

Interpretation

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Winter 1993–1994

Volume 21 Number 2

- 105 Thomas Lewis Identifying Rhetoric in the *Apology*: Does Socrates Use the Appeal for Pity?
- 115 Joel Warren Lidz Reflections on and in Plato's Cave
- 135 Bernard Jacob Aristotle's Dialectical Purposes
- 169 Mary L. Bellhouse Rousseau Under Surveillance: Thoughts on a New Edition and Translation of *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques: Dialogues*
- 181 Peter Augustine Lawler Tocqueville on Socialism and History
- 201 Maurice Auerbach Carl Schmitt's Quest for the Political: Theology, Decisionism, and the Concept of the Enemy
- Discussion*
- 215 Victor Gourevich The End of History?
- Book Reviews*
- 233 Will Morrissey *Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*, by Charles L. Griswold, Jr.
- 245 Leslie G. Rubin *Citizens and Statesmen: A Study of Aristotle's Politics*, by Mary P. Nichols
- 253 John S. Waggoner *The Liberal Political Science of Raymond Aron: A Critical Introduction*, by Daniel J. Mahoney

Interpretation

- Editor-in-Chief Hilail Gildin, Dept. of Philosophy, Queens College
Executive Editor Leonard Grey
General Editors Seth G. Bernardete • Charles E. Butterworth •
Hilail Gildin • Robert Horwitz (d. 1987) •
Howard B. White (d. 1974)
- Consulting Editors Christopher Bruell • Joseph Cropsey • Ernest L. Fortin
• John Hallowell (d. 1992) • Harry V. Jaffa • David
Lowenthal • Muhsin Mahdi • Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr.
• Arnaldo Momigliano (d. 1987) • Michael Oakeshott
(d. 1990) • Ellis Sandoz • Leo Strauss (d. 1973) •
Kenneth W. Thompson
- European Editors Terence E. Marshall • Heinrich Meier
Editors Wayne Ambler • Maurice Auerbach • Fred Baumann
• Michael Blaustein • Patrick Coby • Edward J. Erler •
Maureen Feder-Marcus • Joseph E. Goldberg • Stephen
Harvey • Pamela K. Jensen • Ken Masugi • Grant B.
Mindle • James W. Morris • Will Morrisey • Aryeh L.
Motzkin • Charles T. Rubin • Leslie G. Rubin •
Bradford P. Wilson • Hossein Ziai • Michael Zuckert •
Catherine Zuckert
- Manuscript Editor Lucia B. Prochnow
Subscriptions Subscription rates per volume (3 issues):
individuals \$25
libraries and all other institutions \$40
students (four-year limit) \$16
Single copies available.
Postage outside U.S.: Canada \$4.50 extra;
elsewhere \$5.40 extra by surface mail (8 weeks
or longer) or \$11.00 by air.
Payments: in U.S. dollars AND payable by
a financial institution located within the U.S.A.
(or the U.S. Postal Service).

CONTRIBUTORS should follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 13th ed. or manuals based on it; double-space their manuscripts; place references in the text, in endnotes or follow current journal style in printing references. Words from languages not based on Latin should be transliterated to English. To ensure impartial judgment of their manuscripts, contributors should omit mention of their other work; put, on the title page only, their name, any affiliation desired, address with postal/zip code in full, and telephone. Please send THREE clear copies. Contributors using computers should, if possible, provide a character count of the entire manuscript.

Composition by Eastern Composition, Inc.,
Binghamton, N.Y. 13905
Printed and bound by Wickersham Printing Co.,
Lancaster, PA 17603

Inquiries: Patricia D'Allura, Assistant to the Editor,
INTERPRETATION, Queens College, Flushing, N.Y.
11367-1597, U.S.A. (718)997-5542

Daniel J. Mahoney, *The Liberal Political Science of Raymond Aron: A Critical Introduction* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1992), xiv + 187 pp., \$14.95.

JOHN S. WAGGONER

The American University of Paris

Daniel J. Mahoney's *The Liberal Political Science of Raymond Aron* has met with critical acclaim from diverse reviewers in the United States and Europe. It is a brilliant analysis of "one of the most important thinkers and participant observers" in this century and deserves a wide audience.

Mahoney is forthright in acknowledging his deep sympathy for Raymond Aron but stresses that it is born of "a sustained study" and "critical meditation" on his thought. His first contact with Aron came as an undergraduate, and the attraction was "instant and strong." As a graduate student, his study of Aron broadened and deepened. But Aron's works always remained "exciting," in contrast to the usual menu of academic works found in international relations, the field of study in which Aron is very often pigeonholed.

Mahoney generally found the literature of international relations "strangely apolitical," largely disconnected from the "burning issues of the day" that engage thoughtful citizens and statesmen (and appeal to university students of finer instincts and better capacities). Such literature is more often than not insufficiently informed by historical knowledge, any deep appreciation for the character of political regimes, or any serious confrontation with the great political thinkers.

