

France's Anti-68 Liberal Revival

Iain Stewart

In the tenth anniversary issue of the intellectual journal *Commentaire*, the economist Christian Stoffaës remarked that, since the journal's birth in 1978, France had undergone a 'liberal revolution' in which Marxism had been displaced from its position of ideological dominance by the rediscovery of the country's liberal heritage.¹ As the intellectual historian Mark Lilla has noted, other continental European countries experienced a similar collapse in the intellectual respectability of Marxism during this period, but only in France was this accompanied by a major revival of the domestic liberal tradition.² Both Stoffaës and Lilla viewed this development with considerable satisfaction, but of course the ideological reorientation of the French intelligentsia in these years was not always so warmly received. In 1983, Perry Anderson famously remarked that in the space of a few years Paris had made the transition from a beacon of revolutionary politics to 'the capital of European intellectual reaction', an argument that continues to echo on the contemporary French left in the work of Daniel Lindenberg and François Cusset.³

Yet radical evaluative disagreement over France's 'liberal revolution' exists alongside a basic empirical agreement over the extent of the ideological transformation that occurred in France between the late 1970s and 1980s: whatever they think of its content, all the commentators mentioned above would agree that something akin to an ideological revolution occurred in France in these years. The need to develop our understanding of the content and complexities of this phenomenon is a major priority for contemporary intellectual historians of France since the 1970s.⁴ Much of the work published on this topic in the 1990s tended to reduce the complexities of France's intellectual revolution to an 'anti-totalitarian turn' in the mid- to late 1970s. In this narrative, the French publication of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag*

Archipelago in 1974 triggered a collective epiphany among France's intellectuals, leading them to abandon Marxism and to embrace a half-forgotten liberal tradition.⁵ Although there is an element of truth in this argument, such narratives obscure more than they reveal. There were, for instance, different kinds of anti-totalitarianism. While some anti-totalitarian intellectuals championed the cause of human rights, others regarded this as a utopian illusion.⁶ Indeed, not all anti-totalitarian intellectuals claimed to be liberals, and those that were active in the recovery of France's liberal tradition in these years entered into this project with significantly different objectives. Like the Revolution of 1789, the historiography of which was being fundamentally contested in this period, France's liberal revolution was not a bloc.

This chapter builds on, and is a contribution towards, the new historiography of France's intellectual transformation in the 1970s and 1980s. In particular, it follows recent work by Michael Scott Christofferson and Julian Bourg in de-emphasising the importance of a mythical 'anti-totalitarian moment' and stressing the importance of longer-term factors in the transformation of the French intellectual landscape, particularly the impact of the *événements* of May–June 1968.⁷ Unlike Bourg or Christofferson, however, the focus here will be specifically on the revival of the French liberal tradition in these years. Through a historical analysis of the contribution made by the journals *Contrepoint* and *Commentaire* to this revival, I identify a specific form of liberal revivalism that emerged as a hostile response to the upheavals of 1968.⁸ In line with their explicit commitment to intellectual pluralism, contributors to *Commentaire* and *Contrepoint* sometimes cooperated with other liberal revivalists and anti-totalitarians; however, the two journals' anti-68 origins clearly shaped their interpretation of the French liberal tradition that they were programmatically committed to reviving. What distinguished the liberal revivalism of these journals was that it was tied to a specific project aimed at reforming French political culture. Anti-totalitarianism played an important rhetorical role in this project. But it was the interrelated critiques of radical egalitarianism, relativist 'anti-humanism', and intellectual 'irresponsibility' that fundamentally shaped the liberal revivalism promoted by *Contrepoint* and *Commentaire* and marked it out from alternative readings of France's liberal tradition in the 1970s and 1980s.

Raymond Aron and the roots of the French liberal revival

During an interview in 1981, the political sociologist and commentator Raymond Aron remarked with amusement that for the first time his work was on the verge of becoming fashionable.⁹ At this point, towards the end of his life, he was undergoing a reputational transformation. Ever since his conversion to militant anti-communism at the onset of the Cold War had

caused him to break with his friend Jean-Paul Sartre, Aron had been shunned by a French intellectual left where it was supposedly considered 'better to be wrong with Sartre than right with Aron'. The relative popularity of these two men has often since been used as a kind of shorthand for the ideological orientation of the French intelligentsia. The historian Tony Judt summed up the dramatic political changes that swept the French intellectual landscape in the late 1970s and 1980s as the building of 'a monument to Aronian reason' upon 'the funeral pyre of Sartrean radicalism', an analysis echoed in 2005 by the then French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, who noted with satisfaction that 'the majority of intellectuals [now] prefer to be right with Aron than wrong with Sartre'.¹⁰ However, the origins of Aron's reputational transformation lie not in any radical change in his own work, but rather in France's 'anti-totalitarian moment' of the mid- to late 1970s.¹¹ The revival of the French liberal tradition, which accelerated amid this anti-totalitarian turn, also contributed to Aron's intellectual ascendancy in these years. Not only was Aron one of France's earliest theorists of totalitarianism, but he had pioneered the rediscovery of the French liberal tradition long before this became fashionable in the late 1970s and 1980s. French liberal revivalists such as François Furet, Marcel Gauchet and Pierre Manent read authors like Tocqueville and Constant through the prism of their contemporary anti-totalitarianism, and in doing so some of these figures were influenced by Raymond Aron.¹² Nevertheless, just as it would be a mistake to regard the liberal revival and anti-totalitarianism as two sides of the same coin, Aron's own liberal revivalism cannot be simply reduced to his anti-totalitarianism.

Aron's earliest work on the subject of totalitarianism was published on the eve of the Second World War, but it was not until the late 1950s that his reflection on this issue began to draw explicitly on the French liberal tradition for inspiration.¹³ A central and influential contention of his theory was that democracy and totalitarianism were not opposites but rather that the latter was the pathological product of a malfunctioning democratic political culture. Although he originally developed this argument under the influence of radically anti-liberal thinkers such as Carl Schmitt, in the late 1950s Aron turned to Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* to rework his theory for the book *Democracy and Totalitarianism* (1965).¹⁴ Here Aron maintained his earlier emphasis on the problem of political culture, but articulated this by using Montesquieu's vocabulary of the 'principle' of a regime and the problem of its corruption. He followed Montesquieu by defining the principle of a political regime as a set of social attitudes without which such a regime cannot function. For liberal democracies, this principle was a combination of respect for legality and a spirit of compromise, and the underlying importance of these attributes remained implicit in his subsequent work that engaged more substantially with France's liberal tradition.¹⁵ As we shall see, some of these later instances of Aron's French liberal revivalism also involved a corresponding shift away from some of his formative German intellectual influences.

Democracy and Totalitarianism was the last in a trilogy of books based upon lectures given at the Sorbonne between 1955 and 1958, which was the period in which Aron first began seriously to study Montesquieu and Tocqueville.¹⁶ Ironically, given the title of this book, these were years in which the language of international anti-communism was moving away from the aggressive and emotive anti-totalitarian discourse of the early Cold War and towards an ostensibly more objective comparative analysis of Capitalist and Communist forms of 'industrial society'.¹⁷ One of the features of this rhetorical shift was the emergence of what came to be known as 'end of ideology' theory. In the mid- to late 1950s, Raymond Aron was France's leading proponent of this theory.¹⁸ The degree of optimism with which it was articulated varied, but proponents of the end of ideology shared the fundamental assumption that sustained economic growth, managed by a moderately interventionist state in cooperation with labour and enterprise, could simultaneously deliver increasing levels of wages, benefits, profits and investment.¹⁹ By thus aligning the interests of workers and employers, a new 'politics of productivity' would replace the old politics of class conflict, rendering traditional ideological distinctions between left and right redundant in the process.²⁰ Because it embraced the mixed economy and a moderate degree of state economic planning, end of ideology theory received a hostile reception from neoliberals committed to a revival of classical economic liberalism.²¹ But for liberals like Aron, this post-ideological vision was the basis on which a healthy democratic political culture of legality and compromise could be built in France.

