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Raymond Aron’s *Liberty and Equality* is a short book. Yet, it feels like a long one. Short books with big words in their titles often have something bold and punchy to say. Yet while Aron’s reflections are always intriguing, he wanders from theme to theme, with no particular effort to connect them to an overarching thesis. He does have something to say about liberty and equality, but he covers plenty of other ground as well. He enumerates the fundamental liberties of contemporary Western societies, focusing on personal, political, and social liberties; he acknowledges that, while these liberties have an empirical reality, “many individuals have the feeling of not being free” (21); he assesses the Marxist critique of liberty; he analyzes the “moral crisis of democracy” in the contemporary West (49); he considers the merits of philosophical ideas about liberty; and he concludes by emphasizing the exceptional character of societies founded on liberal principles. Aron packs this all into 55 small-format pages.

If the book manages to be both rambling and stimulating, it is because we are dealing with the mind of a fox, in Isaiah Berlin’s sense: that is, a thinker who, rather than embracing “a single, universal, organising principle,” pursues “many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory,” that are “connected, if at all, only in some de facto way.” In this instance, the “de facto” occasion of Aron’s musings was his final lecture at the Collège de France, delivered in April 1978. Aron, of course, was a French philosopher, sociologist, and political commentator who, in addition to being one of the twentieth century’s most prominent intellectuals, was also a lucid proponent of liberalism and moderation in an age of extremes. His lecture’s title, *Liberty and Equality*, suggests some kind of definitive statement, in the vein of *On Liberty* or *A Theory of Justice*. Yet, true to his foxlike nature, Aron eschews any all-encompassing claims. His instinctive pluralism is on display in the first sentence, when he announces that he will speak of “liberty, or more precisely… liberties” (1).

Moreover, despite the lecture’s conceptual title, Aron’s reflections are deeply rooted in a time and place. With only the text to go on, well-informed readers would find plenty of clues indicating that the book was composed in Western Europe in the late seventies. Aron is concerned, among other things, with the “liberty of unions” and the resulting “rivalry of power between the bosses and those who represent the workers” (14). He observes that, as the Cold War drags on, justifications of liberalism tend to be “negative or defensive” and that liberalism defines itself “essentially by its opposition to totalitarianism” (34). He worries that, in the wake of the upheaval of the sixties, the “present generation” is consumed with “the detestation of power as such” (40). Conscious of the generational rift, Aron further regrets that whoever “speaks seriously about the duties of citizens” risks sounding like a holdover from a “world which has disappeared” (50).

What most stands out in Aron’s lecture—and which makes it unexpectedly relevant, despite being so steeped in its moment—is less his ideas than his disposition. In our own time, the precarious state of liberal democracy is often described as a loss of faith. The liberal ideal, it would seem, has lost its ability to inspire. Yet for Aron, liberalism persuades first and foremost by virtue of its realism—its willingness to see the world as it is. Liberalism, in Aron’s view, has little to gain from propping itself up on philosophical stilts. After perfunctorily mentioning a few theories of liberty, he flatly concludes that “to posit or to deduce liberty in the abstract does not mean very much” (6). Personal liberties matter because they are “essentially or eminently concrete”: “Nothing is more real than being able to move to another city, leave one’s own country, or sometimes choose one’s own country” (15).

For Aron, realism also means using language properly. He bemoans that radical arguments often depend on the disingenuous use of words. For instance, he notes the tendency “to confound liberty and equality,” which

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results from defining liberty as “power” rather than as “equal rights.” If one defines liberty as “the capacity or power of doing,” there is no question that Western societies are unequal (38-39). Yet this position makes liberalism appear disappointing only by misrepresenting what it really has to offer. In his epilogue (originally written as the introduction to the text’s French edition, published in 2013), Pierre Manent observes that the inspiration for the mature Aron was not Max Weber, the hero of his youth, but Aristotle. “For Aron as for Aristotle,” Manent writes, “it is a matter of beginning with what is” (87). Whatever else liberalism is for Aron, it is a standpoint of political realism—a suspicion of abstraction, slippery language, and even philosophy itself.

