

Raymond Aron and Political Criticism

레이몽 아롱과 정치비평

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Abstract

Raymond Aron was both a philosopher and a columnist, a sociologist and an expert in international relations and strategic issues. This disconcerting profile, along with his involvement in the ideological disputes of the Cold War, may obscure the importance of his political criticism and its relevance in the post-Cold War era. This paper deals with the distinctive features of Aron's political thinking: his criticism of the philosophies of history embedded in the ideologies of the 20th century, but also in the European project conceived by Jean Monnet; his pragmatic liberalism which, most of the time, was closer to Keynes than to Hayek; the constant moderation of his discourse which, whatever his taste for controversies, reflected his high intellectual standards and his vision of the scholar's duty to enlighten his fellow citizens. The first part describes, in light of recent research, the defining decades of the 1930s and 1940s in which Aron, from Germany to London, developed his political criticism as an answer to the looming "era of tyrannies". The second part explains the commitment of Raymond Aron in the first ten years of the Cold War, not only as a negative undertaking aimed at defeating communism, but also as a constructive defense of political freedom which included warnings about the flaws of American policies or European integration as well as about the hopelessness of the colonial wars waged by France. The last part defines the legacy of Aron through his criticism of the Western democratic societies.

□ Key words: Liberalism, philosophy of history, Raymond Aron, political criticism, democracy.

초록

레이몽 아롱은 철학자이자 칼럼니스트이며, 사회학자이자 국제관계와 전략의 전문가이다. 이러한 양면적 프로파일은 그가 냉전시대에 이데올로기적 논쟁에 관여한 것과 더불어 그의 정치비평과 그 비평의 탈냉전적 관련성의 중요함을 희미하게 만든다. 이 글은 아롱의 다음과 같은 정치적 사유의 특징들을 다룬다. 20세기 여러 이데올로기들 뿐만 아니라 장 모네가 상상한 유럽 프로젝트에 내재된 역사철학에 대한 비판, 대부분 하이에크 보다 케인즈에 더 가까운 실용주의적 자유주의, 논란이 여덟든 간에 동료 시민을 계몽하려는 학자의 의무에 대한 높은 지적 기준과 비전을 반영하는 담론에 있어서 그의 지속적인 절제력. 이 글의 첫 부분은 최근 연구에 힘입어 아롱이 당시 독일부터 런던까지 떠오르는 “폭정의 시대”에 대한 답변으로 자신의 정치비평을 발전 시킨 1930년대와 1940년대를 다룬다. 둘째 부분은 냉전시대 첫 10년 동안 공산주의를 무찌르려는 목적으로 일했을 때를 설명한다. 또한 프랑스가 수행한 희망없는 식민전쟁에 대한 경고뿐만 아니라, 미국의 정책과 유럽통합의 문제점에 관한 경고를 포함해 정치적 자유를 방어함에 있어서 아롱의 개입을 설명한다. 마지막 부분은 서구 민주주의의 사회에 대한 비평을 통해 아롱의 유산을 정리해본다.

□ 주제어: 자유주의, 역사철학, 레이몽 아롱, 정치비평, 민주주의

On December 1, 1970, Raymond Aron delivered his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France. This was the apex of a career. In this lesson, Aron insisted that, back in 1930 in “pre-hitlerian” Germany, he had experienced “a revelation of politics in its diabolic essence” which compelled him to think against himself, against its intimate leanings as well as against his university education. In the words of Arnold Toynbee, he had the impression that “history was again on the move”,¹⁾ which inclined him towards “active pessimism”. Considering the heroic stance embedded in that speech, we might consider it a foreword to Aron’s biography, later developed in the interviews of *The Committed Observer* and his memoirs.²⁾ Yet, with hindsight, we might also argue that the reward of the Collège de France came late, and that the philosopher and sociologist had had a narrow escape: from the defense of his dissertation in 1938 to *The Opium of the Intellectuals* in 1955, he had always been an outsider. After the war, his involvement as a colum-

1) Raymond Aron, *De la condition historique du sociologue* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 21.

2) Aron, *Le Spectateur engagé* (Paris: Julliard, 1981), *Mémoires. Cinquante ans de réflexions politiques* (Paris: Julliard, 1983).

nist was seen as unfit by most of his peers which cost him a setback when he applied for a chair at the Sorbonne in 1948.³⁾ Seven years later, when he made a new bid, he was elected by a narrow margin. Besides, Aron himself described his writings as a Sisyphean undertaking.⁴⁾ Indeed, he wrote dozens of books, hundreds of scientific papers and thousands of newspaper articles, not counting dozens of radio chronicles.⁵⁾ Very few intellectuals could compete with him in quantitative performance, even fewer in quality. The student who faces Aron's works confronts the daunting task of grasping the meaning of a towering mass of writings ranging from philosophy to sociology, from economics to international relations and strategy. Aron's impressive works reflect his approach of politics in troubled times.⁶⁾ In this paper, I argue that this indefatigable commitment to political theory and comment was based, as the inaugural lecture testifies, on his awareness of the "era of tyrannies" unleashed by the rise of totalitarian ideologies in the wake of WW1. The first part deals with Aron's conception of the political. Then, in the second part, we shall examine the political commitment which derived from that conception. Last but not least, we shall try to assess the legacy of Aron's political criticism.

I . A Conception of the Political Rooted in the "Era of Tyrannies".

The political turmoil in Europe was caused by the Great War that destroyed three empires – Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia – and entailed the development of three totalitarian ideologies: Soviet communism, Italian fascism and German national-socialism. Even though France had "won" the war, it was a pyrrhic victory: the price to pay – 1.25 million French troops had fallen on the front – was so high that most Frenchmen embraced pacifism. The most popular French

3) Aron, *Mémoires* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2010), 295.

4) Joachim Stark, *Das unvollendete Abenteuer*, 262 (interview of Aron by Joachim Stark on 14 October 1981).

5) Elisabeth Dutarte, *Fonds Raymond Aron, Inventaire*, (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2007).

6) Vincent Descombes, *Philosophie par gros temps* (Paris: Minuit, 1989), 80.

philosopher of the interwar period would be Alain who, in *Mars or the truth about war*, made the case against militarism.⁷⁾ Alain, who had courageously served in the army during the war, now became a beacon for the pacifist youth. In another book, *The citizen against the powers*,⁸⁾ he suggested that the individual had to oppose the administration in order to preserve freedom.

