relief to our real
disease, which is democracy, the poison of which, by a subdivision, will only be the
more concentrated in each part, and consequently the more virulent” (Naess,
Christophersen & Kvalø 1956: 108). Following the same path, Thomas Green
Fessenden published a poem entitled “Democracy unveiled”. He wrote in the

The person who in these times dares to rend the veil of Democracy, and disclose the demon in
his hated deformity, must expect that the worshippers of that infernal idol will vow
vengeance on his devoted head. ... But it is the duty of every real Republican, to be ready, like
the Roman Curtis, to plunge into the gulf, and sacrifice himself to save his country.

Then, the poem itself is a long diatribe against democracy. These virulent criticisms
were not that different from those made in the 1780s and 1790s. Nor were they
isolated or few in number. For example, Robert Treat Paine wrote in 1812 that (Laniel
1995: 181)

The worshippers of democracy, though their altars are thrown down, are not yet converted
from their devotions. The frozen snake has still some sparks of animation; and, if placed by
compassion near your hospitable fires, he will revive with exasperated venom, and sting the
hardy fool that fostered him. Deal therefore with these ferocious demoralizers, as our crafty
mariners trade with the savages of the Indian Ocean—with your men at their posts, your guns
loaded, and your slow matches burning.

Furthermore, in 1816, the pamphlet Portrait of the Evils of Democracy, Submitted to the
People of Maryland, was published in Baltimore, and in 1818, Lyman Beecher declared
that the "Democrats" are "Sabbath-breakers, rum-selling, tippling folks, infidels and ruff-scuff generally" (Laniel 1995: 181).

The Success of Pro-Democratic Propaganda: The Andrew Jackson Era

During the 1824 presidential election, the five candidates—John Quincy Adams who won the election, John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, William Crawford and Andrew Jackson—stood as "republicans," although some called themselves "Federal Republicans" or "Democratic Republicans." Actually, there was real confusion among all these "republicans." During the presidential electoral campaign of 1828, Jackson decided to present himself as a "plain democrat" in a conscious attempt to be seen as a real alternative. At the National Convention of 1840, the party officially adopted the name "Democratic Party," and "the democratic faith" is mentioned in the platform (Nelson, ed. 1991: 166; Reichley 1992: 84).

It would be unfair to maintain that this semantic strategy was pure opportunism on Jackson’s part. He clearly defended and promoted interests of the "real people," claiming that government must be used to protect the poor. For Jackson, "the real people" referred to a social class that included planters, farmers, mechanics and labourers, those whom Jackson called "the bone and sinew of the country" and those for whom "success depends upon their own industry and economy" (Meyers 1971: 202). Behind Jackson stood the States politicians who were seeking office at the federal level; such offices were known to be under the control of a clique of professional politicians and civil servants linked to a so-called "monied aristocracy," as Jackson himself said (Remini 1981: 129). The reference to the aristocracy of wealth was not unusual. Samuel J. Tilden had spoken, for instance, of "MONEYED ARISTOCRACY" in his "Address of the Convention of the Democratic Young Men of the County of Columbia" in 1833 (Silbey, ed. 1973: 22). Democrats went further, even asserting that such aristocrats were no less than "criminals"
controlling the country and its institutions in order to promote their own interests. In William Leggett’s editorials in the *New York Evening Post* of the mid-1830s he berated the “grasping, monopolizing spirit of rapacious capitalists,” and denounced the plan of the rich to establish and secure their control “in triumph on the ruins of democracy” (Laniel 1995: 249-250). As a matter of fact, Jackson’s struggle against his opponents became broadly known as a clash between “democracy” and “aristocracy.” In 1828, the *Telegraph* explained that the “Democratic Republican party” stood on the side of “the great cause of the many against the few, of equal rights against privileged orders, of democracy against aristocracy” (Nelson, ed. 1991: 141). During the election campaign of 1832, the September 5th edition of the *Globe* maintained that “The Jacksonian cause is the cause of democracy and the people, against a corrupt and abandoned aristocracy” (Remini 1981: 377). In 1828, the election was presented in the October 3rd edition of the *Enquirer* as a clash between “The Ebony Party of Aristocracy and the Topaz Party of Democracy”, and a victory of Jackson would be “a triumph of democratic principle” (Morantz 1971: 195).

Since democracy traditionally referred to the common folks and the poor and to egalitarian policies, it was not totally inconsistent for Jackson and his partisans to define his platform as democratic. Frederick Robinson in an address in Boston, on July 4th, 1834, declared that “Equality is democracy” (Laniel 1995: 260). In 1838, the newspaper significantly called the *Bay State Democrat* explained to its readers that "democracy" means “a principle at the heart of which lies EQUALITY” (Ashworth 1983: 11). Two years later, in his *Address of the Democratic Republic Young Men's Central Committee of the City of New York*, John Ashworth claimed that the new democratic discourse of the Jacksonian era was concerned mainly with equality. Ashworth declared that “The Democratic principle teaches the perfect civil and political equality of mankind” (Ashworth 1983: 11). The rivalry between poor and rich had been analysed in 1833 by the Scottish Thomas Hamilton who published *Men and Manners in America*, a book that influenced none other than Karl Marx. Like de Tocqueville,
Hamilton wrote his book after discussing American politics with Americans. For Hamilton, there was a real class struggle in America. He cited the demands for agrarian laws and the "Workies" of New York, an association of workers who wanted universal education in the name of democracy, considering that unequal education undermined the idea of equal opportunity (Rubel 1974: 174-176). The idea of a class struggle was recalled by Martin Van Buren, who spoke of "the anti-republican tendency of associated wealth" in an official Message to Congress (Ashworth 1983: 49). In 1841, a Louisiana newspaper, the *Hebdomadal Enquirer*, stated that the last elections had been "a contest between wealth and popular rights" (Ashworth 1983: 49). In a similar vein, a Southerner declared in 1844 that it was "repugnant to the true principles of democracy to say that a farmer without slaves, working on his own farm, should have less weight in the government than the rich proprietor adjoining his little farm, who had a hundred negroes" (Ashworth 1983: 12). William Marcy, himself a Democrat, stated that "it is undoubtedly true as a general abstract proposition that wealth is hostile to democracy" (Ashworth 1983: 50). The democratic newspaper *Vermont Statesman* explained to its readers, in its edition of August 30, 1837, that "Such is the nature of man and such the spirit which inequality of condition engenders, that sleepless vigilance and perpetual conflict, are the only means by which the DEMOCRACY OF NUMBERS can maintain the ascendancy against the power of individual and ASSOCIATED WEALTH" (Ashworth 1983: 49). According to the *Enquirer* of Richmond of August 30, 1836, due to the party system, "under institutions essentially Democratic, the lineage of men conferred no superiority" (Morantz 1971: 202).

It was commonly felt during those days that the federal administration was controlled by a greedy, corrupt, venal and privileged aristocracy of officials. Jackson declared that he was going to get rid of the well established officials to make room in the public administration for self-made men who had worked at the local level (Meyers 1971: 198; Latner 1979: 59-60). He expressed the hope that "the time may
come when the offices of this nation, both State and Federal, profitable and
honorable, from the President down to the lowest in the gift of the people, will be
filled with the farmers and mechanics of the country” (Ashworth 1983: 12-13).
Generally, Jackson failed in his attempt to reshape the body of the federal civil service,
since only around 10 or 20% of the officials of the John Quincy Adams era left their
office, and they were replaced by individuals whose origins were rarely humble.

More fundamentally, however, there is a difference between standing as a
defender of the interests of the poor—Jackson used the slogan “power to the
people”—and a defender of “democracy,” which had been understood for two
thousand years as the direct rule of the people. Jackson did not contemplate in-depth
institutional reforms that would have given to the people a real participation in the
law-and decision-making process. What really mattered for Jackson, in fact, was for
the people to believe that the bureaucracy was undergoing a democratic reform
(Morone 1990: 88; Remini 1981: 192). Consequently, Jackson’s identification with
democracy was quite a distortion from the perspective of etymology, history and
philosophy. It is important to note that Jackson and his friends were conscious of
what they were doing in using the word “democracy.” They were, moreover,
conscious of being among the first to use it in a positive way, as is evident in their
personal letters, for instance (Morantz 1971: 158-159). The break with the intellectual
foundations of the term “democracy” was made easier by the fact that Jackson and
his egalitarian partisans held that the veneration of the classics was elitist (Miles 1974:
264). Jackson was a new kind of political actor. The Founders such as Franklin,
Madison and Jefferson were students of the classics and even of ancient Greek. But
such was not Jackson’s case. As a matter of fact, his opponents even accused him of
being illiterate, an accusation that backfired since it made Jackson appear even closer
to the common folk and, therefore, more popular with them. Jackson relied on his
image as a politician from the West, very close to the people, and firmly opposed to
the power of money, especially the power of the banks (Latner 1979: 5).
It must also be said, that in the pre-Jacksonian years, a strong nationalist sentiment, fuelled by the Conquest of the West, the economical growth, and the military successes against the Spanish, the British and the Natives, flourished in the United States. And it was often argued that the democratic spirit and the people were the causes of these successes (Ashworth 1983: 9). Several new States entering the Union established so-called "universal" suffrage (this "universal" suffrage encompassed rather less than 50% of the American universe, since Blacks, Natives, women and children were excluded). Finally, the inhabitants of these new States, generally shared an egalitarian spirit hiterto unknown to the urban elite of the Eastern cities (Laniel 1995: 204; 211-222; Ashworth 1983: 237). In 1830, only one American out of fifteen lived in a city of more than 8000 inhabitants (Hofstadter 1971: 184). The egalitarian spirit shared by the new States spread and slowly but surely, "universal" adult white male suffrage was adopted by several of the older States. Rhode Island was the last to adopt it, in 1842.11 The farmers and workers going to vote were the embodiment of what was becoming known as "representative democracy" or simply "democracy." Of course, this extension of the right to vote was highly revolutionary for the time, and at the Pennsylvanian Constitutional Convention of 1837-38, a delegate stated that "the laws which establish the right of suffrage, are fundamental to a democratic Government" (Morantz 1971: 169 n. 9). The anti-Democrats condemned "universal" suffrage, which was, according to Chancellor Kent from New York, the "extreme democratic principle" which transformed States into "downright democracies" (Morantz 1971: 172). Yet, it is by transforming the meaning of the label, not by transforming the political organization, that the United States came to be called a democratic regime.

Nevertheless, the reality of "universal" suffrage forced politicians to woo voters even from the lower classes, and to do so they had to adopt a new public discourse. Hence, the word "democracy" rapidly became a very effective buzzword in a political world where politicians had to seduce the common people, who were

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participating more and more in elections. In fact, the parties themselves worked very hard to encourage the people to vote, and, while only 27% of the electorate voted in 1824 (350000 voters), the ratio had risen to 57% for the election of Jackson in 1828, and to more than 80% in 1840 (Morone 1990: 86; Reichley 1992: 104). It seems that the term “democracy” was quite appealing to the electors, as witnessed by the *Globe* of September 22, 1832, which reported that the crowd attending a democratic meeting yelled “Democracy against the Aristocracy” (Remini 1981: 384). Duff Green stated, in the *Telegraph*, July 24-28, 1828: “If required to define their own government, the people of this Union would say that all their institutions were purely democratic. ... They would then pronounce democracy the best of governments, allow their own to be a pure democracy” (Morantz 1971: 194). “Democracy” was not only appealing for electors, but also for consumers. Indeed, in her study of American newspapers Regina Ann Morkell Morantz (1971: 164-165) discovered that before 1800, no newspaper had used the words “Democrat,” “Democratic” or “Democratic-Republican” in its name. Between 1800 and 1807, three made their appearance: *Democratic-Republican* (Baltimore, 1802), *Democrat* (Boston, 1804-1809), and the *Constitutional Democrat* (Lancaster Pennsylvania, 1805-1807). Between 1820 and 1850, she found 202 newspapers with the term "Democrat" in their names, and some of those were Whig newspapers (‘Whig’ being the new name the anti-democratic ‘National Republicans’ adopted after 1834). Thus, “democracy” was gaining in popularity almost everywhere, and even editors came to believe this word might help to sell their product.

In 1838, the prolific novelist James Fenimore Cooper launched his essay, *The American Democrat*, which deserves a close look. Cooper felt first the need to clarify the concepts of “aristocracy” and “democracy” that he believed were not used properly in his day: “We live in an age, when the words aristocrat and democrat are much used, without regard to the real significations. An aristocrat is one of a few, who possess the political power of a country; a democrat, one of the many” (Cooper 1959:
Cooper remarked, with the Founders, that direct democracy was unsuitable for a community the size of the United States, and that consequently, representation was the key (pp. 128-129):

Representation is the vital principle of all free government, with the exception of those which rule over unusually small territories. A pure democracy infers institutions under which the people, in primary assemblies, enact their own laws; a system of which the good is questionable under any circumstances, and which is evidently impracticable in large communities.

Cooper then adapted the republican discourse on the common good to his self-proclaimed "democratic" discourse. Indeed, though Cooper was not a partisan of "pure democracy," he was nevertheless an advocate of "democracy": "Democracies being established for the common interests, and the publick agents being held in constant check by the people, their general tendency is to serve the whole community, and not small portions of it, as in the case in narrow governments" (p. 72 [emphasis added]). Here, Cooper is referring to what was know only a few decades before as a "republic." As a matter of fact, Cooper's thoughts basically echo statements made by the Founders, but with the term "democracy" in place of "republic." Cooper also claimed that "Democracies, other things being equal, are the cheapest form of government ... . Democracies are less liable to popular tumults than any other polities" (p. 73) a statement that could have been made by republicans about "republics" the day Cooper was born in 1789. It is also interesting to note that in his book, Cooper condemned social egalitarianism.

In less than a generation, then, people had grown proud to identify the American regime as "democratic" and to be identified as "democrats." "I am a Democrat!—was born a Democrat, have lived and shall die a Democrat, in the true and genuine sense of the term," claimed Henry Clay in a speech delivered in Nashville on August 17, 1840 (Morantz 1971: 244). The same year, George Bancroft published The Principles of Democracy, where he linked progress to democracy.
However, still oblivious of the recent normative shift concerning the word "democracy," the American Quarterly Review stated in 1837 that Jefferson was guilty of leading the United States "from a republic into a democracy" (Morantz 1971: 235). The same year, James Kent formulated this equation: "Jacksonism = democracy of numbers = radicalism = horrible doctrine" (Laniel 1995: 231). Nathaniel Beverley Tucker, from Virginia, wrote a personal letter to Gilmore Simms in which he maintained, referring to the aristocracy of his State: "She is sunk in the slough of democracy" (Laniel 1995: 231). Chancellor Kent declared that "all unchecked democracies are better calculated for man as he ought to be, than for man as he is" (Morantz 1971: 172). For John Quincy Adams, "democracy" was not a regime to be proud of since, as he stated in 1833, "Democracy has no forefathers, it looks to no posterity, it is swallowed up in the present and thinks of nothing but itself" (Rakove 1997: 367).

More in touch with the spirit of his time, Philip Hone, a rich Whig from New York City, declared in 1846 that "The love of the people—the dear people—was generally on men's tongues when they wanted to gain some particular end on their own" (Meyers 1971: 200). It is precisely because the Whigs acknowledged the political efficacy of the term "democracy" in seducing the electors that they decided, despite their political ideals, to use the word in a positive way and to call themselves "democrats." Henceforward, the word "democracy" occupied a hegemonic position in the political discourse and the propaganda of the American political system.

From Federalists to Republicans to National-Republicans to Democratic Whigs

One has only to look at party names to realize how important language and words seem to have been for the political actors of those days. For instance, the old Federalist party went through several name changes, shifting to Republican, then to
National-Republican, and later to Whig. In his editorial in the *New York Evening Post* (Nov. 4, 1834), William Leggett remarked with regard to party names:

Since the organization of the Government of the United States the people of this country have been divided into two great parties. One of these parties has undergone various changes of names; the other has continued steadfast alike to its appellation and to its principles and is now, as it was at first, the Democracy. ... The great object of the struggles of the Democracy has been to confine the action of the General Government within the limits marked out in the Constitution; the great object of the party opposed to the Democracy has ever been to overleap those boundaries and give to the General Government greater powers and a wider field for their exercise.

It was in 1834 that the National Republicans adopted the new label of Whigs. The label “Whig” was first adopted by Southern planters, advocates of the rights of the States and very reluctant to call themselves National Republicans (McSweeney & Zvesper 1991: 18; Reichley 1992: 83). Knowing that whoever was credited for the discovery of an effective label would be reputed a wise politician, James Watson Webb, Nathan Sargant, and Philip Hone, among others, each claimed to be the one who proposed the new Whig label (Morantz 1971: 236). The National Republicans purposefully adopted the name Whig, the label Whig evoking a popular and egalitarian image. This was the image the self-proclaimed American Whigs wanted to portray in order to gain votes. And, as a matter of fact, a Democrat complained in the *Globe* that “ancient TORIES now call themselves WHIGS” (Reichley 1992: 97).

Despite their public statements, these Whigs were more elitist than egalitarian. Behind the “democratic” veil stood the same old ideas. The Whig Chief Justice John Marshall, for instance, although referring to “democracy,” stated that “a ‘well-regulated democracy’” must protect “the immutable rights guaranteed by our Constitution, and not that Jacobinism which courts anarchy, arrays the working classes against their employers, excites the baser feelings of our nature by contending for a general distribution of property, and strives to abolish all human laws” (Morantz 1971: 261). The Whigs maintained that nature made human beings different from each other and unequal. Therefore, the egalitarianism promoted by the Democrats must be
nothing but artificial and inefficient social engineering. Francis Baylies, from Massachusetts, declared in a party assembly (Ashworth 1983: 53):

I hold to no aristocracy except the aristocracy of nature. To genius, talents, moral worth and public services I render due honor; and I care not whether the claimant to that honor is clad in robes of purple and fine linen, or in the squalid rags of poverty—whether he obtained his education at a district school or at a University—whether he sits in the high places of the nation, or digs the earth for his daily food—whether he be the son of a peasant or the son of a President.

According to William Seward of New York, “science and learning always will create an aristocracy in every country where they are cherished.” And the members of this aristocracy are “the most enlightened, and therefore the most useful, members of society” (Ashworth 1983: 53). The Whig Review explained to its readers that according to this aristocratic theory, “the average capacity and intelligence of those whom they elect to high offices are, or should be, greater than their own” (Ashworth 1983: 54). Hence, the Whigs resurrected the old argument that elected politicians must freely express their own will and must not be tied to their electors’ will. With regard to this issue, one Whig even declared that “the practice of holding members obedient to local views in effect changes our government from a representative republic to a democracy” (Ashworth 1983: 57). But such open contempt for “democracy,” though very common a few years earlier, had become very uncommon, even for the former Federalists now known as the Whigs.

In fact, the Whigs even made some attempts to portray themselves as the party of democracy (see, for instance, the National Gazette of Philadelphia [Aug. 3, 1836] and the National Intelligencer [Jan. 7, 1836]). Hence, in 1834, Martin Van Buren wrote ironically to Jesse Hoyt: “I almost begin to pity the poor Whigs. Their next cognomen [epithet] will be Democrats” (Morantz 1971: 243). Van Buren seems to have been behind his time, since already in 1828, the The Ohio State Journal had suggested that “There are now but two parties to wit, one which support [sic] the present administration, and one which support [sic] General Jackson, each of these parties
names and denominates itself "The Democratic Republican Party of the Nation" (Christophersen 1968: 78). However, it is the newspaper which somewhat overstated its case. Although politicians from all sides had probably begun to identify with "democracy," it was not before the mid-1830s that the Whigs systematically referred to themselves as "democrats." In fact, on April 12, 1835, William H. Seward wrote to Weed Seward explaining that the Whigs would have to stand for "democracy" if they wanted to win the elections. This letter warrants extensive quotation, since Seward's writing exposes the thinking of a self-conscious propagandist who believed that pretending to stand for "democracy" would be a very efficient way to seduce electors (Morantz 1971: 236-237).

It is utterly impossible, I am convinced, to defeat Van Buren. The people are for him. No so much for him as for the principle they suppose he represents. That principle is Democracy, and the best result of all our labours in the Whig cause has only been to excite them, while they have been more and more confined in their apprehension of the loss of their liberties by an imaginary instead of real aristocracy. It is with them, the poor against the rich; and it is not to be disguised, that, since the last elections, the array of parties has very strongly taken that character. Those who felt themselves or believed themselves poor, have fallen off very naturally from us, and into the majority, whose success proved them to be the friends of the poor.

It is worth underlining expressions such as "they supposed he represents," "excite them," "imaginary," "felt," "believed," all of which refer to symbolism, interpretation, and state of mind rather than concrete policies or social situations. Seward and his friends were thus fully aware of the importance of perceptions in electoral politics. In his autobiography, Seward further acknowledges that the Democrats had "in their own name, a tower of strength" (Morantz 1971: 237). For politicians, the important matter is no longer to explain the difference between republic and democracy and to offer a typology and definition of regimes consistent with etymology, history and political philosophy, but to brandish the tag "democracy"—whatever the institutions of the regime might be—in order to seduce or even delude the voters. In Seward's opinion, the word "democracy" no longer had anything to do with a specific form of regime, it was simply a catchword that might
help candidates get elected. Seward was not the only one to think in these terms. The
*Boston Quarterly Review* explained (Jan. 11, 1839) that “No measure clearly seen to be
anti-democratic, can stand the least possible of succeeding. No party, not believed to
be democratic, can rise even to respectable minority.”