The contributors to this roundtable propose alternative approaches to Aron’s lecture and the proper way to situate this slight volume in relation to Aron’s oeuvre. Sophie Marcotte Chénard reminds us of Aron’s unclassifiable nature. In France, his reputation was “tainted by ambivalence,” while in the United States, he was embraced, in some circles, as a “Cold War liberal,” though Aron was always reluctant to identify with any “ism,” liberalism included. Marcotte Chénard praises Manent’s essay on Aron, noting the originality of his claim that Aron was influenced by Aristotle—particularly since this inspiration was unknown to Aron himself. She concludes by noting some problems in the translation and shortcomings in its scholarly apparatus. By contrast, Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins prioritizes a contextualist interpretation of Aron’s lecture. The latter’s concern with the moral crisis of democracy and public disenchantment with Western conceptions of freedom must be understood, Steinmetz-Jenkins argues, in light of Aron’s belief that, in the late 1970s, American weakness, leftist politics, hedonistic lifestyles, and pacifist attitudes were making Western Europe vulnerable to Soviet domination. *Liberty and Equality* should be read not as a philosophical statement but as an alarm bell intended to rouse the French from their torpor. Finally, the volume’s translator, Samuel Garrett Zeitlin, discusses why an English version of this lecture was needed, in addition to explaining some of the interpretive choices he made in his translation from the French.

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The reception and recognition of Raymond Aron’s work in France has long been tainted by ambivalence. Despite Aron’s appointment at the Sorbonne, and later at the Collège de France, which is often considered the highest institution of knowledge in France, his place within the academic establishment has remained contested. A respected editorialist at Le Figaro, Aron considered himself a spectateur engagé, which in turn attracted criticism (the most well-known being that he was a “journalist of the Sorbonne and professor at the Figaro”); he himself felt as if he did not have a rightful place in academia. However, there has been in recent years a renewed appreciation of his legacy. In June 2023, Sciences Po Paris inaugurated the Raymond Aron lecture hall, a somewhat late recognition after decades of relative mise à l’écart. The naming of the room itself constitutes a formal acknowledgement; what is more interesting is that it was the result of a popular vote from a list of more than a hundred names, after consultation with the body of students and faculty at Sciences Po. There is thus, in France, a renewed interest in the sociologist and philosopher’s contribution beyond a close circle of specialists.

In the anglophone academic world, Aron was received early on as one of the “Cold War liberals,” a malleable category that included thinkers such as Isaiah Berlin and Judith Shklar. The recent publication of Liberty and Equality, translated by Samuel Garrett Zeitlin and based upon a lecture by Aron at the Collège de France in 1978, confirms Aron’s appeal as a thinker of liberalism. Indeed, the lecture condenses several of Aron’s fundamental theses about the modern experience of liberty, about its possibilities and limits, and offers a succinct view of his positioning within what we call “liberal thought” in the twentieth century. However, his insistence on the plural character of liberty marks a departure from some of the other liberal thinkers with whom he is often associated. For Aron, there was no ideal of liberty in the singular; there were libertés, which were to be studied and analyzed in their particularities (1). Thinking about history and politics in the plural, in all their complex manifestations and processes, was Aron’s lifelong commitment. We see this same commitment at play in the lecture translated here. Thus, while Aron decidedly embraced some of the premises of liberal thought, he nonetheless entertained a fraught relationship with liberalism as a doctrine. As he emphasized in the lecture, even though this doctrine was ascribed to him, he never explicitly identified with it (34). Aron, true to himself, remained suspicious of all words that ended in ism that necessarily came with predetermined ideological commitments and blind spots. Pierre Manent rightly points out that for Aron, “liberalism may be an attribute but never a substance” (71).

