Raymond Aron's "Machiavellian" Liberalism

Recent interest in Raymond Aron in Anglophone scholarship has centered on his "Cold War Liberalism."[1] There Aron, often paired with Isaiah Berlin and Karl Popper, is presented as an anti-Marxist and anti-Communist thinker who defended a "negative" or "minimum" version of liberalism, one sometimes associated with what Judith Shklar identified as the "liberalism of fear": what needed to be avoided first and foremost was cruelty.[2] As such, rather than propose a positive or indeed coherent political theory, Aron instead defended certain values (pluralism, tolerance) drawn, like all good liberals, from an idealized vision of England, and advocated an attitude or sensibility (prudence, moderation) in the face of the perils of nuclear Cold War politics.

That characterization of Aron is undeniably true, but it nonetheless leaves open a large space within which to place him. Is he, as he has often been depicted, a Tocquevillian "liberal"?[3] That association has been the longest and strongest,[4] and

Many thanks to Joshua Cherniss, Gregory Conti, Stefanos Geroulanos, William Selinger, Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins, Iain Stewart, Or Rosenboim and two anonymous reviewers of the JHI for helpful comments to the drafts.

[1] Stuart Campbell, "Raymond Aron: The Making of a Cold Warrior," *Historian* 51, no. 4 (1989): 551–573; Brian Anderson, ed., *Raymond Aron: The Recovery of the Political* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1997), 1-18; Jan-Werner Mueller, "Fear and Freedom: On 'Cold War Liberalism,'" *European Journal of Political Theory* 7, no. 1 (2008): 45–64; Aurelian Craiutu, *Faces of Moderation: The Art of Balance in an Age of Extremes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 60; Or Rosenboim, *The Emergence of Globalism: Visions of World Order in Britain and the United States, 1939-1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 27; Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins, *The Other Intellectuals: Raymond Aron and the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming).

[2] This Aron is obviously linked to the Aron theorist of international relations, he who had the ear of Henry Kissinger. Stanley Hoffmann, "Raymond Aron and the Theory of International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (1985): 13-27.

[3] Daniel Mahoney, *The Liberal Political Science of Raymond Aron* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1992); Jeremy Jennings, "Raymond Aron and the Fate of French Liberalism," *European Journal of Political Theory* 2, no. 4 (2003): 365-371; Michael Behrent, "Liberal dispositions: recent scholarship on French liberalism," *Modern Intellectual History* 13, no. 2 (2016): 447–477.

[4] Stanley Hoffman, "Aron et Tocqueville," *Commentaire* 8, no. 28-29 (1985): 200-212; and Stuart Campbell, "The Tocquevillian Liberalism and Political Sociology of Raymond Aron," *The Historian* 53, no. 2 (1991): 303-316.

seems to have been publicly avowed in Aron's introduction to his classic sociological study *Les étapes de la pensée sociologique* (1967), where he declared his admiration for the "*limpide et triste*" (clear and sad) prose of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, leading to the sobriquet of labelling Aron himself a "*liberal triste*."[5]

Yet if Aron's long reflections on democracy naturally ties him to Tocqueville, that is not the full story. In fact, in the introduction to *Les étapes* in question, Aron places his general reflections under the banner of the "opposition Tocqueville-Marx." He confesses that whilst he has been reading Marx for the past thirty-five years, he only recently turned to Tocqueville, in the last ten years, as a way of criticizing Marx. Ultimately, however, he would never hesitate between *Capital*, whose "mysteries" never ceased to intrigue him, and *Democracy in America*: if his conclusions belong to the "English School" of Tocqueville, then his "training" was in the "German School" of Marx.[6] Bringing Marx – and in particular critics of Marx – back into the fold (Aron was to continue to write on Marx long after *Les étapes*),[7] links the anti-Marxist and anti-Communist "Cold War Liberal" Aron to the Tocquevillian Aron thinker of modern democracy.

This article will argue that what ties the anti-Communist to the Tocquevevillian Aron are the early twentieth century elite theorists of democracy whom he dubbed the "Machiavellians": Gaetano Mosca, Vilfredo Pareto and Robert Michels. It is through his engagement with these thinkers that Aron was able to

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[5] "Je continue, presque malgré moi, à prendre plus d'intérêt aux mystères du *Capital* qu'à la prose limpide et triste de *La Démocratie en Amérique*." Raymond Aron, *Les étapes de la pensée sociologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 21. This was translated by Richard Howard and Helen Weaver as *Main Currents of Sociological Thought* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998). I cite the French editions and all translations are my own. Giulio De Ligio, *La Tristezza del pensatore politico: Raymond Aron e il primato des político* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2007).

[6] "Mes conclusions appartiennent à l'école anglaise, ma formation vient surtout de l'école allemande." Aron, *Les étapes de la pensée sociologique,* 21.

[7] Raymond Aron, *D'une sainte famille à l'autre. Essai sur le marxisme imaginaire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969) and *Le Marxisme de Marx* (Paris: Éditions de Fallois, 2002). For Aron's critique of Marx, see Daniel Mahoney, "Aron, Marx, and Marxism," *European Journal of Political Theory* 2, no. 4 (2003): 415-427.

articulate, on the one hand, his anti-Marxist critique of totalitarianism during World War II and the Cold War, and, on the other, develop his theory of democracy, which took as its basis the anti-Marxist "fact of oligarchy," that these authors had, on his account, first demonstrated.

The importance Mosca, Michels and in particular Pareto played in the development of Aron's thinking has been highlighted before, not least by Stuart Campbell's study of "The Four Paretos of Raymond Aron," and Serge Audier's more recent *Raymond Aron: La démocratie conflictuelle*.[8] The latter even develops what he calls a "Tocquevillian-Machiavellian" paradigm to interpret Aron's democratic theory.[9] Recognizing the role the Machiavellians play in identifying the hierarchical nature of modern society in Aron's thought, Audier adds a Tocquevillian dimension to underline how Tocqueville had identified a specific egalitarian dynamic to modern life. Whilst Audier is undoubtedly correct in underlining this Tocquevillian dynamic, he is mistaken to think that the Machiavellians did not see the disappearance of old aristocracies: quite the opposite, their whole point was to show that even in modern egalitarian democracies that had overthrown their aristocratic class, elites stilled ruled, either through their theories of the "ruling class" (Mosca), "circulation of elites" (Pareto), or the "iron law of oligarchy" (Michels). Moreover, these theories were developed in explicit contradistinction to the Marxist notion that once the proletarian revolution accomplished, all hierarchies would melt away – that the "government of people," as Engels, borrowing from Saint-Simon, put it, would leave way to the "administration of things" – which is why Aron, in his desire to criticize Marxism, was so taken by them.

