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Sommario/riassunto	In this inaugural volume of the Alexis de Tocqueville Lectures, James Ceaser traces the way certain "foundational" ideas-including nature, history, and religion-have been understood and used over the course of American history. Ceaser treats these ideas as elements of political discourse that provide the ground for other political ideas, such as liberty or equality. Three critical commentators challenge Ceaser's arguments, and a spirited debate about large and enduring questions in American politics ensues.