Aron's writings "suffered none of these deficiencies." His works largely contributed to the weakening of the "Hegelian-Marxist consensus" that dominated the intellectual life of the European continent from the 1930's to the 1970's and kept alive a tradition of humane liberalism. "If Solzhenitsyn sounded the trumpet that blew down the gauchist Jericho, . . . it was Aron who laid the groundwork for the final triumphant assault," Mahoney writes. Aron was one of the most trenchant commentators on the tragic events of this century. But he was also a theoretician of the first rank who laid the groundwork for "a genuine political science" that can help provide "guidance in reconstructing a humane understanding of social and political phenomena."

Mahoney insists that

Aron was not a narrow or soulless specialist. His works transcend academic distinctions. He embodied the ancient perspective of the political scientist as the

rational architectonic analyst, evaluator, and guide of human political life. He was simultaneously an historian, philosopher, political theorist, student of comparative politics and theoretician of international relations. (Preface, p. x)

As a Final Note to Mahoney's text indicates, Aron is a thinker of "Permanent Contemporaneity" that can illuminate the choices we face at the "dawn of universal history" from the point of view of the irreducible tensions or "antinomies" that characterize political life.

Mahoney's Critical Introduction to the political science of Raymond Aron is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 analyzes Aron's complex relationship to the thought of Max Weber. Academically, Aron practiced sociology, and it is the towering figure of Max Weber whose shadow is cast across the whole field of social science in this century. Aron considered himself a student of Max Weber and was particularly attracted to his critique of historical determinism. But Aron also sensed that the unchallenged influence of Weber would degrade thought and debase political practice.

Mahoney sees Aron as challenging Weber on two fundamental grounds—the distinction he drew between facts and values and his doctrine of the "inexorable conflict of the gods." Contrary to Weber, Aron argued that there can be no genuine understanding of social phenomena if the *fact* that values are built into facts is denied. Facts in the human sciences remain unintelligible without value judgements. The reality of modern totalitarianisms, for example, cannot be appreciated outside of a moral dimension. Moreover, if we begin by denying the possibility of a science of man, we end by undermining any incentive for the search for the most important truths.

Aron acknowledges the limitations of reason. The future is opaque, choice involves conflict and painful tradeoffs, and it can bring forth unanticipated negative consequences. Indeed, the recognition of the limits of reason is a requirement of reason itself. But it does not entail the adoption of nihilism or irrationalism, in the manner of Nietzsche or Weber. The social scientist remains scientific "not by a humanly impossible and theoretically undesirable neutrality but through fair description and evaluation of social phenomena." In a balanced analysis of social phenomena, the responsible social scientist can mediate social conflict and bring to politics the necessary moderation that Weberian social science discounts.

Chapters 2 and 3 represent the "heart of the study" and together provide a detailed textual analysis of Aron's 1960 essay "The Dawn of Universal History," the core text of the Aronian corpus, according to Mahoney. A careful examination of this essay introduces the reader to the themes that resonate throughout all of Aron's work. Herein is a "self-conscious response to both Marxist and existentialist understandings of freedom and necessity." Following Aron's essay, Mahoney powerfully reveals in successive chapters the two foci of the Aronian perspective. On the one hand, Aron sees and articulates the

undeniably crucial influence of modernity and scientific society on human affairs—what makes this century essentially unique. He also discerns in this new political landscape the ultimately determinative importance of political choice and the political regime in helping to shape the events of our time.

The two foci merge when they turn to the historical interpretation of our time—as in his understanding of the “Thirty Years’ War” that dominated the beginning of this century—to present a picture of unrivalled power, clarity and richness. According to Aron, the events of this century ultimately reveal the “new and revolutionary character of process” brought about by the forces of science, technology, and industry—and the persistence of “history as usual,” its drama and tragic choices, rival ideas and individuals, in the perennial human context of conflict and war.

Contrary to historical determinists, what is did not have to be. The future is always at least partially open. But contrary to the existentialists, our “situation” is not a “free construction,” reflecting a commitment to “values” which necessarily remain unredeemed by reason. While the relative weight of “process” and “drama” might be changed in modern times, Aron agrees with Tocqueville, of whom he is a self-proclaimed “latter day descendant,” that history leaves to human freedom the space in which to act. The task is to use such “margins of liberty” responsibly and reasonably. Aron articulates a “probabilistic philosophy of history” (*déterminisme aléatoire*) that frees modern man from the hold of debilitating fatalism as well as from mindless fanaticism.

Aron’s political science, like Tocqueville’s before him, is an equitable evaluation of the fundamental choices that man faces politically in the century in which he finds himself. Clearly, the critical choice which Aron and his generation faced was the choice between the liberal politics of Western democracies and ideocratic totalitarianism. This century witnessed the rise of a new form of despotism, more ambitious in its goals and more violent in its means than the tutelary despotism imagined by Tocqueville. It was Raymond Aron who first coined the phrase “secular religion” to describe this wholly new phenomenon.