Aron soon became one of Alain's followers. When he began a three-year stay in Germany in 1930, he wrote a series of articles in Alain's journal *Libres Propos*(*Free Comments*).⁹⁾ Born in a Jewish family from Lorraine, in Eastern France, he was a patriot and a Republican, leaning towards the left. The French right had been against the republican regime, and so remained the far right of the interwar period. The monarchist and nationalist leader of Action Française, Charles Maurras, was also a violent anti-Semite, who had started his political career with the Dreyfus Affair. Even though Aron was an agnostic¹⁰⁾ and repeatedly said that in those days, he did not lay much importance on his Jewishness, it is obvious that for him the nationalist right was never an option. Conversely, he knew that the French Revolution had granted full citizenship to the Jews who, like other minorities as the Protestants, always endorsed the Republican secularism called *laïcité* in France.¹¹⁾

Aron arrived in Germany because it was a tradition that the students of the École Normale Supérieure had a stay over the Rhine. Célestin Bouglé, the school's director and one of Aron's teachers, had been there in the 1890s.¹²⁾ Aron was also willing

7) Alain (Émile Chartier), *Mars or the truth about war* (London: J. Cape, 1930).

8) Alain, *Le citoyen contre les pouvoirs* (Paris: Slatkine, 1979).

9) For Aron's early writings, see Joachim Stark's edition in German : Raymond Aron, *Über Deutschland und den Nationalsozialismus, Frühe politische Schriften 1930-1939* (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1993); Aron, *Croire en la démocratie* (Paris: Fayard, 2017).

10) Aron, *Mémoires*, 996.

11) Marie-Laurence Netter, "Raymond Aron and the French Revolution", *European Journal of Political Theory*(2003/2), 373-382: "This is something that a Jewish person cannot forget. We are talking about the positive side of the Revolution, about principles introduced in the 18th century and which progressively spread throughout Europe. In France the new principle of equality before the law, eventually the right to vote, these are the achievements of the French Revolution."

12) Jean Breton(i.e. Célestin Bouglé), *Notes d'un étudiant français en Allemagne* (Heidelberg, Berlin, Leipzig, Munich, Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1895).

to put his socialist opinions on trial: he intended to read the works of Marx. Nevertheless, his arrival coincided with the sudden rise of the Nazi party in the general election of September 1930. From twelve seats in the previous Reichstag, the Nazis rose to 107. Within a few months, Aron was so impressed by the harshness of German nationalism that he would confess his fears to his friend, the Germanist Pierre Bertaux: not least at the movies, there were outbursts of hatred towards the French, and the heroes of the wars of liberation against Napoleon, like Queen Luise of Prussia, were hailed by the crowds.¹³⁾ Moving to Berlin, Aron had the opportunity to attend a meeting in which Hitler delivered a speech, on 17 January 1932.¹⁴⁾ With his friend Golo Mann, the son of Thomas Mann, he witnessed a Nazi book burning with an address by Joseph Goebbels. As early as May 1931, the crisis of the Weimar Republic led him to an about-turn on the German question. He admitted that concessions would be useless, that neither the myth of a reconciled, politically united Europe envisioned by Coudenhove-Kalergi, nor the system of collective security based on the League of Nations would withstand the strength of German nationalism.¹⁵⁾ Later, Aron would describe the end of the Weimar Republic as “the ideal form of the self-destruction of a democratic regime”, brought about by the creation of two revolutionary parties on either side of the political spectrum.¹⁶⁾ As of 1933, he would draw the consequences and care about war preparedness. In 1934, he made the case against the pacifist conscientious objectors, arguing that “the citizen’s vocation is, if need be, to be a soldier”. “Nobody, he insisted, should claim the rights of a citizen, short of war”.¹⁷⁾

What worried Aron was, beyond the dawn of the Third Reich, which he considered “a catastrophe for Europe”,¹⁸⁾ was the weakness of the French Republic,

13) Raymond Aron, *Histoire et politique (Commentaire)*, 1985), 29-30: Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAF 28060, Fonds Raymond Aron, box 206, correspondence with Pierre Bertaux.

14) Aron, “Lettre d’Allemagne,” *Libres Propos* (February 1932: article dated from January 1932); *Domarus, Hitler Reden und Proklamationen 1932-1945* (Leonberg: Pammiger & Partner, 1973), 67.

15) Aron, “Révision des traités. Lettre d’Allemagne,” *Libres Propos*, 222-223.

16) Aron, *Introduction à la philosophie politique*, Le Livre de Poche (2014: lessons taught at ENA in 1952), 124.

17) Aron, “De l’objection de conscience,” *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, XLI (Paris, Gallimard, 1972), 133-145, reprinted in *Études politiques*.

18) Aron, “Une révolution antiprolétarienne,” in *Inventaires. La crise sociale et les idéologies nationales* (Paris: Ican, 1936).

in which the 1930s were a decade of civil strife. On February 6, 1934, the leagues of the nationalist far right organized a demonstration that was considered a failed fascist coup d'État by the left which, in turn, decided to build up the Popular Front which, two years later, won the general election. Aron, still leaning towards democratic socialism, then voted for the candidate of the Popular Front, whose leader, Léon Blum, was infamously attacked by Maurras in *L'Action française*. Just before the election, on 7 March 1936, Hitler had remilitarized the Rhineland in an open violation of the treaty of Versailles. Yet, the opponents to the Popular Front would embrace the motto “Better Hitler than Blum”. An indignant Aron rejected a proposal made by the liberal essayist Alfred Fabre-Luce to join the fascist PPF – Party of the French People – led by the formerly communist Jacques Doriot. In a letter to the Jesuit priest Gaston Fessard, a friend with who he attended Alexandre Kojève’s seminar on Hegel’s phenomenology, Aron confessed his fear that France, if she could not overcome her internecine strife, might some day disappear, “with or without a war, through hitlerization from within or from without.”¹⁹⁾

Aron’s liberalism was, consequently, mostly political and defensive. It was rooted in the awareness of the foreign threat of German Nazism combined with the state of deep discord among the French. Aron became, together with his friend Robert Marjolin, one of the closest followers of Élie Halévy, the director of the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* and great historian of England.²⁰⁾ Halévy enabled him to publish an article that criticized the economic policies of the popular front: Aron suggested that a devaluation of the franc would have boosted the economy.²¹⁾ While Aron certainly underestimated the political reasons why Léon Blum had not followed such a policy – it was not sheer incompetence, the right would have cursed him even more for devaluating the national currency, thus adding to the climate of civil strife –, he nevertheless showed his commitment to working out solutions to the national crisis. Thus, a few months after the defense of his thesis, he took part in the Colloque Lippmann in Paris.²²⁾ Organized by Louis Rouquier

19) Raymond Aron to Gaston Fessard on 28 October 1938: NAF 28060, box 206.