Françoise Mélonio has linked France's post-Second World War Tocqueville revival to the emergence of this end of ideology theory.²² Given Tocqueville's famous concerns over the extension of the powers of the centralised state, this is not an obvious connection to make even if Tocqueville could be mobilised in support of end of ideology theory in other ways.²³ In Aron's case, instead of referring to the author of *Democracy in America* to support the detail of his analysis, he set up a comparison between Tocqueville and Marx's predictive accuracy in relation to the issue of equality. The point here was to suggest that, under the influence of sustained economic growth, the development of post-Second World War western democracies confirmed Tocqueville's predictions of rising social equality in democratic capitalist societies and contradicted Marx's opposite vision of the pauperisation of the working class.²⁴ Another way in which Tocqueville resonated with Aron's end of ideology argument was in his critique of intellectuals' alleged propensity for a moralising and unrealistic form of 'literary politics'.²⁵ One of the principal obstacles to a political culture of legality and compromise that Aron consistently identified and critiqued throughout his career was the alleged irresponsibility of France's public intellectuals, and it is significant that he first articulated his end of ideology theory in the conclusion to his famous polemical work *L'Opium des Intellectuels* (1955).²⁶ However, it is important to recognise that Aron's theorisation of intellectual irresponsibility predated his encounter with Tocqueville in the 1950s; instead, it originated in his

reading of Max Weber's work on the political ethics of responsibility and conviction during the early 1930s.²⁷ As with his adaptation of Montesquieu to reformulate his comparative analysis of democratic and totalitarian states, Tocqueville was not a formative influence but rather an adaptive one.

If Aron used aspects of Montesquieu and Tocqueville's work to inform elements of his own theories of totalitarianism and the end of ideology between 1955 and 1958, it was not until 1959–60 that he positioned his work more explicitly and comprehensively within this liberal lineage. The key text here, sometimes referred to as a foundational moment in the wider French liberal revival, is his *Les Étapes de la pensée sociologique*, published in 1967 but based upon lectures on the history of sociological thought given at the Sorbonne eight years earlier.²⁸ Here Aron cast himself for the first time as a 'belated descendent' of Montesquieu and Tocqueville, whom he identified as the founders of a 'French school of political sociology' that was in opposition to the influential positivist and Marxist traditions.²⁹ By claiming this lineage, Aron was attempting both to legitimise his own brand of anti-positivist, anti-Marxist political sociology and reinforce its epistemological basis.³⁰ In referring to himself as a 'belated descendent' of the liberal tradition, Aron tacitly acknowledged the fact that he had developed his sociological perspective in the 1930s entirely independently of these retrospectively selected French liberal predecessors. Before the Second World War, his main influences were a series of German thinkers including Wilhelm Dilthey, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and, above all, Max Weber.

In his second book, *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire* (1938), Aron combined these German influences to inform a relativistic critique of the epistemological position of Marxism on the basis of which he argued for a sociologically informed, gradualist and broadly liberal 'politics of understanding'.³¹ This was Aron's version of Weber's ethic of responsibility. In his memoirs, Aron identified the *Introduction* as having established the fundamental basis of all his subsequent political thought, but the problem with this book was that its radically relativistic attack on Marxism and positivism seemed to remove the possibility of attaining the kind of objective knowledge upon which responsible, sociologically informed decision-making was to be based.³² Furthermore, from a moral perspective, Aron's epistemological relativism provided an insubstantial normative basis for his defence of moderate liberal democracy.³³ It was partly to address these issues that Aron turned to a more comprehensive analysis of Montesquieu and Tocqueville in 1959.

Influenced in part by Leo Strauss's critique of Max Weber's moral relativism,³⁴ one of Aron's priorities in the late 1950s and early 1960s was to explore the possibilities for a modern political science that combined empirical rigour with a renewed sensitivity to the normative concerns of classical political philosophy. This is one of the things that attracted him to the work of Montesquieu and Tocqueville in these years. Like Weber, they were pluralistic, probabilistic thinkers who refused mono-causal determinism, but their interpretative pluralism did not overextend into a radical relativism

that undermined empirical objectivity or denied the possibility of rationally grounded value judgements. For Aron, Montesquieu and Tocqueville were to be admired as political sociologists 'who never cease to judge at the same time as [they] describe'.³⁵ This concern with establishing a political sociology that combined modern empirical methods with a classical philosophical sensibility was partly a response to growing criticism of the end of ideology theory in the late 1950s. Because it apparently reduced a political problem to the technical issue of managing economic productivity, end of ideology theory came to be linked to growing concerns about a crisis of normative political philosophy in the late 1950s and early 1960s.³⁶ This critique of end of ideology theory on classical philosophical grounds was soon compounded by a more radical attack from the emergent New Left that led Aron to draw further upon Tocqueville in formulating his response.³⁷

The ideological development of the New Left in France and elsewhere during the 1960s was partly a critical response to trends that end of ideology theorists had celebrated, notably the rise of the consumer society and the decline of the working class as a revolutionary force. This response involved highlighting the persistence of shocking inequalities within consumer societies, exploring the phenomena of alienation and anomie that accompanied growing prosperity, and critiquing post-war technocratic elitism in the name of a direct democracy that would extend beyond the traditional political arena to all spheres of social life through the promotion of self-management (*autogestion*). Aron responded to the new ideological challenge posed by the New Left through a theory of the 'dialectic of equality' that drew heavily upon Tocqueville for inspiration.³⁸ His main disagreement was with the influential neo-Marxism of Herbert Marcuse. Aron argued that the alienation and anomie that had accompanied the post-war economic miracle were not so much products of capitalism as they were inherent within the insatiable egalitarian appetite of modern democracy. This impulse was at once stimulated and frustrated by an industrial civilisation that provided rising material prosperity but whose inevitably hierarchical character obstructed the same egalitarian desires that growing productivity had helped to create. Although rising post-war prosperity served in part to lessen the appeal of revolutionary political ideologies, it could not provide reasons for living. Thus while in one sense it engendered social conservatism, at the same time it fed a spiritual revolt whose privileged expression during the 1960s was a rise in demands for enhanced participation and self-management and a critique of hierarchical bureaucracies that was keenly felt in the Gaullist Fifth Republic.

The explosion of such demands amid the libertarian contestation that marked the events of May and June 1968 in France prompted Aron to reformulate this Tocquevillian critique along more aggressively polemical lines.³⁹ He refused to take the actions of students and intellectuals during the crisis seriously and, convinced that they were indulging in pseudo-revolutionary agitation against a consumer society of whose material benefits they were among the principal beneficiaries, he labelled the events a 'psychodrama'.⁴⁰

Although in this regard Aron's analysis was dismissive, in another sense he took the events of May 1968 extremely seriously. The explosion of discontent in 1968 signified a profound moral crisis, which he diagnosed by adapting Tocqueville's theory of the importance of religion in restraining the egalitarian impulse of democratic societies. By 1968, he suggested, the moral bases of a necessary minimum respect for legally constituted authority in France had been undermined not only by a long-term decline in the influence of religion over social mores, but also by the more recent erosion of atheistic humanism as an alternative source of moral principles with which to tame the insatiable egalitarian appetite of student radicals and the irresponsible intellectuals that indulged them.⁴¹

Aron's liberal revivalism, then, developed in a number of directions between 1955 and 1968, all of which were driven by his overriding preoccupation with the problem of developing and maintaining a democratic political culture based on the principles of legality and compromise. Aron first articulated this in the terminology of Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des lois* when revising his theory of totalitarianism, but in most respects his recovery of the liberal tradition in these years cannot be reduced to his anti-totalitarianism. It was related to a project of epistemological revision undertaken in the context of a crisis of political philosophy, and it informed and legitimised both a critique of radical egalitarianism and of the postmodern anti-humanism with which Aron associated the emergence of radical egalitarian ideologies in France. Tocqueville was the primary point of reference for the latter critiques, and increasingly came to displace Max Weber as the inspiration for Aron's critique of intellectual irresponsibility and its pernicious influence upon French political culture.⁴² Nevertheless, it is important not to overstate the role of Tocqueville: it is significant, for instance, that Aron largely ignored a number of key tenets of Tocqueville's thought, including his economic liberalism and his emphasis on the importance of associational life in maintaining a healthy democratic political culture. The latter point is particularly noteworthy because defenders of the legacy of May 1968 typically point to its positive impact on associational life in France during the 1970s.⁴³ Aron, however, was France's leading intellectual critic of the *événements*, and, as we shall see below, this was the single most important factor in bringing together a group of like-minded younger intellectuals that would form the core editorial teams of two 'Aronian' journals dedicated to reviving France's liberal tradition.