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[8] Stuart Campbell, "The Four Paretos of Raymond Aron," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47, no. 2 (1986): 287-298.
[9] Serge Audier, *Raymond Aron: La démocratie conflictuelle* (Paris: Michalon, 2004), 53-5.

Placing the Machiavellians back into the heart of Aron's thinking allows us to see that Aron's liberalism was not simply a negative or minimalist one. Rather, in articulating a theory of democracy based on the "fact of oligarchy," Aron, notably in his seminal *Démocratie et totalitarisme* (1965), was able to elaborate a positive theory of democracy (a "Constitutional-Pluralist" regime), one which he actively defended against totalitarianism (a "Party Monopolistic" regime).[10] The Machiavellian basis of his thought also provides a coherence to his political theory, from elaborating his critique of totalitarianism on the international sphere, to developing his sociological theory of hierarchical modern democratic society on the domestic. Moreover, beyond political theory, international relations and sociology, there is reason to believe that these elitist notions underpinned his work in the philosophy of history too:[11] in *Dimensions de la conscience historique* (1961), Aron explains that history is the interplay between two central notions, *drama* and *process*. If *process* attempts to account for the necessary transformation of society, notably in this case the development of industrial society, *drama* captures the contingent action of men within this longer history. So if process is concerned with structural factors, drama is the fact of a small number of individuals; or, in other words, of an elite.[12]

This "Machiavellian" dimension to Aron's thought undermines recent attempts to classify him as a "neo-liberal".[13] Aron was no doubt a "new" type of

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[10] "Les régimes constitutionnels-pluralistes" and "Un régime de parti monopolistique." Raymond Aron, *Démocratie et totalitarisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965) This was translated by Valence Ionescu as *Democracy and Totalitarianism* (New York: Praeger, 1969).

[11] Iain Stewart, "Existentialist manifesto or conservative political science? Problems in interpreting Raymond Aron's *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire*," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 16, no. 2 (2009): 217-233.

[12] "Tâchons de dégager la loi de la nécessité industrielle à l'œuvre dans le drame des guerres et des empires, l'action de quelques-uns donnant forme et figure au procès d'industrialisation." Raymond Aron, *Dimensions de la conscience historique* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2011), 238.

[13] Perry Anderson, "*Dégringolade*: The Fall of France," *London Review of Books* (September 2, 2004) and "*Union Sucrée:* The Normalizing of France," *London Review of Books* (September 23, 2004).

liberal for the twentieth century,[14] much like Tocqueville had been the for nineteenth, wiling to think politics in the "*gros temps*" of the Cold War, and he certainly attended the now infamous *Colloque Walter Lippmann* in Paris 1938, where the term was first coined.[15] But the epithet "neo", in particular in terms of what it has come to mean today, seems not to capture him well.

For one, many of the participants in the *Colloque* – Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich von Hayek, Wilhelm Röpke, Aron himself – rejected the term or did not use it.[16] What we now identify as neoliberalism developed later, in the 1970s, and is associated with the rising influence of Milton Friedman, Gary Becker's Chicago School, and the Virginia school of public choice theorists James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock.[17] But that type of neoliberalism, which wished, in particular in its Becker Chicago School incarnation, to extend *economic* logic to all aspects of life, is far removed from the type of *political* liberalism Aron wanted to defend, which formally drew from a group of Francophone liberal thinkers (Montesquieu, Tocqueville, Constant, Guizot) utterly foreign to the economic thinking of the Chicago School: a *political* liberalism premised on a clear separation between economic and political spheres.

Nor can Aron's thought be subsumed under the banner of Hayek's libertarianism. As Jan-Werner Mueller succinctly puts it: "Aron explicitly criticized Hayek's notion of liberty for being one-dimensional and ahistorical, and argued that the advanced industrial societies of the West had managed to find a *synthèse*

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[14] H. S. Jones and Iain Stewart, "Positive Political Science and the Uses of Political Theory in Post-War France: Raymond Aron in Context," *History of European Ideas* 39, no. 1 (2013): 35-50.
[15] Nicholas Gane, "In and out of neoliberalism: Reconsidering the sociology of Raymond Aron," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 16, no. 3 (2016): 261-279.
[16] Serge Audier, "The French Reception of American Neoliberalism in the late 1970s" in Stephen Sawyer and Iain Stewart ed., *In Search of the Liberal Moment: Democracy, Anti-totalitarianism, and Intellectual Politics in France since 1950* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 167-8.
[17] Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets since the Depression* (Cambridge [MA]: Harvard University Press, 2015).

démocratico-libérale which had absorbed the socialist critique of a purely negative understanding of liberty."[18] Moreover, Aron was willing to entertain a degree of economic planning and welfare redistribution, something anathema to Hayek, and which led, on the latter's account, onto *The Road to Serfdom* (1944).[19] For Aron it was democracy, that is to say *politics*, that came first, with the market a tool to help foster political liberties, whereas for Hayek it was the market that needed to be defended from the encroachments of democratic politics.[20] As Michael Behrent, channeling Churchill, has written in another context: if Aron was "in" the neoliberal moment, he was not "of" it.[21]

This openness on Aron's part to entertain market planning and social redistribution – whether for conservative reasons or not, or indeed whether within different historical circumstances he would have defended the same ideas – has led Audier to argue that Aron is best understood as a "social-liberal," one willing to try to reconcile socialism (Aron identified his own intellectual roots as coming from the left) with liberalism.[22] In attempting to combine liberty and equality, this, of course, links Aron back to Tocqueville, but also, this article contends, to the Machiavellians.

Building on Campbell and Audier's work, this article will at first deepen Aron's engagement with the Machiavellians, by tracing his intellectual dialogue with Pareto and how that provided him with important intellectual tools to critique totalitarian regimes on the one hand and develop a positive theory of democracy on the other. It will be particularly attentive to the shift in Aron's appreciation of Pareto,

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[18] Mueller, "Fear and Freedom," 56. See Aron's critique of Hayek "La définition libérale de la liberté," in Raymond Aron, *Études Politiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972) , 195-215 ; his *Essai sur les libertés* (Paris: Pluriel, 2014), and his final cours at the Collège de France, *Liberté et égalité* (Paris: Editions de l'EHESS, 2013).
[19] Craiutu, *Faces of Moderation*, 62-5.
[20] Gwendal Châton, "Libéralisme ou démocratie ? Raymond Aron lecteur de Friedrich Hayek," *Revue de philosophie économique* 17, no. 1 (2016): 103-134.
[21] Michael Behrent, "Foucault and France's Liberal Moment" in Sawyer and Stewart, *In Search of the Liberal Moment*, 156.
[22] Audier, *Raymond Aron: La démocratie conflictuelle*, 61-88.

from seeing him in his early days as an apologist of Fascism to a fellow-in-arms critic of totalitarianism and defender of democracy. The role the ex-Trotskyist James Burnham's now forgotten book, *The Machiavellians: Defenders of Liberty* (1943), played in this change of heart will be key, and it is he who will give the elite theorists the Machiavellian appellation Aron will subsequently make his own. The second section will turn its attention to Aron's often overlooked sociological writings of the 1950s and 1960s, where he developed, through his engagement with the Machiavellian thinkers, his concept of a "divided" ("*divisée*") and "unified" ("*unifiée*") elite, which was to serve as the basis for distinguishing liberal-democratic from non-democratic regimes. How Aron articulates the passage from political sociology to political philosophy, notably in *Les étapes* and *Démocratie et totalitarisme*, will be of particular interest.