The Democrats’ newspapers reacted with anger to the Whigs’ strategy: “This is
the unkindest cut of all ... Thus to ‘filch us our good name’,“ declared the *Democratic
Review*, in September 1838. Similarly, the readers of the *Boston Quarterly Review*,
learned (Jan. 1839) that

The Whig party ... has called itself democratic, and challenged success on the ground of being
more democratic than the democratic party itself. Why has it done this, if not from the
conviction that democracy is the dominant faith of the country, and that all open and avowed
opposition to it must be unavailing? In doing this, has it not said that its success must be
proportionate to the belief it can produce that it is the real democratic party? that to conquer
it must steal the democratic thunder, and swear that it is whig property?

In April 1840, the same newspaper sounded the charge anew:

It is well known that for the last two years the Whigs have, to some extent, claimed to be
democrats; and it is equally well known, because they themselves have acknowledged it,
that they claim to be democrats only because they regard the people as so attached to the
name, that they will not vote for a party which does not bear it.

In *The Expositor*, Amos Kendall declared with anger (Morantz 1971: 247):

we protest against their robbing us of ours [i.e. our name]. ... As the Federalists sought to obtain
confidence by calling themselves Federal Republicans, so the Whigs are attempting to gild
their already tarnishing name by calling themselves Democratic Whigs. Indeed in some
places, we believe, they drop the name Whig altogether, and claim to be Democrats. ... This is
not fair, gentlemen. Change your own name ... as often as you disgrace it; but do not interfere
with ours. ... Take any other name but ‘Democrat’ ... the term ‘Democrat’ is ours. ... The name of
Democrat and the principles it indicates we will never surrender.

The Whigs not only used their opponents’ name, they also copied their political tactics
such as mass meetings, national conventions, etc. In the electoral campaign of 1840
opposing Jackson’s successor Martin Van Buren and General William Henry Harrison,
both parties tried to seduce the commoners. Cognizant of resorting to demagogy,
Henry Clay complained in private that his Whig party was “appealing to the feelings and passions of our Countrymen, rather than to their reason and judgements” (Laniel 1995: 318). Nevertheless, the same Clay delivered a speech in which he presented the Whigs as the advocates of “genuine democracy” while their opponents, the Democrats, were only “bogus democrats” (Laniel 1995: 322). In May 1840, in Baltimore, the Whigs organized the “Young Men’s Democratic Whig National Convention” [emphasis added]. In 1840, in Boston, One Hundred Reasons Why William Henry Harrison Should and Will Have the Support of the Democracy for the President of the United States in Preference to Martin Van Buren, by a Workingman was published. The Whigs were now speaking the language of “democracy,” as Joshua Giddings suggested, declaring that the Whigs were the “true democrats, the real friends of the People” (Morantz 1971: 259). Caleb Cushing, a Whig Congressman, declared in the National Intelligencer (Jan. 3, 1840): “I believe in change, innovation, movement, progress, advance, improvement, reform. This is the spirit of democracy.” According to the Whigs, while Van Buren was an aristocrat, their own candidate Harrison was much closer to the people since he was said to have lived in a “log cabin” drinking “hard cider.” The Whigs also depicted their Democrat opponent, Van Buren, as an “American King supported by his Janissaries.” The height of irony was reached when the Whigs claimed that Van Buren’s partisans “arrogate to themselves the name of Democrats” (Morantz 1971: 256)!

As Harrison remarked in a speech delivered on October 17, 1840: “The most extraordinary thing in this contest is that we are fighting under the same banner. All here claim to be Democrats. The question then is, who has the right to the appellation of Democrat ... ?” (Morantz 1971: 259). Another of Harrison’s speeches (Nelson, ed. 1991: 169-174) delivered during the same campaign deserves a close look (Oddly, neither Morentz [1971] nor Laniel [1995] mentioned this speech). First, as the Whigs’ presidential candidate, Harrison spoke of Thomas Jefferson as “the high priest of constitutional democracy,” a laudatory comment, given that he went on to affirm that
"my honored father had inducted me into the principles of Constitution Democracy."

Harrison then complained that "The Government is now a practical monarchy." He stated emphatically: "Power is power, it matters not by what name it is called. The head [here President] of the Government exercising monarchical power, may be named King, Emperor, or Imaum, still he is a monarch." He thereupon declared "I am a democrat." Yet, Harrison knew there was some doubt as to claim of being a democrat. Hence follows the most interesting part of Harrison's speech (emphasis added):

An old farmer told me the other day that he did not believe one of the stories circulated against me, and he would support me if I were only a Democrat. But if I support and sustain democratic principles, what matters it how I am called? It matters a good deal, said he; you don't belong to the Democratic party! Can anything be more ruinous in its tendency to our institutions, that this high party spirit, which looks to the shadow, and not to be the substance of things? Nothing, nothing. This running after names, after imaginings, is ominous of dangerous results. In the blessed Book we are told that the pretensions of false Christs shall be in future times so specious that even the elect will be deceived. And is it not so now with democracy? The name does not constitute the Democrat.

Harrison here clearly acknowledges the importance of political marketing and propaganda. He then tried to debunk the generally accepted idea of the time that the United States was witness to a struggle between democracy and aristocracy (emphasis added).

It is the vilest imposture ever attempted upon the credulity of the public mind to array the poor of the country under the name of Democrats against the rich, and style them aristocrats. This is dealing with fables. The natural antagonist of Democracy is not aristocracy. It is monarchy.—There is no instance on record of a Republic like ours running into an aristocracy. It can hurry into a pure Democracy, and the confidence of that Democracy being once obtained by a Marius or Caesar, or a Bolivar or a Bonaparte, he strides rapidly from professions of love for the people to usurpation of their rights, and steps from that high eminence to a throne! And thus, in the name of democracy, the boldest crimes are committed. Who forgets the square in Paris, where ran rivers of the people's blood, shed in the name of Democracy at the foot of the statue of liberty! Cherish not the man, then, who under the guise and name of Democracy, tries to overthrow the principles of Republicanism, as professed and acted upon by Jefferson and Madison.

Harrison thus made it clear that a person could use the term "democracy" to delude the people. Yet, the conclusion of Harrison's speech reveals a kind of confusion: Harrison obviously wanted to persuade the people that the Democrats—Harrison's
opponents—were copycats of Caesar, Bonaparte and the violent French revolutionaries responsible for the rivers of the people’s blood shed "in the name of democracy"... Harrison then referred to “the principles of Republicanism,” an odd shift, since, from the beginning of the speech, he had referred to himself as a democrat, not a republican. Yet, despite Harrison’s own comments, it seems quite obvious that he aimed to delude the people with the label “democracy,” for what he really cared about were the old familiar norms and rules of republicanism established and strengthened by Jefferson and Madison. So the ironic comments of the Whig William Cost Johnson about those who “call themselves the true States rights, Old Dominion, republican democrats of the Jeffersonian School” may have applied to Harrison himself (Peterson 1962: 71).

As of the 1840 electoral campaign, however, the ideology of the two main parties started to be less and less different. Moreover, “democracy” would become a catchword used to define both the American political system and the “American way of life.” No party condemned the political system itself anymore as may have occurred a generation before. In fact, the political system of the United States came to be seen as sacred and to be identified with “democracy.”

"Democracy" is God’s Idea and America, a Democratic Paradise

By the 1830s and 1840s, “democracy” had become such an honorific term that politicians and editors of newspapers started to claim that “democracy” embodied all good.13 “Democracy” was no longer just a political system in which the people rule, or in which the representatives of the people may be elected, or in which individuals have rights. Democracy—the new name used to about the political regime of the United States—had become the embodiment of reason, truth and even God’s will. On July 4, 1834, Frederick Robinson delivered a speech before the Trades’ Union of Boston and Vicinity. He declared that (Morantz 1971: 208):
Equality is democracy. Everyone who truly loves the human race will favor such governments, constitutions, laws, and administrations as he believes to be productive of equality. ... This is the rock on which democracy is founded. ... The spirit of democracy, which is equality, teaches us that the laborer, the producers, and not the talented, the rich, and the learned, are the benefactors of mankind.

In October 1837, the Democratic Review explained to its readers that the goal of the paper would be to advocate “that high and holy democratic principle which was designed to be the fundamental element of the new social and political system created by the American experiment” (Morantz 1971: 207). John L. O'Sullivan, in the same newspaper, wrote in October 1837: “We are willing to make every reform in our institutions that may be commanded by the test of the democratic principle, to democratize them ... consistent with a due regard to the existing development of the public opinion” (Laniel 1995: 307). He went on: “For Democracy is the cause of Humanity ... It is the cause of philanthropy ... It is the cause of Christianity.” And further, “Democracy is a creed of high hope and universal love” (Laniel 1995: 308). In September 1838, one could read in the Democratic Review: “Democracy is bold and energetic, unresting in its perpetual striving after a better good, a higher perfection of social institution” (Morantz 1971: 209 n. 37). In 1845, Hugh A. Garland from Virginia delivered a speech entitled The principles of democracy identical with the moral improvement of mankind, a very telling title. Of course, this new faith was not exempt of partisanship: “We consider the preservation of the present ascendancy of the Democratic party as of great, if not vital, importance to the future destinies of this holy cause” (Morantz 1971: 210 [emphasis added]).

This was not the first attempt to utter the word “democracy” in a panegyric way and in relation to God. For instance, as early as July 4, 1800, J. Cloyd declared in a speech that (Morantz 1971: 154)

The heads of a certain party [Federalist] in this country have fought by a confusion of terms, to bring democracy into disrepute— ... They have artfully contrived to substitute the word republican for that of democrat— It cannot be denied that the word republican is known to the constitution. ... but it is as certain that it meant a democratical republican form. ... I trust I
speak the mind of all in this meeting when I say, that to be called a DEMOCRAT, (a word I would restore and put in the place of republican) is a term of the highest political respect—The cause of Democracy is the cause of God!

Cloyd's early attempt to make "democracy" a honorific term—to "put [democrat] in the place of republican," in his own words—had failed. At that time, God was still a republican rather than a democrat, as Perez Fobes' public comment of 1795 shows (Fobes 1983: 1000):

a republican form was the choice and fabric of God himself for his own people. Moses with a senate of seventy, shared the government of Israel. The nature of man, the character of christian rulers, above all the benevolent principles of liberty and equality, embosomed in the religion of JESUS, are congenial to no other form; at least they appear incompatible with monarchical principles and the dynasty of kings.

However, forty years later, "democracy" had apparently replaced "republic" in God's heart. Indeed, in 1841, Amos Kendall, editor of The Expositor, declared (Morantz 1971: 208):

The Democracy we advocate is justice between man and man, between state and state, between nation and nation. It is morality. It is 'giving to every man his due.' It is 'doing unto others as we would have them do unto us.' It advocates the banishment of falsehood, fraud, and violence from the affairs of men. It is the moral code of all true philosophy; ... it is the perfection of reason and the law of God.

In Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass, first published in 1855, democracy was no longer a political system, but a culture in which the "democratic individual" could flourish.14 In the opening poem, Whitman (1983: 1) writes: "One's-Self I sing, a simple separate person,/Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse." Elsewhere (p. 3) he writes: "I heard that you ask'd for something to prove this puzzle the New World,/And to define America, her athletic Democracy,/Therefore I send you my poems that you behold in them what you wanted." "O Democracy," sings Whitman, and further (p. 363): "Sail, sail, thy best, ship of Democracy." By his own admission, Whitman wished to compose "the poems of freedom, and the exposé of
personality—singing in high tones democracy and the New World of it through These States” (in Kaplan 1983: xvi). In an article entitled “The strength of the Democratic Party” published in the Brooklyn Eagle on November 17, 1846, Whitman also declared: “The democracy of this country can never be overthrown. The true democratic spirit is endued with immortal life and strength ... true democracy has within itself a perpetual spring of health and purity” (Morantz 1971: 210 n. 39).

Novelists as well took up the pro-democratic discourse. In Moby Dick, published in 1851, Herman Melville (1975: 102) writes: “That democratic dignity without end which ... radiates from God himself! The great God absolute! The center and substance of democracy.” In chapter 26 of the novel, America is depicted as “The center and circumference of all democracy!” All Americans—even the one “that wields a pick or drives a spike”—shared a “democratic dignity.” In 1906, Barrett Wendell remarked with cynicism: “Our popular professions of loyalty to Democracy often sound impressively like the confession of a creed; and, in truth, the American ideal of Democracy has developed various creedlike qualities” (Laniel 1995: 324-325). Wendell went on to scorn “this superstitious deference to the mere name of Democracy, this almost timorous acceptation of domination by a venerated word” (Laniel 1995: 325).

A gesture of which Thomas Paine would say: “that the principles of America opened the Bastille is not to be doubted; and therefore the key comes to the right place” (Elkins & McKitrick 1993: 309).

Furthermore, the Assemblee Nationale proclaimed three days of mourning in April 1790, following the death of Benjamin Franklin (Elkins & McKitrick 1993: 312).

On the debate opposing virtue to corruption in early republicanism, see Bouvet & Chopin (1997: 34-37); Kramnick (1982); Pocock (1993: 246-251); Worden (1994: 46-47); and Morone’s (1990: 15-19) and Pangle’s (1988: 31-33) attempt to merge liberal and republican traditions.

According to Jefferson, Hamilton even commented: “say the federal monarchy, let us call things by their right names, for a monarchy it is” (Padover, ed. 1943: 1274); and see also Pocock (1975: 528-531).
Expressing such a view about the French Revolution, Chauncey Goodrich wrote to Olivier Wolcott on February 17, 1793, that the “greatest danger is from the contagion of levelism” which may make “all equal to French barbers” (Morantz 1971: 111).

The founders of these associations were inspired by the English patriotic societies, the American clubs like the “Sons of Liberty” created about the time of the War of Independence, and also, of course, the political clubs in France such as the Girondins, the Jacobins, the Cordeliers, etc.

On July 4, 1795, on the proposal of a toast, the members of the Juvenile Republican Society of New York City drank to: “A speedy emancipation of the sons of Hibernia [Latin name of Ireland]—may they soon rank as a Republic amongst nations./France—may her arms henceforth be as forceful in giving freedom to nations as in the influence of Holland./Holland—may the unanimity and moderation which has characterized that infant Republic continue to excite other nations to follow her example./Poland—may she shortly enjoy the blessing of Peace, Liberty and Independence as the reward of her arduous tho’ unfortunate struggles” (Foner, ed. 1976: 232).

The link between the “Democratic Societies” and the French revolutionaries is also pointed out in a letter published by the New York Daily Gazette, in February 1794: “Do the people require intermediary guides betwixt them and the constituted authorities? ... If not, as I know no other authority, I shall hereafter regard them as self-creators, as a branch, perhaps, of the Jacobin Society of Paris” (Elkins & McIttrick 1993: 460).

This concern about factions and societies is not new. See for instance George Washington’s letter to Bushrod Washington, September 30, 1786: “I am not friend to institutions except in local matters which are wholly or in great measure confined to the County of the Delegates. To me it appears much wiser and more politic, to choose able and honest representatives, and leave them in all national questions to determine from the evidence of reason, and the facts which shall be adduced, when internal and external information is given to them in a collective state” (Allen, ed. 1988: 335)

Even the very short-lived Anti-Masonic party (1831-1832) identified itself with the “republic” (Nelson, ed. 1991: 149).

After the “Dorr Rebellion” of 1841, which planned to introduce universal manhood suffrage and which released the “People’s Constitution.” Its first article went as follow: “In the spirit and in the words of ROGER WILLIAMS, the illustrious Founder of this State, and his venerated associates, WE DECLARE, “that this government shall be a DEMOCRACY.” or Government of the PEOPLE, “by the major consent” of the same, “ONLY IN CIVIL THINGS.” The will of the people shall be expressed by Representatives freely chosen” (Swindler, ed. 1979: 371). The rebellion was defeated. Universal suffrage for male, however, was introduced the year after.

Probably a quite unpleasant experience, assuming they all shared the feelings of the young Federalist Washington Irving, who wrote to Mary Pairlie, on May 2, 1807, about the election in New York: “We have toiled through the purgatory of an election ... I drank beer with the multitude; and I talked handbill-fashion with the demagogue, and I shook hands with the mob—whom my heart abhorreth ... Truly this saving one's country is a nauseous piece of business, and if patriotism is such a dirty virtue (I have been to such filthy corners)—prythee, no more of it. I was almost the whole time at the Seventh Ward—as you know, that is the most fertile ward in mob, riot, and incident” (Laniel 1995: 192).

According to an anti-democrat, the term “Democracy” worked as a “talisman”: “The fate of the country is sealed up in this SINGLE word, and there is no escape from its influence. It is dear to the native born of the land, and every immigrant comes here for the sake of DEMOCRACY. DEMOCRACY all the world over is the proud name of the people’s sovereignty, and so it is destined to be” (Peterson 1962: 75).

George Kateb goes as far as asserting that Whitman wrote “the best phrases and sentences about democracy” (Kateb 1990: 545).
CHAPTER VII
The Birth of Pro-Democratic Discourse in France

Introduction

In the early 1800s, “democracy” was commonly associated with the most extreme events that had shaken France during the revolutionary era of the previous century. For Pierre-Louis Roederer, even the 1791 Constitution was democratic. In his *L’esprit de la révolution*, published in 1815, he explained that this Constitution “... was in fact a democratic republic, a ghost of a monarchy.” However, it would not take long for French political actors and commentators to stop thinking of the word “democracy” in reference to history, whether ancient or recent, and to start using it positively in reference to the present.

We have seen that the motivation for American politicians to introduce the term “democracy” into their electoral propaganda as a tool to seduce electors was the formation of the first modern mass political parties, combined with the adoption of universal suffrage (for white males). At first glance, the French case cannot be compared to the American case, since there was nothing in France equivalent to American political parties. Several “sociétés” and “clubs” became involved in electoral campaigns to support their favourite candidates, but these associations did not have the structure, the human resources, the legitimacy or the national presence that parties already had in the United States at that time. It is also very significant that in contrast with the United States, the right to vote and the right to be elected in France were reserved for a happy few. In 1817, only 90000 individuals were allowed to vote, and around 10000 had the right to be candidates. The number of electors slowly
increased—166000 in 1831, then 245000 in 1847 (Furet 1992: 272 and 333; Ponteil 1989: 23; Tulard 1985: 452). So, the fact that only a very small elite was allowed to vote meant that referring to “democracy” in positive terms during the electoral campaign did not make as much sense as it did in the United States during the same period. Interestingly, it is precisely in the aftermath of the Revolution of February 1848, when half-universal suffrage was established, that mainstream politicians started to adopt the term “democracy” as a very useful catchword for seducing voters.

The French political situation was however very much more chaotic than the American one, and because of such political turbulence, the new meaning of “democracy” would take longer to stabilize. France entered the 19th century under the reign of the Emperor Napoléon Bonaparte, then witnessed a brief restoration of the Monarchy until Bonaparte returned and ruled during the so-called Hundred Days before being defeated at Waterloo. France was thereafter occupied by foreign armies. The king, Louis XVIII, returned to the throne, from which his brother, Charles X, was eventually removed by the Revolution of July 1830. A new constitutional monarchy (known as the Monarchy of July) was established and King Louis-Philippe—a liberal king—ruled until the Republican Revolution of February 1848. In 1848, the term “democracy” was commonly used in an honorary manner even by mainstream political actors (as in the United States), although Louis-Joseph Napoleon’s coup d’état of 1851 destabilized the vocabulary of politics. For almost twenty years, France was no longer a republic. The Second Empire lasted until September 1870, when the Emperor surrendered to the Prussians at Sedan. The Third Republic was proclaimed and France has remained a republic to this day. With the proclamation of the Third Republic in the early 1870s, the word “democracy” really became established as a term of approval to be used even by mainstream political actors, who had come to the conclusion that to use such a term in a laudatory manner was a very effective means of seducing the people.
The First Half of the 1800s: Representation and “Democracy” Not Yet Synonymous

One of the most famous theorists of the representative system in the early 1800s was Benjamin Constant, a complex individual and an ambitious and ambivalent political actor. He began his political career as a member of the Tribunate (1799-1802), then was an opponent to the First Empire, became an ally of the Bourbons in 1814, served under Napoléon Bonaparte during the Hundred Days, sat with the opposition during the Restoration and was a partisan of King Louis-Philippe. Philosophically, he was a defender of constitutional monarchy (Harpaz 1986: 41-42) although he advocated equality before the law for all. When he died, the radical Auguste Blanqui gave him a stirring homage, stating that Constant was a champion of “liberty,” a “great citizen and a great man” (Blanqui 1971: 104 and also Beranger 1974 [1831]: 7). 4

It seems that Constant genuinely believed that the only true source of legitimacy was to be found in popular sovereignty, for both philosophical and practical reasons (Constant 1991: 297-301 and 1988c: 175-183; see also Fontana 1991: 50). Moreover, Constant held that even representatives must respect laws and minorities (Harpaz 1986: 46-47). In Constant’s own words, a representative regime might be controlled by “despotic legislators” (Constant 1991: 295)5 and therefore, “the people ... must exercise an active and constant surveillance over their representatives” because “The holders of authority ... are so ready to spare us all sort of troubles, except those of obeying and paying!” (Constant 1988b: 326) Such statements sound like those uttered a few decades earlier by the spokespersons of the sansculottes. Nevertheless, Constant’s political thinking provides a rational justification, based on sociological considerations, for modern individuals to dismiss direct democracy and to embrace a representative government (Fontana 1991: ch. 4; Holmes 1984: ch. 1-2 and 5; Manent 1987: ch. 8). 6 First, Constant claimed that modern states are simply too large geographically and demographically to provide an appropriate frame for direct democracy. He also maintained that modern individuals are not of the same nature as
were the ancients: the former are not ready to squander time and energy in political participation since private life is what really matters to them.