The origins and orientations of *Contrepoint* and *Commentaire*

Prior to the publication of his famous anti-68 essay, *La Révolution introuvable* (1968), Aron gave a running commentary on the events in his columns for the conservative daily *Le Figaro*. On 11 June 1968, he used this

column to publish an appeal for the formation of a 'Committee for the Defence and Renovation of the French University'.⁴⁴ Although the committee itself was short-lived, the group of intellectuals that rallied to Aron's appeal continued to interact through his weekly seminar at the *École pratique des hautes études*. It was through the network established there that the journal *Contrepoint* was founded in May 1970.⁴⁵ *Contrepoint* was the first French journal explicitly committed to reviving France's liberal tradition of political thought, and its liberal revivalism was closely related to its origins in Aron's intellectual reaction against May 68.⁴⁶ Timing the launch to coincide with the second anniversary of the *événements* was a deliberate move, and the journal, which carried a different quotation from Tocqueville on each of its mastheads, regularly published articles devoted to studying aspects of the moral crisis that Aron had diagnosed in *La Révolution introuvable*. Thus, for instance, the editorial in the first issue of *Contrepoint* claimed that it was committed to combating 'the nihilist anarchism of the dominant group of intellectuals' and the radically egalitarian, anti-authoritarian ideologies espoused by the various leftist groups that had sprung up in the wake of 1968.⁴⁷ Its early editions were special issues treating such themes as 'liberty and authority', 'the state of the youth', 'the origins of the malaise' and 'the situation of the intellectuals'. *Contrepoint* was particularly critical of those intellectuals – most prominently Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari – whose relativist anti-humanism was regarded as the philosophical basis for the nihilistic libertarianism of the *soixante-huitard* radicals.⁴⁸

Contrepoint was an anti-totalitarian journal, but its anti-totalitarianism was expansively defined in response to the post-68 landscape of left-wing politics in France. A significant feature of this landscape was the crystallisation of radical left-wing forms of anti-communism. Groups such as Gauche Prolétarienne existed to the left of (and in opposition to) the French Communist Party (PCF), often espousing a 'third worldist' ideology inspired by the examples of Communist China, Vietnam or Cuba rather than the Soviet Union. *Contrepoint*'s anti-totalitarianism therefore extended beyond the PCF and USSR to embrace Communist regimes in the developing world and the revolutionary leftism in France, which, notwithstanding its own opposition to the PCF, was accused of opening the door to Communist subversion by destabilising the liberal order.⁴⁹ These concerns intensified from 1972 with the signing of the Common Programme between the PCF and the Socialist Party, which established the prospect of Communists entering government in France for the first time since the start of the Cold War. The wider anti-totalitarian turn in France developed following the scandal surrounding Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* and media coverage of atrocities and humanitarian crises in Cambodia and Vietnam, but was itself in large part a response to the re-emergence of the PCF as a potential party of government.⁵⁰ *Contrepoint*, however, was unable fully to take advantage of the more propitious intellectual environment that began

to develop in 1974 because personal differences between the journal's directors, Georges Liébert and Patrick Devedjian, led to the former's resignation, the withdrawal of Raymond Aron's support for the project and, shortly thereafter, the journal's termination at the end of 1976.⁵¹

While *Contrepoint* never achieved a circulation that would enable it to compete with more established publications such as *Esprit* or *Les Temps modernes*, it nevertheless carried a degree of influence in the entourage of the centre-right politician Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who admired the journal and wanted it to operate as a kind of think tank for the development of his brand of 'advanced liberalism'.⁵² Although this invitation was declined, both *Contrepoint* and its successor *Commentaire* retained close links to Giscard d'Estaing and the governments that served under his presidency between 1974 and 1981. Jean-Claude Casanova, a key figure in the running of both journals, served as an advisor to Raymond Barre during the latter's time in office as Prime Minister between 1976 and 1981.⁵³ Raymond Aron served as an informal advisor during the election campaigns of 1978 and 1981 and had previously taught Giscard d'Estaing, Raymond Barre and Alain Peyrefitte (who was Minister of Justice between 1977 and 1981) at the École nationale d'administration and Sciences Po.⁵⁴ The close ties that existed between *Contrepoint*, *Commentaire* and Sciences Po were significant from an ideological as well as a sociological point of view. The latter institution originated from the École libre des sciences politiques founded in 1872 to train France's new political and administrative élite following the Franco-Prussian War. Its name had changed following its part nationalisation after the Second World War, when Raymond Aron joined its teaching staff, but across its different incarnations Sciences Po was closely associated with the preservation of France's liberal tradition of political thought.⁵⁵ The variety of liberalism with which this institution tended to be associated was one that was more or less elitist and for which the value of democracy was secondary to that of liberty.⁵⁶

The journal *Commentaire* was founded in March 1978 and its editorial team was largely composed from the group that had coalesced under Aron's tutelage ten years earlier. Liébert and Devedjian, the younger alumni of Sciences Po that had driven the establishment of *Contrepoint*, were replaced by the more experienced and well-connected Jean-Claude Casanova, alongside the young political philosopher Pierre Manent and the historian Marc Fumaroli. Unlike at *Contrepoint*, where he played a fairly inconspicuous role, Raymond Aron was presented as the public face of *Commentaire*. The journal was advertised to prospective subscribers as an initiative taken by Aron with the aim of contributing to the intellectual and political reform of France. The means by which this reform would be pursued were the promotion of liberal pluralism and the rejection of dogmatic intellectual conformism.⁵⁷ The latter had been a prominent and recurrent theme in *Contrepoint*, which was more overtly combative than its successor and placed less of an emphasis on its intellectual pluralism.⁵⁸ This tonal shift was a reflection of the newly emerging

intellectual landscape in France at the time. Still, there were limits to *Commentaire*'s embrace of alternative ideological outlooks. Although it positioned itself as an anti-totalitarian journal, its inaugural editorial was scornful of the 'telegenic' and 'lightweight' New Philosophers, former radicals such as Bernard-Henri Lévy and André Glucksmann who had become famous following their anti-totalitarian conversions.⁵⁹

It is significant in this regard that *Commentaire* did not position itself merely as an anti-totalitarian journal; it was opposed to what it identified as the *two* major threats to liberal democracy: 'the inarticulate cry of pure revolt on one side; the absolute knowledge of total ideology on the other'.⁶⁰ In railing against the first of these enemies of liberty, it picked up from where *Contrepoint*'s condemnation of nihilistic libertarianism had left off in 1970. Thus, while its opposition to 'total ideology' situated *Commentaire* within a wider field of intellectual anti-totalitarianism, its conservative anti-libertarianism distinguished it from other anti-totalitarian journals like *Esprit* or *Le Débat*. The most significant direction in which *Commentaire* explicitly opened itself to outside collaboration was the anti-Communist, *autogestionnaire* current within the Socialist Party and the non-Communist trade union, the Confédération française démocratique du travail (CFDT). This section of the French left was praised in its inaugural editorial for having 'rediscovered civil society' and being ready to 'break the fatal equation of socialism and state control'. This olive branch proffered to a section of the left was, however, conditional upon it 'demonstrat[ing] that it can be something other than the impotent libertarian counterpoint to the statist left'.⁶¹

Anti-68 liberal revivalism in comparative perspective

As we have seen, the French liberal revivalism prosecuted by the intellectuals of *Contrepoint* and *Commentaire* originated primarily in their hostility to the events and legacy of May 1968 rather than in the critique of totalitarianism. However, this did not prevent them from applying the vocabulary of anti-totalitarianism to their readings of the French liberal tradition. Articles in *Commentaire*'s 'Classics of Liberty' section, which was devoted to the rediscovery of predominantly French liberal authors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, are littered with references to 'Jacobin totalitarianism', the 'pre-totalitarian experience' of the First Empire, or the sensitivity to the totalitarian menace of authors such as Hippolyte Taine or Benjamin Constant (who 'somehow foresaw Hitler through Napoleon').⁶² This anachronistic tendency was a feature of the wider liberal revival that accompanied the anti-totalitarian turn; it was not specific to authors associated with *Commentaire*.⁶³ An explicitly anti-totalitarian interpretation of Constant by the pro-68 philosopher Marcel Gauchet was praised in the

pages of 'Classics of Liberty' by Pierre Manent in 1980, for instance.⁶⁴ Gauchet's mentor, Claude Lefort, was another pro-68, anti-totalitarian liberal revivalist whose work was praised by Manent in *Commentaire*.⁶⁵ Closer comparison of Manent and Lefort, however, indicates that, despite converging upon the language of anti-totalitarianism, they otherwise offered divergent interpretations of the French liberal tradition's contemporary significance.