Aron's "Machiavellianism" has led Audier, building on John Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment*,[23] to posit a French post-war "Machiavellian moment" encompassing Aron, Maurice Merlau-Ponty and Claude Lefort.[24] And although his concerns about the corruption of political regimes ties in well with the themes of the original Florentine "Machiavellian Moment", Aron did not develop the type of "non-domination" republicanism that characterizes Quentin Skinner and Philip Pettit's work.[25] Instead, as Audier has argued, Aron's "Machiavellianism" centers on a "conflictual pluralism"[26] that sees liberty as emerging from within the space opened up by competing parties, interests and groups. And that conception of liberty, this

[23] John Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).
[24] Serge Audier, *Machiavel, conflit et liberté* (Paris: Vrin, 2005); Warren Breckman, *Adventure of the Symbolic: Post-Marxism and Radical Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).
[25] Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).
[26] Audier, *Machiavel, conflit et liberté*, 28.

article submits, emerged through his engagement with his own Machiavellians – Pareto, Mosca and Michels – instead of Machiavelli as such.

The French moment did not die, however, with Aron. The theme of "conflictual pluralism" is present throughout the work of many of the members of the *Centre Raymond Aron* that was founded in his name: not solely in Lefort's work, but also in the work of Pierre Manent, Bernard Manin and Pierre Rosanvallon, to name but three. Indeed, Rosanvallon's dialogue with Michels and Moisie Ostrogorski – a figure almost entirely forgotten today – dates back at least to his time as a young *auto-gestionnaire*. The third part will thus explore the legacy of Aron's Machiavellianism and how its figures were used to address new questions, notably that of representation. In conclusion the article will ask whether such an account of democracy still has anything to offer us today.

I: Aron, Pareto and Burnham

Aron engaged with Pareto from early on, and that engagement was to continue throughout his productive career. His first published piece appeared in 1937, whilst he was still finishing his PhD. It was entitled "La sociologie de Pareto," and it was published in Horkheimer's *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*.[27] In it Aron was critical of Pareto, presenting him as a proto-Fascist thinker: by rejecting the Marxist idea of a forthcoming proletarian revolution that would do away with class inequality by affirming the historical, social and political persistence of elites, Aron saw in Pareto's sociology a theory reactionary bourgeois could seize upon to fight a rear-guard action

[27] Raymond Aron, "La sociologie de Pareto," *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 6, no. 3 (1937): 489-521.

against revolutionary forces. Yet Aron also drew three key insights from his study of Pareto, which he retained throughout his life. First, that the sphere of politics was autonomous from the economic and social spheres – a highly significant move in a French context dominated by Marxist accounts of the primacy of economics, or Durkheimian views on the pre-eminence of the social.[28] Aron's view that it was politics that came first and foremost is crucial to understanding the fact that whilst the modern world is characterized by being an industrial society, the type of political regime that goes with it – democratic or not – is ultimately a political question, and it is that question that will mark the trilogy of lectures Aron will give at the Sorbonne in the 1950s and 1960s: *Dix-huit leçons sur la société industrielle* (1963), *La Lutte des classes* (1964), and *Démocratie et totalitarisme* (1965).[29]

Second, Aron drew from Pareto's sociology a theory of fascist leadership: a hypocritical demagogue, willing to use any type of myth to excite the crowds, but who defends the interests of the elites, whom he ultimately rules in favor of.[30] This more analytical Pareto was one Aron grew closer to over the next decades. Indeed, Pareto the analyst of Fascism, rather than its spokesman, was to become the dominant interpretation of Pareto that Aron would develop over time, most notably in his later *Les étapes*. Aron imparts blame for the rise of the fascist leader to the liberal bourgeoisie, who, losing their nerve in face of communist agitation, were willing to throw in their lot with a violent elite.[31] This is quite perceptive in terms of explaining the rise of both Mussolini and Hitler, who relied at first on traditional conservative

[28] Giulio De Ligio, "The Question of Political Regime and the Problems of Democracy: Aron and the Alternative of Tocqueville" in *The Companion to Raymond Aron,* ed. José Colen and Elisabeth Dutartre-Michaut (New York: Palgrace Macmillan, 2015), 119-135; and Daniel Mahoney "Introduction: Raymond Aron and the Persistence of the Political," *Perspectives on Political Science* 35, no. 2 (2006): 73-74.
[29] On Aron and "convergence theory" see Daniel Mahoney, "The Totalitarian Negation of Man: Raymond Aron on Ideology and Totalitarianism" in *The Companion to Raymond Aron*, ed. Colen and Dutartre-Michaut, 137-148.
[30] Aron, "La sociologie," 516-9.
[31] Aron, "La sociologie," 518-9.

elites to cement their power before disposing of them, and it also offers Aron his third insight derived from Pareto: that liberalism has to be defended, sometimes even with force.

When the article was reprinted some forty years later in 1978 in the *Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, Aron explicitly distanced himself from his early piece, explaining in a brief preamble that the views expressed there no longer represented his current views.[32] What had changed? In a seminal article published in 1986, based on an interview with Aron conducted in 1982, one year before his death, Stuart Campbell analyzed the "four Paretos" Aron claimed to have been in existence in his work.[33] These four Paretos, which Aron himself identified in his 1973 text "Lectures de Pareto," were: the fascist Pareto, the authoritarian Machiavellian Pareto, the liberal Machiavellian Pareto, and the Pareto the cynic.[34] There is much to be said about reading Aron's Paretos in this way: we have already explored the fascist Pareto, and it is true that during his wartime journalist writings Aron started to use the more analytical Pareto as a way of making sense of rising totalitarianism in Europe, whether Fascist, National-Socialist, or Communist – what Campbell identifies as the "authoritarian Machiavellian Pareto." Indeed, the first piece he wrote for *La France libre*, which he was editing from London as part of the wartime effort under de Gaulle, with whom he had an oftentimes fractious relationship, was entitled "Le machiavélianisme, doctrine des tyrannies modernes" (1940).[35] Inspired by his mentor

[32] Raymond Aron, "La sociologie de Pareto," *Revue européenne des science sociales* 16, no. 43 (1978): 5-33.
[33] Campbell, "Four Paretos," 287.
[34] Raymond Aron, "Lectures de Pareto" in *Machiavel et les tyrannies modernes* (Paris: Editions de Fallois, 1993), 263-7.
[35] Raymond Aron, "Le machiavélisme, doctrine des tyrannies modernes" in Raymond Aron, *Penser la liberté, penser la démocratie* (Gallimard: Paris, 2005), 115-124. See also "L'Homme contre les tyrants" in *Penser la liberté*, 107-384 and in Aron, *Machiavel et les tyrannies modernes*.