The English preface to Liberty and Equality, while a decent introduction to the main tenets of Aron’s thought, does not tell us anything that is not already known to those who are familiar with his work. More interesting is the inclusion of Pierre Manent’s introductory remarks from the French edition. The translation of Manent’s

1 Some version of this quip is attributed to Général Charles de Gaulle, who is believed to have said that Aron was a “professeur au Figaro et journaliste au Collège de France.” (Dominique Seux, “Interview avec Jean-Claude Casanova et Pierre Hasser: Aron, un professeur d’hygiène intellectuelle”, Les Échos, 11 March 2005, https://www.lesechos.fr/2005/03/aron-un-professeur-dhygiene-intellectuelle-600112). However, as Jean-Claude Casanova notes, De Gaulle had already passed away when Aron took the position at the Collège de France.


5 On this point, see also Iain Stewart’s discussion in Raymond Aron and Liberal Thought in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 13-17.

6 It would have been fruitful to add a presentation and discussion of the reception of Aron’s thought in recent years, in France and abroad. Aron’s work has gone through some sort of renewal, with a new generation of scholars in intellectual history and political theory revisiting and reassessing his contribution.

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preface is a welcome addition, providing readers with a glimpse into a specific reception of Aron’s work within the French intellectual landscape. This text marks the last of a series of Manent’s commentaries on Aron,7 and constitutes his most definitive account of the French thinker’s fundamental approach to politics.

The most contentious claim put forth by Manent in his remarks concerns the place and status of Aristotle as the ultimate pillar of Aron’s intellectual outlook (87). Along with other commentators such as Daniel Mahoney, Manent argues that the prudence, moderation, and sound political judgment Aron displayed throughout his life can be understood in light of his Aristotelianism (83).8 The singular feature of Aron’s Aristotelianism, however, is that it is unknown to him.9 Manent recognizes this fact when he underlines the distinctively modern character of Aron’s work and his overt influences, namely his lifelong dialogue with Max Weber. Manent writes: “If Weber, as we have seen, was the declared hero of Aron’s first maturity, Aristotle silently accompanied his social and political inquiry once it had effectively begun” (92). In Manent’s view, the understanding of Aron as a classical thinker cannot be explained by a nostalgia for a Greek moment or by an attempt, in a Straussian manner, to recover Greek political philosophy. Rather, it rests on a classical way of approaching political life, one that begins with the opinions that circulate in the city rather than with abstract and universal principles.

This explains Manent’s critical stance toward those who conceive of Aron’s political philosophy as indebted to Immanuel Kant (86). But this reconstruction of Aron’s fundamental posture has been challenged by other French scholars and commentators. Sylvie Mesure and Alain Renaut, for their part, insist on the Kantian and neo-Kantian roots of his intellectual enterprise, linking Aron’s approach to that of Kant, Fichte, Dilthey, and Weber.10 Other commentators such as Philippe Raynaud and Pierre Hassner, while recognizing the presence of Kantian-inspired concepts, cast doubt on the very possibility of attributing to Aron’s thought an “ultimate referent.”11 Hassner suggests that if Aron is a Kantian, he is one that has been “mugged by history.”12 Serge Audier represents yet another avenue, presenting Aron’s political philosophy as a Machiavellian-Tocquevillian project, one that focuses on the antagonistic elements of modern democracy.13 And even if we were to agree with Manent that Aron’s thought has elective affinities with a classical approach, we would be compelled to argue, based on textual evidence, that he stands closer to a Thucydidean perspective than an Aristotelian or Platonic one.14 Manent’s preface also tends to emphasize the more conservative aspects of Aron’s lecture: the

13 For a concise presentation of Serge Audier’s position, see Gwendal Châton, Introduction à Raymond Aron (Paris: La Découverte, 2017), 107-108.
denunciation of the spirit of May 1968, the lamentation over the loss of moral and civic virtue. While it is true that we observe in Aron’s trajectory a sort of “conservative turn” in the 1970s, his pessimistic diagnosis about modern societies is offset in the text by a more optimistic stance on the “happy exception” (54) of plural constitutional societies within the broader history of humanity. While Manent proposes an elegant and compelling reading of Aron’s project, his remarks must nonetheless be situated within the context of a debate about the foundations and aims of his political philosophy.

