

RAYMOND ARON AND THE INTELLECTUALS: ARGUMENTS SUPPORTIVE OF LIBERTARIANISM

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"INTELLECTUALS . . . SEEK NEITHER TO understand the world nor to change it, but to denounce it," so wrote Raymond Aron (1983, p. 158) in a damning critique of those who were very much his intellectual kindred. Such a sentiment may at first seem surprising since Aron was, after all, a Marxist scholar and lifelong socialist who felt comfortable with the social welfare states prevalent in postwar Europe—welfare states that his fellow intellectuals strongly supported. This would lead some to believe that Aron's take on politics and economics would be in opposition to that of libertarians who are, generally speaking, fierce advocates of less government intervention in social and economic matters. Aron's philosophy, however, clearly reveals liberal underpinnings.

Given this apparent dichotomy, this paper will examine Aron's liberal philosophy and compare it with modern American libertarianism. The first part of the paper explores the possible rationales underlying Aron's liberal philosophy and details the major themes detectable in his writings. This will be followed by an examination of the primary tenets of libertarianism. In conclusion, an interpretation of the similarities between Aron's philosophy and libertarianism will be offered in order to determine whether the former can be used to support the latter.

OUT OF STEP WITH SOCIALISM: THE LIBERALISM OF RAYMOND ARON

Though he may be little known in America, Raymond Aron arguably stood as the preeminent example of French intellectualism for much of the twentieth century. Aron was not only one of the

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most respected continental philosophers of the post-World War II era, but also a historian, sociologist, and political journalist. Though he shared many political and social tendencies with his French contemporaries, Aron often seemed conspicuously out of step with them. He was an advocate of European political liberalism, as opposed to the communist version of Marxism that appeared ascendant after 1945 and appealed to many Western intellectuals.

Seeing himself as more of a critic of contemporary society than as one of its creators, Aron wrote voluminously in a style characterized by cool, dispassionate analysis. The views reflected in those writings alternately earned Aron scorn from the political left and right. Interestingly, he was regularly vilified not just by ideological opponents, but by former friends as well (Judt 1998, p. 174). During his long career, Aron circulated easily within Anglo-American and German intellectual circles, while remaining estranged from most of his French contemporaries (p. 181).

Although environment alone does not make the man, Aron's life and experiences are a logical starting point to better understanding his philosophy. Raymond Aron was born into a family of assimilated, nonreligious Jews in Lorraine in 1905. He attended the Lycée Condorcet and then the Ecole normale supérieure from 1924 until 1928, passing the national agrégation (teacher's examination) in philosophy in his final year (Judt 1998, p. 138). During this time he dabbled in socialism, but soon became disenchanted with the economic policies of the Popular Front (Hoffman 1983, p. 9). From 1930 to 1933, Aron lived in Germany where he studied German philosophy, sociology, and history in Cologne and Berlin (Mahoney 1994, p. 2).

Returning to France upon the rise of Hitler and the Nazi party, Aron spent the next several years formulating his thesis, *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire*, which he successfully defended in 1938. Influenced by German philosophy, he presented an existentialist argument emphasizing the limits of historical objectivity, breaking with the positivism characteristic of French scholars of the time (Mahoney 1994, p. 3). The existentialist nature of Aron's thesis began his long association with French intellectuals.

When war broke out, Aron joined the Free French government in exile in London, serving as editor-in-chief of *La France Libre*. Returning to his France after the war, Aron's inspiration had shifted from German thinkers to French thinkers, and especially the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville (Judt 1998, p. 145). Aron refused the sociology chair offered by the University of Bordeaux and, having acquired a taste for journalism in London, wrote editorials for *Combat* in 1946 and 1947. In 1947, he moved to the conservative *Le*

Figaro, where he remained active and contributed editorials until 1977 (Mahoney 1994, p. 4). Aron, in 1946, served briefly in de Gaulle's Ministry of Information (Price 2001, p. 23), and became a member of the anticommunist Congress for Cultural Freedom (Price 2001, p. 25). Aron also participated in de Gaulle's conspicuously patriotic and nationalistic Rally of the French People in 1947 (Hoffman 1983, p. 9).