Elie Halevy's *L'Ere des tyrannies* (1938),[36] Aron set out to analyze both the rise of Fascism and Communism through the lenses of "Machiavellianism."[37] Fascism on this account, as we saw above, adopted a Machiavellian/Paretean philosophy, whilst Communism adopted Machiavellian tactics.[38]

Whilst these four Paretos offer undeniably helpful prisms through which to interpret Aron's work, it would be a mistake, however, to think of them as somehow temporal and sequential, mapping themselves back onto Aron's own development. Rather than these four different moments, what seems of most importance is the shift from Aron's early view of Pareto as a proto-Fascist to him having a more positive view of Pareto – a Pareto who ultimately served the cause of liberty – as Aron himself acknowledged in the 1982 interview.[39] And that shift came about as a result of his discovery of Burnham in the 1940s. Indeed, we have already explored the evolution of the "Fascist Pareto," from apologist of Fascism in the pre-War writings to analyst of Fascism post-War. Pareto the cynic, which we haven't much discussed, is present throughout Aron's writing on Pareto, already in his early 1937 piece on "La Sociologie," to his latter 1967 *Les étapes*, and through to his "Lectures de Pareto" of 1974 – although that Aron's cynicism would increase in his later life is a point well made.[40] Finally, as we shall now turn to, it seems difficult to disentangle the so-called "authoritarian" from the "liberal" Machiavellian Pareto of the 1940s/50s to 1960s, the Pareto used both to critique totalitarianism and also to develop a theory of democracy, an inseparable task in the context of the Cold War.

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[36] Iain Stewart, *Raymond Aron and the History of Liberal Thought, 1926-1983* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).
[37] Nicolas Guilhot, *After the Enlightenment: Political Realism and International Relations in the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[38] Campbell, "Four Paretos," 289.
[39] Campbell, "Four Paretos," 287.
[40] Aron, "La sociologie," 519-520; Aron, *Les étapes*, 20; Aron, "Lectures," 263. On Aron's cynicism, see Campbell, "Four Paretos," 297-8.

James Burnham, a disappointed Trotskyist turned reactionary critic of bureaucracy, is best remembered for his 1941 book *The Managerial Revolution*. That book, in the era of Trump, is going through a mini-renaissance,[41] but his 1943 follow-up *The Machiavellians: Defenders of Liberty* is now almost completely forgotten. Aron however, who met Burnham, was very taken by it, and personally arranged for it to be published in his "Liberté de l'esprit" series he was directing at Calmann-Lévy in 1949.[42] In an 1949 article "Histoire et politique," Aron registered his debt to Burnham, explaining that his reading of Pareto and the other Machiavellians, who proposed a more "realistic" or "pessimistic" account of power, in which power was needed to check power, served as a critique of Communist millenarianism: that regimes that aim for the highest level of perfection are in fact the ones most likely to use oppressive and totalitarian means to achieve it.[43] What was needed instead was a divided elite ("*divisées*") that aimed not for a perfect society, but made best do with the imperfect societies in which they lived.[44]

This critique of millenarian Marxism, married to a more positive formulation of what a society that wishes to uphold liberty should look like, means that the Machiavellian authoritarian and the Machiavellian liberal Pareto go hand-in-hand. It also underlines how central Burnham's reading of Pareto and his Machiavellian colleagues were to Aron's understanding of them, and particularly in his more positive, post-War, reappraisal of them. Indeed, by emphasizing how power needs to be checked and not given unlimited reign – that it is counter-powers that are the best

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[41] Julius Krein, "James Burnham's Managerial Elite," *American Affairs* 1, no. 1 (2017): 126-51. American Affairs was launched in 2017 to "help explain Trumpism". See further Alan Wald, "From Trotsky to Buckley," *Jacobin*, 15/09/2017.
[42] James Burnham, *Les Machiavéliens: Défenseurs de la liberté* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1949).
[43] "Souvent les prophètes de la société parfaite sont précisément ceux qui édifient la société la plus oppressive." Raymond Aron, "Histoire et politique" in Aron, *Penser la liberté, penser la démocratie*, 533.
[44] "les élites les plus supportables son celles qui sont divisées…Il n'y a pas de société parfait, mais il y a des degrés dans l'imperfection." Aron, "Histoire et politique," 533.

guarantors of freedom – Pareto and the Machiavellians, on Aron's account, fundamentally furthered the cause of modern liberty, as the subtitle to Burnham's book intimated.[45] As he will come to fully theorize in both his sociological and political writings of the 1950s and 1960s, liberty was to be found, for Aron, from the fact that different political, social and economic elites all compete for power. It is within the space opened up between these opposing forces that liberty can flourish.

II: Divided and unified elites

In the second chapter of *Démocratie et totalitarisme*, entitled "From philosophy to political sociology," Aron questions the relation political philosophy, which he defines as the exercise of judging political regimes, entertains with sociology, which comprises a factual study of different regimes.[46] He starts with Aristotle, whose *Politics* combined both political sociology, in its classification of regimes into monarchies, aristocracies and polities – alongside their corrupted versions tyranny, oligarchy and democracy – and political philosophy, in that it judged these regimes according to a human telos.[47] In a contemporary sociological text, one we'll have occasion to return to, Aron points out that when Aristotle comes to the detailed description of the ancient Greek cities, he leaves aside his abstract classification and posits instead a perennial conflict between oligarchy and democracy, between the rich and the poor, between the rulers and the ruled.[48]

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[45] Aron, of course, might have gleaned counter-powers from Montesquieu, but the latter does not offer the reflections on elites within a modern industrial society that the Machiavellians do.
[46] "De la philosophie à la sociologie politique." Aron, *Démocratie*, 38.
[47] Aron, *Démocratie*, 38-41.
[48] Raymond Aron, "Catégories dirigeantes ou classe dirigeante?" in Raymond Aron, *Études Sociologiques* (Paris: PUF, 1988), 88.