By contrasting modern and ancient liberty, Constant openly compared direct democracy with representative government (although he did not once use the term "democracy," but rather "republic," in his famous speech [1988d: 311; Fontana 1991: 49] entitled "The liberty of the ancients compared with that of the moderns"). Constant added: “Among the moderns, ... the individual, independent in his private life, is, even in the freest of states, sovereign only in appearance” (Constant 1988: 312 [emphasis added]). “Appearance” here means fiction, and Constant explained elsewhere that because of the size of modern states, “the mass of their inhabitants, whatever form of government they adopt, have no active part in it. They are called at most to exercise sovereignty through representation, that is to say in a fictitious manner” (Constant 1988d: 103-104 [emphasis added]). Echoing Rousseau, Constant stated that the modern individual’s “sovereignty is restricted and almost always suspended. If, at fixed and rare intervals, in which he is again surrounded by precautions and obstacles, he exercises this sovereignty, it is always only to renounce it” (Constant 1988b: 312). Constant concluded, however, that modern people “enjoy the benefits of representative government” (p. 309).

What has been oddly downplayed by students of Constant’s political ideas is the simple fact that Constant dismissed direct democracy and praised representation in a time when he himself was a candidate involved in an electoral campaign. He delivered his well known speech entitled “The liberty of the ancients compared with that of the moderns” in February 1819 at the Athenée Royal, during an electoral campaign. After having been defeated in 1817 and 1818, Constant was finally elected in March 1819. An obvious problem arises concerning Constant’s position: Constant and his fellow representatives care about politics and public life, are they modern or ancient individuals? And if they do belong to an ancient culture, how can they be fit to rule a modern state? Or, if Constant and the other representatives do share a modern
identity with their contemporaries, there are consequently good reasons to believe that they might regard their political careers not merely as a means to achieve the public good (an ancient ideal), but rather to pursue their own interests, since modern men are said by Constant himself to be mainly concerned with their private interests. These considerations go beyond the scope of our current research. However, Constant's philosophical justification of representative government must not obscure the fact that he was seeking to be a representative. Thus, Constant's considerations were not merely philosophical: he was legitimating a political regime, his own socio-political function and, therefore, his own political power.

Constant rarely used the term "democracy," although when he did, it was consistent with the way his contemporaries used it. In the chapter "Du pouvoir représentatif" of his Cours de politique constitutionnelle, he used the expression "pure democracy" when alluding to the ancient cities, but also to Geneva, and he clearly specified that "democracy" is distinct from "representative government" (Christophersen 1968: 52; Lobrano 1994: 57 n. 20). Other influential representatives legitimated the representative regime while dismissing "democracy." François Guizot, for instance, expressed his admiration for the representative system in his Des moyens de gouvernement et d'opposition dans l'état actuel de la France, released in Paris in 1821. Guizot suggested that "representative government" empowers "superior" individuals, that it is respectful of "truth" and of "liberty" (Manent, ed. 1986b: 157). Openly elitist, Guizot's position is also a bold celebration of the author himself, since as a representative he is one of those individuals gifted with "real superiority." Moreover, Guizot, among others, believed that it is not the will of the people but reason itself that must be expressed by the representatives. In 1831, Pierre-Paul Royer-Collard (1986b: 123) argued against popular sovereignty, suggesting that representatives must express the sovereignty of reason. First, he explained that "the word representation is a metaphor" (1986a: 116). Royer-Collard furthermore advocated the establishment of two assemblies, one "democratic" and the other
“aristocratic”: the former would be the protector of liberty and, therefore, must be elected, the latter would be the guardian of order and stability and, consequently, must be hereditary (1986b: 128). In Royer-Collard’s discourse (1986b: 130-131), there is no ambiguity about “democracy”—it is wrong:

Democracy? Think about it, gentlemen, and see what is her strength? For centuries, she has been walking hand in hand with civilization. ... From the society where she rules without opponents, she has already broken into the government. ... Which fruits has she carried? Inside, anarchy, tyranny, misery, bankruptcy, and finally despotism. Outside, a war that has lasted more than twenty years. ... democracy within the government is incapable of prudence; it is so because it is, by nature, given to violence, war, bankruptcy.9

Thus, even if in 1822 Royer-Collard suggested that “democracy is everywhere,” expressing a kind of sociological assessment, this does not mean that he was for “democracy.” Actually, to designate French society as democratic in this sociological manner was quite problematic.

“Democracy” as a Sociological Concept

Some French political commentators began in the 1820s to used the term “democracy” as a sociological concept, referring to the characteristics of a society, rather than to the organization of a political regime or to a section of a population (the demos—i.e. the poor—in opposition to the aristocrats and to the Crown). According to this new fashion, a society might be “democratic,” even though its regime was a monarchy or an aristocracy. The Catholic Lamennais, for instance, condemned Charles the Tenth’s monarchical rule for being a “vast democracy” (Furet 1992: 345).10 Pierre Rosanvallon (1995) suggests that the publication of the first volume of de Tocqueville’s Démocratie en Amérique, in 1835, is one of the major causes of this shift in the meaning of the term “democracy.” Yet, students of de Tocqueville’s work found no fewer than eleven definitions of the word “democracy” in his texts (Manent 1993: 13-28; Olivier 1990: 173-183; Schleifer 1980).11 The title of de Tocqueville’s famous book
is itself problematic, since he travelled around America exactly during the years when American political actors were developing their own pro-democratic propaganda. It is very likely that De Tocqueville had been intoxicated by the pro-democratic discourse emerging in America. Moreover, at the time of the Revolution of February 1848, de Tocqueville adopted two different definitions of the word “democracy,” and such a semantic shift was not determined by philosophical or sociological considerations, but by the political need to contain the socialist tide. Thus, what seems at first glance to be an epistemological gain—i.e. to consider “democracy” as a sociological concept—must also be understood as politically motivated. Moreover, it is interesting to note that this conceptual innovation was introduced by conservative and nostalgic commentators. Their attitude was quite similar to that of the conservative Americans of the 1780s who suggested that it was the overly "democratic" society resulting from Independence that explained the economic and political turbulence they were witnessing, and this justified in their eyes the creation of a centralized government for the Union.

De Tocqueville was not the only French citizen to be confused about the meaning of "democracy." In the early 1820s, the comte de Serre expressed in one of his addresses to the Chambre des députés the idea that “democracy” was “everywhere” (Rosanvallon 1993: 23; English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 149):

If the democratic principle languishes among us inactive and lifeless, we have a sure means of reanimating it: let us unbind the newspapers. If, on the contrary, democracy is everywhere full of life and vigor, if it is making its influence felt in industry, in property, in the laws, in memories, in men, and in things, if the torrent threatens to overflow the feeble channels that just barely contain it, let us not be so foolish as to add to its strength and impetuousness. On January 22, 1822, Royer-Collard replied to de Serre that “democracy” is a “social state” and that “Democracy set out to change the internal state of society, and has done so. Throughout many misfortunes, the equality of rights (which is the truth of democracy) has prevailed; recognized, consecrated, and guaranteed by the Charter, it is today the universal form of society, and in this way democracy is everywhere.”
would be misleading to maintain that these political actors were making a rigorous use of "democracy": while democracy—and equality of rights—was said by the conservative Royer-Collard to be "everywhere" (speech to the Chambre des députés [Jan. 22, 1822]), only 100000 citizens were allowed to vote (Rosanvallon 1993: 23-24; English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 149). Thus, these political actors obviously used the term in order to evoke a confused image merging ideas of equality and liberty without considering the actual type of political regime. The ideas of these official political actors were mirrored by publications of the time. The 1835 edition of the Dictionnaire de l'Académie française suggested in its introduction that "Democracy is in manners" (a statement echoed in 1848 in the Bulletin de la République: "democracy ... is everywhere today; in interests, in ideas, in manners") (Ponteil 1989: 212 and Rosanvallon 1993: 24; English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 15). Adopting a similar view, Armand Carrel published in the National (Dec. 9, 1835) an article entitled "We must not confuse democracy and republic." In his text, Carrel maintained that "France is a democracy and not a republic. The democratic principle is well and properly granted in the existing constitution."

Carrel, Royer-Collard and de Tocqueville were not just political commentators, they were also political actors sharing a relatively conservative world view. Their writings and speeches were informed not only by history or philosophy, and references to "democracy" did not serve only philosophical purposes. These people often practised political philosophy rather than political philosophy. Their new way of speaking about the so-called "democratic" social state of France was not simply a manipulation of their discontent with the current situation (as had been the case for anti-democratic Americans in the 1780s), but was also a discursive strategy which sought to make the people believe that as France was already a "democracy," there was no reason to undertake radical transformations. Guizot however, himself quite a conservative political actor, contested the idea that democracy was a social state. Guizot did so in a critical review of two books—Edouard Alletz's De la démocratie
nouvelle, ou des mœurs et de la puissance des classes moyennes en France, 1837, and Auguste Billiard's Essai sur l'organisation démocratique de France, 1837, written for the Revue Française in 1837. In his book, Alletz adopted a rather unusual position, labelling the representative system a “democracy.” However, Alletz made a distinction between “old democracy,”—that is, the “government by the masses,” the “power of numbers,” the “authority of folly and misery”—and the “new democracy,” that is, the representative system offering “the possibility of a democracy without universal suffrage” (Rosanvallon 1993: 25; English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 150).¹⁸ In his review of these two books, entitled “De la démocratie dans les sociétés modernes,” Guizot highlighted a paradox: both authors, Alletz and Billiard, suggested that France was a “democracy,” insofar as its society was concerned, yet both were unwilling to state that Louis Philippe’s monarchy was a democracy. Moreover, while Alletz’s political model was a constitutional monarchy, Billiard favoured a republic with universal suffrage. Hence, Guizot (1837: 194) asked: “Thus, what is this democracy, this sovereign fact that leads to such contrary conclusions two enlightened men of good faith ... ?”¹⁹ Guizot remarked with good reason that according to historical and philosophical traditions, “democracy ... is a war cry; it is the flag of the many placed below, against the few placed above” (p. 197)²⁰ (this idea is repeated a few pages further along: throughout history, the “democratic movement did not change. ... [it is] war from the bottom up, of the many against the few, of the small against the great” [p. 202; English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 150-151]²¹). Guizot also suggested that “What was once democracy would today be anarchy”, (Rosanvallon 1993: 26; English trans. Rosanvallon 1995: 151)²² and he declared that modern democracy may also mean “the limitation of all powers by representative government, civil equality, the equal admissibility of all to public office, and the extension of individual liberties” (Rosanvallon 1993: 25; English trans. in Rosanvallon 1995: 150-151).²³ On May 5 of the same year, Guizot stressed that “What has often ruined democracy is that it did not
allow any hierarchical organization of society; liberty was not enough for her; she wanted levelling. This is why democracy perished” (in Dournon 1982: 229).24

Thus, Guizot was dissatisfied with the sociological use of the term “democracy” because he believed that it led to contradictory conclusions and was inconsistent with the history of the concept. Working class militants and propagandists also understood “democracy” in accordance with its etymological, historical and philosophical background. Not surprisingly, they, unlike conservative political actors and commentators such as Royer-Collard and de Tocqueville, did not believe that a country under a monarchical regime in which only few thousand people were active citizens deserved the label of “democracy.” Although those who advocated a true direct democracy were rare, working-class activists and spokespersons nevertheless strived for a political organization that would have included elements of direct democracy. Even more interesting is the fact that several left-wing commentators were quite concerned about the new trend of enunciating “democracy” in a positive way. Such concern clearly demonstrates a real understanding of the political force of words.

Politics and Words: “Republic” and “Democracy”

Leftist political actors and commentators of the early 19th century deplored the confusion surrounding the meaning of the term “democracy.” Leftists condemned republicans for claiming to be democrats. As a matter of fact, much as in the American case,25 French republicans were so numerous that some of them identified with “democracy” to express their distinctiveness. Furthermore, the popularity of the term “democracy” was also the result of a bizarre rule prohibiting the public use of the word “republic.” This prohibition was enforced during the Restoration, under the Monarchy of July after King Louis-Philippe escaped a murder attempt in July 1835 (Tulard 1985: 382), and during the Second Empire (Caron 1995: 205). Even though it seems that this censorship was not always strictly enforced,26 to declare in public
"Long live the Republic!" ("Vive la République!") around 1830 might result in the deportation of the culprit (Caron 1994: 500). Such a rule is another indication of how conscious political actors were of the political importance of words and labels. Thus, opponents of the Monarchy were looking for terms that might express their political ideals. The term "democracy" was thus often used instead of the outlawed word "republic" (Desbrousses-Peloille 1984b: 468).

In an attempt to clarify the situation, in 1834 the journal La Revue républicaine identified two schools of thought regarding "democracy": the "conventional school" and the "American school." The adherents of the former understood "democracy" in relation to direct democracy and economic equality, while those who belonged to the latter school focused on representative government, political equality (right to vote) and individualism. In the French context, it may be said that the American school was that of the republicans, while socialists belonged to the conventional school (Rosanavallon 1992: 344).

Confusion amongst republicans led Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in 1840 to express a very cynical opinion about the label "republican": "you are republican.—Republican, yes; but this word does not clarify anything. Res publica, this is the public thing; yet, anyone who wants the public thing, whatever the form of government, can claim to be republican. Kings are also republicans" (Proudhon 1966: 295-296). Echoing Proudhon's opinion, Lafayette evoked the idea of a "royal republic" in his Mémoires (Caron 1994: 499). Thus, positive references to "republic" and "democracy" were as a matter of course largely motivated by strategic considerations.

With regard to "democracy", Albert Laponneraye, in his Lettre aux prolétaires (1835) criticized the propensity of political actors to pose as "democrats" regardless of their actual political ideals and goals (Rosanavallon 1993: 27; English trans. in Rosanavallon 1995: 152):

Nowadays everyone pretends to be a democrat—even those who, by reason of interest or prejudice, are the most implacable foes of all democracy. The banker who has grown rich off of shady dealings in the stock exchange, and the corrupt orator who mounts the so-called national
platform in order to defend the most disgraceful monopolies, call themselves democrats. The newspaper that each day echoes aristocratic railings and inveighs furiously against liberty and equality also calls itself democratic. Finally, these is scarcely a marquis in some noble quarter or a onetime Jesuit who does not call himself a democrat.30

Similarly, the worker Pimpaneau (1974b) wrote in the Fall of 1833: “It seems that you use words without understanding them; I want to remind you that democracy is the rule of all, it is what republicans want.” In other words, he simultaneously highlighted that people were using words without really grasping their meanings, and that there was no difference between democracy and republic. Thus, like the United States during the 1820s-30s, France witnessed a political struggle between political actors and commentators, each seeking to control the normative and descriptive meanings of the word “democracy.” This is why Blanqui complained in 1832 that in the Monarchy of July, the Chambre des députés was reputed to be the “democratic” element of the regime. To call the Chambre des députés “democratic” was partly consistent with the traditional meaning of “democracy,” though there was usually a distinction to be made between the aristocratic branch—the Upper House or the Senate—and the democratic branch—the Lower House or the Commons—of a regime (Caron 1994: 499).32 The problem with the Monarchy of July was that there was only one assembly filled with individuals belonging to a very exclusive wealthy elite. Blanqui pointed out the absurdity of labelling the only representative house of the regime “democratic” instead of “aristocratic”: “One hundred thousand bourgeois constitute what we call, by a bitter irony, its democratic element. God! What about the other elements?” (Blanqui 1971: 73 and see also 71-72 and 86).33

Economic Struggle and “Democracy”

Until 1830, the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie were the two primary competing classes (Tulard 1985: 397). In the 1830s, the main opponents were the rising working class and the bourgeoisie. In other words, the proletariat was pitted against the
"financial aristocracy" (Faure & Rancière, eds. 1976: 50)\textsuperscript{34} or the "aristocracy of wealth" (Jador 1974: 30).\textsuperscript{35} For François Furet, this class struggle, in Marxist terms, was not so much the result of industrialization as the consequence of social and philosophical tensions inherited from the French Revolution and its aftermath (Furet 1992: 343). Those who protested violently against their social and economic conditions were mainly unemployed people, artisans working in small shops, students and intellectuals. Nevertheless, it is striking for anyone reading their pamphlets and flyers how concepts such as prolétares and bourgeois were already important to them.\textsuperscript{36} This consciousness of a divided society and of a "class struggle" was deeply rooted in the minds not only of the workers,\textsuperscript{37} but also of the "bourgeoisie,"\textsuperscript{38} who felt terribly threatened by the workers. Such fear was the result of the violent confrontations that erupted regularly: the workers' insurrection in Lyon in 1831, rioters taking control of the Eastern part of Paris on June 5 and 6, 1832, and workers' riots in 1834 in Lyon and Paris. Another important riot broke out in Paris in August 1840 (Furet 1992: 340-346; Tulard 1985: 377, 379 386). In all these cases, thousands of people were involved, roadblocks were erected, entire city districts or even an entire city (Lyon) were totally controlled by rioters for hours or days, and the military was sent to crush the protesters. This struggle, which divided French society along economic lines, reached its peak with the Commune of Paris, in 1871. Moreover, the harshness of the discourses of the socialist and anarchist political philosophers and propagandists—Blanqui, Proudhon, Buonarroti, Buchez—also fuelled the bourgeoisie's fear, a fear that was openly acknowledged by political commentators of the time. Gustave Flaubert, for instance, declared: "I believe that the poor hate the rich and the rich fear the poor, it will be thus eternally" (Priollaud, ed. 1983: 11).\textsuperscript{39} Even Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, who was to become the President of France and its second emperor, was a self-proclaimed "socialist"! He wrote in jail in 1844 L'Extinction du paupérisme, a book in which he aligns himself with the workers (Furet 1992: 454). According to the socialists,
it was time now to steer the revolutionary movement that had begun in 1789 to its natural harbour, i.e. a socialist republic (Nicolet 1982: 40).

Working-class pamphleteers rarely referred to “democracy” during the first years of Monarchy of July. Rather, it was the terms “Republic” and “popular sovereignty” that expressed the goal of the workers. This is easily understood, since the general feeling among the workers was that they had been unjustly deprived of the fruits of the revolution of July 1830, which resulted in a new monarchy instead of a republic (Pimpaneau 1974a: 7). In the following years, however, some workers began to call their political goals “democracy.” Thus, in the Fall of 1833, Pimpaneau stated that “universal war is open between the people and the kings, between liberty and despotism, between democracy and aristocracy” (Pimpaneau 1974a).

This kind of attitude toward “democracy” prompted A. M. Bertin’s statement in the Journal des débats of December 8, 1832, that while speaking to the workers, orators like to use what he called “democratic flattery” (in Faure & Rancière, eds. 1976: 60).

Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, in L’Extinction du pauvérisme, declared that “We must soon be able to say: ... the triumph of democratic ideas has destroyed pauperism” (Tulard 1985: 432). For Bonaparte, “democracy” means economic equality, an idea consistent with the conceptual history of democracy (Rosanvallon 1993: 26; 1995: 151). Several newspapers clearly identified themselves as “democrat” and “communist,” or, at least, as supporters of the workers’ cause. Such was the case of the first issue of Le Travail, Organe de la rénovation sociale, published in Lyon in June 1841. The main text of the front page is entitled: "UNION À NOS FRÈRES LES DÉMOCRATES." It is an appeal for the unity of all “democrats.” On page 3, the birth of another newspaper, La Fraternité, is mentioned. It is noted that this new journal, expressing the “communist opinion,” should be “very helpful for Democracy.” In July 1841, in its second issue, the front page headline of Le Travail read: “WHY WE ARE COMMUNIST.” In Le Cataclysme social, in 1845, Étienne Cabet (1845a: 20) claimed that “Democrats” are “Communists” and vice versa. Then, Cabet (1845b: 49)
condemned the discursive strategy of the "bourgeoisie" who used "democracy" to delude the people: "the title of Democracy that they [the bourgeoisie] feign to take is nothing but a lie." 48 Several newspaper openly claimed to be democratic while expressing at the same time popular concerns. In 1839, the newspaper *La Propagande démocratique*, made positive reference to "the democrats," and published advertising for Émile Pagès's *Fables démocratiques* and C-F Chevé's *Programme démocratique: résumé d'une organisation complète de la démocratie radicale*. In 1847, the newspaper *Le Peuple* had a subtitle referring to itself as the "weekly newspaper of French democracy." The editor explained that "Our politics and our literature shall be written by the most important writers of the democratic party." 49 On the front page of the first issue, Sieyès' claim that the *Tiers État* must be politically recognized, was reinterpreted by the author of the article who declared that it was time, now, for the people to be recognized (a tactic that was repeated in 184850). Another newspaper, *Le Club*, also had a reference to "democracy" in its subtitle.51 In the same spirit, Considérant released in 1843 *Principes du Socialisme: Manifeste de la Démocratie du XIXe siècle*. In his book, Considérant explained why his newspaper *La Phalange* had been renamed *La Démocratie Pacifique*: "The word Democracy is at the same time the deepest, the most general, and the most powerful word in current events, the only one that has a strong future life in active publicity" [emphasis added]. He continued: "Today, revolutionary parties make of the term Democracy a flag of revolution and war, a redoubtable weapon, some against the political order and the government, others against property and the foundation of the social order" (Christophersen 1968: 114).52 Thus, socialism, communism and condemnation of private property and wealth were associated with "democracy" in the public discourse and socialist propaganda, and leftists were increasingly conscious of the rhetorical impact of the term in their own propaganda or that of the bourgeoisie.