Along with Cornelius Castoriadis, Lefort had been a founder of the anti-Stalinist journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, which had been influential in developing the direct democratic, left-wing anti-communism that was a major ideological inspiration for many activists in 1968.⁶⁶ That year he had been a prominent supporter of the student and workers' movements, a position for which he was criticised by Raymond Aron, who was Lefort's doctoral supervisor and with whom he otherwise had good relations.⁶⁷ Meanwhile, Pierre Manent was Aron's assistant at the Collège de France and a director of *Commentaire*. In 1968 he had begun to frequent Aron's seminar, which he has described as 'a refuge far from the nave of madmen' at the École normale supérieure where he studied philosophy in an environment dominated by Althusserian Marxism.⁶⁸ Reflecting back on the *événements* in 2010, Manent attributed them partly to a crisis in the teaching of political philosophy in France at the time.⁶⁹ He retrospectively defined his own intellectual project as an attempt at rehabilitating an 'authentic political science', reconnected to its classical philosophical roots and liberated from postmodernist relativism.⁷⁰

The first major source of inspiration in this enterprise was the work of Raymond Aron, and it was Aron who introduced Manent to his second main intellectual influence, Leo Strauss.⁷¹ Claude Lefort was also an admirer of Strauss and Aron, as well as being an important theorist of totalitarianism in the 1970s.⁷² Lefort and Manent shared Aron's basic point of view that totalitarianism existed as a permanent possibility within democracy itself rather than something opposite and external to democracy.⁷³ And they both viewed France's liberal tradition, with the primacy that it afforded to the political domain, as a rich source of inspiration from which to approach this issue. The work of Tocqueville in particular was a common point of reference, but Lefort and Manent's readings of Tocqueville emphasised contrasting sides of his work, with Manent following Aron's lead in focusing on the problem of the insatiable egalitarian impulse at work in democratic societies and Lefort being more interested in Tocqueville's views on associational life as the guarantor of a strong civil society.⁷⁴

This essential difference between Lefort and Manent became apparent in an article by Manent dedicated to Lefort's writing on democracy and totalitarianism, published in the winter of 1981. In this otherwise positive assessment of Lefort's work, Manent took exception to his sympathetic evaluation of the contribution made by new social movements committed to women's and gay liberation, ecology, and the causes of the Lip factory workers and the farmers of the Larzac. Whereas Lefort saw such movements

in a positive light as having helped to reinforce the rights of individuals in the face of the state, Manent regarded them as ultimately reinforcing the power of the state, as the final guarantor of these rights, and eroding those traditional relations of authority – ‘employer over employee, man over woman and children . . .’ – belonging to civil society.⁷⁵ A year earlier, Manent had expressed his views on this issue in more polemical terms:

All that is needed to make the water diviners of the rue du Mail feel civil society bubbling up beneath their feet is for three ecologists, two feminists, a community organiser and a pirate radio presenter to meet up somewhere. There is something more urgent than liberating civil society from the grip of the State: liberating minds from the sterilising grip of the comfort blanket concept of civil society.⁷⁶

The concept of civil society makes for a useful point of comparison from which to develop a more specific sense of the ways in which *Contrepoint* and *Commentaire* instrumentalised anti-totalitarianism and the French liberal tradition to intervene in contemporary social and political debate. That anti-totalitarianism was unavoidably a pro-civil society position was made obvious by the foundation in 1980 of the independent Solidarity trade union in Poland. Yet while this development received significant positive coverage in *Commentaire*,⁷⁷ the journal’s regular contributors were at best ambivalent towards recent developments in French civil society. Whether such developments were regarded with friendly scepticism or open hostility depended on an implicit distinction at work in ‘Aronian’ liberal commentary between ‘radical’ and ‘moderate’ ideal types of French civil society movements.

The landslide Gaullist victory in the elections of June 1968 marked the immediate political failure of 68 radicalism. In the wake of this failure, however, the generalised libertarian contestation of 68 was channelled into a wide variety of different single-issue protest organisations, which for the purposes of our analysis can be collectively defined as the emergence of a new radical civil society in France.⁷⁸ Two movements emblematic of this radical civil society were anti-psychiatry and the campaign for greater transparency in the running of France’s prison system.⁷⁹ Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze were among the most prominent intellectuals to become involved in these movements, theorising a new form of ‘specific’ intellectual engagement in the process. By enabling marginalised groups to speak for themselves, the engagement of intellectuals like Foucault and Deleuze in these movements was intended to be highly practical, but at the same time the anti-psychiatry and prisons movements were informed by Foucault and Deleuze’s complex poststructuralist theories of power and desire.⁸⁰ The anti-68 liberal critique of radical civil society often collapsed the critique of new social movements into an attack on structuralist and poststructuralist anti-humanism and its alleged propensity for irresponsible, libertarian nihilism.⁸¹

Tocqueville was again an important point of reference here, as he had been in 1968 and before, with Raymond Aron revisiting the nineteenth century liberal to critique the anti-psychiatry and prisons movements along with the theories of their intellectual advocates. 'By what aberration or ignorance of history,' Aron asked 'do so many intellectuals denounce as "repressive" the societies that legalise abortion, that tolerate homosexual relationships, that give consideration to unions in the armed forces?'⁸² From the perspective of Deleuze's definition of men as 'desiring machines', he argued, all known forms of society must appear oppressive, but for Aron 'what threatens liberal Europe is not excessive repression, but license'.⁸³ In order to explain what he described as '[t]he conjunction of *paraded license* . . . and of *denounced repression*' he drew upon Tocqueville's account of the origins of the French Revolution. In *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, Tocqueville had underlined the paradoxical nature of the Revolution given the extent of the social liberalisation that had occurred under the absolute monarchy compared to in France's continental European neighbours. His counterintuitive explanation for this was that 'the very destruction of some of the institutions of the Middle Ages made those that survived seem all the more detestable'.⁸⁴ Aron turned this specific argument into a general principle, explaining that the anti-psychiatry and prisons movements were illustrative of what he called 'Tocqueville's Law'. Writing the year before legislative elections that the united Socialist and Communist parties were widely expected to win, the application of 'Tocqueville's Law' to France's radical civil society reprised Aron's previous theoretical critiques of insatiable egalitarianism while linking it to the practical possibility of a partially Communist government in France.

Aron was not the only liberal revivalist associated with *Commentaire* to draw upon the French liberal tradition to critique egalitarian ideology, its intellectual defenders and its influence on radical civil society. In his best-selling book *Le Mal français*, published in 1976, the Gaullist politician Alain Peyrefitte proposed an 'intellectual and moral reform' inspired by Ernest Renan, stressing the importance of intellectual and political 'responsibility' while lamenting French intellectuals' tendencies towards its opposite.⁸⁵ Peyrefitte, like Aron who had advised him during the preparation of the book, called upon Tocqueville to explain and critique the intensification of radical egalitarianism in the 1970s.⁸⁶ Rather than celebrate the growth of associational life in this decade, Peyrefitte bemoaned its negativity and the preponderance of 'anti-associations'.⁸⁷ In other texts published in *Commentaire*, Peyrefitte also used Tocqueville's writings on the penal systems in France and the United States to argue against the 'philanthropic illusions' of both moderate and radical promoters of liberalising prison reforms.⁸⁸ François Bourricaud, who had been Peyrefitte's advisor during the latter's ill-fated tenure as Minister of Education in 1968,⁸⁹ was another prominent liberal revivalist at *Commentaire*. A sociologist claiming the lineage set out by Aron in *Main Currents of Sociological Thought*, Bourricaud was a defender of meritocratic elitism. He was worried by a 'crisis of professional

authority' whose origins he traced to May 68 and the influence of thinkers like Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault, 'sophists' who paled in comparison with the great Tocqueville.⁹⁰