20) Élie Halévy, *Correspondance 1891-1937* (Paris: De Fallois, 1996).

21) Aron, “Réflexions sur les problèmes économiques français,” *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, n° 4(1937).

as a tribute to Walter Lippmann's book *The Good Society*, the colloquium investigated the decline of liberalism, trying to grasp the reasons of the crisis and to revive the liberal school of thought beyond the economics of laissez-faire. Aron and Marjolin participated together with Friedrich Hayek, Michael Polanyi, Jacques Rueff, Étienne Mantoux and Wilhelm Röpke. Even though Aron was not, and would never be an economist, his commitment to upholding the political form of liberal democracy was unwavering. Consequently, Aron made a noted lecture at the French philosophical society on 17 June 1939.²³⁾ He distinguished between the revolutionary totalitarian states and the conservative democracies. And he recommended that the citizens of the latter "should be able of the same virtues" as those displayed by the former, by which he meant abnegation, if need be by risking their lives so that their country might survive in freedom. In his speech, Aron criticized the French antifascists for their lack of political realism: neither idealism nor pacifism could be the appropriate answer to the war that loomed of Europe. This led to feverish reactions from the audience, among others from Victor Basch, who would later be shot by the militia of the Vichy regime. Obviously, Aron foresaw the war that was coming, and did his best to forge alliances – the Colloque Lippmann suggested an alliance of the three Western democracies: France, Britain and the United States – and to educate the public by shedding light on the political stakes of the time. After his stay in Germany, Aron had become well-acquainted with the Weberian distinction between ethics of conviction opposed to ethics of responsibility. The time had now come to support the ominously weak Western European leaders in their efforts for improved defense. Alain's vision of the citizen against the powers was no longer relevant. And the word *virtues* used by Aron echoed the thought of Machiavelli. Until then, Aron had considered the fascists like the heirs to Machiavelli. Now, he would lay emphasis on the necessities of the war on Nazi totalitarianism. The leader should not place the peace of his soul above the salvation of his state. Whereas Aron had previously blamed Machiavellianism for its inherent cynicism, he would henceforth consider the rele-

22) Serge Audier, *Le Colloque Lippmann. Aux origines du néo-libéralisme* (Paris: Le Bord de l'eau, 2008).

23) Aron, "États démocratiques et États totalitaires," *Penser la liberté, Penser la démocratie* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 55.

vance of its realism. In 1932, Aron, who had described the situation in Germany, had been asked by the then undersecretary of state for foreign affairs, Joseph Paganon, what he would do if he were in the place of the government. The question had left Aron dumbstruck.²⁴⁾ From now on, understanding the viewpoint of the leadership and examining the available options for decision-making would become a distinctive feature of his political thought as well as a rationale behind his huge editorial work in the aftermath of WW2. Not that Aron was giving up the high ethical standards of his original neo-Kantian education, on the contrary he would develop his own and peculiar vision of a “moderate Machiavellianism”, aimed at preserving the chances of liberal democracy throughout the ordeals of the totalitarian age. During the long months of the Phoney War, Aron devoted himself to improving his understanding of Machiavelli.²⁵⁾

For him, the defeat of May-June 1940 was a defining moment. Not only because the fall of France forced him to exile, but also because he was, more than others, aware that France had lost her status as a great power and would presumably never fully recover it. While René Girard’s first scholarly work in 1943 was about the reception of the French defeat in the US,²⁶⁾ Pierre Manent begins his essay *Situation de la France*, written in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 2015, by a remembrance of the defeat that still haunts the nation and its leaders.²⁷⁾ Aron’s choice for De Gaulle was also a choice for Britain, the country which embodied the values of European liberalism within the war, and whose gallant behaviour from June 1940 to June 1941, when, “undaunted by odds”,²⁸⁾ the British went on fighting, alone against the Reich, vindicated the view that Aron had defended in 1939: the citizens of democracies might be able to show “the same virtues” of military courage as those of the totalitarian dictatorships.

Recent research has shed light on Aron’s London years on which the Aron archives provide little knowledge. Lucia Bonfreschi, in her *Raymond Aron e il gollism*

24) Aron, *Mémoires*, 91.

25) Aron, *Machiavel et les tyrannies modernes* (Paris: De Fallois, 1993).

26) René Girard, *Battling to the end. Conversations with Benoît Chantre* (Michigan State University Press, 2010), 184; René Girard, *American Opinion of France 1940–1943*, University of Indiana.

27) Pierre Manent, *Situation de la France* (Desclée de Brouwer, 2015).

28) Winston S. Churchill, David Cannadine, *The Speeches of Winston Churchill* (London: Penguin, 1989), 188(The “Few”, 20 August 1940).

o²⁹) shows that he was close to the French socialists in London. Concerned with national unity and the risk of a civil war, Aron did not wish the Free French to proclaim a provisional government too early and, privately, did not consider the armistice a treason in itself. Until November 1942, when the Anglo-American army landed in North Africa and Germany occupied Vichy-France, Aron hoped that Pétain and De Gaulle might join their forces. However, he openly denounced the risk of an authoritarian drift of Gaullism in an ominous article in *La France Libre*, “The Shadow of the Bonapartes”, published in August 1943, at a time when General Giraud, De Gaulle’s rival, whom the Americans were willing to push forward, had not been ousted yet.³⁰) The article drew disparaging comparisons between De Gaulle, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte and General Boulanger, who had taken the lead of a short-lived populist movement against the Third Republic in 1889. That untimely attack on De Gaulle happened notwithstanding the pressures of the British government to contain such moves. Aron, at that time, was definitely not a Gaullist.³¹)

Or Rosenboim, in *The Emergence of globalism*, explores another side of Aron’s London years: his proximity with the British liberals and increasing awareness of the global scale in international affairs.³²) As a matter of fact, Aron had not developed any interest for military matters and strategic thinking before the defeat of May-June 1940.³³) Then, he embraced De Gaulle’s vision that, in spite of the French defeat, the alliance of the Western democracies would prevail at the global level: France had lost a battle, not the war. But contrary to De Gaulle, Aron did not consider that national sovereignty was an end in itself. The idea of the sovereign nation-state might have become obsolete in what Aron now called “the age of empires”.³⁴) In London, Aron was also a frequent visitor to the Reform Club, where he met again with Hayek – whom he knew since the Colloque Lippmann

29) Lucia Bonfreschi, *Raymond Aron e il gollismo 1940-1969* (Rubbettino, 2014).