Some French leftists even advocated the establishment of a direct democracy. In 1837, Auguste Billiard wrote about "pure democracy" in his *Essai sur l'organisation
démocratique de la France and suggested the creation of “primary cities” as a means to establish a genuine “government of the people by the people” (Rosanvallon 1993: 27). In 1840, a worker named Charles Noiret published a pamphlet entitled Aux travailleurs, in which he criticized the claim often made by advocates of the representative system (such as Sieyès and Constant) that commoners have no time, no interest and no skill for politics (Faure & Rancière, eds. 1976: 113-114). Noiret went on to advocate the establishment of a direct democracy: “in Rome, before, there were assemblies of four hundred thousand citizens, who voted in a loud voice, and there was no trouble. ... If we had conquered the right to name, to scrutinize, to recall, and to punish the public civil servants, and to reject laws that are not advantageous for the people, it is doubtless that we would had made a big step” (Faure & Rancière, eds. 1976: 117). In 1850, M. Rittinghausen published La Législation directe par le peuple ou la Véritable Démocratie, and the following year, while in exile in London, Ledru-Rollin published Du gouvernement direct du peuple in which he proposed the establishment of a political system founded on the principles of the 1793 Constitution, i.e. including a single assembly, annual elections, and the right of the people to approve or veto laws (Nicolet 1982: 367; Calman 1930). Yet, this kind of advocacy for democracy was very exceptional, even in the ranks of the left (Christophersen, 1968: 19 and see also Rosanvallon 1992: 385).

The Republican Revolution of February 1848

The Revolution of 1848 and the short-lived Second Republic resulted in confusion among the republicans (Huard 1996: 91) and in the extension of the use of the term “democracy.” Although the revolution and its aftermath revealed the popularity of the term “democracy” among the workers, it was nonetheless the term “republic” that prevailed in February 1848, partially because it was the establishment of a republic that the rioters were fighting for. Yet, according to Jules Salmson, the workers had been deceived once again. In the fifth issue of Journal des travailleurs,
published on June 11, 1848, an article beginning with “LONG LIVE THE REPUBLIC!” appeared under Salmson’s name. He went on to ask his readers (in Faure & Rancière, eds. 1976: 310-311):

Since February, what Frenchman has not cried: Long live the Republic? ... So, what is the Republic? ... That word seems to mean the government of all. Let us examine it. Neither acts of power, nor existing institutions, nor finally the inclinations of our lawmakers, bring us closer to the idea we may have had of a republican government.

Then, simulating a debate, he wrote (pp. 312-313):

What do you want exactly? Is it the Republic of Sparta?—No, we do not want kings and slaves.—Is it the Roman Republic?—We do not want Consuls, Triumvirs, dictators.—Is it the Republic of Venice?—We do not want a Doge, a Council of the Ten.—Is it the American Republic?—We do not want a President and again slaves...

He concluded with the idea that instead of a “false republic,” he wants a “democratic and social republic.” In 1850, in his book *Le Socialisme pratique (Association pacifique et volontaire des Travailleurs)*, Jean-Pierre Drevet commented harshly on how political actors deceive people with words and labels and how, too often, revolutionaries only replace the previous label of the regime by a more appealing one without really transforming the political structures. Drevet’s comments were very similar to those of Pierre Vincard, made on June 8, 1848 in the second issue of the *Manifeste des délégués des corporations (ayant siéges au Luxembourg) aux ouvriers du département de la Seine*. Vincard declared that “the bourgeoisie believed that nothing had changed, except that the word republic had taken the place of monarchy” (in Faure & Rancière, eds. 1976: 307) and Drevet stressed (in Faure & Rancière, eds. 1976: 411) that

When the people of a nation have made a revolution to improve their lot, and afterwards these people turned over their victory to a few men who talked politics to them, lulled them with pretty speeches, and the improvement that the people rightly expected from their victory has always consisted, up until now, in changing the name of those who rule, and the politics has been the same as it was before the revolution. ... To be admitted into the club of political men, one must know how to delude. ... One must not spill the blood of the people only to fatten a few political charlatans: this is why we want a democratic and social Republic. ... We say democratic republic, because there are aristocratic republics, which act like kings, which rule for the profit of few. The word democratic means government by all for all.
Here we find both the idea that political actors consciously use words and labels to deceive the people, and the idea that in order to clarify their radical goals, militant workers have to stand up as "democrats." This notion was taken up by the worker Aguier who explained in his pamphlet that "from now on ... we must not use the word Republican without merging the term Democrat with it. ... We must be Republicans, Republican-Democrats" (in Faure & Rancière, eds. 1976: 357). Similarly, during the Luxemburg Commission formed to debate workers' rights, the Parisian workers claimed that they wished to establish a "Democratic and Social Republic" (Sewell 1980: 244, 269). In fact, there were countless references to a democratic ideal, and this "democratic" propaganda was not limited to Paris. Workers associations and clubs gave themselves democratic names. There was, for instance, a broad movement known as démoc-soc ("democratic" and "socialist") among urban and rural workers around 1848 (Sewell 1980: 266). The démoc-soc in the Sarthe region created the Société de Publications Démocratiques with the aim of propagating democratic ideas (Peyrard 1994: 519). Around the same time, the Société de la Propagande démocratique et sociale européenne was created, and disseminated thousands of copies of pamphlets and pictures in the countryside. The Clubs démocratiques of Paris invited Blanqui to deliver a speech on March 22, 1848 (Blanqui 1971: 116). In Lyon, as early as February 28, 1848, the workers' Club démocratique central (membership of 8700) was founded (Huard 1996: 88); in the Rhône, the Comité démocratique électoral was founded during the Summer of 1848 to support leftist candidates (Huard 1996: 92); newspapers appeared with references to democracy in their titles, such as La Démocratie pacifique, La démocratie du Cher and Le Démocrate du Var (Peyrard 1994: 518; Pigenet 1994: 527). Even when leftist organizations chose not to have the term "democracy" or a derivative in their names, such as the national association known as the Solidarité républicaine, they did refer to "democracy" in their platform. To by-pass laws limiting public protests, the left organized several banquets démocratiques (Rosanvallon
1994: 193 n. 4 and p. 199; Nicolet 1982: 85 n. 2). These were public banquets rather than
demonstrations, but they did include political discourses. "Democracy" was a word
praised by those attending such events. In the Cher region, people from the right
created an association named La République de 1848. About 2000 of their opponents
from the left gathered to welcome F. Pyat, and they cried "Long live the democratic
and social republic!" a slogan very common in the early 1850s (Pigenet 1994: 527-529).

All these references to "democracy" had a political function: to make it clear that
the establishment of a mere "republic" was not enough. The term "democracy" and
its derivatives referred to an economic ideal and expressed the idea that the 1848
Revolution had to be pushed further. Such an idea was cleverly summarized in Exposé
du plan d'association entre le capital et le travail par les délégués de la société populaire de
Limoges. In this text published in 1848, the workers' delegates openly adopted
Emmanuel Sieyès's attitude, but they applied to the workers Sieyès' claims on behalf
of the Tiers État. Adopting the same tactic as that used in 1847 in the newspaper Le
Peuple, the Tiers État once again was made to play the role of the aristocracy (Faure
& Rancière, eds. 339):

The Third Estate does not realize that it is facing democracy, in exactly the same way that
sixteen years ago, the nobility faced the Third Estate, when Sieyès posed the famous question:
What is the Third Estate? Nothing; what does it want to be? Everything, ... The Third
replaced the nobility, took its privileges, its power, its vices, but not its grandeur. What would
it answer if, evoking the principles that made it strong, we simply oppose Sieyès's pamphlet
with this following variation: What are the people? Nothing. What do they want? The same
right for all!

Workers not only protested, they organized themselves into very democratic
associations, in which general assemblies were held regularly (sometimes once or
twice a month) (Sewell 1980: 256). All of this provoked the fear of equality and of the
poor among the wealthy. Finally, universal suffrage (for males) was established on
March 4, 1848. The electoral body previously composed of 250000 persons grew to
9000000 (Furet 1992: 400 and 421). Despite the fact that it was a matter of quantity
rather than quality—a significantly greater number of citizens gained the right to elect
representatives, yet these citizens had no more power nor means to participate in the law-and decision-making process—this enlargement was seen as highly egalitarian and "democratic."

The poor nevertheless continued to take to the streets to make their voices heard. On May 15, 1848, a protest in Paris resulted once again in the invasion of the Assemblée Nationale, a building that was stormed quite often in modern French history. The crowd was crushed by the military. Blanqui and other leading figures of the workers’ movement were arrested. On June, 21, 1848, the rumour (later confirmed) that the ateliers nationaux were going to be abolished fuelled the anger of thousands of workers and unemployed people: violent riots broke out in Paris, and the rioters—frustrated by the conservatism of the mainstream republicans—cried “Long live the democratic and social republic!” (Tulard 1985: 476). The Saint-Antoine district was under the control of the workers from June 23 to June 26. Repression was merciless and thousands of persons were deported to Algeria. On June 13, 1849, another protest turned wild and led to violent repression. Such turbulence increased the upper class’s fear of the poor. Mainstream and conservative political actors were indeed quite concerned about the workers’ political goals. One tactic used to control the pressure exerted by the street and workers’ associations was to adopt a pro-democratic discourse, a tactic made even more necessary by the expansion of the electoral body. We have seen that in the United States, even conservative politicians began to refer positively to “democracy” in electoral campaigns in order to seduce electors at a time—around 1835—when new States with universal suffrage (for white males) were joining the Union. In France, the establishment of universal suffrage (for males) also opened the door for mainstream republicans and even conservatives to use “democracy” in a favourable manner so as to seduce the people and to delude the workers. As with Andrew Jackson, it seems that republicans found it useful to add the epithet of “democracy” or “democratic” to their name in order to make themselves distinguishable from mainstream and conservative republicans. Several candidates in
the legislative elections of April 23, 1848 identified themselves with the workers, even though they belonged to a different class. Intellectuals, for instance, used phrases such as "worker of thought" or "proletarian of the intellect" to give to themselves an honourable image (Déloye 1999: 238). Victor Hugo, a candidate sympathetic to the workers but not a socialist (Furet 1992: 426), also began to use the "democratic republic" label. During the election in the Spring of 1848, for example, electors could read on Hugo's electoral poster that there are two kinds of republic: "One will knock down the tricolour flag with the red flag ... The other will be the holy union of all French people at present, and of all peoples one day in the democratic principle" (Rosa 1994: 656). In 1849, the candidate R. Sauvage spoke in his _Adresse aux habitants de la Mayenne_ of a "democratic and social Republic," yet this did not aim for any social and economic egalitarian reforms, but simply meant a political regime in which every citizen would have equal political rights (Dubois 1962: 405).74

Thus, while for some members of the "bourgeoisie," "democracy" still meant socialism, communism, violence and bloodshed (Ponteil 191 and 208), others, such as de Tocqueville and Lamartine, realized that the best way to contain the socialist surge was to make the regime appear democratic. Hence, the merger between liberalism and democracy was the fruit of a pragmatic strategy to block the socialist wave of 1848, a strategy acknowledged by the political actors of the time. This alliance is summarised by de Tocqueville's own experience. Before 1848, Tocqueville sometimes vaguely equated "democracy" with socialism or, at least, with the will to abolish private property (de Tocqueville 1988: 12 and in an unpublished manifesto dated from 1847 and cited in Christophersen 1968: 88). In 1848, however, de Tocqueville delivered a speech at the _Assemblée Constituante_ in which he declared that "[d]emocracy and socialism are linked only by a word, equality; but the difference must be noted: democracy wants equality in freedom, and socialism wants equality in poverty and slavery" (Sartori 1987: 373). Even though in October 1847, de Tocqueville dismissed "democratic opinions" as being a direct threat to private property (Mélonio 1994: 284).
in September 1848—less than a year later—the same man prayed for the coming of a republic “entirely democratic without being socialist” (Mélonio 1994: 586). After the revolution of February 1848, de Tocqueville changed his discourse, making it clear that “democracy” and “socialism” were different in nature, and although “democracy” should be preserved, “socialism” must be contained. In fact, and even though it was inconsistent with the intellectual roots of the term, “democracy” became more or less synonymous with “republic” (Sartori 1987: 386). The use of the term “democracy” to designate not a democracy, but the republic, was known as a means that might help stem the socialist tide (Christophersen 1968: 86 and 89). Of course, French citizens gained political rights with the Revolution of February. Yet once again, these new rights were not enough, from the perspective of etymology, history and philosophy, to name the new regime “democracy.” In one of its Declarations of 1848, the gouvernement provisoire (provisional government) referred to “the democratic government that France owes to herself,” and it specified that the gouvernement provisoire should devote its energies to secure such a democratic government for France (Ponteil 1989: 192). This is the first time since Robespierre and Saint-Just that the French government referred to itself as a “democratic government.” There had obviously been a successful “ideological innovation,” to recall Quentin Skinner’s concept. Let us return to James Farr’s quotation cited previously in our theoretical chapter: “in order to gain popular support for party policy ... concepts may be changed. ... conceptual change may be explained in terms of the attempt by political actors to solve speculative or practical problems and to resolve contradictions which their criticism has exposed in their beliefs, actions, and practices” (Farr 1989: 36). In the same vein, Noam Chomsky (1988: 664) has suggested that one may “consciously manipulate [words] in order to introduce confusion and lack of perception.” Hence, 1848 republicans started to use the term “democracy” and its derivatives to refer to themselves, their platform and the liberal republic that they just had established, and which was a source of discontent amongst workers and
"democratic" forces. By adopting a pro-democratic propaganda, while identifying as "democracy" political structures and practices that only a few years before would have been perceived as non-democratic according to the etymological, historical, and philosophical meaning of the term, mainstream republicans sowed confusion as to the real nature of the regime. They secured the legitimacy of the regime by manufacturing consent among the workers, and they increased their powers of persuasion during the electoral campaigns. Such a strategy was condemned by Blanqui, amongst others.\textsuperscript{78} In 1852, Blanqui (1971: 134) firmly attacked those he named the "so-called revolutionary-republicans or democrats": "Do not think that ... they did not know how to overthrow [the current order]; they did not want to."\textsuperscript{79} Blanqui’s comments deserve a closer look. In 1852, Blanqui, who was in jail, answered a letter from his friend Maillard. In his letter, Maillard had discussed political labels in details. Replying to Maillard, who had claimed to be a "revolutionary republican," Blanqui (1971: 131) discussed "professions of faith":

You say you are a Revolutionary Republican. Be careful about the use of words and about being duped. This title of Revolutionary Republican is precisely the one taken by men who are neither Revolutionary, nor perhaps even Republican ... You tell me: I am neither a bourgeois, nor a proletarian, I am a Democrat. Be careful of words without definition, it is the tool favoured by schemers. ... it is they who invented this nice aphorism: neither proletarian, nor bourgeois! but democrat. So, tell me, please, what is a democrat? This is a vague word, banal, without any specific meaning, a rubber word. Which opinion would not succeed in finding a home under such a banner? Everyone claims to be a democrat, especially the aristocrats. Don’t you know that Mr. Guizot is a democrat? ... People do not want to call the two opposite sides by their real names: Proletariat, Bourgeoisie. Yet, they have no other names.\textsuperscript{80}

It is understandable that leftists such as Blanqui were quite upset that their label had been appropriated by their opponents.\textsuperscript{81} Let us recall that we observed exactly the same anger amongst the Jacksonians in the United States, very much upset to see their opponents adopting a pro-democratic discourse. Moreover, the conservative Guizot eloquently echoed Blanqui’s reflection, in his \textit{De la Démocratie en France} (1849: 36): "One fact strikes me and disturbs me very much: it is the fervour with which the Republic has publicly and officially named itself democratic."\textsuperscript{82} Displeased with this
label of République démocratique “adopted as the official name, as the symbol of the
government,” Guizot wrote (1849: 39-40),\textsuperscript{83} “Democracy. ... It is the sovereign,
universal word. Every party refers to it and wants to appropriate it for themselves as
a talisman” (p. 9 and see Lobrano 1994: 53).\textsuperscript{84} And further (Lobrano 1994: 65 n. 132):

The monarchists have said: “Our Monarchy is a democratic monarchy”. ... The Republicans are
saying: “The Republic, this is democracy ruling itself”. ... the Socialists, the Communists, the
Montagnards want the Republic to be a pure democracy ... Such is the sway of the word
democracy, that no government, no party would dare to live, nor would they believe it possible
to live, without inscribing this word on its flag.\textsuperscript{85}

This brings to mind one more almost identical example we encountered in analysing
the American case: In 1839, the \textit{Boston Quarterly Review} maintained that “No party,
not believed to be democratic, can rise even to respectable minority” (Morantz 1971:
224). Such comments by political actors and commentators of the time demonstrate
that these people anticipated 20\textsuperscript{th} century linguists or political philosophers such as
Austin, Orwell and Skinner in their understanding of the social and political power of
words.

Even though a \textit{rapport de forces} might be legitimated through a discourse of
propaganda, it is very unlikely that the discourse itself would have no influence over
the \textit{rapport de forces} and the actors involved in it. To put it another way, the political
strategy of seducing the people with the word “democracy” and its derivatives
implies real behavioural adaptations and new practices. Thus, in 1848 in France,
political actors not only began to praise “democracy,” they also changed their
behaviour, practices and laws. In this sense, the implementation of universal suffrage
for males was clearly a revolutionary decision and it was seen as a clear democratic
gain. What should be stressed here is that, having adopted a pro-democratic
discourse, political actors no doubt felt the need to enforce what they believed to be
democratic laws and policies, such as the extension of suffrage and some egalitarian
policies. However, in a country where the majority of the people were illiterate,
where news travelled slowly and was very unlikely to reach every inhabitant,
universal suffrage for males was far from offering equal opportunity for all political ideas and groups to be heard. As a matter of fact, enlargement of the suffrage functioned as a subtle tool for stemming the socialist tide. This is not a conclusion reached only by political students today: the political actor and commentator Lamartine openly declared at that time that universal suffrage would contain the "popular volcano" (Ponteil 1989: 192). Lamartine wrote, in *Bulletin de la République* (no. 4, March 19, 1848), that "The right of election belongs to all without exception. From the promulgation of this law, there is no longer a proletariat in France" (English trans. in Rosanvallon 1994: 199). Flaubert expressed the same opinion in his *Education sentimentale*, in which one may read that universal suffrage resulted in "the abolition of the proletariat" (English trans. in Rosanvallon 1994: 199 n. 20). Even Karl Marx stressed, on June 8, 1855, in *Neue Oder Zeitung*: that "The universal suffrage that was an expression of general fraternisation in 1848 was in England a war cry. In France, the immediate content of the Revolution was universal suffrage; in England, the immediate content of universal suffrage was revolution" (English trans. in Rosanvallon 1994: 203). Thus, half-universal suffrage in France was a symbol of unity for a people tired of class conflicts, and Blanqui was therefore right when he declared that to name France a "democracy" was a good way to forget about the fact that the country was divided into two classes, the *Proletariat* and the *Bourgeoisie*. This so-called classless society had come to be called a "democratic republic," even by workers (Déloye 1999: 250). In spite of that, however, many were afraid of the workers and of the socialist leaders. In November 1849, strikes were again outlawed. Although the general elections of April 1848 resulted in pushing socialist candidates to the fringe, several radical candidates won by-elections in the Spring of 1850. This left the majority of parliamentarians in a state of shock and they decided to change the rules in order to contain the socialist forces. On May 31, 1850, electoral rules were modified with the result that amongst the 9,000,000 electors, 3,000,000 lost their right to vote—mainly unemployed people, workers, journeymen and servants (Huard
1996: 103; Tulard 1985: 485). A few weeks later, censorship of the press and of theatres was reinforced. Yet, the workers and their spokespersons were not the major threat to this strange Republic: the majority of parliamentarians supported the restoration of the monarchy, and the president dreamt of being emperor... (Tulard 1985: 486)

The Victory of the Republican "Democratic" Propaganda

The Republic of 1848 lasted until 1851, when Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, who was already the President, launched a successful coup d'état. He did so because the Constitution of 1848 ruled out the possibility of one individual having two presidential mandates. Bonaparte's coup was approved by the people through a plebiscite. It was thus a popular dictatorship, although violent protests broke out leading to the arrest of around 25,000 people and the deportation of thousands more (Furet 1992: 437). In the 1850s, those who most frequently used the term "democracy"—socialist and republican political actors—were in jail, in exile or too intimidated to speak out loud. However, the regime became increasingly liberal in the 1860s. Regarding workers' rights, for instance, Napoléon III abolished Le Chapelier's law, he used money of the State to support workers' associations and it was under the Second Empire that, for the first time, workers won the right to strike. Oddly, it was during the last years of the Second Empire that the term "democracy" acquired legitimacy as a stabilizing force. In the royalist newspaper Monarchie constitutionnelle of 1869, the Second Empire itself was identified as a democracy. Similarly, the elected politician de Sartiges referred to the "democratic" state of the society of the Second Empire. Jules Ferry stressed in Le Temps that he felt he was living "In the bosom of an exuberant democracy which, instead of enemies has nothing but sycophants." Ferry added, on a prophetic note: "Whoever will demonstrate that the Terror was not necessary, whoever will rid democracy of that dream of dictatorship which sometimes stirs it like a temptation, and sometimes obsesses it like a nightmare, will deserve much from the future" (Furet 1992: 480). The Littré dictionary, published during the Second Empire,
defined "democracy" as a "Political regime in which people promote or claim to promote the interests of the masses" (Caron 1995: 199 [emphasis added]).