If the anti-68 liberal revivalists who wrote in the pages of *Commentaire* were hostile towards the sort of radical civil society represented by the anti-psychiatry and prisons movements, they were somewhat more open towards the 'moderate' developments occurring within the non-Communist trade union the CFDT and the *autogestionnaire* tendency led by Michel Rocard within the Socialist Party. This 'second left' differentiated itself from the Socialist mainstream by its decentralising, anti-statist leanings and critique of the radical nationalising agenda set out in the Common Programme. Its chief theorist was Pierre Rosanvallon, who had been the head of the CFDT's youth wing in 1968.⁹¹ Rosanvallon went on to play an important part in the French liberal revival, with his egalitarian, radically democratic liberal vision reflecting his activist background. As he put it in the mid-1970s:

The original liberal project was to develop an authentic civil society against the project of a totalitarian State . . . Liberalism is thus above all a theory of the separation of powers and of the limitation of the power of the State, but in the framework of an egalitarian society.⁹²

The anachronistic reference to totalitarianism in this passage from Rosanvallon's book *L'Âge de l'autogestion* (1976) situates it within the general context of France's anti-totalitarian turn, but its egalitarian emphasis sets it apart from the anti-68 liberal revivalists of *Commentaire* and aligns Rosanvallon with the radical democratic critique of Claude Lefort. After meeting Lefort and studying his work in the early 1970s, Rosanvallon was persuaded that the best way to theorise *autogestion* would be to do so in the light of reflection on the nature of totalitarianism and the latter's democratic origins. For Rosanvallon, as for Lefort, this entailed a reading of France's liberal tradition of political thought, which emphasised themes of decentralisation and civil association as bulwarks against the totalitarian menace. Whereas anti-68 liberal revivalists like Aron and Manent were preoccupied with tempering an insatiable egalitarian impulse inherent to modern democratic societies, Rosanvallon's theory of *autogestion* represented an attempt to harness this impulse in the service of a new, radically democratic form of political liberalism.

As we have seen, *Commentaire*'s attitude towards the second left was ambivalent: insofar as it was anti-Communist and sceptical of the statist socialism of the Common Programme, this was a section of the left to be welcomed into the journal's pluralist embrace.⁹³ But its egalitarian and direct democratic leanings also made it an object of suspicion; hence the suggestion in the journal's inaugural editorial that the second left must abandon irresponsible libertarianism and stop 'hoping eternally for vague things'.⁹⁴ The latter point was a reference to the theory of *autogestion*, which was subjected to a detailed philosophical critique by Jean Baechler in the same issue.⁹⁵

Although respectful of Rosanvallon, whom he identified as one of the few 'serious' theorists of *autogestion*, Baechler ultimately concluded that his attempt to define *autogestion* as a new form of political liberalism failed. Whereas the absolute evil for liberals was tyranny, for the theorist of *autogestion*, Baechler claimed, this was capitalism. The source of this difference originated not in their respective political or economic theories, but in their attitudes to modernity, which the authentic liberal stoically accepted with all its opportunities and constraints, while *autogestionnaire* socialism rationalised its ultimate rejection of modernity in the name of anti-capitalism.⁹⁶

The heterogeneity of the French liberal revival

As Baechler and Manent's critiques of Rosanvallon and Lefort show, there was significant disagreement between liberal revivalists in France during the late 1970s. Yet there was convergence on some key issues. A mutual preoccupation with the critique of totalitarianism conceived as the product of a failing democratic political culture was one such point of convergence; a shared sense that France's liberal tradition of political thought offered a superior means of engaging with this issue was another. Common to the authors discussed in this chapter was a sense that a key advantage of this liberal tradition was its recognition of the primacy of the political domain; studying its authors therefore offered a means of exploring the phenomena of democracy and totalitarianism without reducing them to products of structural economic forces. This rejection of economic reductionism not only distanced these French liberal revivalists from positivistic forms of Marxism, it also informed their common, if uneven, scepticism towards classical economic liberalism: notwithstanding its opponents' claims to the contrary, French neo-liberalism was far from being a facsimile of its Anglo-American counterpart.⁹⁷

Among the authors covered in this chapter there existed sufficient common ground on which to develop institutional forms of collaboration that would have a lasting impact on the French intellectual landscape. In 1977, the historian François Furet, a major figure in France's late twentieth-century liberal revival, established a seminar at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales dedicated to political philosophy, largely as incarnated in the French liberal tradition.⁹⁸ This seminar was a forerunner of the Institut Raymond Aron, founded in 1985, which played an important role in consolidating France's liberal revival and the related reinterpretation of the French Revolution promoted by Furet and his colleagues; more broadly, it also helped to revive the previously moribund discipline of the history of political ideas in France.⁹⁹ Through this institute the name of Raymond Aron has come to be associated with an expansive, pluralist French liberal revival encompassing the work, not only of his close collaborators at

Commentaire, but also of individuals whose intellectual trajectories included taking positions on the events of 1968 that were opposed, sometimes radically so, to his own. As we have seen, Claude Lefort acknowledged Aron as an important influence on his intellectual development despite their differences over May 68; similarly, François Furet cited Aron as an important influence but did not share his views on the *événements*.¹⁰⁰ Does it, then, make sense to speak of a specific anti-68 liberal revival inspired by Aron's example?

The answer, I think, is yes. The most obvious factor to take into account here is the origin of the two journals, *Contrepoint* and *Commentaire*, in the milieu that developed around Aron following his appeal for the formation of a Committee for the Defence and Renovation of the French University in the summer of 1968. Within the pages of these journals in the 1970s and 1980s a specific reading of France's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century liberal authors predominated.¹⁰¹ This interpretation of France's liberal heritage was linked to a project aimed at reforming the political and intellectual culture of late-twentieth century France through the interrelated critiques of radical egalitarianism, relativist 'anti-humanism', and intellectual 'irresponsibility'. These critiques were substantially inspired by Raymond Aron's Tocquevillian analyses of the 'dialectic of equality' and May 68. The anti-totalitarianism of these journals shared common characteristics with the wider anti-totalitarian turn that developed in France from the mid-1970s, including an anachronistic tendency to apply the language of totalitarianism to the analysis of authors writing in the nineteenth century and earlier. They also tended to regard totalitarianism as the product of a malfunctioning democratic political culture. But, while other liberal revivalists promoted the benefits of an effervescent associational life to counteract this, the regular contributors to *Commentaire* and *Contrepoint* emphasised the need to inculcate the right kinds of social and political *mœurs*, which typically entailed shunning radical egalitarianism as socially and politically pernicious. The positive side of this equation was the need for intellectuals to embrace an attitude of 'responsibility'. For anti-68 liberals this meant rejecting not only Marxism but also the radical relativism of 'French theory' in favour of a form of centrist 'realism' aimed at France's cultured political and administrative élite.¹⁰²

The French anti-68 liberal revival has had specific intellectual and political legacies in France and through its reception in the United States. Thanks in large part to Pierre Manent, *Commentaire* became an important transmission belt for the introduction of American neo-conservative thought into France during the 1980s, particularly that of Leo Strauss and Allan Bloom.¹⁰³ The anti-egalitarian, anti-postmodernist leanings of the anti-68 liberal revival chimed with Straussians and other anti-postmodernist intellectuals in the United States, who tried, with limited success, to import it in the 1990s.¹⁰⁴ In the autumn of 1989 the publication in *Commentaire* of the first French translation of Francis Fukuyama's famous article 'The end of history?' signalled a post-Cold War revival of a more conservative, pro-market variant

of end of ideology theory.¹⁰⁵ Debating an apparently post-ideological age actually pre-dated the end of the Cold War in French domestic politics, and was linked to the electoral decline of the PCF, the influence of Furetian revisionism in French revolutionary historiography, and the experience of political 'cohabitation' between 1986 and 1988.¹⁰⁶ Following the collapse of communism abroad and the revival of mass social protest at home, however, France's heterogeneous liberal intellectual alliance became increasingly fragmented during the 1990s. This process reached a low point in 2002 when a scandal broke out over the publication in a series edited by Pierre Rosanvallon of a book by Daniel Lindenberg attacking Pierre Manent as an intellectual reactionary.¹⁰⁷ The involvement of Nicolas Baverez, Raymond Aron's biographer and a regular contributor to *Commentaire*, in Nicolas Sarkozy's infamous campaign speech on the need to 'liquidate the legacy of 1968' again highlighted the specificity of the journal's liberal vision.¹⁰⁸ By this point, though, the intensity of *Commentaire*'s liberal revivalism, as measured by the frequency with which the 'Classics of Liberty' section ran in the journal, had slowed significantly since its peak in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁰⁹ However, given that at the time of writing the latest two issues of *Commentaire* have focused on 'The Crisis of Liberalism', perhaps the late twentieth-century French liberal renaissance will itself be subjected to an early twenty-first-century revival.¹¹⁰