30) Aron, “L’Ombre des Bonapartes,” *La France Libre*, VI, 34 (16 August 1943), 280-288.

31) Bonfreschi, 59.

32) Or Rosenboim, *The Emergence of Globalism. Visions of World Order in Britain and the United States, 1939-1950* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017), chapter 2.

33) Christian Malis, *Raymond Aron et le débat stratégique français 1930-1966* (Paris: Economica, 2005).

34) Aron, “L’ âge des empires,” *La France Libre*, X, 55 (May 1945), 13-20.

– and Lionel Robbins. Even though he did not make much comments about it – he says in his *Memoirs* that, for patriotic reasons, he did not accept the British nationality that was proposed to him – we are induced to think that he relished the intellectual thrill of the complex, far-reaching visions that were being worked out by the English liberals.

Lionel Robbins, for example, argued that the time of European colonial empires would soon be over, and that democratic federalism could be a solution, with free trade as a guarantee of political liberty.³⁵⁾ Aron could also witness the debates surrounding the conception of the Beveridge Report that provided the blueprint for a post-war welfare state, an idea that Aron did not oppose in the least. In 1941, he had described the security of employment as a prerequisite to political stability: “no political or social regime will endure, will be tolerated, if it does not provide a minimal security to the common man. And the first one, in our time, is employment security. Without a job, the individual is excluded from the community: against such destitution, he cannot help rebelling”.³⁶⁾ If totalitarianism was to be defeated, Aron argued, appropriate action should be taken to get rid of social discontent that had, in a country like Weimar Germany, fuelled the rise of Hitlerism. Presumably during the London years, Aron had read Colin Clark’s book, *The Conditions of economic progress*, which, drawing on wide-ranging statistical analysis, vindicated the idea that technological progress and appropriate management could drastically improve living conditions.³⁷⁾ All this led him to asympathetic appraisal of the social and economic policies of the Labour government,³⁸⁾ as well as to endorse the Keynesian approach of economics, to the point that, in his foreword to *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, Aron defined himself as “Keynesian, with some regret of classic liberalism”.³⁹⁾ Whatever his regrets, Aron would tell his students at the École Nationale d’Administration, the new cradle of the French political elite in post-war France, that “the implementation, in modern times, of a liberal economic system such as the one wished by Mr von Hayek or Mr Jacques Rueff

35) Rosenboim, 138.

36) Raymond Aron, “Naissance des tyrannies,” in *Chroniques de guerre, La France Libre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 517.

37) Colin Clark, *The Conditions of Economic Progress* (London: Macmillan, 1940).

38) Aron, “La Chance du socialisme,” *Les Temps Modernes*, n°2 (1945), 222-247.

39) Aron, *L’Opium des intellectuels* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1955).

would require a political dictatorship”.⁴⁰⁾ Conversely, Aron knew that Hayek did not support mere laissez-faire economics and he was certainly receptive to Hayek’s idea that checks had to be implemented so that the state might not infringe on the individual’s freedom of economic initiative.⁴¹⁾

While Aron’s conception of the political was not individualistic – he was definitely a sociologist –, he would also, as a liberal thinker, always care about individual freedom and economic efficiency. Even though he had been interested in his youth by the planism of the Belgian socialist leader Henri de Man,⁴²⁾ he showed nothing more than a practical interest for economic planning after the war. Preceded by his friendship with the Anglophile Élie Halévy, his exile years in London, beyond a new awareness of global issues, also developed in him a pragmatism influenced by the Anglo-American approach to economic and political issues.

II. An Indefatigable, Seemingly Ubiquitous, yet Strategically Selective, Political Commitment.

Aron had come back to France in 1944. In his *Memoirs*, he insists that he was carried away from university by his passion for politics. Instead of resuming his career as a scholar in Bordeaux, he chose to stay in Paris and become a columnist, first at *Combat*, then in 1947 in *Le Figaro*, the bourgeois newspaper of the moderate right where he would write during thirty years.⁴³⁾ In the aftermath of WW2, Aron

40) Aron, *Introduction à la philosophie politique*, 127.

41) Rosenboim, 157-165. Aron had been a member of the Mont-Pèlerin Society from its inception in 1947 and left it in 1956.

42) Aron, “Henri De Man, *Au-delà du marxisme*,” *Libres Propos* (January 1931), 43-47; Aron, “Henri de Man, *Au-delà du marxisme*,” in *Contrepoints*, n°16 (1975). During WW2, De Man had become a collaborator, as believed that Hitler had definitely won the war. Aron blamed him for his pessimism in *La France Libre* in 1943. From the 1960s onwards, however (De Man had died in 1953), Aron would honor him as a pragmatist, whose idea of planism was not doctrinaire in the least.

43) For the articles in *Figaro* on international affairs, see Aron, *Les Articles du Figaro*, édition présentée et annotée par Georges-Henri Soutou. Tome 1 : *La Guerre froide 1947-1955* (Paris: Editions de Fallois, 1990), 1418; Tome 2 : *La Coexistence 1955-1965* (1994), 1508. Tome 3 : *Les Crises 1965-1977* (1997), 1823. The articles on French politics have been published as an

did not forget what he had learned in the intellectual powerhouse that London was, but he had to take into account the situation of France. While sharing the joy of his fellow citizens – “the people, around me, were moved by a genuine passion, it was a national enthusiasm”⁴⁴⁾ – he was mostly concerned about the reconstruction of war-torn France and worried by the strong influence of the French Communist party, which, in the aftermath of the war, carried nearly a third of the votes. Aron knew that an American economic aid and a cooperation between the European nations would be necessary to speed up the economic recovery of the Old Continent, but the communist threat had to be confronted first at the national level.

Those were the circumstances surrounding Aron’s commitment in De Gaulle’s RPF, the “Union of the French people” created in 1947. Even though Aron later downplayed his role within the Rassemblement, Bonfreschi’s research using the archives of the Gaullist movement shows that his involvement was more important and of longer duration than Aron was willing to admit.⁴⁵⁾ His influence was decisive in bending the Rassemblement towards the Atlantic Pact. Through the namesake article in *Liberté de l’Esprit*, the Gaullist journal, Aron succeeded in convincing De Gaulle himself of the efficacy of the alliance.⁴⁶⁾ Besides, Aron was also in charge of the socioeconomic agenda at the Rassemblement’s National Council, to implement De Gaulle’s vision of “association between labour and capital”, as an alternative between capitalism and socialism. Most members of the National Council were lukewarm and Aron did not agree with De Gaulle that the French crisis was a social one. As he put it later, the dialectics of industrial societies were contradictory: “Modern industrial societies are both egalitarian in aspiration and hierarchical in organization. They recognize the right of each individual to an equal dignity, to happiness, to citizenship, and, as a consequence, to an equitable share of the assets produced by society. But industrial societies also have as their objective the efficacy of the collective work effort, and this implies the subordination of

ebook : Aron, *Politique française 1944-1977* (Paris: De Fallois, 2016). Articles in *L’Express* and other magazines were reprinted in Aron, *De Giscard à Mitterrand 1977-1983* (Paris: de Fallois, 2005), 895.