Nevertheless, what follows in *Démocratie* is a potted history of ideas, where Aron discusses the relation between sociology and politics in figures such as Montesquieu, Hobbes, Marx and Popper. Montesquieu's new classification of regimes into republic, monarchy and despotism will in fact serve as the opening for the later *Les étapes*, where Aron examines the passage from political theory to sociology by exploring how Montesquieu, after elaborating his new conceptual schema, will turn to studying the political sociology of these regimes, by analyzing both their *material* (climate, geography) and *social* (religion, commerce) causes.[49]

But the notion of the conflict between ruler and ruled will return. Aron locates the birth of *modern* political sociology in the nineteenth century, notably with the work of Comte and Marx. This modern sociology teaches us two things: that all regimes are essentially defined by the struggle for power, and the fact that it is always the few who rule.[50] These two new "*savoirs*" Aron attributes to the Machiavellians, and to Pareto in particular: whilst Marx was right to identify the conflictual nature of politics, he was mistaken to think that the class struggle would come to an end after the proletarian revolution, and that the "rule of the (few) men" could be replaced with the "administration of things." Pareto's answer to Marx was that conflict would continue in the future, and the question of politics would continue to be "who rules?".[51]

This "Machiavellian" critique of democracy – that all regimes are in fact oligarchic, that the few always rule – Aron had already developed in his 1950s lectures *Introduction à la philosophie politique* at the *École nationale d'administration* (ENA), set-up by de Gaulle after the war to train the future high civil

[49] Aron, *Les étapes*, 27-52.
[50] Aron, *Démocratie*, 51.
[51] "Le vrai problème est de savoir qui gouverne…le fait qu'un petit nombre d'hommes exercent le pouvoir." Aron, *Démocratie*, 49-50.

service in charge of reconstructing the country, and in reality continues to furnish France with a large portion of its political class even today, notably Emmanuel Macron. There he explicitly cites Pareto, Mosca and Burnham as being the originators of this theory, but he does not leave it at that, arguing that once the oligarchic nature of democracy had been stated, then the question of how that oligarchy is constituted, and what its relation to the masses is, become the key political questions.[52] In *Démocratie* Aron goes further still, criticizing the "Machiavellian" conception as being too "cynical" – a throwback to our discussion of Pareto above – as it concentrates solely on the struggle for power, but overlooks the fact that one can still judge between regimes to see which one is best.[53]

The type of political sociology, then, that Aron wishes to practice is one that does not simply affirm the Machiavellian struggle for power, nor indeed grounds itself on an Aristotelian telos of human nature. Instead, basing itself on the "fact of oligarchy" that modern sociology has brought to light, it desires to evaluate the different regimes in existence to see which one is more legitimate, which one can be considered the best.[54] This is precisely what Aron will do in the rest of *Démocratie*, comparing the Western European and American "Constitutional-Pluralist" regimes to the Eastern "Party Monopolistic" regime of the USSR, coming down heavily in favor of the former. But to get a better sense of the make-up of these regimes, we must return to Aron's sociological writings of the 1950s and 1960s, where he developed his theory of the "divided" and "unified" elite.

In three fundamental sociological texts of the 1950s and 1960s – "Structure sociale et structure de l'élite" (1950), "Classe sociale, classe politique, classe

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[52] Raymond Aron, *Introduction à la philosophie politique: Démocratie et révolution* (Paris: Éditions du Fallois, 1997), 55-8.
[53] Aron, *Démocratie*, 51-3.
[54] "la recherché du pouvoir *légitime*…du régime *le meilleur*." Aron, *Démocratie,* 51-3.

dirigeante" (1960) and "Catégories dirigeantes ou classe dirigeante?" (1965) – Aron fleshed out his theory of elite rule. Building explicitly on Pareto, Mosca and Michels, and read again through Burnham,[55] Aron presented what he terms a "synthesis" of Marx and Pareto.[56] It is in the 1960 text, "Classe sociale, classe politique, classe dirigeante," that the notion of the "fact of oligarchy" – alongside Michels, its originator – first appears,[57] although Aron had already theorized the idea that if one can talk of democracy as government "for" the people, it would be a mistake, because of the fact that it is always the few who rule, to talk of government "by" the people.[58] The theme of Paretian "cynicism" returns here too, with Aron admitting that one could read – as he had done in the past – these Machiavellian thinkers as being, in their rejection of socialism, proto-Fascists.[59]

The main notion Aron will develop over the course of these writings is the view that societies are determined by the relation between what he calls either the *classes* or *catégories dirigeantes* – what in English we might term the *political classes* (the plural is key)[60] – and the *classe* or *personnel politique*, namely the more directly political class or politicians.[61] This is an anti-Marxist point: what Aron is saying is that it is not the relation between social classes (capitalists v the proletariat) that determines the political superstructure, as Marx would have it, but rather it is the relation the different social, economic, bureaucratic elites – the "ruling classes" –

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[55] Raymond Aron, "Structure sociale et structure de l'élite," "Classe sociale, classe politique, classe dirigeante" and "Catégorie dirigeantes ou classe dirigeante? " in Aron, *Études Sociologiques*, 111, 123, 141, 143, 188, 191.
[56] Raymond Aron, "Structure sociale," 111, 142. This paper was first given at the LSE in 1949, and published in English as "Social Structure and the Ruling Class," *British Journal of Sociology* 1, no. 1 (1950): 1-16 and no. 2, 126-143. On the Marx-Pareto "synthesis" see also Aron, *Démocratie*, 363 and Raymond Aron, *Mémoires: 50 ans de réflexion politique* (Paris: Julliard, 1983), 34, 392-8.
[57] Aron, "Classe sociale," 149, 155.
[58] "Il y a des gouvernements pour le people, il n'y a pas de gouvernements par le people." Aron, "Structure sociale," 121-2.
[59] Aron, "Classe sociale," 149, 161.
[60] *The Ruling Class* is the English title given to Mosca's main work.
[61] Aron, "Classe sociale," 151, 154, 157 ; "Catégories dirigeantes," 187, 193.

entertain with politicians that defines the regime.[62] By "ruling classes" Aron gives trade union leaders, captains of industry, the high civil service, judiciary, military as examples, namely leaders of the different spheres that make up society (masses, money, bureaucracy, military).[63]

In elaborating this theory of elite rule, Aron builds on each of the earlier Machiavellian thinkers. From Michels he borrows the "iron law of oligarchy," but transforms it into a "fact" that itself needs to be evaluated, and from which other sociological questions – how is this oligarchy formed? who is it in and how are they recruited? – emanate. From Pareto he takes the notion of "elite," namely those who are the leaders in their respective fields, and uses Mosca's term of the "ruling class" to designate them. But on the basis that there is not *one* ruling class, but in fact as many as there are spheres without which governing would be impossible – the economy, workforce, military[64] – he turns Mosca's term into a plural – ruling *classes* – and comes up with a new term, the political *personnel*, to designate politicians in the strict sense of the word.