Notes

- 1 Christian Stoffer, 'Apprivoiser le libéralisme', *Commentaire* 41 (1988): 46. All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated. I am grateful to Emile Chabal for his careful reading of, and comments on, an earlier draft of this chapter.
- 2 Mark Lilla, 'The other Velvet Revolution: Continental liberalism and its discontents', *Daedalus* 123 (1994): 129–57.
- 3 Perry Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (London: Verso, 1983), 32; Daniel Lindenberg, *Le Rappel à l'ordre: Enquête sur les nouveaux réactionnaires* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002); François Cusset, *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. transformed the intellectual life of the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 309–27.
- 4 See for example, the innovative work of Michael Scott Christofferson, Julian Bourg, Michael Behrent and Samuel Moyn.
- 5 Mark Lilla, 'The legitimacy of the liberal age', in Mark Lilla, ed., *New French Thought: Political philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3–34; Tony Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility: Blum, Camus, Aron, and the French twentieth century* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 137–82.
- 6 For different anti-totalitarian perspectives on human rights, see Raymond Aron, 'Sociology and the philosophy of human rights', in H. E. Keifer et al., eds., *Ethics and Social Justice* (New York: State University of New York, 1968), 282–99; Claude Lefort, 'Droits de l'homme et politique', *Libre 7* (1980): 3–42;


- Marcel Gauchet, 'Les droits de l'homme ne sont pas une politique', *Le Débat* 3 (1980): 3–21.
- 7 Julian Bourg, ed., *From Revolution to Ethics: May 1968 and contemporary french thought* (London: McGill Queen's University Press, 2007); Michael Scott Christofferson, *French Intellectuals against the Left: The anti-totalitarian moment of the 1970s* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004).
 - 8 On an alternative form of liberal revivalism developed by authors with roots in *soixante-huitard* activism, see Andrew Jainchill and Samuel Moyn, 'French democracy between totalitarianism and solidarity: Pierre Rosanvallon and revisionist historiography', *The Journal of Modern History* 76 (2004): 107–54; Samuel Moyn, 'The politics of individual rights: Marcel Gauchet and Claude Lefort', in Raf Geenens and Helena Rosenblatt, eds., *French Liberalism from Montesquieu to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 291–310.
 - 9 Raymond Aron, *The Committed Observer* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1983), 271.
 - 10 Judt, *Burden of Responsibility*, see Note 5, 137; Jean-Pierre Raffarin, 'Allocution de M. Jean-Pierre Raffarin, Premier Ministre', in Élisabeth Dutartre, ed., *Raymond Aron et la démocratie au XXI^e siècle* (Paris: Éditions de Fallois, 2007), 237. See also Sunil Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution: The intellectual left in post-war France* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), 130–3.
 - 11 I borrow this term from Christofferson, *French Intellectuals against the Left*, see Note 7.
 - 12 On this point see for example, Helena Rosenblatt, 'Why Constant? A critical overview of the Constant revival', *Modern Intellectual History* 1 (2004): 439–53. Furet and Manent in particular acknowledged their intellectual debts to Aron. See Pierre Manent, *Le Regard politique: Entretiens avec Bénédicte Delorme-Montini* (Paris: Flammarion, 2010), 49–81; François Furet, 'La Rencontre d'une idée et d'une vie', *Commentaire*, 8 (1985): 52–4.
 - 13 See Raymond Aron, 'États Démocratiques et États Totalitaires', in Raymond Aron, *Penser la liberté, penser la démocratie* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 57–106.
 - 14 Iain Stewart, 'Raymond Aron and the roots of the French liberal renaissance' (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 2011), 77–112.
 - 15 Raymond Aron, *Démocratie et totalitarisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 170–8.
 - 16 The first two books were Raymond Aron, *Dix-huit leçons sur la société industrielle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962) and Raymond Aron, *La Lutte de classes: Nouvelles leçons sur la société industrielle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964). Aron began to study Tocqueville in 1955 on the recommendation of the American sociologists Daniel Bell and Robert Dahl. See here Françoise Mélonio, *Tocqueville et les Français* (Paris: Aubier, 1993), 279.
 - 17 On this point, see Ghita Ionescu, 'Raymond Aron: A modern classicist', in Kenneth Minogue et al., eds., *Contemporary Political Philosophers* (London: Methuen, 1976), 198.
 - 18 Aron's key contributions to this theory are to be found in Raymond Aron, *L'Opium des intellectuels* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 2002), 315–34; Aron,

- Dix-huit leçons*, see Note 16; Aron, *La Lutte*, see Note 16; Aron, *Démocratie et totalitarisme*, see Note 15. For the wider debate over end of ideology theory see Chaim Isaac Waxman, ed., *The End of Ideology Debate* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1968). For a detailed account of Aron's contribution to end of ideology theory and his role in the Congress for Cultural Freedom see Stewart, 'Raymond Aron', see Note 14, 113–51.
- 19 At the most optimistic end of the spectrum Seymour Martin Lipset claimed in 1960 that in Western liberal democracies 'the fundamental political problems of the industrial revolution have been solved' and that such regimes represented 'the good society itself in operation'. Seymour Martin Lipset, *The Political Man: The social bases of politics* (London: Mercury Books, 1960), 403, 406.
 - 20 The term 'politics of productivity' is taken from Charles S. Maier, *In Search of Stability: Explorations in historical political economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 121–52.
 - 21 Lipset, *Political Man*, see Note 19, 404–5.
 - 22 Mélonio, *Tocqueville*, see Note 16, 274–85.
 - 23 See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and Two Essays on America* (London: Penguin, 2003), 777–809.
 - 24 Aron, *Dix-huit leçons*, see Note 16, 33–73. See also Raymond Aron, *Essai sur les libertés* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1965), 17–72; Raymond Aron, *Trois essais sur l'âge industriel* (Paris: Plon, 1966), 108.
 - 25 Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (New York: Anchor Books, 1983), 138–48.
 - 26 Aron invokes the 'end of the age of ideologies' in the conclusion to Raymond Aron, *L'Opium des intellectuels* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 2002), 315–34.
 - 27 See, e.g., Raymond Aron, 'Réflexions sur les problèmes économiques Français', *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, XLIV (1937): 793. The relevant text from Weber is Max Weber, 'Politics as a vocation', in Hans Heinrich Gerth et al., eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1991), 77–128. On the importance of Weber's influence, see Raymond Aron, *Mémoires: 50 Ans de réflexion politique* (Paris: Julliard, 1983), 68–72.
 - 28 Jean-Louis Benoît, 'Reading Tocqueville: Diachrony, synchrony and new perspectives', in Raf Geenens et al., eds., *Reading Tocqueville from Oracle to Actor* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 54.
 - 29 The English translation of this these lectures was published in 1965, two years before the French version. References here are to the latter: Raymond Aron, *Les Étapes de la pensée sociologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 295.
 - 30 A more detailed version of the following analysis is available in Stewart, 'Raymond Aron', see Note 14, 152–203.
 - 31 Raymond Aron, *Introduction à la Philosophie de l'Histoire: Essai sur les limites de l'objectivité historique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), 413–14.
 - 32 Aron, *Mémoires*, see Note 27, 125.
 - 33 On these points, see Daniel J. Mahoney, 'Raymond Aron and the morality of prudence', *Modern Age* 43 (2001): 243–52.