44) Aron, *Le Spectateur engagé*, (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 2005), 153 (First edition 1981).

45) Bonfreschi, chapters 3 and 4.

46) Aron, “Le Pacte atlantique,” *Liberté de l’esprit*, n°3 (April 1949).

all to the decisions of a few".⁴⁷⁾ In the end, still under his influence, a more liberal programme was chosen.⁴⁸⁾ By joining the RPF, Aron, who distrusted the institutions of the 4th Republic because they had more or less recycled part of the personnel of the 3rd Republic who were responsible for the defeat of 1940, expected that a parliamentary Gaullism would give France her best chances within the context of the Cold War. So, he felt disappointed when General de Gaulle did not show the slightest interest in the general election of 1951.⁴⁹⁾ Oddly enough, this was the only election in which Aron has ever thought of a candidacy. Indeed, his position in the Rassemblement made it a legitimate aspiration. Eventually, he gave up the idea and, in his own words: "I did not quit the RPF. It ceased to exist".⁵⁰⁾

But there was more in that commitment to the Gaullist movement. One of the major issues at stake was Europe. During the war, Aron had considered the nation-states as the distinctive feature of European politics and he continued to do so in his later writings.⁵¹⁾ Simultaneously, he would nevertheless approve of all cooperations implied by the Western alliance, like the Marshall Plan, the OEEC – whose chairman was his friend Robert Marjolin – and the Atlantic Alliance. He was more sceptical on the Schuman Plan. Not only because the European Coal and Steel Community created by Schuman and Monnet did not convince him at the economic level – a sectorial community led by a supranational institution was not in itself a guarantee of success – but because he – rightly – suspected that the functionalist vision of Jean Monnet was hiding, under economic pretexts, a political project. Neither a federalist nor a functionalist, Aron was nonetheless

47) Aron, *Progress and Disillusion* (London: Pelican, 1972), 20(1st edition 1968).

48) Bonfreschi, 166-174.

49) A new electoral system, known as "apparentements" (associations) had been implemented for the purpose of limiting the number of seats won by the communists on the left and the Gaullists on the right. If the "associated" parties polled more than half of the votes cast, they divided among themselves all the seats of the constituency (usually a *département* with an average of five seats). See Alexander Werth, *France 1940-1955* (London: Robert Hale, 1956), 515.

50) Aron, *Mémoires*, 314.

51) Aron, "Destin des nationalités," *La France Libre*, V, 29 (16 March 1943), 339-347, reprinted in *Chroniques de guerre*, 608-620; "Discours à des étudiants allemands," *La Table Ronde*, n°1 (1948), 63-86.

ready to support the experiment, yet “with some reservations”.⁵²⁾ He shifted to outright opposition with the prospect of the European Defense Community which intended to establish a European army before any political authority or common policy had been defined. This was like putting the cart before the horse. Aron objected that “the method of transferring sovereignty to a high authority or commission is dreadful for the European idea in itself. It is not by merging sovereignties for the benefit of technocrats that Europe will be built. The latter will not come out of a merger, it will be an accord between sovereignties.”⁵³⁾ Aron, among other reasons, pointed at the differences between the respective national interests of France and Western Germany. While the former was still a colonial world power, involved in the Korean war and the war of Indochina, and would still define herself as a Mediterranean or Eurafrikan power, the latter was the rump of a divided nation, whose most evident aim would be reunification. Aron nonetheless engaged in a polemic against the Gaullist Jacques Soustelle who, in a last-ditch attempt to thwart the West German rearmament, considered recognizing the Oder-Neisse line.⁵⁴⁾ In the end, Aron was relieved when the French parliament rejected the treaty on 30 August 1954, which led to the creation of the West German *Bundeswehr* within the framework of NATO. This decision preserved what was essential to Aron: the cohesion of the Western alliance and a show of the willingness to defend Western Europe against any communist intimidation. This was also the rationale behind Aron’s participation in the Congress for Cultural Freedom. The Congress enabled him to play a pivotal role in *Preuves*, a Parisian journal, that would embody the “intelligence of anticommunism”⁵⁵⁾ during most of the 1950s and 1960s.⁵⁶⁾

52) Aron, “Le Plan Schuman, III. Ratification sous réserve,” *Le Figaro* (2 April 1951).

53) Aron, “Le réarmement de l’Allemagne. III. La possible révision,” *Le Figaro* (24 november 1952).

54) Bonfreschi, 275: The Oder-Neisse line was the provisional border between Germany and Poland decided at the Potsdam conference in July–August 1945. It was not recognized by the FRG until Willy Brandt’s Ostpolitik in 1970. Back in 1954, the recognition envisioned by Soustelle would have shattered the recent Franco–German reconciliation, brought about by the Schuman Plan.

55) Pierre Grémion, *Intelligence de l’anticommunisme, le Congrès pour la liberté de la culture à Paris, 1950-1975* (Paris: Fayard, 1995); Grémion, *Preuves, une revue européenne à Paris* (Paris: Julliard-Commentaire, 1989).

56) Joël Mouric, “Raymond Aron et les réseaux libéraux(1938-1980),” in Dominique Barjot, Olivier

Until the scandal that wrecked the Congress in 1966–67, Aron did not know that it was funded by the CIA. He believed it was funded by American foundations like the Ford foundation which, besides, also helped in the creation of Aron's Centre de sociologie européenne in 1960. Aron insisted that Preuves had never been under pressure from the American side and that the intellectuals who contributed were entirely free.⁵⁷⁾

Back in 1954, Aron considered the rejection of the EDC was “the death certificate”⁵⁸⁾ of Monnet's project. Two years later, he showed an uncompromising criticism towards the new project of Jean Monnet: the European Economic Community which was created by the treaty of Rome on 25 April 1957. The reason was still the same: under the appearance of an economic community, Monnet's idea was more than ever to bring about a political union, while Aron's political philosophy, based on pragmatism and methodical scepticism, led to the idea of the autonomy of the political. Whatever the complexity of historical causality and the usual interplay of economic stakes and political reasons, the political remains nevertheless a distinctive range of realities so that, contrary to Monnet, Aron did not believe that a political community could be derived from an economic one. That's why he more than once denounced “the fanatics of the European idea”⁵⁹⁾ and later argued, against Monnet that “The hope that the European federation might imperceptibly and irresistibly come out of the Common Market is based on one great illusion of our time: the illusion that economic and technical interdependence between the different parts of mankind has definitely depreciated the fact of ‘political sovereignties’, of distinct states that claim to be autonomous”.⁶⁰⁾

Aron, who had always striven towards Franco–German reconciliation, sincerely

Dard, Frédéric Fogacci et Jérôme Grondeux, *Histoire de l'Europe libérale, Libéraux et libéralisme en Europe xviiiè-xxie siècles* (Paris: Nouveau Monde, 2016).