Aron articulates the relation the ruling classes entertain with the political personnel through the notion of a "divided" or "unified" elite, namely whether political, economic, social, military or legal elites find themselves within the same institution, for example a unified political party, or whether they are divided within themselves, that they have their own, independent, institutions that are in competition with one another.[65] The question for Aron is whether all the political, economic, social etc. decisions will be taken by the same people, at the same time, and within the same institutions, or whether these decisions will be taken by different people, at

[62] Aron, "Classe sociale," 157.
[63] Aron, "Catégories dirigeantes," 193-4.
[64] Aron, "Classe sociale," 151.
[65] "La différence fondamentale entre une société de type soviétique et une société de type occidental, c'est que la première a une élite unifiée et la seconde une élite divisée." Aron, "Structure sociale," 123.

different – and often conflicting – times and going in conflicting directions, in different settings.

That is, for Aron, the difference between a divided and unified elite, and the regime will be determined by how the relation between the different elites is organized constitutionally. Aron, however, is not of the belief that a unified elite will mean conflict will disappear. Quite the contrary: conflict is inescapable; it is part of the genetic make-up of society. And because all the interests are centralized in a common institution, it will manifest itself through extra-institutional and extra-constitutional ways, most probably through violence – already we see here how Aron will favor a divided over a unified elite.[66] Indeed, Aron will engage in these writings in a fruitful debate with C. Wright Mills's recently published *The Power Elite* (1956), which posits the existence of a *united* elite, one that takes all its decisions in common and for its own benefit, in cooperation and not in competition with itself, which was the opposing theory Robert Dahl developed in his answer to Mills in *Who Governs?* (1961).[67] Based on his view that conflict will always manifest itself, Aron will reject Mills's thesis as conspiracy theorizing – he explains that he is not convinced the examples Mills provides are clearly of collusion.[68] Instead, he posits that reality is to be found somewhere between the two extremes – Mills's power elite and Dahl's polyarchy – between pure collusion and pure competition.[69] A ruling class will never be purely unified or purely divided – those are Kantian/Weberian, two thinkers who strongly influenced Aron,[70] "ideal-types" – but elites will be more or less divided.

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[66] Aron, "Structure sociale," 139.
[67] Raymond Aron, "Macht, Power, Puissance: prose démocratique ou poésie démonique?" in Aron, *Études Politiques*, 171-194.
[68] Aron, "Classe sociale," 151, 156, 162; "Catégorie dirigeantes," 191, 200.
[69] Aron, "Catégories dirigeantes," 201.
[70] Reed Davis, "The Phenomenology of Raymond Aron," *European Journal of Political Theory* 2, no. 4 (2003): 401–413.

Whilst Aron can see how a unified elite might be more efficient in its rule,[71] his own preference is division. He explains that when a unified elite concentrates within its grasp all political, economic and social power, then the masses find themselves defenseless against them.[72] He expresses a preference for dialogue between the rulers and the ruled that is constitutionally organized – like conflict, dialogue between the two always happens, but when formally organized means bloodshed can be avoided.[73] In the end checks and balances are still for Aron the best guarantor of liberty,[74] and, like all good liberals, he offers an romanticized version of the English "Establishment" as his ideal ruling class: one situated between the two extremes of unity and division, which, although it has a ruling class, is one open to talent and is willing to assimilate within it the leaders of those who oppose it.[75]

In *Démocratie et totalitarisme*, Aron will use his notions of a "unified" and "divided" elite to analyze the political systems of the East and the West,[76] classifying the former as a "Party Monopolistic" regime, one where the totality of the ruling classes are concentrated in the Party, and the latter as a "Constitutional-Pluralist" regime, which allows for structured competition between different political parties, and where the ruling classes are divided – the emphasis on political party here comes from Michels, who concentrated his "iron law of oligarchy" in his study of modern, highly centralized and hierarchical, political parties. The Machiavellians – Pareto, Mosca, Michels, Burnham – are again at the center of his reflections; indeed one of his chapters on the Western "Constitutional-Pluralist" regime is entitled "The

[71] Aron, "Classe sociale," 165.
[72] Aron, "Structure social," 124-5.
[73] Aron, "Classe sociale," 162.
[74] Aron, "Structure social," 142.
[75] Aron, "Classe sociale," 155.
[76] See also Raymond Aron, *La lutte des classes* in Aron, *Penser la liberté, penser la démocratie*, 1088-1098.

oligarchic character of the Constitutional-Pluralist regimes."[77] And the ideas developed in his sociological studies provide the bedrock upon which Aron constructs his own democratic theory: Mosca's political personnel, the "fact" of oligarchy and the further political questions its raises, government *for* rather than *by* the people, even ruling class conspiracies surrounding Jesuits, Free-Masons or petrol companies make an appearance.[78]

His conclusions are the same too: he attributes directly to Mosca the thought that a divided "Constitutional-Pluralist" regime provides the "best guaranties for the governed."[79] As he explains in his *Introduction à la philosophie politique* lectures, if human nature, as the Machiavellians had pointed out, should be understood pessimistically, then democracy is the least worst regime because it legally regulates competition between groups, leading to what Audier terms the "conflictual balance of social forces:"[80] if one is looking for a "realistic" regime, then democracy, being the best of the worst regimes, is actually the best regime possible.[81] Yet keeping to his idea that extremes are to be avoided, if Aron had expressed fears about a too unified elite, he also in *Démocratie* expresses concerns about a too divided elite, one which would be too dispersed, unstable and inefficient to be able to rule in an effective manner.[82] Democracies have to find the right balance and not fall into demagogy.[83]

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[77] "Du caractère oligarchique de régimes constitutionnels-pluralistes." Aron, *Démocratie*, 128-132.
[78] Aron, *Démocratie*, 128-132, 149. Interestingly Aron, himself Jewish, does not mention anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.
[79] "le régime constitutionnel-pluraliste est celui qui donne le maximum de garanties aux gouvernés." Aron, *Démocratie*, 134-5.
[80] "l'*équilibre conflictuel des forces sociales*." Audier, *La démocratie conflictuelle*, 46. Aron, *Introduction à la philosophie politique*, 135-6.
[81] Aron, *Introduction à la philosophie politique*, 135.
[82] Aron, *Démocratie*, 149.
[83] Aron, *Introduction à la philosophie politique*, 56.