- 34 For a discussion of Strauss's critique of Weber see Raymond Aron, 'Introduction', in Max Weber, *Le Savant et le politique* (Paris: Plon, 1959), 31–52. On Aron's admiration for Strauss, see Aron, *Mémoires*, see Note 27, 457.
- 35 Aron, *Les Étapes*, see Note 29, 239–40.
- 36 Andrew Vincent, *The Nature of Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 56.
- 37 See for example, C. Wright Mills, 'Letter to the New Left', *New Left Review* 1 (1960): 18–23; Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society* (London: Routledge, 2002), 11.
- 38 Raymond Aron, *Les Désillusions du progrès: Essai sur la dialectique de la modernité* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1969), 19–90. This book was first published in English as an entry into the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1964.
- 39 The notion of 'contestation' was central to the rhetoric of protest in 1968. It connotes a radically anti-authoritarian critique directed at wide range of social institutions, not just the State or the University but also the family, trade unions, schools, offices, factories, etc.
- 40 Raymond Aron, *La Révolution introuvable: Réflexions sur les événements de Mai* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1968), 117–21.
- 41 Aron, *La Révolution introuvable*, see Note 40, 134–7. See also pages 122–3, 147.
- 42 Daniel J. Mahoney, *The Liberal Political Science of Raymond Aron: A critical introduction* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1992), 15, 161.
- 43 See, e.g., Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East: French intellectuals, the cultural revolution, and the legacy of the 1960s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 362.
- 44 Raymond Aron, 'La crise de l'Université: Une mise en garde et un appel de Raymond Aron', in Aron, *Révolution introuvable*, see Note 40, 169–70.
- 45 *Contrepoint* has been described by one of its regular contributors as a direct response to Aron's appeal for a committee in defence of the University in *Le Figaro* two years earlier. See Gwendal Châton, 'Désaccord parfait: Le *Contrepoint* liberal dans les configurations intellectuels des années soixante-dix', in Jean Baudouin et al., eds., *Les Revues et la dynamique des ruptures* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2007), 145. On the links between Aron's seminar and *Contrepoint*, see Châton, 'Désaccord parfait', 138–59 and Rémy Rieffel, *La Tribu des clercs: Les Intellectuels sous la Ve République* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1993), 245–6.
- 46 'Contrepoint was really founded in reaction to May 1968' – Jean Baechler quoted in Gwendal Châton, 'La Liberté retrouvée. Une histoire du libéralisme politique en France à travers les revues Aroniennes *Contrepoint* et *Commentaire*' (PhD diss., University of Rennes 1, 2006), 160.
- 47 Anon, 'Éditorial', *Contrepoint* 1 (1970): 4.
- 48 Châton, 'Liberté retrouvée', see Note 46, 228–9, 243–8.
- 49 Châton, 'Liberté retrouvée', see Note 46, 227.
- 50 This is a main argument of Christofferson, *French Intellectuals*, see Note 7. See also Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution*, Note 10, 149–50.

- 51 In 1977, Liébert went on to develop the collection *Pluriel* at the French publishing house Hachette, producing new paperback editions of classic texts from the liberal tradition as well as numerous works by contemporary liberals that had been affiliated with *Contrepoint*. He also maintained a place on the editorial board of *Commentaire*. See Rieffel, *La Tribu des clercs*, see Note 45, 260.
- 52 See Châton, 'Désaccord parfait', see Note 45, 161–2.
- 53 Rémy Rieffel implies that *Commentaire* was 'un club barriste'. See his *La Tribu des clercs*, see Note 45, 252–7.
- 54 Aron, *Mémoires*, see Note 27, 566–74; Nicolas Baverez, *Raymond Aron: Un Moraliste aux temps des ideologies* (Paris: Flammarion, 1993), 436–40, 474.
- 55 H. S. Jones, 'French liberalism and the legacy of the Revolution', in Tim Blanning et al., eds., *Historicising the French Revolution* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 192.
- 56 In both of its incarnations, this institution was founded amid the theorisation by some of its most respected teaching staff of elite renewal in response to national humiliation. See in the first instance, Ernest Renan, *La Réforme intellectuelle et morale* (Paris: Michel-Lévy Frères, 1871) and, in the second, Raymond Aron, *Chroniques de guerre: 'La France libre', 1940–1945* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990). On criticism of Sciences Po as elitist and undemocratic, see Philip Nord, *France's New Deal: From the thirties to the post-war era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 67–86, 130–44, 189–213.
- 57 See the advanced promotional flyer kept in *Fonds Raymond Aron*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, NAF28060(130).
- 58 Anon, 'Éditorial', *Contrepoint*, 1 (May 1970): 3–5. On the theme of intellectual non-conformism, see Châton, 'Liberté retrouvée', see Note 46, 164–8.
- 59 Anon, 'Commentaire', *Commentaire* 1 (1978): 5. See also Raymond Aron, 'Pour le progrès: Après la chute des idoles', *Commentaire* 1 (1978): 233–43.
- 60 Anon, 'Commentaire', see Note 59, 3.
- 61 Anon, 'Commentaire', see Note 59, 5.
- 62 Jean-Thomas Nordmann, 'Taine liberal', *Commentaire* 3 (1978): 364; Alfred Fabre-Luce, 'Benjamin Constant et ses partenaires', *Commentaire* 2 (1978): 193. See also Patrice Rolland, 'Équivoques du libéralisme: À propos de Benjamin Constant', *Commentaire* 16 (1981): 417; René Pomeau, 'Montesquieu: Le Vécu d'une politique', *Commentaire* 17 (1982): 127–8; Pierre Rétat, 'La Notion du principe chez Montesquieu', *Commentaire* 17 (1982): 131; Jean-François Revel, 'Pour lire Jouffroy', *Commentaire* 27 (1984): 546–7, etc.
- 63 On this wider tendency, see Rosenblatt, 'Why constant?', see Note 10.
- 64 Pierre Manent, 'Aux origines du libéralisme: Benjamin Constant', *Commentaire*, 11 (1980). Manent was commenting upon Marcel Gauchet, 'Introduction' in Benjamin Constant, *De la Liberté chez les Modernes* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1980), 11–91.
- 65 Pierre Manent, 'Démocratie et totalitarisme: À propos de Claude Lefort', *Commentaire* 16 (1981): 574–83.

- 66 See for example, Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Gabriel Cohn Bendit, *Obsolete Communism: The left-wing alternative* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2000), 23.
- 67 For Lefort's analysis of May 1968, see his contribution to Claude Lefort, Edgar Morin and Jean-Marc Coudray, *Mai 1968: La Brèche. Premières réflexions sur les événements* (Paris: Fayard, 1968). On his relations with Aron, see Claude Lefort, 'Raymond Aron et le phénomène totalitaire', in Christian Bachelier et al., eds., *Raymond Aron et la liberté politique* (Paris: Éditions de Fallois, 2002), 87.
- 68 Manent, *Regard politique*, see Note 12, 35.
- 69 Manent, *Regard politique*, see Note 12, 39.
- 70 Manent, *Regard politique*, see Note 12, 11–15.
- 71 Manent, *Regard politique*, see Note 12, 49–81.
- 72 On Lefort and Strauss, see Claudia Hilb, 'Claude Lefort as reader of Leo Strauss', in Martin Plot, *Claude Lefort: Thinker of the political* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 71–88. On Aron and totalitarianism, see Lefort, 'Raymond Aron', see Note 67.
- 73 See Manent, 'Démocratie et totalitarisme,' see Note 65, 575.
- 74 Serge Audier, *Tocqueville retrouve: Genèse et enjeux du renouveau Tocquevillien français* (Paris: Vrin, 2004). On the 'Aronian' reading of Tocqueville, see pages 19–162; on the 'Lefortian' interpretation, see pages 163–232. See also Pierre Manent, *Tocqueville et la nature de la démocratie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982).
- 75 Manent, 'Démocratie et totalitarisme', see Note 65, 582.
- 76 Manent, 'Aux origines du libéralisme,' see Note 64, 484. Rue du Mail was home to the offices of the left-wing weekly news magazine, *Le Nouvel observateur*.
- 77 See for instance, Marcin Krol, 'Pologne: Une Révolution différente', *Commentaire* 12 (1980): 537–45.
- 78 The binary distinction between radical and moderate forms of civil society movements oversimplifies a more complex reality; it is used here simply as a means of clarifying the anti-68 liberals' different responses to different kinds of civil society movement, and corresponds with a similar distinction made by authors contributing to *Contrepoint* and *Commentaire*. For an example of this distinction, see Jean Baechler, 'Libéralisme et autogestion', *Commentaire* 1 (1978): 27–38.
- 79 On these movements, see Bourj, *Revolution to Ethics*, see Note 7, 79–176.
- 80 See here 'Intellectuals and power: A conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze' [1972]. Available at libcom.org, accessed 31 August 2013: <http://libcom.org/library/intellectuals-power-a-conversation-between-michel-foucault-and-gilles-deleuze>
- 81 See Michel Crozier, 'Les angoisses existentielles des intellectuels français', *Commentaire* 6 (1979): 169–80; François Bourricaud, 'La Crise de l'autorité professionnelle: Avocats, Magistrats, Médecins et Professeurs', *Commentaire* 7 (1979): 382–89; François Bourricaud, 'De la Psychanalyse à la révolution', *Commentaire* 36 (1986): 804–7. See also the positive reception afforded to Alain Renaut and Luc Ferry's controversial *La Pensée 68: Essai sur l'anti-*