57) Aron, *Mémoires*, 318.

58) Aron, Lerner, *La Querelle de la CED, Essais d'analyse sociologique* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1956), 209–211. Cahiers de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques.

59) Aron, “Nations et empires,” *L'Encyclopédie française*, volume XI, 11–04–1 to 11–04–6 (Paris, 1957), reprinted in *Dimensions de la conscience historique* (Paris: Plon, 1961). 233–234.

60) Aron, *Peace and War, A Theory of international relations* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1962), 740 of the French edition.

hoped that a European political community might be possible. In the early years of the Cold War, as German reunification was becoming impossible and communism was gaining momentum, he saw the European idea as the only political myth that could be opposed to communism. The idea of the political myth was borrowed from Georges Sorel. It refers to a political idea which is likely to mobilize the people for action. In the late 1940s, the active supporters of European unity were numbered in the hundred of thousands. Yet, as early as 1948, Aron, who attended the Congress for a federal Europe at the Hague, lost any illusions about the prospect of a federal Europe.⁶¹⁾ There was little popular support, and the European idea remained an idea of intellectuals. By 1975, in his Spaak lectures in Brussels,⁶²⁾ Aron argued that the European political myth was dead,⁶³⁾ and he warned the leaders of the EEC about the necessity to build up consent if they did not want the peoples to become hostile.

Aron was often mocked as a staunch cold warrior, even as a warmonger.⁶⁴⁾ On 8 September 1954, the satirical weekly *Canard enchaîné* cartooned him calling Major Thomson, the then famous conservative character of Pierre Daninos' novels, "a crypto-communist" because he was happy that the treaty establishing the European Defence Community had been rejected. The English journalist and historian Alexander Werth went so far as to suggest that Aron recommended a pre-emptive war against the Soviet Union in 1951-53, which was not true: Aron had always supported the policies of containment and opposed the "roll back" theories, as he made clear in his postface to the French edition of James Burnham's *Containment or Liberation*.⁶⁵⁾ It would be mistaken to consider that Aron had the same vision of all totalitarian regimes, Nazism and communism alike. As early as 1936, he argued that "communism strives to teach reading to all human beings, and they won't be content with *The Capital* forever. Even the only ideology does not have the same meaning: communism is the transposition, the caricature of a

61) *Mémoires*, 362-363.

62) Aron, "L'Europe face à la crise des sociétés industrielles," in *L'Europe des crises* (Bruxelles, Bruylant: Bibliothèque de la Fondation Paul-Henri Spaak, 1976), 77-142.

63) Aron, "L'Europe, avenir d'un mythe," *Cahiers européens* 3, pages 8-10 (amended with a Europhile conclusion); the authentic text was published in 2005 in *Cités*, n°24 (November 2005), 164-179.

64) Alexander Werth, *France 1940-1955* (London: Robert Hale, 1956), 349.

65) James Burnham, *Contenir ou libérer* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1953).

religion of salvation, while the fascist ideologies do not even recognize mankind".⁶⁶) In an age of ideological strife, Aron's anticommunism, though determined, would not preclude political moderation. While he had called the war with Nazi Germany "a struggle to death", he immediately defined the Cold War as a "bellicose peace", inventing the formula "peace impossible, war improbable".⁶⁷) The important was to preserve the existence of liberal democracy in Western Europe and to avoid a civil war. Thus, he never recommended to ban the French Communist Party, which would have contradicted his liberal philosophy. More, he warned the Americans that the climate of McCarthyism and the US visa restrictions would benefit to communist propaganda. Such policies, he wrote, were "stupid and ineffective."⁶⁸) Contrary to the sociologist Jules Monnerot, a fellow member of the RPE, Aron did not draw much on the idea that communism was a new Islam⁶⁹) By contrast, he developed his concept of "secular religion"⁷⁰) and insisted on the affinities between the Catholics on the left and the communists. Communism thrived on evangelical patterns.⁷¹) Left-wing intellectuals considered the working class like an Elect people, endowed with a historical, providential role. Against the seductions of the Marxist ideology and communist propaganda, Aron's answer was to provide accurate analyses on foreign policy issues, and to expose "the myth of the proletariat".⁷²) Soon after the death of Stalin, in 1953, international tensions were eased: the Korean war ended in a stalemate, the uprising in

66) Aron, "Contribution à L'Ère des tyrannies," séance du 28 novembre 1936, *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie*, XXXVI (1936), 226-228. Reprinted in Aron, *Machiavel et les tyrannies modernes* (Paris: de Fallois, 1993), 307-308.

67) Aron, *Le Grand schisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948).

68) Aron, "American Visa Policy," in *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (October 1952).

69) Jules Monnerot, *Sociologie du communisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949).

70) Aron, "L'Avenir des religions séculières," *La France Libre*, VIII (1944), 45-46.

71) Aron, "Marxism is a Christian heresy," in *Les Guerres en chaîne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), 136: See also Aron, *The Opium of the intellectuals* (New York: Norton, 1957), 84: "What the Christian, without being aware of it, is taken in by in the working-class world and in Marxist ideology are the reminders, the echoes, of a religious experience: proletarians and party militants, like the early Christians, live in anticipation of a new world; they have remained pure, open to charity, because they have never exploited their fellowmen; the class which carries within it the youth of humanity rises up against the corrupt past. Subjectively, the left-wing Christians remain Catholics, but they have shelved the religious factor until beyond the revolution."

72) *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, chapter 3.

East Berlin showed that communism could not rely on popular support, but had to depend on Soviet tanks. In 1955, just when the question of the West German rearmament was solved, Aron was elected at the Sorbonne, where he would develop his criticism of ideologies through a comparative study of industrial societies, as a sociologist and teacher.