This new translation is a welcome addition to the catalogue of Aron’s work that is available in English, and Samuel Garrett Zeitlin has for the most part succeeded in maintaining the experience of reading Aron in the original French. However, the translation is at times too literal and fails to portray the accessible, and almost casual, character of the lecture. Aron was known as a subtle orator, as an intellectual with an unparalleled ease of expression. Unlike some of his contemporaries, he disdained the unnecessary opacity of philosophical language, preferring a sober and direct expression of ideas. These stylistic choices must be taken into account when translating his work. Some of this is lost, with choices of words and expressions that do not capture the everyday vocabulary used and preclude the reader from fully appreciating the clarity and precision of Aron’s prose. For instance, the literal translation leads to obvious mistakes about the meaning of French adverbial phrases such as tout de même (“still” rather than “all the same,” 53) and d’ailleurs (“besides” rather than “elsewhere,” 11). Sûreté should have been translated as “safety” or “security” instead of “surety” (6, 9, 19), given that Aron discusses the Hobbesian theme of the preservation of individual rights. Given the number of such missteps, the text would have gained from a thorough revision by a French-speaking translator or scholar.

Other interpretive choices could have been accompanied by a more thorough justification. For instance, nothing is said about the decision to keep the subtitles that divide the lecture into sections, and which were added by Giulio de Ligio for clarity and were not part of the original lecture. Despite these minor shortcomings, the translation of the lecture comes at the right time. While the context of reception differs—some of the challenges to the French republic in the 1970s may not resonate with an Anglo-American audience fifty years later—the most fundamental elements, such as Aron’s reflection on the challenges to liberal democracies, have fully retained their topicality.

Ultimately, making the lecture available to the English public allows for a more complete portrait of Aron’s oeuvre and contribution to political philosophy. The text is a further confirmation that Aron was not only a sociologist, a theorist of international relations, and a commentator on political affairs, but also a political philosopher in his own right. This lecture, along with others pronounced at the Collège de France in the

15 See, for instance: “à l’intérieur d’une société” should have been translated by “within a society” rather than “in the interior” (38); “détestation” should be translated as “hated” instead of “detestation” (40); “dans l’ensemble des sociétés occidentales” should have been translated as “within Western societies” rather than “in the assemblage of Western societies” (47) (dans l’ensemble meaning ‘generally’ or ‘for the most part’); “quelles que soient leurs options politiques par ailleurs” should be translated as “whatever their other political options may otherwise be” instead of “whatever, moreover, their other political options may be” (49); “nous autres” should be translated as “we” and not as “we, others” (53); “à juste titre” means “deservedly” or “rightly” and should not be translated as “with a just title” (54).

16 There are also several errors in the translation of Manent’s preface: “Aron lui-même procéda ou commença ainsi” should be translated as “Aron himself proceeded or began thus” rather than “Aron began or begins thus” (58); in the sentence, “C’est pour rester fidèle à cette donnée plurielle,” “donnée” as a feminine noun means element or aspect and should therefore not be translated as “given” (63); “philosophie en dépit de l’histoire” should be translated as “despite history” rather than “in defiance of history” (65), as Manent does not imply that Aron’s philosophy is in any way constituted in defiance of history; “dénudé de sens” should be translated as “meaningless” or “devoid of meaning” and not “denuded of sense” (90); “jugements de valeurs” should be translated as “value judgments” instead of “judgments of value” (91), as both Aron and Manent refer to the Weberian notion.