It is not surprising, then, that Étienne Vacherot explained in the first line of his book entitled *La Démocratie*, published in 1859, that "It is the abuse of the word democracy that gave me the idea for this book." Mirroring Blanqui's and Guizot's complaints, Vacherot (1860: 19) lamented that the term "democracy" had been unjustly hijacked by the advocates of the monarchy who speak the same democratic language as the republicans. However, Vacherot himself was not a genuine democrat (according to the etymological, historical and philosophical definitions of the concept), but a republican hiding behind the label of "democracy." Vacherot declared that he shared Socrates' "disgust" for direct democracy (p. 335). Thus, while advocating "democracy" on one hand, on the other hand Vacherot used the same old arguments raised again and again against democracy: it is unfit for modern societies because of their geographic and demographic size, and the modern individual has no wish to sacrifice his time and energy to public life. Vacherot concluded that representation was absolutely necessary (pp. 335-336). He went even farther, claiming that the citizens must have no right to recall their representatives (no "mandats impératifs") and no right to approve or veto the laws proposed by the representatives. According to Vacherot, parliament was the repository of "representative virtue" and "while the assembly is the image of the country, it is also its elite" (p. 337). Thus, Vacherot was almost a carbon copy of Emmanuel Sieyès and Benjamin Constant, i.e. a strident opponent of "democracy," though Sieyès openly condemned it and Constant and Vacherot did not. In fact, several lines of Vacherot's book could have been written by Sieyès or Constant. Yet, with Vacherot, "democracy" is cut off from its classic tradition, and also from both the French democratic (which advocated "mandats impératifs," among other things) and anti-democratic traditions. For Vacherot, "democracy" was even compatible with the idea.
of the people being ruled by the “elite.” So, it is not the ideas but only the label that distinguishes Vacherot from Sieyès and Constant.

Socialists in the meantime still referred to themselves as “democrats.” Nevertheless, Henri Dameth, the author of *Le Mouvement socialiste et l'économie politique*, published in 1869, remarked that there were now “socialist democrats,” “revolutionary democrats,” “bourgeois democrats,” “imperialist democrats,” and “neo-Christian democrats” (Dameth 1869: 121). And in the newspaper *Le Public*, (May 13, 1869: 1), the republican strategy to adopt “democrat” as a new label was openly discussed. Thus, the situation in France was quite similar to the American one: the people on the left were conscious that they had lost control over the term “democracy,” precisely because that term turned out to be highly effective for the purpose of demagogy. Witnessing the political transformation of the term “democracy,” workers started to refer to “bourgeois democracy” (Dubois 1962: 283) and to the “democratic bourgeoisie” (Ponteil 1989: 304) concepts which revealed how different the meaning of the word had become from what it had been for thousands of years. Indeed, it was so different that in 1868, Henri Allain-Targé defined democracy as the "alliance of the bourgeoisie and the people" (Elwitt 1978: 189). On a more ironic note, but acknowledging nevertheless the importance of “bourgeoisie” as a value, Flaubert who had talked about “democrassy” ("démocrassie") in 1868 (Caron 1995: 201) wrote to George Sand, in 1871, that “The whole dream of democracy is to elevate the proletarian to the level of bourgeois stupidity. The dream is almost realized” (Dournon 1982: 228). For many people, at the end of the 1860s “democracy” referred to individualism and to liberal values. Some politicians openly stressed that “liberal democracy” was the ideal of the (moderate) left. The member of the assembly L. Guyot-Montpayroux (*Annales du Corps Législatif*, V, Dec. 10, 1869: 210), for instance, declared that those on the left “understand the parliamentary regime according to the principles of liberal democracy.”
The Paris Commune would give the socialists and their allies the last real occasion to talk about "democracy" according to the etymological, historical and philosophical meanings of the term. The Second Empire collapsed when Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte and his army laid down their arms before the Prussians at Sedan, on September 1, 1870. When the news reached Paris three days later, the crowd once again occupied the Assemblée Nationale, asking for the establishment of a Republic. The Republic was proclaimed, although the war against the Prussians was not over. The new French government was quite disorganized and even though the Republic had been proclaimed, official politicians were mainly Monarchists and conservative republicans. As the historian Sanford Elwitt (1978: 187-188) explains, "By carrying out a political revolution, the republicans [who organized the succession to the régime of Napoléon III] avoided a social revolution." In Paris, however, the socialist militants of the Internationale took the initiative of the defence against the Prussians. They united the 20 arrondissements of Paris under the umbrella of a central committee. The propaganda was built around main ideas such as patriotism (against the Prussians), but also the "commune souveraine" and the "government of the citizens by themselves" (Furet 1992: 498). After the war against the Prussians, the French government, quite concerned by the Parisians' desire of autonomy, sent two generals on March 18, 1871, to take control of the artillery of the Parisian Garde Nationale. The Garde Nationale refused to give up their guns and the two officers were executed. The Commune was proclaimed on March 26 and Paris was rapidly besieged by the Versaillais, i.e. the troops of the French Republican government. The siege—and the Commune—lasted until the end of May. The Commune was both the final event and the peak of the class struggle that had shaken France through the 19th century. As the historian François Furet remarks, "the last great uprising in the French revolutionary tradition was also the one which created the most fear and shed the most blood" (Furet 1992: 506).
Like the sansculottes in the early 1790s and the workers in 1848, the Communards praised the term “republic.” For many people, “republic” sounded like the last word in politics, especially since France had been under the reign of an Emperor for the previous twenty years, and two revolutions (July 1830 and February 1848) had not succeeded in establishing a long-standing republican regime. Hence, among the groups seeking the establishment of a Commune in 1870, there were L’Alliance républicaine, L’Union centrale républicaine, and the Défenseurs de la république (Lefrançais 1968 [1871]: 112). Moreover, in the play La Commune de Paris, written by Jules Valles (1970), himself a very influential figure of the Commune, the characters several times cry “Long live the Republic!” and “Long live the Commune! Long live the Republic!” (see also Lefrançais 1968). Yet, in contrast with mainstream republicans, these republicans favoured formal equality, but also social and economic reform. The Commune passed laws to control rents, planned to bring in free education for all and to enforce some kind of equality between men and women. For Communards, these decisions were associated with democracy. Moreover, many Communards criticized mainstream republicans for having identified with “democracy.” In Étude sur le mouvement communaliste à Paris, en 1871, published in Neufchatel, in 1871, the author G. Lefrançais, himself an influential political figure of the Commune, explained that mainstream politicians manipulated the idea of “republic” in order to win support for their model, and that such manipulation was merely a “lie.” Lefrançais also stated that for the “1848 republicans,” “democracy” only meant universal suffrage. Lefrançais further suggested that only a socialist republic—i.e. economic reforms—founded on communes could be truly democratic. “Democracy,” in Lefrançais’ mind, referred to local politics. In a genuinely democratic world, the communes would be the core of political life and they would send to the federation mandataires rather than delegates. Lefrançais was far from being the only Communard to refer positively to “democracy.” It was common amongst the political actors of the Commune to identify with “democracy,”
and "socialism," and to declare themselves "democratic socialist" (Rougerie 1973: 87). On posters stuck on the walls of Paris by socialists candidates, there was a call addressed "To the Socialist Democrats of the XVIIIth" [arrondissement] (Rougerie 1973: 93), and a platform including references to "democracy" and "socialism": "In politics: Democratic Republic; the Paris Commune; and total War [against the Prussians] ... In socialism: ... the suppression of the wage system" (Rougerie 1973: 32). A member of the Commune, Arthur Arnould, who in 1872-73 wrote Histoire populaire et parlementaire de la Commune de Paris, praised "democracy," and the "democratic and social Republic," going so far as to speak of "the democratized universe" (Arnould 1981 [1872-73]: 63). He explained that "Revolution is the people; the Commune is the people; democracy, socialism, is the people!" (Arnould 1981: 64). On the other hand, he condemned the "bourgeois pseudo-republican dictatorship" (p. 71) and he accused Gambetta for not being faithful to the "popular and genuinely democratic forces" (p. 57 n. 4).

Not only communards, but also commentators of the Commune referred to the Commune as a democratic experience. On March 18, 1871, Edmond de Goncourt, writing about the Commune in his journal identified it as a "democratic and social Republic" (Priollaud, ed. 1983: 37). Alexandre Dumas wrote of the "democratic fever" (Priollaud, ed. 1983: 20), and, referring to Emmanuel Sieyès's concept of the "Tiers État," he explained that there is now a "Fourth Estate, the working class" (Priollaud, ed. 1983: 16) For Victor Hugo, the Commune placed "Paris under democracy," while London was under the power of the "oligarchy" (Priollaud, ed. 1983: 24).

The Commune was not only the "last great uprising" but also the last great repression, since the Versaillais who invaded Paris shot around 20000 Parisians, including women and children, between May 21 and May 26. Moreover, 40000 persons were arrested and thousands of them deported to New Caledonia (Furet 1992: 504). The most influential and active militants and spokespersons of the
workers' movement were either dead, in jail, or in exile. Mainstream republicans were then free to bend political labels such as "democracy" to their own needs. Having been forced by the law to use "democracy" instead of "republic" under the Second Empire, republicans learned to enjoy the seductive power of the former term. What is striking is that even after the end of the Second Empire, republicans continued to call their model "democracy," because they realized this semantic strategy increased the legitimacy of their representative model in the eyes of the people. However, it must be clearly understood that despite the new label, the ideas promoted by republicans were the same, i.e. to establish and to secure a elective regime. As a matter of fact, the French political system of the 1870s and 1880s would never have been considered as "democratic" by individuals such as Octave Mirabeau, Emmanuel Sieyès, Gracchus Babeuf, and Benjamin Constant. Institutions such as the Senate and the powerful Presidency had been traditionally associated with an anti-democratic spirit. Thus, the republicans of 1870 were "democrats" in name only.

The main figure of the new regime, Léon Gambetta, simply pursued the semantic strategy implemented in the late 1850s and in the 1860s by people such as Vacherot and... himself. Indeed, even before 1870 the newspaper La Démocratie, and a Comité démocratique radical, had been founded to support Gambetta's electoral campaign, during which he claimed to be a "radical democrat" (Dubois 1962: 282). Despite the fact that after 1870, the prohibition against using the term "republic" had been lifted, Gambetta would continue to refer positively to "democracy." Gambetta belonged to the "radical" party, although he hastened to downplay his radical side (in 1876, Gambetta even spoke of his platform as "conservative" in order to get elected and stay in power). His moderate political positions would lead the radicals to split, with the "real" radicals on one side, and the "opportunists" on Gambetta's (Baal 1994: 12). Gambetta was quite representative of the majority of French politicians of the 1870s, who were more pragmatic than ideological (Roy 1974: 5). Gambetta explained, for instance, that he was in favour of what he called a "politics of results" (Roy 1974: 295).
17) and he also condemned his radical opponents for being “partisans of utopia” (Roy 1974: 17-18). But in spite of his pro-democratic label, Gambetta was a liberal and not a democrat. Of course, Gambetta often evoked and praised equality—in Lille, on February 2, 1876, Gambetta stated that “what constitutes true democracy is not the recognition of equals, but the creation of equals” (Nicolet 1982: 492; English trans. in Elwitt 1978: 193)—although he claimed to believe that political equality should be implemented and secured first, and that it would in the end produce social equality. Gambetta openly declared himself to be concerned by “formal” rather than social and economic equality (Nicolet 1967: 21). He believed in individual mobility within the society rather than collective reform, and in equality of opportunity rather than equality of condition.

France was then witnessing a situation similar to the one encountered in the United States, where politicians were very concerned with political philosophy and history from the 1770s until the early 1800s, after which they became more pragmatic. Like the American Jackson, Gambetta strove to seduce the workers, farmers (65% of the population) and middle-class men (Roy 1974: 13). Gambetta again mirroring Jackson, would also insist on well organized political activities. In 1871, he founded the newspaper *La République française* and organized several *Banquets*. Even police reports mentioned that Gambetta’s partisans were very well organized. As a matter of fact, Gambetta’s political strategies and discourses were similar to Jackson’s. As with Jackson, Gambetta claimed that he would open the door of politics to new people. In Grenoble in September 1872, Gambetta talked about “the new generation of democracy, new politicians, a new electorate, new people involved in universal suffrage” (Furet 1988: 477; English trans. in Furet 1992: 525). And actually, the political staff would change somewhat under Gambetta (Nordmann 1974: 66-67), as it had with Jackson in the United States.

The self-proclaimed “democrat” Gambetta also advocated the protection of private property and bicameralism, two ideas that were traditionally considered
antithetical to "democracy." In fact, Gambetta's goal to implement political rather than social reform (Roy 1974: 7 and 110) was an idea clearly alien to the classical and French democratic tradition. In 1877, during the legislative elections in which the question of religion was central, Gambetta declared: "A cry has risen throughout France, this is a government of priests and clerics. You call yourselves the counter-revolution, we have facing us nobles who are unwilling to accept democracy, a congregation that wants to enslave France" (Furet 1988: 462-463; English trans. in Furet 1992: 534). When Gambetta says it, "democracy" sounds calm and quiet rather than revolutionary. Indeed, Gambetta spoke of a "regular and loyal democracy" (Baal 1994: 10), and he declared that "democracy has become reasonable, pacifist, and respectful of the law" (Nordmann 1974: 65-66).

Of course, some elitists continued to express their contempt for "democracy." The hegemony of the term "democracy" was probably less complete in France than in the United States, because the complexity of French political life prevented some political actors from adopting a pro-democratic discourse. Gustave Flaubert, for instance, declared in a letter he wrote to George Sand: "I hate democracy" (Dubois 1962: 215), and in the second volume of A. Richard's Simple Appréciation d'un révolutionnaire, released on December 1870, the reader finds a number of derogatory references to "democracy" (Dubois 1962: 281).

Nonetheless, Gambetta was not the only one to refer positively to "democracy." In 1871 "democracy" was found in the names of groups: the Société de propagande républicaine démocratique and the Association démocratique. Georges Clémenceau, who would become President, promised in 1881 a "democratic and social Republic," echoing the socialist slogan of the 1840s (Nicolet 1982: 472; Baal 1994: 16). The current regime itself, the Republic, claimed to be a "democracy." Even more interesting was the remark of the member of the Assemblée Nationale E. R. Duval made in 1871, according to whom even deputies from the right might identify themselves with "democracy" (Annales de l'Assemblée Nationale, IV, July 31, 1871: 363). And in Paris, in
1871, a newspaper entitled La Monarchie démocratique (The Democratic Monarchy) was launched.\textsuperscript{136}

"Democracy" Embodies Reason and God's Will and France is the Home of "Democracy"

Although French politicians and authors of the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century equated democracy with licentiousness, chaos, irrationality and tyranny, their successors of the mid-19\textsuperscript{th} century were willing to equate "democracy" with the end of history and the political manifestation of reason. Destutt de Tracy stood as an isolated forerunner when he talked in 1820 about "the democracy of enlightened reason" (de Bertier de Sauvigny 1955: 344).\textsuperscript{137} Yet, by May 20, 1850, Victor Hugo, sitting on the benches of the Assemblée législative, declared that the people of France "must preserve the human progress of which France is the soul, the democracy of which France is the home" (Rosa 1994: 658).\textsuperscript{138} On July 9, 1850, he declared to the same assembly: "It is the human spirit that, since the beginning of history has transformed societies and governments according to a law becoming more and more acceptable to reason—first theocracy, then aristocracy, monarchy and today, democracy" (Rosa 1994: 659).\textsuperscript{139} Thus, for Hugo, "democracy" embodied universal reason and marked the end of history. Such a statement would have sounded crazy for people living only fifty years earlier, when "democracy" meant chaos and irrationality.

More striking, but not unlike what happened in the United States, is the fact that religious French political actors now felt the need to refer in a positive way to "democracy" in relation to themselves and their political goals. We mentioned, regarding the United States, that in the 1830s an American claimed that "Democracy is the cause of Humanity ... It is the cause of Christianity" (Laniel 1995: 308). Another American suggested in 1841 that "The Democracy we advocate is the perfection of reason and the law of God" (Morantz 1971: 208). In France, it was around 1830 that the label of "Christian democracy" ("démocratie chrétienne") appeared in the works of
Buchez, Ozanam, Arnaud de l’Ariège and the abbé Morel (in Italy there was also Tommaseo and Montanelli). In 1848, a newspaper in Gérando was titled Démocrate-chrétien. During the elections of April 1848, in the region of Drôme there was a Comité démocratique protestant (Déloye 1999: 240). In the same year, Cabet, who was both Communist and Christian, declared, pompously: “It is Jesus, it is a God who thus prescribed DEMOCRACY amongst all the Christians and within the whole of Humankind!” (Cabet 1948: 160-161).  

According to the Dictionnaire général de la politique, published in 1873, modern democracy complies with Christianity and morality (Baudrillart 1873: 635).

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1 In her Considerations sur la Révolution française, released in 1814, de Staël wrote that “Robespierre avait acquis la réputation d’une haute vertu démocratique” (Caron 1995: 203). Four years later, Jacques-Charles Bailleul also referred to Robespierre, virtue and democracy, suggesting in his Examen critique des Considerations de Mme la baronne de Staël sur les principaux evenements de la Révolution française, that Robespierre “posait comme base de l’état social l’égalité et la démocratie ... Or, le principe de la démocratie, telle qu’il voulait l’établir, est la vertu” (Bailleul 1818 [II]: 235-238).

2 The constitution of 1791 “sentait moins la nécessite de fonder une institution vraiment monarchique que celle d’empêcher le roi, protecteur des privileges, de les rétablir. ... C’était au fond une république démocratique, un fantome de royauté” (in Rudelle 1994: 563).

3 Even though French political actors referred to themselves as belonging to political “partis” (there were for instance the “ultras royalistes,” generally called the “ultras” [Bonald, Chateaubriand and also the young Hugo and Lamartine], the constitutional monarchists, known as the “Doctrinaires” [Guizot and Royer-Collard], the liberal left [Benjamin Constant] and the socialist left [Auguste Blanqui]), these groups were not official and were not structured political parties. According to Raymond Huard, the reasons for the absence of political parties are: an understanding of the general will as being homogeneous; the bad memories of the revolutionary clubs and their excesses; laws prohibiting political associations; and the workers’ political faith in workers’ unions and associations (see Huard 1996: 15-25).

4 “un grand citoyen et un grand homme” (December 11, 1830).

5 “légitimateurs despotes.”

6 Constant’s faith in representation was shared by several of his contemporaries, among whom was Madame de Staël, his confidant and intellectual mentor and one of his lovers. In her Traité des passions, de Staël referred to the representative system as a “perfectionnement sublime” (Tulard 1985: 148).
"se propose [de faire constamment tomber le pouvoir] aux mains des supériorités réelles ... . Système admirable, car il est conforme à la vérité des choses, car il résout le problème de l’alliance du pouvoir avec la liberté; d’une part, en n’accordant le pouvoir qu’à la supériorité, de l’autre, en imposant à la supériorité la loi de se prouver elle-même, de se faire constamment accepter."

"Le mot représentation est une métaphore" because "hors l’élection populaire et le madat [impératif], la représentation n’est qu’un préjugé politique qui ne soutient pas l’examen, quoique très répandu et très accrédité" (p. 118).

"La démocratie? Pensez-y, Messieurs, voyez quelle est sa force. Il y a des siècles qu’elle marche chez nous du même pas que la civilisation ... . De la société où elle règne sans adversaires, déjà elle a fait irruption dans le gouvernement. ... Deux fois la démocratie a siégé en souveraine dans notre gouvernement; c’est l’égalité politique qui a été savamment organisée dans la Constitution de 1791 et dans celle de l’an III. Certes, ni les lumières ne manquaient à leurs auteurs, ni les bonnes et patriotiques intentions, je le reconnais. Quels fruits ont-elles portés? Au-dedans l’anarchie, la tyrannie, la misère, la banqueroute, enfin le despotisme. Au-dehors, une guerre qui a duré plus de vingt ans ... . La démocratie dans le gouvernement est incapable de prudence; c’est qu’elle est, de sa nature, violente, guerrière, baqueroutière."

La démocratie constitue l’état social, le dogme de la souveraineté du peuple constitue le droit politique. Ces deux choses ne sont point analogues. La démocratie est une manière d’être de la société, la souveraineté du peuple est une forme de gouvernement"; and "souveraineté du peuple et démocratie sont deux mots parfaitement corrélatifs; l’un présente l’idée théorique, l’autre sa réalisation pratique" (in Rosanvallon 1993: 25).

"La presse périodique est éminemment démocratique parce qu’elle est éminemment propre à remuer la multitude.” “Si le principe démocratique languit chez nous sans action et sans vie, nous avons un sûr moyen de la ranimer: déchaînons les journaux; si au contraire la démocratie est partout pleine de sève et d’énergie, si elle est dans l’industrie, dans la propriété, dans les lois, dans les souvenirs, dans les hommes et dans les choses; si le torrent coule à pleins bords dans de faibles digues qui le contiennent à peine, ne soyons pas assez imprudents pour ajouter à sa force et à son impétuosité.”

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25 We saw that in the United States, the five candidates in the elections of 1828 were all “republicans,” a very confused situation indeed. Therefore, Andrew Jackson decided to stand as a republican “democrat.”

26 The term “républicanisme” appeared for instance in the issue of June 20, 1829, of the newspaper La Jeune France (see Caron 1994: 502).

27 “école conventionnelle” and the “école américaine”.

28 “vous êtes républicain.—Républicain, oui; mais ce mot ne précise rien. Res publica, c’est la chose publique; or, quiconque veut la chose publique, sous quelque forme de gouvernement que ce soit, peut se dire républicain. Les rois aussi sont républicains.”

29 “république royale.”

30 “Par le temps qui court chacun à la prétention d’être démocrate sans même en exécuter ceux qui, par intérêt ou par préjugé, sont les ennemis les plus implacables de toute démocratie. Le banquier qui s’est enrichi dans les sales tripotages de la Bourse, et l’orateur subventionné qui monte à la tribune prétendue nationale pour y défendre les plus révoltants monopoles, se disent démocrates; le journal qui, chaque jour, se fait l’écho des déclamations aristocratiques, et qui tonne avec le plus de fureur contre la liberté et l’égalité se dit démocrate; enfin, il n’est pas jusqu’aux marquis du noble faubourg, jusqu’aux ci-devant marquis de Sade, jusqu’aux ci-devant marquis du noble faubourg, jusqu’aux ci-devant jésuites à grands et à petits collets, qui ne se disent également démocrates.”