III. Beyond the Cold War: Aron's Legacy as a Classic for the 21st Century.

Aron argued that the core of the political problem was less the justification of authority and obedience than their limitation: "It would be irrelevant to justify any kind of obedience, any kind of power. Is it possible to justify simultaneously obedience and its refusal? Authority and its limits? This is the eternal problem of the political order, to which all regimes are the solutions, always imperfect".⁷³⁾ Aron was not content with a simplistic definition of democracy like "government of the people by the people", as no peoples of considerable size have ever governed themselves. The idea of the social contract did not appear any better to him, because it did not guarantee freedom. While he showed more sympathy for the English parliamentary model which led, without any catastrophe, from the aristocratic society of the 18th century to the social democracy of 1945, Aron never believed that such a model, the product of English history, could be implemented in France or anywhere else. Aron, drawing on Vilfredo Pareto, developed a sociology of the elites: a revolution always replaces an elite by another one. And the stability of democratic institutions requires that the elite be clear-sighted enough – so that the nation would respect the regime – and open enough to renew itself. Abuse of oligarchy as well as abuse of demagoguery had to be avoided. The main characteristic of a democracy is, for Aron, the existence of a peaceful competition for power in which, he wrote, "the use of machine-guns is excluded". Then, democracy depends on the existence of checks and balances, not only by law, but

73) Aron, *Democracy and Totalitarianism*, in *Penser la liberté, Penser la démocratie* (Paris: Bouquins, 2006), 1249.

also through the education of the citizens, especially of the elite. Thus, the definition of a democracy is not limited to the constitution. That's why Aron argued that the quest for the best political regime might be a dead end. Democracy also includes what Montesquieu called "the general spirit of a nation". In Third World countries, he said, institutions wrought after the model of Western democracies did not forestall successive coups, either because the imported constitution had no roots in the country or, most of the time, because there was no national reality.

That's why Aron supported the parliamentary regime of the 4th Republic during the Algerian war. Contrary to De Gaulle, he never questioned the *raison d'être* of political parties which he considered essential to democratic life. Back in 1958, when he made the lessons that were later published as *Democracy and Totalitarianism*, he did not consider a new constitution could provide any guarantee vis-à-vis the Algerian crisis. "The current crisis, he said in his last lesson, is evidence of a dreadful truth: the constitutional-pluralist regime which, I believe, is the only one compliant with the French industrial society, is not firmly rooted yet. The French, has divided in depth as they were in the last century, have only one protection against the threat of civil strife. That only protection is what I called, a few months ago, the silk thread of legality. It is not broken yet: may Heaven ensure that it shall never be broken!"⁷⁴) Aron stated that the "constitutional-pluralist regimes", as he called the democracies, are by definition prone to instability: "how to avoid that a regime, which permanently tolerates conflicts between the citizens, the groups, in the end disintegrates the national unity, which is necessary to the salvation of any political community?" or "can a regime remain constitutional if it becomes genuinely popular?"⁷⁵) Drawing on Montesquieu, Aron envisioned the "corruption of the principle", a situation in which human beings can no longer uphold a free regime. But in industrial societies, he argued, the concept of virtue is no longer relevant.⁷⁶) For instance, can human beings take frugality as the supreme virtue in a society that strives towards ever greater abundance?⁷⁷) Aron be-

74) *Democracy and Totalitarianism*, 1465.

75) *Ibid.*, 1302.

76) This was 1958, and represented a change from his previous thinking as we could judge from his statements in 1939.

77) *Ibid.*, 1334.

lieved in three remnants of the antique civic virtue that were still essential to the existence of democracies: respect for the law, first of all of the constitution, contribution to the public debate, last but not least the spirit of compromise, for lack of which major crises would develop. “The decisions, he claimed, should be based on an analysis of the situation”.⁷⁸⁾ This is the duty, not of the sole leaders, but also of the journalists and intellectuals. This what he was doing through his uninterrupted journalistic endeavour. By corruption, Aron did not mean the depravation or lack of integrity of the individuals. The corruption of the principle happens “when the representatives forget the actual political stakes and think only about their personal interest”.⁷⁹⁾ For him, the “best example” of the corruption of a constitutional-pluralist regime was Weimar Germany. Communists and Nazis were both willing to fight the regime. By 1933, there remained only two possibilities left: either to abandon the power to one of the groups that were hostile to the regime, or a coup d’État by those who supported the republic. With hindsight, Aron argued, knowing the catastrophe that was Nazism, the latter solution would have been preferable. A democratic regime, Aron concluded, can lose contact with the people to the point that the citizens themselves may wish, in the end, the destruction of their own liberties.

Therefore, Aron did not recommend the overthrow of a “corrupt” regime. It might be better to keep it working. Whereas the prolongation of the Weimar Republic would have been preferable to the Third Reich, the 4th Republic, whatever its flaws, was better than a jump into the unknown, with the risk of a dictatorship and a civil war. Aron’s judgement on the Algerian war was right: decolonisation was inevitable. The French army could go on fighting with some tactical successes, but there was no prospect of a decisive victory and the war would eventually ruin the country and possibly degenerate – as the rise of the OAS in the later years of the war testifies – into an all-out civil war.⁸⁰⁾ By contrast, Aron was lukewarm about the circumstances of De Gaulle’s comeback in May 1958 – “almost

78) *Ibid.*, 1334-1335.

79) *Ibid.*

80) Aron, *La tragédie algérienne* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1957); Olivier Dard, “Raymond Aron et la question algérienne,” in *Raymond Aron et la défense de la Liberté: libéralisme, nationalisme, post-modernité*, eds. Bouthillon, Mouric, Oppermann (Paris: De Fallois, 2016).

a coup d'État" – and criticized the referendum by which De Gaulle asked the nation to legitimate the election of the president through universal suffrage, because by increasing the powers of the executive branch, it might destabilize the institutions.⁸¹⁾ Aron nonetheless took sides for De Gaulle and his regime during the events of May 1968, which looks like a paradox. It makes sense, however, if we consider Aron's view that, in the meantime, the 5th Republic had restored the international position and institutional stability that France had lost in the last years of the 4th Republic. Confronted with May 68, he felt like Tocqueville commenting on the revolution of 1848: 68 was less than a revolution though a little more than a revolutionary fete: it was ridiculous, though harmful to liberal democracy.