Immediately following World War II, Aron was named to the editorial board of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Les Temps modernes*, the "house organ" for the Parisian intellectual left. Sartre thought so much of Aron's work that he presented Aron with a copy of *Being and Nothingness* as an "ontological introduction" to Aron's thesis of 1938 (Judt 1998, p. 144). Aron broke friendly relations with Sartre in 1946 over the latter's "indulgence" of the Soviet regime, a break that culminated in Aron's publication of *The Opium of the Intellectuals* in 1955 (Mahoney 1994, p. 5).¹

That same year, Aron was elected to the sociology chair at the Sorbonne. From that position, he criticized the student revolts of 1968 as an attack on the "authentic" university and as lacking any real motivation (Mahoney 1994, p. 6). Aron was elected to the Académie des sciences morales et politiques in 1963 and taught a regular seminar at the Ecole des haute études en sciences sociales (Judt 1998, p. 138). The Collège de France elected him professor in 1970. Still active in the world of journalism, he served on the editorial committee of *L'Express* from 1977 until his death in 1983 (Mahoney 1994, p. 7).

These experiences molded Aron's liberal philosophy and his presentation of it: his education infused his arguments with an impressive intellectual rigor; his various academic positions provided a fertile ground for developing criticisms of leftist intellectuals; and his various positions as a journalist allowed him the opportunities to present those arguments in writing. Aron's public service, albeit brief, gave him an appreciation for the practical aspects of government, as opposed to a concentration on abstract ideology or theory. By temperament and philosophy, Aron was a man of the Left,

¹Harvey Mansfield (2001) called *Opium* a "leading document" of the Cold War (p. xi); Matthew Price echoed the sentiment, calling the book a "central text in the literature of anti-communism" (2001, p. 22). Stanley Hoffman notes that in *Opium*, Aron "denounced, in effect, the entire French intellectual tradition, in which he found writers again and again committing themselves to causes without any serious analysis of reality or regard for consequences" (1983, p. 9).

but he participated with the Right in order to curb what he feared were the Left's excesses.

There are several recurring themes throughout Aron's writings. The primary one is the lack of political responsibility in the writings of the postwar French intellectuals of the Left. A second is Aron's belief that it is a dangerous mistake to consider political ideology in a vacuum since its practical application incurs very real consequences. Finally, commenting on the negative aspects of the planned economy Aron denies the deterministic relationship of politics and economics postulated by Karl Marx and his intellectual progeny.

Aron notes, when discussing political responsibility, the leftist intellectuals sacrificed the best part of the Enlightenment without just cause. Aron thought of himself as a liberal in the Enlightenment sense. He advocated the modern egalitarianism of "liberty, equality, and universal citizenship," not the equality demanded of the Left through the redistribution of wealth. He considered the free market and the welfare state to be compatible (Mahoney 1994, pp. 67–68). Conversely, Aron writes that leftist intellectuals were not only

sacrificing the best part of the legacy of the Enlightenment—respect for reason, liberalism—but they were sacrificing it in an age when there is no reason for the sacrifice at least in the West, since economic expansion in no sense requires the suppression of parliaments, parties, or the free discussion of ideas. (Aron cited in Price 2001, p. 23)²

A second aspect of political irresponsibility that Aron identified among intellectuals was their tendency to see politics in abstract "literary" or theoretical terms. He concentrated on the exercise of that "prosaic," but indispensable virtue of prudence. Aron understood that political wisdom rested in the ability to choose between better courses of action (the possible) even when the best course is unavailable (the theoretical) (Kimball 2001, p. 6).