III: The "Machiavellian Moment" and the Centre Raymond Aron

The emphasis on corruption and the imperfection of the political regime in *Démocratie*[84] echo some of the themes of the Florentine "Machiavellian Moment" Pocock first theorized in 1975. For Pocock that moment – which he would subsequently extend to seventeenth century England and the work of James Harrington, and to eighteenth century American debates over virtue and commerce – was marked by a dual reflection entertained by the original "Machiavellians" (Machiavelli, Savonarola, Guicciardini, Giannotti): the problem of elaborating a non-transcendental account of the passage of time, married to confronting the temporal finitude of the republic; what Machiavelli attempted to address through his notions of "virtue" and "fortune."[85]

It is certainly the case that with his wartime writings on the "Machiavellian" threat of totalitarianism to Western liberal-democratic regimes, and his studies of the inevitable corruption of the "Constitutional-Pluralist" regime, Aron, who also lived through de Gaulle's forceful passage from the Fourth to the Fifth Republic, which he attempted to account for in the introduction to *Démocratie*,[86] mirrored the concerns of his "Machiavellian" predecessors. In large part due to his lifelong engagement with Weber's work on political rationality,[87] Aron thought long and hard about how to formulate a secular account of time, notably through his work on the philosophy of history that had been the subject of his PhD, and indeed he is still celebrated today as the figure who exercised the best political judgement during these turbulent years.[88]

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[84] Chapters 9-11 and 18-19 in Aron, *Démocratie*, 166-219, 337-70.
[85] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, xxiv.
[86] Aron, *Démocratie et totalitarisme*, 9-19.
[87] Raymond Aron, "La rationalité politique," *Commentaire* 156 (2016): 725-42.
[88] Aron, *Mémoires*.

This has led Audier to posit a post-War "*moment machiavélien francais*," encompassing Aron, the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the political philosopher Claude Lefort.[89] There is little doubt that "Machiavellianism" served as an important conduit for these authors's thinking about contemporary politics, but as Audier has correctly pointed out that thinking was quite removed from the "Neo-Republicanism" – with its focus on non-domination – that has characterized the subsequent work of Skinner and Pettit. Instead, the French Machiavellians's thinking was marked by "conflictual pluralism,"[90] and in Aron's case that was articulated less through Machiavelli than his own "Machiavellians:" Pareto, Mosca and Michels. For Aron liberty emerges from within the space in which different parties, interests and groups compete,[91] and this thus ties his conception of liberty closely to Mosca's theory of "legal defense," namely the constitutional structure set-up to organize institutionally and channel productively the antagonism between different social forces.[92] Moreover – and although the name of the French Republic might lead to some confusion – what Aron was ultimately concerned with was the survival of western liberal-democracy, and not 'republics' as such.[93]

The French Machiavellian moment did not end with Aron, however, nor indeed with Merleau-Ponty and Lefort: a strong case can be made for the inclusion of the *Centre Raymond Aron* itself, of which Lefort was a member. Originally launched as an informal *groupe de reflexion* in 1977 by François Furet, the seminar in political philosophy at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* formally morphed into the *Institut Raymond Aron* in 1984, before becoming the *Centre de recherches*

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[89] Audier, *Machiavel, conflit et liberté*.
[90] Audier, *Machiavel*, 28.
[91] Cf. John McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
[92] Serge Audier, "A Machiavellian Conception of Democracy? Democracy and Conflict" in Colen and Dutartre-Michaut ed., *The Companion to Raymond Aron*, 155.
[93] Emile Chabal, *A Divided Republic: Nation, State and Citizenship in Contemporary France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 135-157.

politiques Raymond Aron in 1992, and transforming itself yet again in 2009 into its present incarnation, the CESPRA (*Centre d'Etudes Sociologiques et Politiques Raymond Aron*). At its peak the Centre brought together many of the leading French political thinkers – Aron, Furet and Lefort, of course, but also Pierre Manent, Marcel Gauchet, Pierre Rosanvallon and Bernard Manin – and is known for having renewed the study of democratic theory and having been at the forefront of the rediscovery of the French liberal tradition, notably through studies of Condorcet, Constant, Guizot and Tocqueville.[94]

The French Machiavellian theme of "conflictual pluralism" – mediated through Aron's own reflections drawn from Mosca, Pareto and Michels – are central to many of the Centre's members work. Pierre Manent, for instance, one of Aron's inheritors,[95] completely grants in his *Cours familier de philosophie politique* (2001) that political sociology has demonstrated the undeniable oligarchic nature of modern democracies, within which political parties play an important role: all rather reminiscent of Michels.[96] And the definition Manent will give of democracy is the '*organisation of separations*', that modern politics is organised around two oppositions: between represented/representatives, and the more classic 'separation of powers', namely a divided elite.[97] It is within these two oppositions – the conflict between the elite and the masses, and within the elites themselves – that modern liberty is to be found: Aron's point all along.[98]

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[94] Hugo Drochon, "Democracy, Anti-Totalitarianism and Liberalism," *Politics, Religion and Ideology* 18, no. 3 (2017): 333-336.
[95] Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins, "Why did Raymond Aron write that Carl Schmitt was not a Nazi? An alternative genealogy of French liberalism," *Modern Intellectual History* 11, no. 4 (2014): 572.
[96] Pierre Manent, *Cours familier de philosophie politique* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 24-5.
[97] Manent, *Cours familier*, 29-31. See Aron, *Démocratie et totalitarisme*, 348 for "l'organisation de la compétition."
[98] Manent, *Cours familier*, 28.

Bernard Manin's classic *Principes du gouvernement représentatif* (1995) accepts the "oligarchic" or "elitist" nature of elections, which he readily attributes to Pareto.[99] And he also affirms Michels's critique of the oligarchic nature of modern mass parties, which bring about new elites cut-off from the general party membership.[100] Manin's argument, of course, was in part intended as a refutation of the elite theorists of democracy, in particular Schumpeter:[101] whilst modern democracy contains within it patently aristocratic elements, notably elections, it also contains democratic elements too – it is a 'mixed' regime – in the sense that elections are open to all.[102] It is the conflict between those two principles that determines the nature of our modern representative regimes.

The French Machiavellian themes, and their authors, are also highly present in the work of another prominent member of the Centre Aron, and now professor at the *Collège de France*, Pierre Rosanvallon. Rosanvallon has used these themes and authors to address what has been the guiding thread of his own reflections, namely that of the "crisis of representation." That crisis is the by-product of the decline of the political party, which at its apex at the turn of the twentieth century offered a synthesis between the *anciens corps intermédiaires* and modern forms of individualism and singularity.[103] Embedded within a pluralistic institutional framework, the political party, allied to rise of syndicalism, provided the stability to the Third Republic within which Rosanvallon thought he had found the synthesis of Lefort's understanding of democracy as conflict and Furet's quest to end the French

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[99] Bernard Manin, *Principes du gouvernement représentatif* (Paris: Flammarion, 2012), 189-190.
[100] Manin, *Principes*, 265-7.
[101] Manin, *Principes*, 207-8.
[102] Manin, *Principes*, 306-8.
[103] Gregory Conti and William Selinger, "The Other Side of Representation: The History and Theory of Representative Government in Pierre Rosanvallon," *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory* 23, no. 4 (2016): 553-4; Andrew Jainchill and Samuel Moyn, "French Democracy between Totalitarianism and Solidarity: Pierre Rosanvallon and Revisionist Historiography," *The Journal of Modern History* 76, no. 1 (2004): 142-3.