Aron died only six years before the end of the Cold War which he was confident might be overcome without a war, when the USSR would abandon its pretensions towards ideological and geopolitical hegemony.⁸²⁾ Henceforward, Aron would also be considered, more than ever, a cold-warrior. This is particularly the case of his theory of international relations, of which a commentator once said that it has been quoted more often than read.⁸³⁾ By the same token, we could say that the sociology of the elites developed by Aron has known a limited posterity. On the contrary, it is the interpretation of sociology developed by his former assistant Pierre Bourdieu, based on a sociolinguistic approach, that is, as of today, the most influential in French universities.⁸⁴⁾ There are, however many reasons to read Aron as a classic. The first one is his great philosophical achievement: his criticism of the philosophies of history⁸⁵⁾ which became a powerful tool against Nazi or communist totalitarianism before it was used, in a lowered tone, against Jean Monnet's vision of European integration. Hence, Aron would always question the *hubris* of simplistic geopolitical conceptions like the Wilsonian ideals of collective

81) Bonfreschi, chapter 6.

82) Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1962), 686–687.

83) Bryan-Paul Frost, "Better late than never : Raymond Aron's Theory of International relations and its prospect in the 21st century," *Politics and Policy*, vol.34, No.3 (2006), 506–531.

84) For Bourdieu's criticism of Aron, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Paris: Minuit, 1984).

85) Aron had always criticized "the confidants of the Providence" and opposed any kind of Hegelianism. See Aron, *La Philosophie critique de l'histoire. Essai sur une théorie allemande de l'histoire* (Paris: Vrin, 1950), 15(1st ed. 1938).

security and self-determination.⁸⁶⁾ By contrast, “when there is an agreement between the great powers, there is no war, with or without collective security”.⁸⁷⁾

The second reason is that Aron is not a postnational thinker. This should be taken into account when, for example, the European Union is greatly influenced by a philosopher like Jürgen Habermas and his vision of a constitutional patriotism.⁸⁸⁾ Faced with the rise of populist and nationalist movements which have led to the choice for Brexit, the risk of a Scottish secession and the advent of a Catalan declaration of independence, lately the entry of the Alternative for Germany in the *Bundestag*, Europe should show more consideration for a thinker who, though not an enemy of European unity, insisted on the limits and difficulties of both federalism and functionalism.

The third reason is Aron’s constant plea for moderation. Contrary to Carl Schmitt,⁸⁹⁾ who reacted to the crisis of the Weimar Republic by developing a pessimistic vision of the political based on the friend or foe distinction and eventually supported the Nazi regime, Aron never indulged in a definition of the political based on enmity. In a letter to his Schmittian student Julien Freund, he wrote: “the difficulty, I believe, is that you deal with domestic politics and foreign policy simultaneously. The aim of politics is friendship. But, in the state of nature, which means in foreign policy, the risk of enmity is foremost”.⁹⁰⁾

In the three situations of civil strife which he witnessed: the crisis of the 1930s, occupation of France during WW2, the Algerian war, he always sought to safeguard the political debate so as to defuse the tensions. In his study of the Aronian reviews, *Contrepoint* and *Commentaire*, Gwendal Châton has shown that a whole generation of French politicians and intellectuals moved from the far right towards more moderate positions under Aron’s influence.⁹¹⁾ Facing the rebel students in 68 and after,

86) *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, 570-572.

87) *Ibid.*, 704.

88) See Joël Mouric, “Raymond Aron, citoyen français et intellectuel européen,” in *Raymond Aron, Penseur de L’Europe et de La Nation*, ed. Giulio De Ligio (Peter Lang: Berne, 2012), 160, 63-79; Jan-Werner Müller, *Constitutional patriotism* (Princeton, 2007).

89) Jan-Werner Müller, *A dangerous mind, Carl Schmitt and post-war European thought* (Yale, 2003), 98-103: “Aron vs Schmitt : reclaiming the autonomy of politics.”

90) Letter from Aron to Julien Freund (4 February 1964), NAF 28060, box 38.

91) Gwendal Châton, *La Liberté retrouvée. Une histoire du libéralisme politique en France à travers les*

Aron was never malevolent, insisting on the similarities between the former traditionalist right and the new left in their common rejection of the industrial society and its superstructures. By striving to uncover “the Marxism of Marx” beyond the Marxist-leninist ideology, Aron also raised the interest of numerous students and readers, not least when, after the Soviet repression in Czechoslovakia, he alluded to Marx’s passionate commitment to the freedom of the press and called him “the triumphant and betrayed prophet”.⁹²⁾ Moreover, Aron exposed the contradictions of his former friend Jean-Paul Sartre who, in *Critique de la raison dialectique*, had tried the impossible task to reconcile existentialism with Marxism-leninism.⁹³⁾ Sartre, Aron stated, extolled the enthusiasm of the revolutionary mobs: would not a fascist theorist have approved of that praise of violence?⁹⁴⁾ Still against Sartre, Aron took sides with Solzhenitsyn who had criticized the irresponsible behaviour of Western leftist intellectuals in an article which aroused the sympathy of Bernard Levin, the literary critic of *The Times*: “Solzhenitsyn, while still in Moscow, refused to meet this most odious of all the West’s fellow travellers [i.e. Sartre] and Aron, who has for so long honoured Europe by his very existence, tells us, in searing words, exactly why: Here is the Right and here is the Left. Here are the concentration camps which one does not approve and here the ones which one does. There are good murderers and evil ones. Marxism remains the insurpassable philosophy of our epoch, and those who base themselves upon it are always on the right side, while those who defend freedom against the advocates of that philosophy are in the wrong...”⁹⁵⁾

In a eulogy for Aron, Pierre Manent, his assistant and friend, said that he had been “an educator of the city”.⁹⁶⁾ Thus, he meant that the political criticism developed by the late philosopher and sociologist would still exert influence in the years to come. The citizen needs indeed an education so as not to become content with

revues aroniennes «Contrepoint» et «Commentaire» Ph.D, University of Rennes I (2006).

92) Aron, “La Tragédie tchécoslovaque, II. Le Diktat de Moscou,” *Le Figaro* (30 August 1968).

93) Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique*, two volumes (Paris: Gallimard, 1960).

94) Aron, *Histoire et dialectique de la violence* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973).

95) The article was sent to Aron by Sir Nicholas Henderson, the British ambassador in Paris. Bibliothèque nationale de France, NAF 28060, box 127.

96) Manent, Pierre, “Raymond Aron éducateur,” in *Raymond Aron 1905-1983, Histoire et politique, Commentaire* n° 29-30 (1985), 155-168.

being consumers. In an age in which violence, once again, takes the shape of terror, the citizen may rediscover that his individual freedom depends, more than ever, on his personal commitment to defending collective freedoms. And moderation is more than ever a political virtue when the escalation of violence threatens in many parts of the globalized world.

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