1970s and some earlier texts, put at the forefront the philosophical dimension of his reflection on liberty. This newly available work testifies once again to Aron’s sense of reality, and captures his fundamental view of the tension between the exception heureuse of contemporary liberal democracies and their inner fragility and vulnerability.

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I would first like to thank Michael Behrent for both inviting me to participate in this discussion, and for his editorial efforts regarding it. A great debt is also owed to Samuel Garrett Zeitlin for translating Aron’s last lecture at the Collège de France into English. I hope that his effort signals that more of Aron’s untranslated work will appear in English. Despite the fact that his wartime articles for *La France Libre* are some of the most insightful of Aron’s work, the vast majority of them remain untranslated.

For my comment for this forum, I want to make one intervention, which claims that Aron’s criticisms in *Liberty and Equality* of the liberalism of a younger generation contains a blind spot that continues to haunt much of liberal thinking today. A few clarifications about the historical and intellectual context of Aron’s lecture, which was delivered on 4 April 1978, are in order.

Two issues are worth pointing out about this date. First, it took place a few weeks after the 1978 French legislative elections. At this time, despite the fact that the French Communist Party (*Parti communiste français*, PCF) and Socialist Party (*Parti socialiste*, PS) failed to reach an agreement on an alliance that previous fall, Aron and his circle—sometimes called the Aronians—believed that the result of this election could still bring Communist Party members into government.1 Of course, the center right won the election, and a decisive majority in the National Assembly. Looking back years later on the anxieties this election caused for the Aronians, Pierre Hassner, a disciple of Aron, admitted that:

> Today such fear appears incomprehensible, even ridiculous…. We had good reasons to be scared…. In the rest of the world, there is a sense that the communist movement is pressing home its advantages. We really have the feeling that the Communists are on the offensive and that the United States and the West are in a defensive position. [President Jimmy] Carter is being humiliated by [Iran’s Ayatollah Ruhollah] Khomeini, Europe is dominated by a pacifism which proclaims “better red than dead,” West Germany is on the brink of neutralism.2

This leads to a second observation about the timing of Aron’s talk, namely that it was given a month before the journal *Commentaire* was founded in March 1978. *Commentaire*, which was fundamentally shaped by Aron’s political outlook, was in part founded in response to the threat of the *Programme commun*. Aron’s headlining article, “Incertitudes françaises,” appeared shortly before the spring elections of 1978. It repeated Aron’s exhortation in his *Plaidoyer pour l’Europe décadente* (1977) to remain diligent in the fight against Communism. Despite the rupture of the PCF and PS, Aron warned his colleagues that the PCF could still bring Communist Party members into government, which could result in years of perhaps revolutionary, perhaps despotic turmoil.3 “Incertitudes françaises” defined the mood of *Commentaire* well into the 1980s. For these reasons, *Commentaire*, according to the historian Gwendal Châton, positioned itself to the right of the “anti-totalitarian front…it is undeniable that Giscard-Barrism was the effective political center of this journal.”4

These contextual factors are key for understanding some of the political background for Aron’s critique of liberalism in his lecture *Liberty and Equality*. Part of his complaint was that a younger generation of liberals—former Communists, Maoists, etc.—had, in their noble rejection of totalitarianism, embraced a conception of

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liberalism that was politically vacuous. As Aron puts it, “today liberalism tends to define itself, in a manner perhaps regrettable, essentially by its opposition to totalitarianism” (34). One group Aron certainly had in mind here were the so called Nouveaux philosophes, and most notably the intellectual Bernard-Henri Lévy.

In regard to Lévy’s anti-totalitarianism, Aron scoffed that: “The unmasking of Marxist mystifications doesn’t matter much anymore; it is nihilism, the verso of yesterday’s Marxism, that we must denounce. The death of Marxism or the defeat of the Left would remove with them the hope they gave in the face of death.” In this regard, Aron actually was a critic of the turn to human rights in France, as it did not offer much of a political program. “The cult of human rights among some members of the intelligentsia,” writes Aron, “can be interpreted as the absence of an ideology to replace communism.” But the turn to human rights constituted just one part of Aron’s critique of the turn to liberalism in the 1970s.