Aron held that if one wanted to adequately conceptualize the political, it was essential to avoid "literary politics"—meaning a manner of engaging in political life that deliberately ignored reality and that preferred to remain at the level of an abstract theory or a kind of purely "contentless moralizing." Aron thought that the archetypical example of such thinking, which he considered an "intellectual solipsism," could be found in the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre, who dismissed empirical analysis altogether and replaced it

²The quote cited is from an article Aron wrote for the literary journal, *Preuves*.

with his “prodigious imagination.” Aron rejected the utopian speculation of his fellow philosophers who, he thought, failed to understand the constraints, dangers, and responsibilities of politics (Anderson 1997, pp. 4–5). The rejection of literary politics requires the patient empirical study of existing institutions and regimes. Without such an effort, political thought remains detached from historical, political, and social realities and is thus hopelessly abstract (p. 8). Aron fully recognized that “men, and especially intellectuals, believe what they want to believe . . . and are, in the final analysis, impervious to arguments” (Judt 1998, pp. 148–49).

Aron similarly remarked on the tendency of intellectuals to deny political responsibility by intentionally overlooking the repressive nature of Communist regimes. He charged that intellectuals concerned themselves with the theoretical aspects of these regimes rather than their practical implementation, stating that “[t]he ideology becomes a dogma by acquiescing in absurdity.” He showed that the Soviet Union established a party hierarchy that would in theory transform itself into the dictatorship of the proletariat (which never happened) and depended on ideology and terror to sustain itself (Aron 2000, p. 281). Aron regarded Communist practices done in the name of ideology as irrational and he found Western intellectuals more concerned with ideological purity than political reality as equally irrational.

Aron adamantly believed that intellectuals should not consider ideology in a vacuum; ideology informed political action and had a direct effect on how societies functioned, for good or bad. One of the ways Aron thought that intellectuals operated in an ideological vacuum was their creation of a “secular religion” (Aron coined the term in a 1944 *Le Libre* article). He called the faith of the Left in Soviet Communism a “pseudo-religious dogma,” and noted:

The combination of prophetism and scholasticism produces sentiments analogous to those of religious believers. Faith in the proletariat and in history, charity for those who suffer today and who tomorrow will inherit the earth, hope that the future will bring the advent of the classless society—the theological virtues appear in a new guise . . . this hope is placed in a future which, in default of being accomplished by spontaneous forces, will be produced by violence; this charity for suffering humanity hardens into indifference towards classes or nations or individuals condemned by the dialectic. Communist faith justifies all means. Communist hope forbids acceptance of the fact that there are many roads towards the Kingdom of God. Communist charity does not even allow its enemies the right to die an honourable death. (Aron 2000, p. 267)

Aron further observed that nothing comparable to the secular religion of Communism had arisen out of nationalism or democracy (2000, p. 268).

All too aware of the intellectuals' preference for abstract theories, Aron claimed intellectuals failed to think politically because they ignored the relationship between politics and the actual real world choices faced by those making the policy decisions. In order to think politically, it is first necessary to place oneself within politics, to recreate the world faced by the political actor, where one must ascertain the possible (Anderson 1997, p. 55). Aron's was a political science of regimes and a sociology of industrial societies, both communist (ideocratic) and capitalist (liberal). The purpose of a social scientist was to understand both the political and social worlds, taking sober and responsible action within them. Political choice must be prudent and not irrational (Mahoney 1992, p. 113). Aron wrote that his fellow intellectuals did not share his sentiments due to the fact that

[u]nder the Communist regime the intellectuals, sophists rather than philosophers, rule the roost. . . . [They] enjoy substantial advantages: prestige and glamour, a high standard of living, the sense of participating in a stirring achievement. They are not so ingenuous as to be taken in by the propaganda for the masses, but they are too keen on their privileges to refuse to justify the regime and their own docility towards it. (2000, p. 291)

Aron continued his critique of the Paris intellectuals in later years:

First, they prefer ideology, that is, a rather literary image of a desirable society, rather than to study the functioning of a given economy, of a liberal economy, a parliamentary system, and so forth. (1983, p. 158)

He likewise castigated the Left for falling prey to the false dichotomy of comparing western democratic reality to communist theory. Aron faulted intellectuals for what he called a "humanistic historicism" that attacked the liberal order in the name of a future universal liberation and emancipation of people and societies. This tendency led many intellectuals to criticize the faults of the West mercilessly, while overlooking the "progressive" tyrannies of the Left, such as Stalin, Mao, and Castro, so long as they were committed in the name of the proper doctrines (Mahoney 1992, p. 80).

Aron disavowed absolutism, but recognized that some absolutes were demonstrably worse than others. He knew that distinctions had to be made about "lesser evils and greater goods" when democracies faced tyrannies—sides had to be chosen and actions had to be taken. Though frequently critical of the American conduct of the

Cold War, Aron harbored no illusions that the alternative to it was anything but unacceptable capitulation (Rothstein 2003).

Disagreeing with the Marxists' interpretation that subjugated politics to economics, Aron denied the absolute appeal of the planned economy. He thought that liberal industrial democracies represented the highest form of civilization yet attained, noting the misguided and naïve faith intellectuals placed in Soviet Communism:

Ever since the consolidation of the Stalinist dictatorship, no non-Stalinist revolutionary has had a political role of any importance. In Parisian intellectual circles, however, they lead the field and existentialists such as Sartre and Merleau-Ponty have given a kind of philosophical respectability to a revolutionary idealism which the tragic death of Trotsky together with the realism of Stalin would seem to have condemned These people . . . continue to acclaim the events of 1917 but criticize, more or less vigorously according to circumstance, certain aspects of the Soviet regime. . . . Hostile to the bourgeois world, which allows them to live and express themselves freely, they retain a certain nostalgia for the other world which would ruthlessly eliminate them if it had the chance but which, distant and fascinating, embodies their dreams and the cause of the proletariat. (Aron 2000, pp. 114–15)

Aron steadfastly believed that liberal industrial societies remained the best hope of mankind to achieve his cherished ideals of the Enlightenment, while avoiding the "ideocratic" tyranny championed by the intellectual left (Mahoney 1992, p. 113).

He similarly rejected other deterministic aspects of Marxism. Politics were not reducible to the mode of production. Aron thought that whenever a determinist view of history undergirds a political program, political reason has once again been lost (Anderson 1997, p. 56; Mahoney 1992, p. 39).

Aron believed in the autonomy and irreducible diversity of political institutions. A single type of "social order," such as industrial society, would take on different forms depending on the nature—liberal or totalitarian—of its political regime. He chose to reject determinism and focus on "the logics of different kinds of societal activities (such as industrial societies or foreign policy) as well as on the interplay between these logics" (Hoffman 1983, pp. 7–8). Aron wrote that

[t]he Marxist prophetism transfigures an evolutionary pattern into a sacred history of which the classless society will become the outcome. It gives a disproportionate significance to certain institutions—the system of ownership and the functioning of the economy—and makes planning by an all-powerful State a decisive stage in history. The intelligentsia lapses all too easily into these

errors, to which its devotion to left-wing principles predisposes it. (2000, p. 283)

Aron also criticized intellectuals' faith in the superiority of a planned economy. He felt that a planned economy requires centralized mechanisms that increase state power exponentially (Anderson 1997, pp. 84–85). In the absence of a free market, the coordination of economic life by political authority inevitably leads to the absolute primacy of politics, not its disappearance. The political problems—such as determining who governs, how leaders are chosen, how power is exercised, and what the relationship of consent or dissent is between the governing and the governed—still remain, regardless of the social or economic regimes (Anderson 1997, pp. 84–85). He pointed out that