31 “Il paraît que vous employez les mots sans les comprendre; je veux bien vous rappeler que la démocratie est le gouvernement de tous, c’est ce que veulent les républicains.”

32 In 1814, Chateaubriand explained for instance that in a mixed monarchy, there are two houses, one for the aristocracy and the other for the democracy (Chateaubriand 1911: 88).

33 “Cent mille bourgeois en forment ce qu’on appelle, par une ironie amère, l’élément démocratique. Que sera-t-il, bon Dieu! des autres éléments?”

34 “aristocratie financière” (Auguste Colin, Le Cri du peuple, 1831).

35 “aristocratie des richesses” (Henry Jador, Procès de la commission des ouvriers typographes au bénéfice de la caisse de secours mutuels pour les typographes sans ouvrage, 1830).

36 In 1848, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, delivering a speech to the Assemblée Nationale, identified himself with the “prolétaires” and tagged as “bourgeois” the representatives seating before him (Ponteil 1989: 224).

37 For a description of the working class, see Tulard (1985: 419-426).


39 “Je crois que les pauvres haissent les riches et que les riches ont peur des pauvres. Cela sera éternellement.” About the bourgeoisie’s fear of the poor, see also Furet (1992: 409) and Huard (1996: 82). We already mentioned the very influential Auguste Blanqui and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who in 1840 had released his book Qu’est-ce que la propriété?, in which property equals robbery. The same year, Louis Blanc published his L’organisation du travail. Blanc, Blanqui and Proudhon had forerunners, such as the Saint-simoniens in the 1820s, Philippe Buonarroti, who released Conspiration de l’Égalité dite de Babeuf in 1828, and Buchez, who from 1834 to 1839 released the 40 volumes of his Histoire parlementaire de la Révolution française, in which he analysed the revolution from a socialist—and catholic—point of view. In the mid-1840s, major figures of the workers’ movement such as Karl Marx himself and Bakunin, were in Paris, working closely with French leftist thinkers. Marx was expelled from France by François Guizot in 1844, four years before the publication of the famous Communist Manifesto (January 1848). See also E. Mounier (1966: 136).

40 Thus, confusion between “republic” and “democracy” also resulted from the fashion among radical workers to refer to “republic”—a regime that was not yet secured in France at that time—as their political ideal.

41 As the worker Pimpaneau stressed in 1833, “Pour les peuples, notre révolution a opéré un grand changement dans les opinions, ... . Pour ce qui est du changement survenu dans les choses, dans les affaires publiques, il n’a été senti que de quelques hommes. Mais, pour nous, notre travail a-t-il été moins pénible? Notre salaire a-t-il augmenté? ... Où est notre souveraineté? Pour nous, qui avons exécuté la révolution physique, il n’y a eu qu’un complément de révolution métaphysique; notre position est restée la même.” For a conservative such as Chateaubriand, however, the Revolution of 1830 went too far and it resulted in a “democratic” society: “The July movement has nothing to do
with politics properly speaking; it has to do with the social revolution which goes on ceaselessly. Through the sequence of this general revolution, 28 July 1830 is merely the enforced consequence of 21 January 1793 ... But July, if it does not bring the final destruction of France by the annihilation of all liberties, July will come to its natural fruition: and that fruit is democracy” (Chateaubriand’s Mémoire d’outre-tombe, bk. XXXIV, ch. 9; English trans. in Furet 1992: 338).

43"la guerre universelle est ouverte entre les peuples et les rois, entre la liberté et le despotisme, entre la démocratie et l’aristocratie."

44"Il faut qu’on puisse dire bientôt: le triomphe du christianisme a détruit l’esclavage, le triomphe de la Révolution française a détruit le servage, le triomphe des idées démocratiques a détruit le paupérisme.”

45"la guerre universelle est ouverte entre les peuples et les rois, entre la liberté et le despotisme, entre la démocratie et l’aristocratie."

46 "opinion communiste"; "rendre d’importants services à la Démocratie."

47 "POURQUOI NOUS SOMMES COMMUNISTES."

48 "le titre de Démocratie qu’elle [la Bourgeoisie] affecte de prendre n’est qu’un mensonge."

49 "journal hebdomadaire de la démocratie française"; "Notre politique et notre littérature seront rédigées par les écrivains les plus éminents du parti démocratique."

50 "Il faut penser que les leçons de l’expérience ne profitent guère, puisque le tiers-état ne s’aperçoit pas qu’il se trouve en face de la démocratie, absolument comme, il y a soixante ans, la noblesse en face du tiers-état, quand Sieyès posa la fameuse question: Qu’est-ce que le tiers-état? rien; que veut-il être tout. ... Le tiers a succédé à la noblesse, à ses privilèges, à sa puissance, à ses vices, mais non à sa grandeur. Que répondrait-il si, invoquant les principes qui ont fait sa force, on opposait simplement la brochure de Sieyès avec cette variante: Qu’est le peuple? Rien. Que veut-il? Le même droit pour tous!” (Faure & Rancière, eds. 1976: 339).

51 "journal de discussion politique et philosophique, voulant l’application la plus large et la plus complète du principe démocratique."

52 "Le mot de Démocratie est le mot à la fois le plus profond, le plus général et le plus puissant qui reste aujourd’hui dans le courant de l’actualité, le seul qui ait un avenir de forte vie dans la publicité active.” “Les partis révolutionnaires font aujourd’hui du mot de Démocratie un drapeau de révolution et de guerre, une arme redoutable, les uns contre l’ordre politique et le gouvernement, les autres contre la propriété et la base de l’ordre social.”

53 "démocratie pure”, “cités élémentaires”, “gouvernement du peuple par le peuple” (there is no reference to A. Billiard in Rosanvallon 1995).

54 "Travaillez, nous dit-on, restez dans vos ateliers, la politique ne vous regarde pas, vous n’avez pas le temps de vous en occuper; laissez à ceux qui ont des loisirs le soin de faire les affaires; d’ailleurs, vous n’y connaissez rien; la discussion, la confection des lois sont bien au-dessus de votre intelligence bornée; et puis vous ne sauriez pas faire les choix convenables pour les élections; il faudrait vous réunir en trop grand nombre, et il y aurait de la confusion, du trouble. ... Nous savons qu’en restant perpétuellement dans les ateliers où vous nous tenez emprisonnées, vous êtes plus à l’aise pour faire tout ce qui ne profite qu’à vous ... La politique ne nous regarde pas, dites-vous? Quoi! ces lois, ces conditions, ces charges plus ou moins lourdes, plus ou moins onéreuses que vous nous imposiez, ne nous regardent pas! ... Autant vaudrait nous dire que la vie ne nous regarde pas!” (Faure & Rancière, eds. 1976: 113-114).

55 "à Rome, autrefois, il s’est tenu des assemblies de quatre cent mille citoyens, votant à haute voix, et il n’y avait pas de troubles. ... Si nous avions conquis le droit de nommer, de surveiller, de destituer, de faire punir les fonctionnaires publics, et celui de repousser les lois qui ne seraient pas avantageuses au peuple, nous aurions sans doute fait un grand pas.”

56 "In 1828, Buonarroti published his biography of Babeuf entitled Conspiration pour l’égalité, in which the reader learned that even though Babeuf was seeking “democracy,” it was not direct democracy that he aimed for. “Il ne faut pas croire que les révolutionnaires français aient attaché à
la démocratie qu'ils demandaient le sens qu'y attachaient les anciens. Personne ne s'avise en France d'appeler le peuple entier à délibérer sur les actes de gouvernement. Pour eux la démocratie est l'ordre public dans lequel l'égalité et les bonnes mœurs mettent le peuple à même d'exercer utilement la puissance législative.

57 "VIVE LA RÉPUBLIQUE!"

58 "Quel est le Français qui, depuis février, n'a pas crié: Vive la République? ... Qu'est-ce donc que la République? ... Ce mot paraissant signifier gouvernement de tous, nous examinons. Or, ni les actes du pouvoir, ni les institutions existantes, ni enfin les tendances de nos faiseurs de lois, ne nous approchent de l'idée que nous avons pu nous faire d'un gouvernement Républicain."

59 "Que voulez-vous donc? Est-ce la République de Sparte? — Non, des rois, des esclaves, nous n'en voulons pas. — Est-ce la République romaine? — Des consuls, des triumvirs, des dictateurs, nous n'en voulons pas.—Est-ce la République de Venise?—Un doge, un conseil des dix, nous n'en voulons pas.—Est-ce la République américaine?—Un président, toujours des esclaves, nous n'en voulons pas..."

"Mais, enfin que voulez-vous donc? — Une République démocratique et sociale."

60 "la bourgeoisie a cru qu'il n'y avait rien de changé si ce n'est le mot de république a la place de celui de monarchie."

61 "Quand le peuple d'une nation a fait une révolution pour améliorer son sort, et ensuite ce peuple a confié sa victoire à quelques hommes qui lui ont parlé politique, ils l'ont endormi par de beaux discours, et l'amélioration que le peuple avait droit d'attendre de sa victoire, a toujours consisté jusqu'à présent à changer le nom de ceux qui gouvernent, et la politique a été la même après qu'avant la révolution. ... Pour être reçu dans la confrérie des hommes politiques, il faut savoir tromper. ... Il ne faut plus verser le sang du peuple pour engraisser quelques charlatans politiques: voilà pourquoi nous voulons la République démocratique et sociale. ... Nous disons république démocratique, parce qu'il y a des républiques aristocratiques, qui font comme les rois, qui gouvernent au profit de quelques-uns. Le mot démocratique signifie gouvernement de tous pour tous."

62 In the same vein, the Club des clubs distinguished between false republicans and democrats: “point de transaction possible entre les soutiens du privilege, aujourd'hui déguisés en républicains, et les fervents apôtres de la démocratie” (Ponteil 1989: 202).

63 dorénavant—et rappelons-nous bien ceci—ne prononçons plus le mot de Républicain sans y ajouter celui de Démocrate. Le mot est un peu plus long mais il n'en est que plus explicatif. Les aristocrates adopteront facilement le mot de République; car il est des Républiques de toutes façons, il en est même qui ont été plus despotes que la monarchie la plus absolue; mais le mot Démocrate n'en est pas de même. Celui-là ne peut dégénérer. Soyons donc Républicains mais Républicains-Démocrates."

64 "dans l'état de la Association Fraternelle et Démocratique des Ouvriers Menuisiers, it is said that the members are in favour of a “gouvernement populaire et démocratique” (Sewell 1980: 256). In 1848, the Club de la rue Fréquillon stated its intentions: “appuyer les candidatures radicalement démocratiques” (Ponteil 1989: 202.). For the Club républicain des travailleurs libres, the clubs are “les barricades vivantes de la démocratie. C'est par ces clubs, c'est par cette seconde assemblée nationale, toujours permanente, toujours agissante qui doit s'édifier le nouvel ordre social” (Ponteil 1989: 203).

65 "In the status of the Association Fraternelle et Démocratique des Ouvriers Menuisiers, it is said that the members are in favour of a “gouvernement populaire et démocratique” (Sewell 1980: 256). In 1848, the Club de la rue Fréquillon stated its intentions: “appuyer les candidatures radicalement démocratiques” (Ponteil 1989: 202.). For the Club républicain des travailleurs libres, the clubs are “les barricades vivantes de la démocratie. C'est par ces clubs, c'est par cette seconde assemblée nationale, toujours permanente, toujours agissante qui doit s'édifier le nouvel ordre social” (Ponteil 1989: 203).

66 "According to Raymond Huard (1996: 95), it was created in In October 1848, yet for Félix Ponteil (1989: 246), it was in 1852...

67 "According to the 19th article of the platform, the association has as a goal: “créer ou soutenir des journaux démocratiques...” Moreover, the Solidarité républicaine must promote “le développement pacifique et régulier des réformes sociales qui doivent être le but et la conséquence des institutions démocratiques (Huard 1996: 98).

68 "Moreover, “democracy” is “cosmopolitan,” and refers to the workers of the world: “vous dont le glorieux héritage a été livré en pâture à tous les intrigants! Martyrs de la cause démocratique et sociale ... Et vous, frères de Milan, de Vienne, approchez... la démocratie est cosmopolite” (Faure & Rancière, eds. 1976: 392-393).

69 "journal hebdomadaire de la démocratie française”; “Notre politique et notre littérature seront rédigées par les écrivains les plus éminents du parti démocratique.”

70 "Il faut penser que les leçons de l'expérience ne profitent guère, puisque le tiers-état ne s'aperçoit pas qu'il se trouve en face de la démocratie, absolument comme, il y a soixante ans, la noblesse en face du tiers-état, quand Sieyès posa la fameuse question: Qu'est-ce que le tiers-état? rien; que veut-il être?"
tout. ... Le tiers a succédé à la noblesse, à ses privilèges, à sa puissance, à ses vices, mais non à sa grandeur. Que répondrait-il si, invoquant les principes qui ont fait sa force, on opposait simplement à la brochure de Sieyès avec cette variante: Qu'est le peuple? Rien. Que veut-il? Le même droit pour tous!"  

70The new republican government adopted social policies that were supposed to please the workers, such as the Luxembourg commission (of which Blanqui was the head) and the creation of the ateliers nationaux, a public policy of hiring unemployed people. Since this public policy was put into practice in Paris, it had the unexpected result of concentrating the poor in the French capital. The ateliers nationaux had already hired 20,000 by mid-March, 1848, and around 100,000 by the end of April. In the opinion of the "bourgeoisie," it was like a workers' army bivouacing in Paris (Furet 1992: 403).  

71"Vive la république démocratique et sociale!"  

72"ouvrier de la pensée" or "prolétaire de l'intelligence."  

73"L'une abattra le drapeau tricolore sous le drapeau rouge ... L'autre sera la sainte communion de tous les Français déjà à présent, et de tous les peuples un jour dans le principe démocratique."  

74"République démocratique et sociale."  

75"opinions démocratiques."  


77"l'unite de la nation, formée désormais de toutes les classes de citoyens qui la composent, le gouvernement de la nation pour elle-même; la liberté, l'égalité, la fraternité pour principes; le peuple pour devise et pour mot d'ordre, voilà le gouvernement démocratique que la France se doit à elle-même et que nos efforts sauront lui assurer."  

78In 1840, Rozier, a hairdresser, declared while participating in a Banquet communiste: "Des exploitateurs de révolutions s'intitulent nos défenseurs ... aussi la tyrannie sera d'autant plus dangereuse que c'est sur une constitution en apparence démocratique qu'on s'appuiera pour les mitrailler [les ouvriers]." Rozier, "À l'égale répartition des droits et des devoirs c'est-à-dire à la communauté des travaux et des jouissances!" (Faure & Rancière, eds. 1976: 296).  

79"Que doit être la Révolution? L'anéantissement de l'ordre actuel, fondé sur l'inégalité et l'exploitation, la ruine des oppresseurs, la délivrance du peuple du joug des riches. Eh bien! les soi-disant républicains-révolutionnaires ou démocrates ne veulent rien de cela. Ils l'ont prouvé en février. Ne croyez pas qu'alors il n'aient pas su renverser; ils ne l'ont pas voulu.«  

80"Venons en aux professions de foi vous vous dites Républicain révolutionnaire. Prenez garde de vous payer de mots et d'être dupe. C'est précisément ce titre de Républicain révolutionnaire qu'affectent de prendre les hommes qui ne sont ni révolutionnaires, ni peut-être même républicains ... Vous me dites: je ne suis ni bourgeois, ni prolétaire, je suis un Démocrate. Gare les mots sans définition, c'est l'instrument favori des intrigants. ... une étiquette empruntée à la phraseologie des escamoteurs ... [les] intrigants. Ce sont eux qui ont inventé ce bel aphorisme: ni prolétaire, ni bourgeois! mais démocrate. Qu'est-ce donc qu'un démocrate, je vous prie? C'est là un mot vague, banal, sans acceptation précise, un mot en caoutchouc. Quelle opinion ne parviendrait pas à se loger sous cette enseigne? Tout le monde se prétend démocrate, surtout les aristocrates. Ne savez-vous pas que M. Guizot est démocrate? ... On ne veut pas que les deux camps adverses s'appellent de leurs vrais noms: Prolétaire, Bourgeoisie. Cependant ils n'en ont pas d'autres."  

81Auguste Blanqui used the term "democracy" in a laudatory manner (Blanqui 1971: 113, 122).  

82"Un fait me frappe et m'inquiète beaucoup: c'est l'ardeur que la République a mise à se nommer expressément et officiellement démocratique."  

83"adoptés comme le nom officiel, comme le symbole du gouvernement? C'est l'écho d'un ancien cri de guerre sociale."  

84"Démocratie. ... C'est le mot souverain, universel. Tous les partis l'invoquent et veulent se l'approprier comme un talisman."  

85"Les monarchistes ont dit: 'Notre monarchie est une monarchie démocratique. ... Les républicains disent: 'La République, c'est la démocratie se gouvernant elle-même. ... les socialistes, les communistes, les montagnards veulent que la République soit une démocratie pure ... Tel est l'empire du mot démocratie que nul gouvernement, nul parti n'ose vivre, et ne croit le pouvoir, sans inscrire ce mot sur son drapeau.'"  

86"volcan populaire."
For the historian and political scientist Rosanvallon (1994: 204), “Universal suffrage was by no means believed to be the political instrument of a pluralist debate. ... Nor were elections expected to bring social diversity into the sphere of politics. Rather, in 1848 the act of voting was understood to be a gesture of adherence, a symbolic expression of membership in the collectivity.”

Il est nécessaire, il est de toute justice que l'assemblée nationale soit composée de tous les éléments de la société, je dis éléments et non classe, parce que dans une République démocratique, il ne saurait y avoir que des citoyens.”

December 21-22, 1851: 7 145 000 ayes, 592 000 noes (Furet 1992: 437).

The representative E. de Sartiges declared for instance, in February 1869, that “L'Empire est fait et ne se discute plus; il représente la force dans le droit, la protection de l'ordre social dans une société arrivée à l'état de démocratie” (Annales du Sénat et du Corps législatif, 1, 50, Feb. 5, 1869, cited in Dubois 1962: 282).

In Monarchie Constitutionnelle (1869): “Corrigeons-nous de la démocratie; rétablions la royauté,” and that “un pays démocratique ne peut être bien administré, bien gouverné, bien commandé.” Jules Ferry’s article in Le Temps: “Au sein d'une démocratie débordante, qui, au lieu d’ennemis, n’a que des flagorneurs” (Furet 1992: 479).

Régime politique dans lequel on favorise ou on prétend favoriser les intérêts des masses.” In 1865-66, Alphonse Peyrat, editor of the republican newspaper L’Avenir national identified himself several times with the “democratic party” (“parti démocratique”). In 1866, the jurist E. Acollas released in Paris his book Nécessité de refonder l’ensemble de nos codes et notamment le Code Napoléon au point de vue de l’idée démocratique. In 1869 were found the Bibliothèque démocratique. (Huard 1996: 117 and 150; Roy 1974: 4).

C’est l’abus du mot démocratie qui m’a donné l’idée de ce livre”.

Les publicistes de la monarchie absolue et du despotisme militaire prétendent parler au nom de la démocratie, comme les publicistes de la république.” Yet, Vacherot himself would use the term intentionally to delude people about its historical and philosophical meaning. Vacherot, claimed to belong to the “école démocratique libérale.”

Il y a donc absolue nécessité pour la société la plus démocratique de se gouverner et de s'administrer par délégation.”

vertu représentative.”

si l’assemblée est l’image, elle est aussi l’élite du pays.”

In 1869, a flyer opened with a call “AUX DÉMOCRADES SOCIALISTES”; the same year, E. Aubry referred to “la démocratie ouvrière” in his Manifeste électoral (Dubois 1962: 283); In 1870, Ch. Beslay, in his Appel au peuple allemand, talked about the “démocrates-socialistes d’Allemagne” and the “démocrates-socialistes de France” (p. 282); Edourard Trouessard, author of Du Mouvement social et réformiste, released in 1870, talked about “la démocratie vraiment libérale et socialiste” (Trouessard, 1870: 64).

démocrates socialistes,” the “démocrates révolutionnaires,” the “démocrates bourgeois,” the “démocrates impérialistes,” the “démocrates néo-chrétiens.” For Dameth, “la démocratie sociale” means “une organisation économique et politique où la liberté soit subordonnée à une égalité matérielle, poussée aussi loin que possible.”

la disparition presque totale du nom de républicains, remplacer par celui de démocrates ... Car le mot Démocratie s’accomode plus volontiers de tous les régimes.”

démocratie bourgeoise.”

the “bourgeoisie démocratique.”

Tout le rêve de la démocratie est d’éléver le prolétaire au niveau de bêtise du bourgeois. Le rêve est en partie accompli.”

On May 28, 1869, for instance, during an electoral campaign, Léon Gambetta declared: “La démocratie radicale ... ne désire, n’ambitionne que le développement de la justice et de la liberté, de la solidarité parmi les hommes. Elle part de la souveraineté du peuple pour fortifier la souveraineté de l’individu par lui-même, qu’elle conclut au gouvernement du pays par le pays” (Nicolet 1982: 481).

comprend le régime parlementaire comme le veulent les principes de la démocratie libérale.”

gouvernement des citoyens par eux-mêmes.”