The other part of this critique, which forms the backbone of Liberty and Equality, proved to be a much more substantive problem for Aron, even as both it and human rights contributed to what Aron saw as a wider problem in European political life. For a younger generation, liberalism had become a doctrine of “the liberation of desires” (47). As Aron elaborates, “Not only are we in a hedonistic society, that’s obvious, but I would say also that today, the enemy of the State or power qua the enemy of individual desires; the enemy is also the prohibitions and all the institutions, which, in effect, limit the liberty of the individual as a being of desire.” This harkens back to Aron’s critique concerning the radical egalitarianism of May 1968, and the Aronians’ connection of it to the extreme “nihilistic libertarianism” of the anti-humanist thought of Michel Foucault, Félix Deleuze, Jacques Lacan, etc. But one might ask, why wouldn’t Aron prefer the liberalism of human rights and “nihilistic libertarianism,” to the “secular religions” of Soviet Communism and Nazi imperialism of which he had fought against his entire career?

Here, Aron’s political anxieties remained deeply stuck in the 1930s, in so far as he saw the 1970s repeating the errors of what he labeled as Europe’s “decadence.” He believed that US military failures in Vietnam, the collapse of the Bretton Woods systems, and President Richard Nixon’s détente policies had resulted in la fin du système bipolaire, leading to dire political consequences for fragile western Europe. With the rise of the Union of the Left, the growing military power of the Soviet Union, and the perceived defensive position of the US, Aron and his circle thought that a victory of the Left at home “would create a window of opportunity for the Soviet Union to undertake the Finlandization of France, and perhaps the rest of Western Europe.”

Aron blamed the hedonistic and nihilistic values of liberalism, as embraced by the younger generation, for leaving Europe lazy, decadent, and ill-equipped to win the Cold War, hence his conclusion: “A specter still haunts Europe: the Red Army…. One must recognize the dangers. In the short term it is the Europeans themselves who are their own worst enemy.” He wondered why the French were enjoying sea, sex, and sun while the Red Army was gearing up to win the war; presumably Aron didn’t realize that the younger Soviet generation was itself perceived by the older Soviet generation to be decadent. And, of course, Aron’s rhetoric paralleled that of his neoconservative allies in the United States.

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7 See, Iain Stewart, Raymond Aron and Liberal Thought in the Twentieth Century, 218.
11 Aron, In Defense of Decadent Europe, 263.
But is Aron’s critique of liberalism in *Liberty and Equality* a pinch hypocritical, considering that he had spent decades promoting a version of liberalism rooted in relativism and critical of nineteenth-century liberal/socialist progressive views of history? Indeed, much of Aron’s calls for pluralism and moderation were inseparable from his longstanding critiques of philosophy of histories that took their cue from the ideas of 1789.13

What Aron offered as alternative to the liberalism he critiques in *Liberty and Equality* is one that is undergirded by a conception of the good life and virtues. “Our societies are legitimate in the eyes of members,” says Aron, “but they have no other ideal than that of permitting to each the choice of his own path” (51). This, however, seems to be just as much a problem with Aron’s Cold War liberalism, as with the liberalism he criticizes. It is hard to hold together Aron’s value pluralism, which was forged in his rejection of Marxist/nineteenth century liberal progressive philosophies of history, from his late life lament that there is no longer “a representation of the good society, of the ideal or the accomplished man.” Said differently, Aron spent much more time during his life critiquing Marxism than articulating robust liberal alternatives to it. His calls for pluralism and moderation seemed principally to be a negative reaction to the Left.