Revolution.[104] As the new intermediary body, the political party had momentarily resolved, at the end of the nineteenth century, the conflicting legacy of the French Revolution – *liberté* et *égalité* – thus ensuring the stability of the regime.

That the political party should be so central to Rosanvallon's thinking means that Michels and Ostrogorski – whose legacy includes all the political terminology surrounding "party machine," "party boss," "omnibus party" and "Single-Issue" parties, and whose emphasis, much like Michels, was on the modern centralized, hierarchical and highly bureaucratized political party – feature strongly and consistently throughout Rosanvallon's work. Indeed, whilst he was still an *auto-gestionnaire* syndicalist in the late 1970s, he was writing of the dangers of centralization facing trade unionism that Michels and Ostrogorski had identified. In a series of texts – "Avancer avec Michels" (1977), "Trois textes pour un débat" (1978) and "Connaissez-vous Ostrogorski?" (1979) – in the syndicalist journal *Faire* he was editing, Rosanvallon affirmed the existence of an "iron law of oligarchy," but argued that this was a present *political* problem that needed to be resolved, presumably through his decentralized and self-organizing *auto-gestionnaire* movement, rather than a past *historical* preoccupation.[105]

His engagement with Michels and Ostrogorski would not simply survive his transition into academia – and this transition was mediated, as Rosanvallon recognized in an interview with the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, through his encounter with Lefort, whose *Machiavel* resonated with the "realist" sociologists

[104] Conti and Selinger, "The Other Side of Representation," 552.
[105] "Avancer avec Michels, c'est considérer la difficulté démocratique comme un problème politique et non pas comme un problème historique." Pierre Rosanvallon, "Avancer avec Michels," *Faire* 17 (1977): 31-34; "Trois textes pour un débat," *Faire* 35 (1978) : 55-57; and "Connaissez-vous Ostrogorski?", *Faire* 50 (1979): 23-26.

Michels and Ostrogorski he was interested in[106] – but offered a bedrock upon which much of his subsequent reflection built: he would write an introduction to an abridged edition of Ostrogorski's *La démocratie et les partis politiques* in 1979 – the sections he would pick out himself; preface Paolo Pombeni's translation into French of his *Introduction à l'histoire des partis politiques* (1992); Michels, Ostrogorski and indeed Pareto would play a key role in his historical trilogy *Le sacre du citoyen* (1992), *Le peuple introuvable* (1998), *La démocratie inachevée* (2000); whilst writing the entry on political parties for Raynaud and Rials's *Dictionnaire de philosophie politique* (1996); and would be one of the great traditions he would discuss in his inaugural lecture to the *Collège de France* in 2002.[107]

In fact one can read one of his latest projects, *Le Parlement des invisibles* (2014), as again premised on Michels and Ostrogorski: the idea of *Raconter la vie* was to offer those who were "*mal-représentés*" the opportunity to explain their existence. This lack of representation, especially for the new working class – the "invisibles" – comes from the professionalisation of political parties and the "iron law of oligarchy" that eats away at political life (Rosanvallon's main target is the French Socialist Party).[108] As Conti and Selinger have pointed out, Rosanvallon has difficulty articulating how the "crisis of representation" he so adroitly documents might be addressed, notably because he has refused to undertake the type of political sociology Michels and Ostrogorski – and Aron in their wake – practiced, which gave them a

[106] Javier Fernández Sebastián and Pierre Rosanvallon, "Intellectual History and Democracy: An Interview with Pierre Rosanvallon," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68, no. 4 (2007): 703-715.
[107] Moisie Ostrogorski, *La démocratie et les partis politiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1979), 7-21; Paolo Pombeni, *Introduction à l'histoire des parties politiques* (Paris: PUF, 1992), ix-xvi; Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le sacre du citoyen* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 497; Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le peuple introuvable* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), 247, 290; Pierre Rosanvallon, *La démocratie inachevée* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 30, 263-4, 293, 401; Pierre Rosanvallon, "Partis" in Philippe Raynaud and Stéphane Rials, *Dictionnaire de philosophie politique* (Paris: PUF, 1996), 525-9; Pierre Rosanvallon, "Inaugural Lecture, Collège de France" in Samuel Moyn ed, *Pierre Rosanvallon: Democracy Past and Future* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 41-2.
[108] "Il y a là comme une sorte de loi d'airain des organisations en général, et de la vie politique en particulier." Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le parlement des invisibles*, (Paris: Seuil, 2014), 14.

basis upon which to ground their proposals.[109] It is true that in its previous incarnation *Raconter la vie* took more the form of a literary "representation-narrative" than an in-depth sociological study,[110] but in 2016 the *Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail*, Rosanvallon's old trade union, conducted a detailed sociological study of 200 000 of its members, and that project, entitled *Parlons Travail*, has now been merged with Rosanvallon's original *Raconter la vie* to create *Raconter le travail*, which might bring some much needed sociology to Rosanvallon's historical and political work.

Conclusion

Drawing directly from Pareto's critique of 1920s Italy, which he characterized as a "demagogic plutocracy", Aron applied his own theory of the key relation between the "*personnel politique*" and the "*catégories dirigeantes*" to his contemporary France. And his conclusions were much the same: behind the façade of democratic politics, where rhetoricians dominate, lurk the rich financiers, because much money is needed to win elections and to govern.[111] It was thus the rich, the financiers, the industrialists, businessmen and entrepreneurs who dominate modern democracies. Aron was writing in the 1960s, but, with the political system awash with money, there is no reason to think that things have changed drastically since. Indeed, with the Occupy Movement and their rallying cry of the 1%, the election of Trump and Brexit, the relation elites entertain with democracy has been forcefully brought back onto the political agenda. Are these elites divided or unified? What are the constitutional structures within

[109] Conti and Selinger, "The Other Side of Representation," 556-8.
[110] Rosanvallon, *Le parlement des invisibles*, 23.
[111] Aron, *Introduction à la philosophie politique*, 56; Aron, *Démocratie*, 130.

which they operate? How do they recruit their members? What is their relation to the non-elite? These are all the questions Aron asked, and they are as urgent now as they were then.