Claus Offe

Self-Observation from the distance - Toqueville, Weber and Adorno in the United States

Frankfurt Adorno Lecture 2003

Sold to

English world rights (Polity), Spanish world rights (Katz), Brazilian Portuguese rights (Tempo Brasileiro), Japan (Hosei UP), Serbia (University of Zagreb), Turkey (Dost)

About

The three classics of European social theory, Alexis de Tocqueville, Max Weber and Theodor W. Adorno, always kept conditions and developments in Europe in mind as a comparative yardstick in their writings compiled during or on the occasion of time spent in the United States. Taken together, their observations of the United States cover a period of 120 years.

Claus Offe’s lectures on Adorno took this unique constellation as a basis for subjecting these observations to critical enquiry and to hone a view of a foreign culture as a view of one’s own culture. The result is not only a fascinating enigmatic portrayal that constantly explores new theoretical and historical settings, for Offe also shows that the questions which the three travelers addressed remain highly poignant today: What can we, as citizens of the »Old Continent« learn from our relatives on the other side of the Atlantic? And what can they learn from us? Will Europe become Americanized, or America Europeanized? Is the United States ahead of us and, if so, is for the good? On the basis of what shared properties is there any justification for talking of the »West«?