- humanisme contemporaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985) in Raymond Boudon, 'Éloge du conformisme intellectuel', *Commentaire* 35 (1986): 535–7; Marc Beigbeder, 'La Bouteille à la mer: L'Heure des comptes?', *Commentaire* 33 (1986): 151–4.
- 82 Raymond Aron, *In Defense of Decadent Europe* (South Bend: Regnery Gateway, 1979). Originally published in 1977, all quotations here come from pages 236–7. On 'Tocqueville's Law' in general, see pages 236–43.
- 83 On 'desiring machines', see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2004).
- 84 Tocqueville, *Origins*, 31–32.
- 85 Alain Peyrefitte, *Le Mal français* (Paris: Plon, 1976), 463, 482–86.
- 86 Peyrefitte, *Le Mal français*, see Note 85, iv.
- 87 Peyrefitte, *Le Mal français*, see Note 85, 397, 407.
- 88 Alain Peyrefitte, 'Les Paradoxes de Tocqueville', *Commentaire* 10 (1980): 280–1; Alain Peyrefitte, 'Tocqueville et les illusions penitenciaires', *Commentaire* 30 (1985): 606–14.
- 89 Alain Peyrefitte, 'Un Intellectuel responsable', *Commentaire* 58 (1992): 433–4.
- 90 Bourricaud, 'La Crise', see Note 81; Raymond Bourricaud, 'L'Avenir de l'institution universitaire en France', *Commentaire* 11 (1980): 492–9; Raymond Boudon and François Bourricaud, 'La Sociologie aujourd'hui', *Commentaire* 19 (1982): 464–5, 470; François Bourricaud, 'De la Psychanalyse à la Révolution', *Commentaire* 36 (1986): 804–7.
- 91 The following discussion of Rosanvallon draws on Jainchill and Moyn, 'French democracy', see Note 8.
- 92 Pierre Rosanvallon, *L'Âge de l'autogestion* (Paris: Seuil, 1976), 44–5.
- 93 See for instance, Pierre Rosanvallon, 'Marx et la société civile', *Commentaire* 4 (1978): 477–88; Michel Rocard, 'La Social-Démocratie et la liberté', *Commentaire* 19 (1982): 367–9.
- 94 Anon, *Commentaire*, see Note 59, 5.
- 95 Jean Baechler, 'Libéralisme et autogestion', *Commentaire* 1 (1978): 27–38. For a more sympathetic analysis of this subject, see Guillaume Guindey, 'L'Autogestion de l'économie', *Commentaire* 4 (1978): 512–14. Baechler was one of Raymond Aron's earliest 'disciples' – see Châton, 'Liberté retrouvée', see Note 46, 87–89; Jean Baechler, 'Maître et disciple', *Commentaire*, 8 (1985): 62–6.
- 96 Baechler, 'Libéralisme et autogestion', see Note 95, 38.
- 97 For a positive French perspective on economic liberalism, see Alain Madelin,  *Aux Sources du modèle libéral français* (Paris: Perrin, 1997). For a critical perspective that mistakenly conflates French and Anglo-American neo-liberalism, see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, 'Neither an accident nor a mistake', *Critical Enquiry* 15 (1989): 482. In October 1984, Gilles Anquetil, writing in the left-wing weekly *Nouvel Observateur*, referred disparagingly to an 'arono-hayekian consensus' in French economics. See Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, 'Droits-libertés et Droits-créances: Raymond Aron critique de Friedrich von Hayek', *Droits* 2 (1985): 75. On French neo-liberalism more broadly, see

François Denord, *Néo-libéralisme version française: Histoire d'une ideologie politique* (Paris: Demopolis, 2007).

- 98 Pierre Manent remembers this seminar as having been dedicated to the recovery of France's liberal tradition, whereas Rosanvallon has described it as a seminar in political philosophy. This confusion is significant in itself in indicating the politically oriented approach to the liberal tradition prevalent at the time. Among the regular attenders of this seminar were Pierre Rosanvallon, Pierre Manent, Claude Lefort, Marcel Gauchet, Cornelius Castoriadis, Bernard Manin, Philippe Raynaud and Krzysztof Pomian. See also, Manent, *Regard politique*, see Note 12, 112–13; Jainchill and Moyn, 'French Democracy', see Note 8, 116.
- 99 Jeremy Jennings, 'Le Retour des émigrés? The study of the history of political ideas in contemporary France', in Dan Castiglione et al., eds., *The History of Political Thought in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 213–15.
- 100 Furet, 'La Rencontre', see Note 12. For a recent biography, see Christophe Prochasson, *François Furet: Les Chemins de la mélancolie* (Paris: Éditions Stock, 2013).
- 101 This is not to suggest that alternative readings did not find their way into *Commentaire* in particular. See here Jean-Pierre Cot, 'Actualité et ambiguïtés du libéralisme', *Commentaire* 35 (1986): 403–11. That *Commentaire* did have a specific vision of the French liberal tradition is confirmed by the fact that this piece was preceded by an editorial note highlighting that Cot's vision of French liberalism differed from that of the journal in which it was published.
- 102 Note here the title of Judt, *Burden of Responsibility*, see Note 5.
- 103 On this, see Serge Audier, *La Pensée anti-68: Essai sur les origines d'une restauration intellectuelle* (Paris: La Découverte, 2009), 141–68. Audier offers an interpretation of Raymond Aron as a thinker less hostile to the legacy of 68 than is given in this chapter. On Aron, see also Serge Audier, *Raymond Aron: La Démocratie conflictuelle* (Paris: Éditions Michalon, 2004).
- 104 Cusset, *French Theory*, see Note 3, 275; Martin Jay, 'Lafayette's children: The American reception of French liberalism', *SubStance* 31 (2002): 9–26. Raymond Aron has been promoted sympathetically in the United States as the originator of neo-conservatism. See Brian C. Anderson, 'The Aronian renewal', *First Things* 6 (1995): 61–4. Authors from the wider liberal revival were also included in the 'New French Thought' series, edited by Mark Lilla, through which the French liberal revival was imported into the United States.
- 105 Francis Fukuyama, 'La Fin de l'histoire?', *Commentaire* 47 (1989): 457–69. I am grateful to Emile Chabal for raising this point.
- 106 See here François Furet, Jacques Julliard and Pierre Rosanvallon, *La République du Centre: La Fin de l'exception française* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1988).
- 107 Lindenberg, *Rappel à l'ordre*, see Note 3. On this scandal, see Jeremy Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic: A history of political thought in France since the eighteenth century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 512–13.

- 108 Audier, *Pensée anti-68*, see Note 103, 54–5.
- 109 In the 1970s and 1980s, 68 per cent (32/47) of *Commentaire*'s issues contained a 'Classics of Liberty' section; in the 1990s this was 52 per cent (21/40), in the 2000s, 32 per cent (17/40); in the 2010s, as of September 2013, 7 per cent (1/14).
- 110 Pierre Manent, 'La Crise du libéralisme', *Commentaire* 141 (2013): 91–103; Pierre-Henri Tavoillot et al, 'Le Libéralisme politique: Victoire ou défaite?', *Commentaire* 142 (2013): 245–64.