In Chapter 4, entitled “The Liberal Definition of Freedom,” Mahoney juxtaposes this century’s historic alternatives with Aron’s reflections on both the strengths and weaknesses of the liberal order. At the time Aron wrote, the choice was not a foregone conclusion, and the totalitarian temptation continued to attract Western intellectuals long after it had been repudiated by those living through the experience of such regimes.

In the *Opium of the Intellectuals*, Aron defends prudential political judgment, based on empirical sociological investigation, from the “abstract” or “literary” perspective. Here Mahoney deserves extended citation (in part, to better appreciate the power and lucidity of his prose).

The leading lights of European intelligence, including Aron’s philosopher-friends from youth, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, appealed to abstractions such as the “left,”

the “revolution” and the “proletariat” to judge concrete issues of political economy which could only be addressed through empirical investigation of the choices facing European society of our time. Intellectuals often judged Western societies by the abstract criteria of “socialism” but judged socialist practice by a semi-mythical theory and not by a detailed or penetrating investigation of its practice. Together with a philosophy of history which was used to justify heinous practices of Marxist-Leninist regimes, this literary approach condemned relatively decent constitutional regimes without specifying that the real alternative to the constitutional pluralistic regimes of the West was socialist practices. (P. 13)

If Aron was alarmed and appalled by the posture of his youthful friends, he was also exasperated by political analysts, including the typical university professor, whose attempts to be empirical in their approach to politics caused them to miss the truly important questions of the times.

Among other things, Chapter 4 is distinguished by a fine treatment of Aron’s complex relation to Marx, Tocqueville, and others. In the manner of Tocqueville, Aron defends the “formal liberties” and “due process” that anchor liberty in the liberal order against the critique by Marx in “On the Jewish Question.” He further sides with Tocqueville against Marx in recognizing the prosperity and opportunities available to the working class in bourgeois democracies. But he is more like Constant than Tocqueville in de-emphasizing the importance of political participation and emphasizing private over public liberties. Aron, however, accepts the Marxist claim that “real liberties” matter. As distinguished from Friedrich Hayek, and in a spirit entirely free of the doctrine, he came to support a moderate form of the welfare state. Contrary to the “pristine liberalism” of a Locke or a Montesquieu and their elaborate government machinery to hedge in power, Aron in part accepts the spirit of the “Promethian” Marx in recognizing the need to “empower Power” as a means to transform society. The ideocratic totalitarianism of the Marxist state was a “prey” that Aron said “he never tired in stalking.” Yet Marx represented a fund of knowledge for Aron in his effort to conceptualize modernity, and he claimed that Marx was one of “his favorite authors.”

In Chapter 5, Mahoney examines Aron’s writing on the theory of international relations. Although often characterized as a partisan of power politics, Aron criticized the realist school for largely ignoring the differences between political regimes and ideologies, not to mention the role of powerful individuals, political parties, and the pressure of minority groups on the formation of public opinion and foreign policy. He was equally critical of the idealist school that confuses “hopes with possibilities,” the Is with the Ought, holding international politics to standards that effectively undermine the ultimate goals they espouse. He recommended a morality of prudence that rejected both the power politics that denies our common humanity as well as the cosmopolitan doctrines that deny human diversity and the inevitably conflictual character of international relations. He thought it necessary to remain within the horizon of the

statesman and to protect it from the “geometric (realist)” and the “literary (idealist)” approaches that distort international affairs and undermine its practice. As a responsible counselor to individuals in public authority, it was his task to help them (in a phrase borrowed from Tocqueville) see “not differently but further than the parties.”

Chapter 6 of Mahoney’s study concludes the preceding with an outline of Aron’s liberal political science, and an appendatory chapter fixes the latter in relation to the political science of Aristotle.

Mahoney’s strengths lie in his range and versatility. He demonstrates his ability to distill and comment upon the essentials of Aronian thought, gathered from the whole Aronian corpus, as well as his capacity as an exegete of key Aronian texts. He says he appreciated Aron as a political theorist for having confronted the great thinkers of modernity. His commentary on this confrontation illumines the thought of Aron, of course, but it also sheds valuable light on such figures as Comte, Weber, Constant, Montesquieu, Sartre, Tocqueville, and others, who stand in comparison. This holds true for the fine discussion of Aron and Aristotle that concludes Mahoney’s study and which allows him to assess the whole Aronian enterprise against the backdrop of the West’s oldest tradition of political science. Unlike that of many academic studies, Mahoney’s prose is strong and crisp. His commentary is often punctuated with an epigrammatic statement that summarizes an important point while provoking further thought and rumination.

Mahoney often speaks of Aron’s “affinity” for one thinker or another. Mahoney’s obvious affinity for the “thought,” “spirit,” and “voice” of Raymond Aron speaks well of the author of *The Liberal Political Science of Raymond Aron*. As Aron’s texts always remained “exciting” for Daniel Mahoney, so does Mahoney’s study remain for the reader.