It turns out, of course, that the representation of the good society that he felt to be lacking with the liberal trends of the 1970s was not needed to win the Cold War, as the decadent West triumphed. But like many of the new Cold War liberals today, Aron did not spend much time reflecting on how the negative/limiting elements of his own brand of liberalism, which was itself rooted in relativism, might have actually gave way to the forms of liberalism that he ended up despising by the end of his life.

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Response by Samuel Garrett Zeitlin (translator), University College London

The translator is thankful to Michael Behrent for kindly organizing this symposium on Raymond Aron’s *Liberty and Equality*, and for the rich intellectual generosity and friendly engagement of both the first and second readers, Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins and Sophie Marcotte Chénard. Their reviews themselves (as well as the readers’ writings beyond these reviews) offer a fine introduction to the lines of intellectual contestation in contemporary academic writing on Aron.

Steinmetz-Jenkins reads Aron as a critic of liberalism, whilst Marcotte Chénard reads Aron as a contributor to liberal thought. If political ambiguity is an attribute of classic works, it would seem that Aron’s writings have the potential to attain classic status on the basis of their ability to speak widely and variously to various readers and writers. Both reviewers agree that Aron is worth reading and that Aron’s writings are inescapable for understanding political thought and political philosophy both within twentieth-century France and beyond it.

Both also agree on the value of translating and publishing Aron’s work in the present. On *Liberty and Equality* specifically, Marcotte Chénard notes that “making the lecture available to the English public allows for a more complete portrait of Aron’s oeuvre and contribution to political philosophy.” Moreover, she continues, “This newly available work testifies once again to Aron’s sense of reality, and captures his fundamental view of the tension between the exception heureuse of contemporary liberal democracies and their inner fragility and vulnerability.”

Where Steinmetz-Jenkins does not offer criticisms or critique of the translation itself, Marcotte Chénard questions some of the interpretive choices, in answer to which questions the remainder of this response is addressed.

One question concerns “sûreté.” One may have safety without surety, and one may have surety without safety. To purchase an insurance policy is to purchase a surety—it does not guarantee one’s safety. To build a missile defence system may augment one’s safety without assuring it. In some of the passages where Aron speaks of “sûreté,” he speaks of “protection” or “insécurité” in close proximity to it, and the translation here respects Aron’s choices rather than mix his vocabulary to indistinction. Aron is, moreover, keen to assert that whilst the state offers surety to property (and this, for Aron, may be the most that one can hope for), property rights to a bicycle do not insure securely that nobody steals the bicycle (surety does not guarantee security) or that the bicycle emerges safely unscathed from a crash (surety does not guarantee safety).

A second question concerns “still” and “all the same.” “Still” carries a potential implicature of temporal continuity which “all the same” (tout de même) lacks: had Aron wished to say *encore* or *toujours*, he could have. In a similar vein, one may hate something without detesting it and one may detest something (say, the taste of Brussels sprouts) without hating it. Had Aron wished to say “haine” in place of “détestation,” he could have, and the translation respects that choice. Moreover, if Aron wished to say “we” (nous) in place of “we others” (nous autres), his rhetorical finesse was such that he could have spoken otherwise.

Scholars of Max Weber as well as sociologists and anthropologists who work in Weber’s wake have been known use “judgments of value” and “value judgments” interchangeably, both in Aron’s time and in our...

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own, and thus to critique the translation of making a misstep in rendering “jugements de valeurs” as “judgments of value” because it does not attend to “the Weberian notion” is inapt.

That which is denuded of sense carries the implication that some sense was present prior to being stripped off. That which is meaningless or devoid of meaning does not carry this implication. If a philosophic and thoughtful writer wishes to say “sans signification” in place of “dénué de sens,” this choice is open and the translation respects this choice.

As a final overall comment, there were multiple native-speaking French readers of the translation. Notwithstanding the questioning of choices addressed here, Marcotte Chénard maintains that “Zeitlin has for the most part succeeded in maintaining the experience of reading Aron in the original French.”

The translation of Aron’s Liberty and Equality had no higher (and no other) aim.

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