Vive la République!” and “Vive la Commune! Vive la République!”
About the lie, he wrote: "le mot République devait seulement servir d'étiquette pour faire accepter au pays ce nouveau mensonge politique" (Lefrançais 1968:). He also stressed that the "républicains autoritaires" must not be assimilated to the "républicains socialistes" (p. 21). According to Lefrançais, even among the members of the Commune, some people belonged to the "parti républicain bourgeois ou conservateur, ... ayant pour but unique de changer le nom, la durée et le mode d'élection des magistratures publiques" (p. 127 and p. 189 [emphasis added]).

Lefrançais further stated that "les républicains socialistes veulent l'accomplissement de réformes économiques sans lesquelles il n'y aura ni progrès possible ni démocratie véritable, réformes que l'organisation communaliste peut seule réaliser" (Lefrançais 1968: 26).

Then, Lefrançais declared: "la Démocratie étant devenue une vérité, la République sera définitivement fondée" (Lefrançais 1968: 32 and 134).

Then, Lefrançais stated: "Aux Démocrates Socialistes du XVIIe."

"En politique: La République Démocratique; la Commune de Paris; la Guerre à outrance [against the Prussians] ... En socialisme ... la suppression du salariat." Following the same line of thought, the Journal Officiel de la Commune (March 22, 1871) explained that "Paris a été, est encore et doit rester définitivement la capitale de la France, la tête et le cœur de la République démocratique, une et indivisible." Charles Limousin, member of the Commune, talked in an anti-Prussian text entitled "La revanche" of the need to "pousser à la République, à la République démocratique, et j'ajouterai même sociale" (Rougerie 1973: 98).

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"La Révolution, c'est le peuple; la Commune, c'est le peuple; la démocratie, le socialisme, c'est le peuple!"

"dictature bourgeoise pseudo-républicaine."

"forces populaires et sincèrement démocratiques."

"République démocratique et sociale."

"fièvre démocratique."

"quatrième-état, la classe ouvrière."

"oligarchie", "Paris, sous la démocratie."

"démocrate radical." Gambetta's "profession de foi aux électeurs de la 1er circonscription des Bouches-du-Rhône," (May 28, 1869): "La démocratie radical ne désire, n'ambitionne que le développement de la justice et de la liberté, de la solidarité parmi les hommes. Elle part de la souveraineté du peuple pour fortifier la souveraineté de l'individu, et c'est parce qu'elle veut le gouvernement de l'homme par lui-même, qu'elle conclut au gouvernement du pays par le pays" (Nicolet 1982: 481).

[Programme] "conservateur."

"politique des résultats," "partisans de l'utopie."

"Le démocrate enfin n'est pas celui qui n'est uniquement préoccupé que de reconnaître des égaux ... Ce qui constitue la vraie démocratie, ce n'est pas de reconnaître des égaux, messieurs, c'est d'en faire."

Gambetta declared: "j'estime que la série progressive de ces réformes sociales dépend absolument du régime et de la réforme politique, et c'est pour moi un axiome en ces matières, que la forme emporte et résout le fond." See also Baal (1994: 10). Thus, the communard Jules Andrieu (1971: 44) was right when in 1871 he distinguished the "républicains formalistes" from the "républicains radicaux."

"cette génération nouvelle de la démocratie, un nouveau personnel politique, électoral, un nouveau personnel de suffrage universel."

"Un cri a traversé la France, c'est le gouvernement des prêtres, le ministère des curés. Vous vous appelez la Contre-Révolution, nous avons en face de nous des nobles qui ne veulent pas s'accomoder de la démocratie, une congrégation qui veut asservir la France."

"démocratie régulière et loyale."

It is worth noting that even Gambetta was elitist: "Il n'y a qu'une certaine partie de la démocratie qui ait la passion et le souci des choses et des actes des hommes publics. C'est donc à ces hommes plus avisés et plus éclairés qu'il appartient, dans une certaine mesure, librement, sans pression, de se faire les instituteurs, les éducateurs, les guides de leurs frères moins avancés du suffrage universel, de ceux qui ont moins de loisirs et de lumières" (Speech, September 26, 1872, Grenoble [in Rosanvallon 1992: 306].
In the same vein, Littré hoped, in the late 1870s, that "l’aristocratie tienne une part considérable dans les démocraties" (Rosanvallon 1992: 344).

"Je hais la démocratie." In 1870, André Léo condemned "the democrats" because they "never took women into consideration" ("les démocrates" "n’ont jamais tenu compte des femmes") (Michel 1979: 78). Also critical of Democracy was Émile Renan. From Renan’s Vie de Jésus, released in 1863: "... le mouvement démocratique le plus exalté dont l’humanité ait gardé le souvenir (le seul aussi qui ait réussi, car seul il s’est tenu dans le domaine de l’Idée pure) agitait depuis longtemps la race juive. La pensée que Dieu est le vengeur du pauvre et du faible contre le riche et le puissant se retrouve à chaque page des écrits de l’Ancien Testament." Yet, Renan is an advocate of a divided and a hierarchical society, and he believed that "French democracy" too easily tried to negate social divisions wanted by God. In the same vein, Renan accused "democracy" of being the source of France’s defeat of 1870 against the Prussians, because "democracy" dissolves military character and discipline. Renan, Vie de Jésus, 1863 (18th ed. 1883), p. 187.

"la tourbe des démocapulards." See also the issue number 11 of the newspaper Le Réparateur, April 1871: "coupe-jarrets qui se font hommes politiques du parti démagogue, ‘démacrote’ et ‘démacrotin’" (Dubois 1962: 280).

For references to the "République démocratique," see also Rougerie (1973: 19).

Prévost-Paradol, in La France nouvelle, (1868) also talked about a "démocratie monarchique" (Rosanvallon 1992: 347).

"la démocratie de la raison éclairée." 138

"à conserver le progrès humain dont la France est l’âme, la démocratie dont la France est le foyer." 139

"C’est l’esprit humain qui, depuis que l’histoire existe, a transformé les sociétés et les gouvernements selon une loi de plus en plus acceptable pour la raison, qui a été la théocratie, l’aristocratie, la monarchie, et qui est aujourd’hui la démocratie." 140

"C’est Jésus, c’est un Dieu qui prescrit ainsi la DÉMOCRATIE parmi tous les Chrétiens et dans l’Humanité tout entière!" See also "Religion des républicain", in Les Révolution du XIXE siècle vol. 4 : Naissance du mouvement ouvrier 1830-1834 (1974).
As we have seen in Parts I and II of this dissertation, the term "democracy" was an effective weapon for either defending or undermining the legitimacy of a political actor, faction or platform. For instance, it was quite common for American and French political actors and commentators in the first years of their respective republics to use the word "democracy" for the purpose of condemning an institution or a proposition that would grant too much power to the poor. The word "democracy" was almost always conjoined with derogatory adjectives so as to besmirch this sort of popular regime. Despite this inauspicious beginning, political leaders gradually became defenders and promoters of "democracy." In the United States, the shift may be explained by the birth of the political machines better known as the official parties. Politicians then faced a new situation in which it was of utmost importance to win the votes of a very large population. The word "democracy" was employed to induce the electorate into believing that the politicians cared about representing their wishes and interests. The modern pro-democratic discourse that flourished in America did refer to the sovereignty of the people, yet the people ruled not directly, but through their "representatives." It should be clear by now that it was these same representatives who developed and proposed this new definition of "democracy," and that they did so because it helped them secure their own power. Clearly, to call the American regime "democracy" had precious little to do with intellectual considerations. "Democracy" simply happened to be a word with high currency on the political market. Indeed, the word "democracy" was so powerfully effective that within a few years it even became a term of religious faith.
Historically and philosophically, both the descriptive and normative meanings of the term “democracy” referred to equality and to the rule of the poor. Hence, progressives had grounds for identifying their political ideals and goals as “democracy.” We saw that during Andrew Jackson’s administration, “democracy” referred to the more egalitarian new States rather than the wealthy Eastern States and urban centres such as Boston and New York, which were known to be nests of the financial elite. And like their American progressive counterparts, it was the French leftists who first started to make positive references to “democracy” in their speeches and writings, references evoking economic struggle. In France, this discursive strategy was also consistent with the revolutionary tradition: during the 1790s, Maximilien Robespierre and Gracchus Babeuf were almost the only ones to openly identified themselves with “democracy.” Though very few leftists advocated direct democracy, leftist references to “democracy” did, albeit perhaps confusingly, evoke the rule of the people because “democracy” is involved in several overlapping language games, such as history, philosophy and politics.

Gradually, republicans (Caron 1994: 503; Nicolet 1982: 154, 298; Peyrard 1994: 516) and even conservative political actors and students began to use the term. Some would try to use it to identify the new social state. More conservative individuals, such as de Tocqueville, tried to use the term “democracy” as a sociological concept, referring to a specific state of society. Yet, they used the term in a non-systematic and sometimes even contradictory manner. Subsequently, mainstream official actors used the term as a label for the republican regime when addressing the people. It is worth noting that around 1840, influential political actors both in the United States and France started to complain that the term “democracy” was too broadly used.

Thus, although the descriptive meaning of the term changed—no longer referring to direct democracy—“democracy” still referred to equality and to the common people. The original meaning of the term—direct democracy by the people, without representatives—still resonated in the word, with its related connotations: the
people, the poor, and equality. But one idea was set aside: direct rule. “Democracy” no longer meant that the people rule directly, although the former meaning was still partially preserved, since it was said that the people do rule through their representatives. In fact, however, the elected political actors themselves acknowledged that this view was a myth, a fiction. The people were politically alienated and the elected politicians were the true rulers and knew it. Thus, both in the United States and France, the self-proclaimed “democrats” consciously decided to play with the word “democracy” in order to achieve broad popular support for their political parties and candidates. It may be said, therefore, that it is mainly due to successful propaganda that we use the label “democracy” today to characterize the American and the French regimes. This does not mean that the United States and France live under harsh dictatorships. Nor that to label the regime a “democracy” does not motivate political actors to transform their behaviour. In fact, semantic strategies imply a dialectic, since one who transforms the meaning of a term has to adapt his or her behaviour so as to avoid being in total contradiction.

To conclude, it is interesting to note that in the end, “democracy” became so common a reference to higher goals that political actors and commentators became oblivious to the historical foundations of their own political regime. Given the Founders’ opinion of democracy, it is thought-provoking, to say the least, to recall the statement made by Thomas Earle at the Pennsylvanian Constitutional Convention of 1837-38, when, in a debate on the introduction of universal suffrage, he declared: “In forming this Government, the intention of its framers was to bring it as near as possible to an absolute democracy, and that was by establishing short terms of office and universal suffrage” (Morantz 1971: 169 n. 9 [emphasis added]). Earle had it all wrong: the majority of the framers were against universal suffrage, and they loudly opposed “absolute democracy,” a phrase that expressed for them chaos and despotism.
Two men were more in touch with reality: Samuel Goodrich (the nephew of the Federalist Elizur Goodrich, from New Haven), and the attorney general Benjamin F. Butler. Looking back to a time he had known when the term "democracy" had a derogatory meaning, Goodrich made this perspicacious comment in his memoirs, sixty years after adoption of the Constitution: "We who are now familiar with democracy, can hardly comprehend the odium attached to it in the age to which I refer." Goodrich went on to observe that people "not only regarded it as hostile to good government, but as associated with infidelity in religion, radicalism in government, and licentiousness in society. It was considered a sort of monster" (Morantz 1971: 12).

Around the same time, in 1842, the attorney general Benjamin F. Butler delivered an address entitled "Representative Democracy in the United States." The comment of the North American Review clearly highlighted the sharp awareness he had of the transformation of the normative meaning of the word "democracy" that had occurred since the foundation: "No man knows better than he [the attorney general Benjamin F. Butler], what would have been the horror of the framers of the Constitution, could they have been told, that in fifty years time, the government they were setting up with such careful framed safeguards against what they called democracy would be itself called a democracy by one of its own highest officers" (Morantz 1971: 12-13).

In France also, despite the harsh comments of the Founders, it became more and more common to talk of France as a "democracy." As evidence of the popularity of the term, one can cite several newspapers (La Démocratie franc-comtoise, 1882), a popular books series ("Bibliothèque démocratique," 1877 [Rosanvallon 1992: 371]) and the number of books which were released having the term "democracy" or its cognate in their titles: Jules Barni's Morale dans la démocratie (1868), Edmond Schérer's La Démocratie et la France (1883), Eugène Spuller, Éducation de la démocratie (1892), Jules Payot, L'Éducation de la démocratie (1895), Léon Bourgeois, L'Éducation de la démocratie
française (1897), Alfred Fouillée, *Les Études classiques et la Démocratie* (1898), Francisque Vial, *L'Enseignement secondaire et la Démocratie* (1901), Henry Michel’s *La Doctrine politique de la démocratie* (1901), Alfred Fouillée’s *La Démocratie politique et sociale en France* (1910) and G. Guy-Grand, *Le procès de la démocratie* (1911). This leaves no reason to doubt how common it had become to identify France’s political system with democracy.
I have chosen to study the American and the French cases because it is commonly said that Boston and Paris were the midwives of modern "democracy." Even though England was already engaged in a long term process of liberalization, it was in the United States and France that a dramatic and clear political break appeared to have occurred. In other words, people generally believed that what the American and French Patriots had done was to establish a new political regime, i.e., a "democracy." Moreover, and despite the fact that "democratic" movements also appeared in the late 18th century in Belgium, Holland and Switzerland, it was the political histories of the United States and France that most influenced the way people think about "democracy."

Yet, as we have seen, the Founders themselves openly held "democracy" in contempt. Instead of a democracy, they established what I shall now call an "elective aristocracy," a term consistent with the political philosophy of the Founders and their own ideas. Indeed, we have seen that for philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Harrington, Spinoza, Montesquieu, and Rousseau, elections are incompatible with democracy since elections imply that amongst the people, some are more skilled than others to rule the State (see chapter 1). In Athens, officers were generally selected by lot, a highly democratic process implying that every citizen has the skill to make the proper political decision. The label of "elective aristocracy" is also in keeping with the Founders' state of mind, since they claimed to belong to the "natural aristocracy" (Jefferson) of their society. Thus, to be consistent with both political philosophy and
the Founders' idea, the so-called modern "democracies" should actually be identified as "elective aristocracies."

Of course, the elected aristocrats suggest that they represent the people. Yet, for a people to be represented is quite different from direct participation in political deliberations and the decision-and law-making process. Representation is one of the main concepts in law—a lawyer represents his or her client—and the majority of the most influential Founders were lawyers or jurists, so this might explain why they dwelt so much on the idea of "representation" (Roels 1969: 1, 9, 119). Furthermore, there has been no political regime that has not claimed to be representative of something: representative of reason, under Plato's philosopher-king; of the nation, under so-called modern "democracy" and fascism; of the working class, under communism; of God, under theocracy and some monarchies, etc. (Morgan 1989; Roels 1969: xiii, 6, 12). According to Anthony H. Birch (1993: 77-78) and others, one "function of representation is the mobilization of consent."

The use of the term "democracy" is central to modern discourse on representation. As we have seen with the cases of the United States and France, the modern political use of the term "democracy" was determined by a four step political evolution:

- First, the Founders of these elective aristocracies used the term "democracy" and its cognate to denigrate revolutionaries aiming to establish genuine democracy (i.e., by implementing reforms that would allow the people to participate directly in the decision-and law-making process). In America and France, the intellectual references regarding "democracy" were the same (etymology, historical examples [Athens], philosophers [Aristotle, Montesquieu]),

  economic concerns were similar ("democracy" evoked the rule of the poor), moral judgements were identical ("democracy" means licentiousness), and conclusions as to the economic, social, moral and political effects of democracy were also the
same ("democracy" is always a wrong). The use of the term, although motivated by political power struggles, was nonetheless consistent with its intellectual roots (etymology, history and philosophy). Mainstream Founders were explicitly anti-democratic and openly expressed their agoraphobia.

- After their victory—Independence in America or the first Revolution of 1789 in France—former allies competed to impose their views on how to reorganize the country they were now ruling. In the case of the United States, the clash was first between the Federalists and the anti-Federalists, then between Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. In France, the rivalries opposed former friends and allies such as Robespierre, Danton, Desmoulins, Hébert, and the Thermidorians, but also elected aristocrats on one hand and the sansculottes and the enragés on the other. During these debates and struggles, the term "democracy" was used more or less according to its intellectual definition, albeit for mainly political reasons, i.e. to undermine or increase political legitimacy.

- After a few decades of semantic confusion, the term "democracy" was used to label the modern elective aristocratic regime, in total contradiction with the intellectual definition of the term. The intended audience for the term "democracy" was no longer other political actors, but the electors, who had to be seduced. Yet, the political actors' political ideal was almost an exact copy of the Founders' ideal (i.e., elective aristocracy informed by the political philosophy of republicanism), the only difference being that the term "democracy" was now synonymous with "republic." In both cases—the United States and France—political factions competed for control of the term "democracy" and even openly acknowledged the existence of this semantic competition. Also in both cases, it was recognized that to be identified with "democracy" was a very effective way to seduce voters,
legitimize the regime and manufacture consent. The new label—"democracy"—occults the agoraphobic underpinnings of the regime.

- While for more than two thousand years "democracy" had referred to chaos, violence, irrationality and the tyranny of the mob, in both countries the term ultimately came to be identified with Reason and God's will. The seductive power of the word has been so great that clubs, newspapers, poems, as well as entire political regimes totally at odds with democracy, including not only modern elective aristocracy, but also Joseph Stalin's and Augusto Pinochet's dictatorships, have identified themselves with "democracy."²

It is worth noting that Athens, which had previously been offered as a counter-model by American and French republicans, became a model—and Sparta, the counter-model—at almost the same time (Rawson 1969: 2; Vidal-Naquet 1976: 37) that "democracy" began to be used as the official label of the so-called "representative democracies." Hence, it seems that the rehabilitation of the term "democracy" was part of a larger celebration of the people's rule, even though modern elected aristocrats did not undertake the major political transformations that could have made the new label a fitting one, philosophically speaking, for the new regime.

Although further investigation would be required, my preliminary research indicates that Canada, England, Germany, and Latin America followed a similar pattern with respect to the use of the word "democracy" and its cognates. It seems, in effect, that "democracy" was also held in contempt during the early political modernity of these regions. In Germany, for instance, Immanuel Kant suggested that "democracy" was "necessarily a despotism" (Jones 1994: 157, 159; Lobrano 1994: 50-52; Sartori 1987: 287).³ In England, public statements were made which condemned "democracy" in very similar terms to those encountered in the American and French cases. In 1786, John Gillies, for instance, released his History of Ancient Greece in which
Athens was depicted as "a wild and capricious democracy." For Gillies, "democracy" was "a fierce and licentious form of government" with "incurable defects" and a "tyrannical spirit" (Roberts 1996: 200). In 1867, Prime Minister Disraeli declared in Parliament: "It will never be the fate of this country to live under a democracy" (in Ajzenstat, Romney, Gentles & Gairdner, eds. 1999: 452). And Lord Bryce wrote in 1920 that "Seventy years ago the word 'democracy' awakened dislike and fear. Now it is a word of praise" (Birch 1993: 63).

The Founders of modern Latin-America and modern Canada shared with the Founders of the United States and France a similar agoraphobia. Simon Bolivar declared that there is no weaker political regime than "democracy" (Vayssière 1989: 15). Similarly, in the debates which led to the establishment of the Canadian Confederation in 1867, we find arguments against "democracy" that are almost identical to the anti-democratic statements made by the Founders of modern United States and France (Kelly 1997: 67-72). On February 7, 1865, George-Étienne Cartier declared in the Legislative assembly (in Ajzenstat, Romney, Gentles, Gairdner, eds. 1999: 185):

They [the Americans] had founded a federation for the purpose of carrying out and perpetuating democracy on this continent; but we ... felt convinced that purely democratic institutions could not be conducive to the peace and prosperity of nations. We were not now discussing the great problem presented to our consideration in order to propagate democratic principles. Our attempt was for the purpose of forming a federation with a view of perpetuating the monarchical element. ... in our federation the monarchical principle would form the leading feature.

Similarly, W.T. Drake declared that "there is no responsible government in the United States; it is an absolute despotic democracy" (in Ajzenstat, Romney, Gentles & Gairdner, eds. 1999: 43). In the Legislative assembly, Cauchon evoked "the forlorn hope of democracy, [of those] who in the streets threaten with riots and gibbets all who wish for the union of the provinces, and thereby, in its time, constitutional monarchy and parliamentary government" (in Ajzenstat, Romney, Gentles & Gairdner, eds. 1999: 446). In the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, on March 28, 1864,
James Johnston declared: “[in my youth] I held strong democratic sentiments ... but reflection and observation have gradually sobered down this sentiment” (in Ajzenstat, Romney, Gentles & Gairdner, eds. 1999: 169) (a statement that resembles Jefferson’s note that “a boy of fifteen who is not a democrat is good for nothing, and he is no better who is a democrat at twenty” [Padover, ed. 1943: 1276] and also one uttered by Novalis [1996: 57]: “Young people stand on the side of [perfect democracy], while the more established father of a household stands on the side of [monarchy]”). J-H Cameron openly condemned the “democratic idea” according to which the Canadian people should approve the new confederation (in Ajzenstat, Romney, Gentles & Gairdner, eds. 1999: 456). Like Jefferson and Robespierre, the statements of Canadian political actors against democracy went hand in hand with the conviction of being part of a natural aristocracy. According to Thomas D’Arcy McGee, “We have no aristocracy but of virtue and talent, which is the only true aristocracy, and is the old and true meaning of the term” (in Ajzenstat, Romney, Gentles & Gairdner, eds. 1999: 446 and see also Resnick 1984: ch. 2).

