





II. 12:15-12:45 Concluding Remarks by Stephen Sawyer

Participant Abstracts

Aline-Florence Manent: University College London

Tocquevillian Democracy in Postwar France and Germany.

My paper will focus on Aron's post-war writings on democracy and the political in order to probe the heuristic value and salience of the "liberal-conservative-democrat" label (or various combinations of these words) that is often pinned on him. I will do so by comparing Aron's thinking with that of some of his German contemporaries who are also seen as exemplifying some form of conservatism (whether liberal, neo-, Schmittian, or any other epithet).

As has been well-documented, Aron has been instrumental in reinserting the thought of Tocqueville in the canon of French political thought in France. An oft-forgotten aspect of this belated revival of Tocqueville, however, is that German intellectuals were also re-reading Tocqueville at the same time, if not a few years earlier, than their colleagues across the Rhine.

We should be wary of being too quick to interpret Aron's turn to the French intellectual tradition and his German colleagues' interest in what a Frenchman wrote about American democracy in nationalistic terms. This is not to deny that for many intellectuals of the early post-war era, German intellectual traditions were morally corrupt and, therefore, a turn to so-called Western democratic traditions was required (at least as a moral imperative). But there is perhaps a more fruitful way to look at this renewed interest in Tocqueville from 1950 onwards on both sides of the Rhine. Tocqueville's thought provided a sophisticated articulation of the intellectual and political sensitivities that united intellectuals such as Raymond Aron, Joachim Ritter or some of his students such as Wilhelm Hennis and Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde (the list goes on, and is not limited to German or French figures, but an exhaustive account would exceed the scope of this paper) for whom democracy meant first



In May 1958, an army coup d'état in Algiers precipitated the terminal crisis of the French Fourth Republic. Over the following months, a new regime – presided over by General Charles de Gaulle – would impose a sweeping reform of France's political institutions. This concatenation, marked by fears of military dictatorship and civil war, elicited a whirlwind of conflicting interpretations. Few observers assessed the changing landscape of French politics more lucidly than Raymond Aron. Skeptical of de Gaulle's authoritarianism yet hopeful he might bring an end to the conflict in Algeria, Aron was quick to perceive the dilemmas facing the new Fifth Republic and the enduring imprint of its origins. His response to events illuminates both the extraordinary character of the conjuncture and the subsequent development of his own political thought.



Iain Stewart: University College London

Raymond Aron, Henry Kissinger, and the problem of Political Realism

In addition to pioneering the discipline of international relations theory in France, Raymond Aron was unusual among French intellectuals for the extent of his personal connections with senior politicians on both sides of the Atlantic. Most notable in this regard is Aron's longstanding relationship with Henry Kissinger, whom Aron met during a stay in the United



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the wisest position to be the middle ground, can even be frustrating for the reader looking for easy answers. However, it was never his ambition to establish an ethical doctrine: he did not even believe in the possibility of IR theory. T Tm0.133 gwiZ(i)8(b)-0(i)7(1)7()