In keeping, once again, with the American and French patterns, it was mainly the most radical political actors in Germany and Canada who proudly identified with “democracy.” Karl Marx participated in “democratic” journals and associations. In 1847, for example, Marx accepted the vice-presidency of the Association démocratique, in Brussels. In Cologne, Marx also founded and published the Neue Rheinische Zeitung, which was known as an “organ of democracy” (Rubel 1974: 177-178). In 1848, Marx and Engels declared in the Manifesto of the Communist Party that “the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy” (Marx & Engels 1977: 52). There was a very similar penchant in Canada for the radicals to refer to themselves as “democrats,” or for political commentators to identify the radicals with “democracy.” Referring to George-Étienne Cartier’s involvement in the republican revolts of 1837-38, Maurice
Laframboise declared to the Assembly, on March 9, 1865 that he—Cartier—has truly left behind his “democratic ideas.”

Eventually, the word “democracy” became a highly popular and effective term of approval, and almost every leader has appropriated the label for himself or herself. As Olivier Reboul (1980: 200) concludes, the illusion that regimes are democratic results from the use of a word “democracy” over and over again, not in order to describe, but to designate, to label. Consequently, the leaders of the capitalist world and those of the communist world all claimed to be democrats. In Canada, as early as 1941, the very influential Catholic and nationalist Lionel Groulx (1941: 14 and see also 32-33) asked French-Canadians to “dedicate themselves to Christ” and to “Democracy,” while at the same time praising dictators such as Franco, Pétain, and Salazar (p. 30, 40-44). Augusto Pinochet did not hesitate to declare in his farewell address that the Chilean army was “the saviour of democracy” (New York Times, Sept 13, 1998). On the left, Achille Occhetto, newly elected general secretary of the Italian communist party in 1989, declared that “Our objective is ... democracy guided by socialist ideals” (Revel 1992: 13). In the same vein, the spokesperson of the Zapatista army stated in January 1994 that “Our organization is not socialist ... we want democracy” (Le Devoir, Jan. 18, 1994). Furthermore, although several Asian leaders, for instance, would claim that Asian culture and democracy are incompatible, we have nevertheless witnessed all over the world an unprecedented “acceptance of democracy as the highest form of political or social organization” (McKeon, ed. 1951: 522-523 and Orwell 1957: 149).

Again, it would be necessary to conduct systematic research to determine whether these other cases really follow the same general pattern we have found while studying the American and the French cases. Moreover, I did not extend my inquiry far enough to show whether in these countries, mainstream and conservative political actors and commentators began to refer positively to “democracy” for the same reasons as had their American and French counterparts. However, my research
seems to bear out that the modern meaning of the term “democracy” has been determined by its employment in propaganda. As I have demonstrated, political actors came to understand that “democracy” had a very important “political function”: associating it with positive connotations helps one to win adherents, seduce the people and manufacture consent. If, as Joseph A. Schumpeter (1950: 269 and see also Dahl 1971; Ostrogorski 1979: 67; Weber 1971) suggested, “the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote,” it is clear that the term “democracy” itself is very useful to increase one’s competitiveness.

One might legitimately ask for proof that the voters were really seduced by political actors using the term “democracy” in a positive manner. Despite my focus on the elite—lettered political actors and commentators—I have also found indications of the impact on the general population of pro-democratic propaganda. Around 1830-40, with the broadening of the suffrage, the people were undoubtedly very likely to be sensitive to politicians speaking highly of popular sovereignty and the political power of the people. One word said it all: “democracy.” I believe it is of great significance that Andrew Jackson and Léon Gambetta became influential political actors and were both elected on the strength of their pro-“democratic” platforms. This seems to indicate that their strategy was effective and that electors were indeed seduced (or, at least, not frightened) by the democratic discourse. Moreover, the fact that numerous newspapers and political clubs and associations gave to themselves “democratic” names is further proof that the term was considered highly attractive, or, in other words, persuasive enough to make people join such associations, or buy such newspapers.
Contemporary Political Philosophy and "Democracy"

Socialisation often blinds individuals to the fact that by using specific words they are making an ideological statement. This state of unawarness is encapsulated in Michel Pêcheux's concept of "forgetting" (Pêcheux 1975). George Orwell, in a bolder way, claims that it is when we begin to use "ready-made phrases" which "even think your thoughts for you, to a certain extent" that "the special connection between politics and the debasement of language becomes clear." Orwell equates the individual speaking about politics with "machines": "The appropriate noises are coming out of his larynx, but his brain is not involved as it would be if he were choosing his words for himself." Echoing the idea of "forgetting," he maintains that "If the speech he is speaking is one that he is accustomed to make over and over again, he may be almost unconscious of what he is saying, as one is when one utters the responses in church. And this reduced state of consciousness, if not indispensable, is at any rate favourable to political conformity" (Orwell 1957: 152-153). Indeed, he or she forgets that he or she has, in fact, the opportunity to choose other words to describe the world and the frequently occurring word becomes attached, in an obvious way, to the political individual, faction, institution, action or idea it connotes. Orwell gives this idea a dramatic shape in his novel Nineteen Eighty-Four, where a totalitarian government has created a new language—Newspeak—in order to reshape the minds of its citizens. By controlling language, the ruling authority controls the mind since one cannot conceptualise what one cannot express in words. As Orwell explains in an appendix (1990: 312),

The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc [English Socialism], but to make all other modes of thought impossible. It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted once and for all and Oldspeak forgotten, a heretical thought — that is, a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc — should be literally unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words.
Orwell also reminds us that one might use, for example, the word “pacification” to describe a situation where “Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets” (Orwell 1957: 153). Echoing the same idea, Noam Chomsky (1988: 662) notes that terms used in political discourse are often “very much divorced from their actual meaning, sometimes even the opposite of it.”

It is generally taken for granted that Orwell’s novel was describing a totalitarian system similar to Stalin’s USSR. Similarly, Hitler’s Third Reich is known to have been highly efficient in the area of propaganda and thought control. Two in-depth studies illustrate the Nazis’ methods of using words to legitimate their power. In 1947, Victor Klemperer published the first study of the use Nazis made of language in order to “engineer souls.” He remarked that Nazis redefined words instead of creating new ones. They took, for instance, the word “fanaticism,” originally quite derogatory in meaning, and made broad utilisation of it, giving it a positive connotation. Jean-Pierre Faye extensively analyzes German political speeches, juridical and police reports, studies of economists, etc. to show how the Nazi party was able to simultaneously speak the language of conservatism and the language of revolution. Faye argues that by mixing concepts and promoting themselves as the representatives of the “national-socialist revolution,” the Nazis confused the minds of Germans, undermined the capacity to build a coherent discourse against them, and won a broad adhesion to their policies (Faye 1972; Klemperer 1996).

Yet harsh criticism of Fascist and Communist language strategies must not make us forget how useful propaganda is in a so-called “democratic” society. With obviously less dramatic results than the Nazis, it seems that politicians in France and the United States followed a similar strategy in order to seduce electors and to manufacture consent, mixing concepts such as “democracy” and “representation,” although these refer to opposite ideas, according to etymology, history and political philosophy. Of course, most political philosophers living in modern elective
aristocracies such as Canada, France and the United States claim that thanks to their political regimes they have the opportunity to do their work in an objective and scientific manner. The problem is that terms used by political philosophers ("democracy," for instance) belong to several interwoven language realms. As Quentin Skinner shows, the vocabulary of philosophers is influenced by political conventions and the specific political vocabulary that are used in the society they live in. Similarly, Wittgenstein's theories (see Flathman 1973: 25) and those of linguists like Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes (1978: 12-13) imply that words used by political philosophers operate within existing conventions. James Farr (1989: 33) summarises the idea in his assertion that "concepts are never held or used in isolation, but in constellations which make up entire schemes or belief systems." This understanding of language accounts for the impossibility of a pure and completely disconnected philosophical discourse. Living with and through language, we are often blind to its rules and laws and unconscious of its power over our way of thinking and of seeing the world. In support of this idea, Laclau (1993: 432) summarizes de Saussure's view by stating that: "in language there are no positive terms, only difference. To understand the meaning of the term 'father', I have to understand the meaning of the terms 'mother', 'son', etc. This purely relational and differential character of linguistic identities means that language constitutes a system in which no element can be defined independently of the others." Since languages and words have a history, and since we passively integrate vocabulary (de Saussure 1995: 30), it is impossible to escape a value-laden relationship between words (Edelman 1985: 120 and 131; White 1984: 10). Edelman (1977: 14) reminds us that

Because the whole point of studies of political symbolism is to examine the evocation of alternative cognitions, they polarize readers who are committed to their own perceptions. The problem is not serious when research focuses upon the problematic character of the beliefs of people living in alien cultures or the beliefs of dissenters and rebels. ... An examination of dominant symbols encounters wider resistance. Indeed, some are likely to confuse a statement that an alternative to their own perception is tenable with the claim that alternative is reality. If the analytic utility of the notion of multiple realities is growing, it is still far from common.
Since both the philosopher and the reader are the heirs to a language with a historicity prescribing specific conventions and networks, to use particular words implies acceptance of the language territory. A political philosopher's word choice implies a political stance and unveils, in and of itself, a political world view. I do not maintain that political philosophy is nothing more than rhetoric and propaganda. I do, however, maintain that in dealing with objective and theoretical problems, political philosophers cannot avoid using words which carry socially and historically constructed normative values. Political implications are unavoidable, since words carry values and normative power, and since groups, for political reasons, tend to control particular words for their own purposes, particular words which are appealing, or which have a specific political power to legitimate and/or judge. Because this is the case, the writings of political philosophers continually reflect both objective and subjective meanings. Although philosophers and sophists are often conceptualised in opposition to each other they are, in fact, inseparable: in each philosopher one can find a sophist, and vice versa.\(^{10}\)

Of course, it is possible to influence and to modify language and its sign system, but doing so inevitably illuminates aspects of a phenomenon or an action while simultaneously concealing others. Indeed, when the time comes to name a regime, in order to be understood and accepted, a political philosopher must utilize available conceptual labels. Hence, the choice of Monarchy over Tyranny, Democracy over Anarchy, is more than mere description: it is an active, yet subtle, evaluation. Moreover, the term “democracy” and its cognates are used not only by political philosophers but also by citizens, activists, politicians, teachers, journalists, and poets. As Jacques Rancière (1995: 14) observes, “it would undoubtedly be convenient” in order to avoid confusion, misunderstanding and disagreement, “that ... the philosopher has at his disposal words entirely different from those of the poet, the merchant, the orator and the politician.” Even if Rancière's hope is legitimate, it is an
impossible one to realize. In fact, most political philosophers like to believe that they speak a scientific language, and that when they use a word like “democracy,” it is not to promote any political goal but instead to make a statement about “truth.”

For contemporary political theorists to attach the label “democracy” to modern elective aristocracies such as Canada, France or the United States is highly problematic. Of course, the manner contemporary political philosophers use the term “democracy” does not have to be consistent with the etymological, historical, philosophical root of the word. We enjoy, after all, freedom of speech and one has the right to give to a word whatever meaning pleasing him. Moreover, several words had not a static meaning through history. Yet, I believe it to be important for contemporary political philosophers to be aware that this was not out of a random process that the meaning of the word "democracy" changed around 1840. To know the political reasons why the meaning of the word "democracy" changed is to know what political impact the use of such a word could have. Historically, political actors labelled the elective aristocratic regime “democracy” and referred to themselves as “democrats” because they realized it would help them gain power and manufacture consent. It is disturbing, to say the least, to see contemporary political philosophers simply dismiss their own tradition to adopt a term as an analytical tool when that term was appropriated and distorted by political actors for strategic rather than philosophical reasons.

Contemporary political philosophers, however, commonly acknowledge that the word "democracy" is rooted in etymology, history and ancient philosophy. The argument usually goes this way: “Democracy” comes from the Greek and it means rule by the people. Yet, it would be unrealistic to believe that such a political regime could function in our modern societies: their geographic and demographic sizes are too large for such a direct democracy to work (an argument already made against democracy by American and French elected aristocrats). Moreover, the modern definition of liberty refers to private freedom rather than political participation. Then, let us simply forget about the etymological, historical and
philosophical meaning of “democracy.” Let us, however, use the term to label our modern representative regime (Held 1987: 2, 4; 1993: 16, 18; Pennock 1979: 3, 7; Simon 1951).

Yet, if our contemporary elective aristocratic regimes are not “democratic” precisely because they do not fit the definition of democracy established in the etymological, historical and philosophical traditions, are political theorists doing their philosophical job when they label such regimes “democracy” only because this term is unquestioningly accepted by politicians, journalists, teachers, poets, and so on? Here I follow Herbert Marcuse (1964: 114-120), according to whom too many political theorists felt there was no problem with simply using the term “democracy” to name our current elected aristocratic regime, despite evidence that the use of such a label was clearly inconsistent with the philosophical tradition. As Marcuse stresses, “If ‘democratic’ is defined in the limiting but realistic terms of the actual process of election, then this process is democratic prior to the results of the investigation.” Marcuse (1964: 116) adds: “the investigation becomes circular and self-validating.” Similarly, in a text written during the Cold War, Felix E. Oppenheim (1975: 291 [emphasis added]) reminds us that “Democracy’, as used in the United States, refers to a competitive party system as an essential, defining characteristic, whereas in Yugoslavia the same term refers primarily to workers’ participation in the management of economic enterprises. [Such definitions] are always based on empirical statements about linguistic habits. Thus their basis is empirically either true or false.” Marcuse explains, furthermore, that nouns like “freedom,” “equality,” “peace” and “democracy” “imply, analytically, a specific set of attributes ... . In the West, the analytical predication is in such terms as free enterprise, initiative, election, individual; in the East in terms of workers and peasants, building communism or socialism, abolition of hostile classes.” And Marcuse (1964: 88) goes farther than Oppenheim by underlining the fact that for mainstream theorists, “transgression of the discourse beyond the closed analytical structure is incorrect or propaganda" while the opposite is known as being objective and scientific.\(^{11}\)
Although I am arguing that it is misleading for political *philosophers* to call our political system a "democracy," it does not follow that I believe direct democracy to be a paradise and that Athens, the American town meetings, the *sansculottes'* sections or the Commune of Paris were havens of pure justice, equality and liberty. Neither do I wish to suggest that the establishment of real democracy in the United States or in France might not have produced bloodshed, a terrible tyranny of the majority, violence against the wealthy, etc. Nor am I contending that citizens of modern elective aristocracies do not enjoy a certain amount of justice, equality and liberty. Moreover, propaganda and legitimizing discourses do influence political actors and practices and through adopting a pro-"democratic" discourse, political actors have been compelled to promote progressive policies. Some political practices such as universal suffrage, for instance, were regarded as highly "democratic" even by the American radicals of 1776 and the French radicals of 1789. However, the right to vote is not enough to make a system democratic, according to the etymological, historical and philosophical meaning of "democracy." To have a democracy, citizens must have the right to participate in the decision-and law-making process. Moreover, "democracy" was commonly understood as the rule of the poor, which means a regime in which egalitarian laws should be enforced and private property not considered a sacred principle. In elective aristocracies, the people have neither the right to propose laws nor to vote on them and private property is generally at the core of the legal system. Thus, there have not been enough major constitutional modifications to legitimate labelling elective aristocratic regime "democratic." Yet, to attach the label "democracy" to undemocratic regimes such as the modern elective aristocracies may also have as a side-effect to increase the people's expectations (see for instance the Progressive Movement in the United States around 1900 [Gow 1998: 241-243]). Finally, and here I repeat myself, my intention is not to suggest that people—politicians, journalists, scholars, poets, etc.—have no right to name the modern elective aristocracy a "democracy." I am not seeking to establish a language police.
Nonetheless, I have demonstrated that the "democratic" labelling of our regime has been imposed by political actors not for etymological, historical or philosophical reasons, but because they believed—as their comments and declarations reveal—that it would be an effective propaganda tool; I further want to stress that this is of considerable consequence for contemporary political philosophy.

For a political philosopher to name our elective aristocracy a “democracy” is to engage in propaganda. Labelling elective aristocracies “democracy” leads people to believe that they have more political power than they actually possess. The choice of a label by political philosophers is important since philosophers write from a particular social position which gives a particular legitimacy to their statements, as Pierre Bourdieu (1982) and Michel Foucault, among others, have suggested (Laclau 1993: 434). Similarly, John G.A. Pocock (1989: 18) suggests that political philosophers are part of what he names “authority-structures.” With this in mind, it is hard to claim that political philosophers are only mere philosophers. Some political theorists seem to be more aware than others of this problem, and the early Robert A. Dahl, for instance, proposed “polyarchy” to designate the representative regime. Later, however, Dahl returned to the official label, releasing a book entitled Democracy and its critics. Other contemporary scholars such as W. B. Gallie (1962), Ernesto Laclau and Emmanuel Terray also acknowledge that the term “democracy” has been a source of political tensions and struggles. Indeed, Ernesto Laclau (1993: 435) remarks that “There is a proliferation of ‘floating signifiers,’ in society, and political competition can be seen as attempts by rival political forces to partially fix those signifiers to particular signifying configurations.” Laclau continues with a reflection about our main concern: “Discursive struggles about the ways of fixing the meaning of a signifier like ‘democracy,’ for instance, are central to explain the political semantics of our contemporary political world. This partial fixing of the relation between signifier and signified is what ... is called ‘hegemony’.” The French leftist writer Emmanuel Terray
(1992: 85), in a statement close to Laclau’s opinion, claims that “There are words that must not be left to the opponents, and ‘democracy’ is the best example.”

Hence, I maintain that it is extremely problematic, to say the least, that after more than two thousand years of disgrace, “democracy” should suddenly become the last word in both philosophy and politics or that the term is used to label a political regime that would have been identified as non-“democratic” not only by Athenians (whether democrats or not), but even by its own Founders. As de Tocqueville (1988: 482) remarked in his Democracy in America, “abundance of abstract terms in the language of democracy, used the whole time without reference to any particular facts, both widens the scope of thought and clouds it. They make expression quicker but conceptions less clear. However, in matters of language democracies prefer obscurity to hard work.”

The first anti-democrats, Plato and Aristotle, stressed that democracy was an easy prey for demagogues. Such an argument was raised again by people most critical of elective aristocracy, such as Proudhon. Speaking of “the representative government and the speechmakers’ tyranny” he declared that “speechmakers control the world, they make our heads spin, they daze us, they rob us, they drain our blood, they ridicule us” (Proudhon 1966: 301 n. 1). The Founders of elective aristocracies themselves affirmed that democracy was to be feared because of the danger of the people falling prey to demagogues. Then, with time and so for demagogic reasons, political actors started to call this regime a “democracy”.

Let me conclude with the following observation. If democracy can easily fall prey to demagogues, so too could elective aristocracy. The term “democracy” became the most effective tool for the modern demagogues of so-called “representative democracy” to use when it emerged in the 19th century. And the same term “democracy,” with all the historical richness that the classical concept contains, remains an effective weapon today in the critique of “representative democracy” itself.
Yet, this is not to suggest that American and French political histories are more universal than others. I do not believe, for instance, that the hundreds of successful and unsuccessful revolutions and counter-revolutions that have shaken the world since the American and French ones are only pale and imperfect copies of what happened in 1776 in Boston or in 1789 in Paris. As a matter of fact, too many American and French historians openly express their faith in the universal relevance of the history of their own countries to global history or, at least, to the history of Modernity. Gauchet and Nicolet are two representatives of this mindset (Gauchet 1995: 7; Nicolet 1982: 87).

Of course, it is always possible for someone to use a word in a manner inconsistent with the definition or the common use of the day.

Leibniz also expressed a contempt toward “democracy” similar to the American and French Founders’ opinion on “democracy”: “I would come out against absolute power, if in our times we had seen tyrants comparable to those monsters of Emperors that Rome saw in other times. But today there is no prince so bad that it would not be better to live under him than in a democracy” (in a letter to Landgraf Ernst of Hesse-Rheinfels, written in 1683. Leibniz [1988]: 186).

“Nulle forme de gouvernement n’est aussi débile que la démocratie.”

Opposed to the idea of “mandat impératif,” Cauchon declared that, for him, “the theory and practice of English constitutional law alone possess attractions” (see Ajzenstat, Romney, Gentles & Gairdner, eds.: 446 and 448).

In 1849, the Manifeste du Club national démocratique was released in Montréal. And in the newspaper Le Pays, on August 9, 1850, it is said that “Au seul cri de patriote, on reconnaissait le démocrate canadien.”

“aujourd’hui il [Cartier] est bien revenu de ses idées démocratiques.” Débats parlementaires sur la question de la confédération des provinces de l’Amérique du Nord, 3e session, 8e Parlement, Québec, Hunter, Rose et Lemieux, 1865: 856.

“Consacrons-nous au Christ, autant, à tout le moins, qu’à la Démocratie.”

According to Terry Eagleton (1991: 5-6), “A dominant power may legitimate itself by ... obscuring social reality in ways convenient to itself. Such ‘mystification’, as it is commonly known, frequently takes the form of masking or suppressing social conflicts, from which arises the conception of ideology as an imaginary resolution of real contradictions.”

Regarding the contemporary understanding and use of the term “democracy” in the United States, France and Senegal, see Schaffer (1999) and Desbrousses-Peloille (1984b).

Chantal Mouffe, well aware of the political importance of this linguistic struggle, claims that “one task of a modern democratic political philosophy, as I see it, is to provide us with a language to articulate individual liberty with political liberty so as to construe new subject positions and create different citizens’ identities.” The strong link between language and political life is, once again, underlined. And she continues: “Political philosophy in a modern democratic society should not be a search for foundation but the elaboration of a language providing us with metaphoric redescriptions of our social relations” (Mouffe 1993: 56-57).

“gouvernement représentatif et de la tyrannie des parleurs”, “Les parleurs gouvernent le monde; ils nous étourdissent, ils nous assomment, ils nous pillent, ils nous sucent le sang et ils se moquent de nous.”
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