[o]ne cannot discuss a socialism which has built an enormous industry by reducing the standard of living of the masses and a capitalism which has raised the standard of living, reduced working hours, and permitted the consolidation of labor unions, as if there were the same realities that Marx considered a century ago or that he anticipated according to a system which has since been refuted by events. (Aron 2000, p. 337)

Aron postulated that excessive claims by the bureaucratic planners favored by intellectuals would end by sapping the foundations of liberal societies. He recognized the necessary connection between political liberty and a significant degree of entrepreneurial freedom and individual initiative, and heartily criticized “the *gauchiste* intellectuals” who did not, saying that socialist science can inform sound political choice, but cannot determine it. He claimed that such prudence is neither scientific nor irrational (Mahoney 1992, p. 118).

Finally, Aron made the connection between political liberty and entrepreneurial freedom that his fellow intellectuals missed. He maintained that a society could not have one without the other:

Limitation of the powers vested in the administration of collective labor seems inconsistent with a fundamental requirement of a political nature to achieve the two economic values most commonly invoked in our time. (Aron 2000, p. 338)

Those values were an increase in gross domestic product and an equalitarian distribution of income.

THE MAJOR TENETS OF AMERICAN LIBERTARIANISM

Let us now turn to American libertarian views on the role of government, the role of intellectuals in government, and the nature of intellectuals themselves. Libertarians believe that the primary function of

government is to secure the rights of the individual, with an emphasis on political rights and property rights that are intimately related. David Boaz, executive vice-president of the libertarian Cato Institute, writes:

What is the role of government in the economy? To begin with, it plays a very important role: protecting property rights and freedom of exchange, so that market prices can bring about coordination of individual plans. When it goes beyond this role . . . it not only doesn't help the process of coordination, it actually does the opposite—it discoordinates. (1997, p. 165)

This concept of market freedom is a recurring theme among libertarian thinkers. David Bergland, the Libertarian Party's vice-presidential nominee in 1976 and its presidential nominee in 1984, notes "the alternative to coercion as the basis for relationships among people is voluntary cooperation. . . . The largest and most widespread [example] is commercial activity, i.e., the marketplace" (1993, p. 11). Though not a libertarian per se, noted Austrian School economist Ludwig von Mises left no doubt as to his feelings on the subject:

The characteristic feature of the market economy is the fact that it allots the greater part of the improvements brought about by the endeavors of the three progressive classes—those saving, those investing the capital goods, and those elaborating new methods for the employment of capital goods—to the nonprogressive majority of people . . . membership in these classes is dependent on brains and will power. (1990, p. 3)

Notably absent from this observation is any reference to government which, as mentioned above, is typically associated with coercion. This is a common theme with many libertarian writers. Bergland states that

[i]t is clear that government is an institution based on force. Just observe that government does not produce anything and the people who constitute the government receive their pay from the citizens through the coercive financing method called taxation. . . . Taxpayers must pay for and submit to government action even when they disagree with it. (1993, p. 11)

Furthermore, this concept is carried over to the rights of citizens and the nature of freedom. Again, the positive and negative aspects of government are determined by its treatment of individual's property rights. As the only institution legally authorized to use force to accomplish its goals, government is

[t]he only coercive mechanism . . . which constitutes a threat to the rights of the citizens. Therefore a major goal should be to confine

government to the legitimate function of assisting the people in defending their rights. (Bergland 1993, p. 11)

Mises expressed a similar opinion on the nature of freedom. In *The Anti-Capitalist Mentality*, he writes:

This is what the modern concept of freedom means. Every adult is free to fashion his life according to his own plans. He is not forced to live according to the plan of a planning authority enforcing its unique plan by the police, i.e., the social apparatus of compulsion and coercion. (1990, p. 3)

A second area of concern for libertarians is the role of intellectuals in government, as their number has grown in tandem with the regulatory and welfare states. David Boaz discusses this topic at length; his writings will serve as representative of the libertarian position. He notes:

Rulers have always employed priests, magicians, and intellectuals to keep the people content. . . . Rulers have often given money and privilege to intellectuals who would contribute to their rule. Sometimes these court intellectuals actually lived at court, participating in the luxurious life that was otherwise denied to commoners. (1997, p. 200)

Furthermore:

In the post-Enlightenment world, ruling classes have realized that divine ordinance would not be sufficient to maintain their hold on popular loyalty. They have thus tried to ally themselves with secular intellectuals from painters and scriptwriters to historians, sociologists, city planners, economists, and technocrats. (p. 201)

He likewise comments on a myth that intellectuals are antiestablishment or revolutionary. Boaz claims that their arguments are usually that the state is not big enough:

In modern America, for at least two generations, the majority of intellectuals have told the populace that an ever bigger state was needed to deal with the complexity of modern life Coincidentally, that ever bigger government has meant ever more jobs for intellectuals. A minimal government . . . would have little use for planners and model builders. (p. 201)

In fact, government has actively co-opted revolutionaries, who become adjuncts of the state, pushing it to become ever more intrusive. Boaz issues a caution against this, stating:

Don't be fooled by the supposedly antiestablishment, and even antigovernment stances of many modern intellectuals, even some of those funded by the government itself. Look closely and you'll see that the "establishment" they oppose is the capitalist system of

productive enterprise. . . And in their brave criticisms of government, they generally chide the state for doing too little. (p. 201)

He then poses the question, "What ruling class wouldn't be glad to subsidize dissident intellectuals who consistently demand that the ruling class expand its scope of power?" (pp. 201–02).

Boaz also comments on the notion of the "tyranny of the status quo" developed by Milton Friedman, winner of the 1976 Nobel Prize for economic science and leader of the Chicago School of monetary economics. Simply put, Friedman stated that once government gets involved in a given area, it never willingly relinquishes control over that area (1984). This is due in part to the iron triangle of "congressional committees that oversee the program, the bureaucrats who administer it, and the special interests that benefit from it." Government's court intellectuals because they naturally figure prominently in this mutually supporting network (Boaz 1997, pp. 196–97).

Finally, libertarians take a dim view of intellectuals in general, especially in regards to economic issues. Bergland unfavorably compared them to utopians, stating that:

Opponents of freedom hold Utopia up as a standard. They will contend that freedom does not guarantee that everyone will get everything they want . . . Because freedom does not guarantee Utopia, they argue that we should reject it. (1993, p. 14)

Libertarians exhibit a similarly strong distaste for the intellectuals' conceptions of capitalism. Mises epitomizes the libertarian philosophy claim that intellectuals "loathe capitalism" because it provides to entrepreneurs and businessmen positions of stature that intellectuals covet for themselves (1990, p. 16). The intellectuals "indict society's economic organization, the nefarious system of capitalism" that makes this result possible (p. 17). He further states that

[t]o understand the intellectual's abhorrence of capitalism one must realize that in his mind this system is incarnated in a definite number of compeers whose success he resents and whom he makes responsible for the frustrations of his own far-flung ambition. His passionate dislike of capitalism is a mere blind for his hatred of some successful "colleagues." (p. 18)

Libertarians also distrust intellectuals' faith in government to control the economy. Bergland notes that such "control . . . is the primary tool used by dictatorship to suppress dissent and any challenge to the ruling party elite" (1993, p. 84)

This attitude is reflected in libertarian critiques of the preference intellectuals have for state economic planning. Boaz typifies the critique thus:

The idea of planning had great appeal for intellectuals because they like to analyze and put things in order. They are enthusiastic builders of systems and models, models by which the builder can measure reality against an ideal system. . . . Planning the intellectual believes, is the application of human intelligence and rationality to the social system. What could be more appealing to an intellectual, whose stock and trade is his intelligence and rationality? (1997, p. 202)

Bergland notes that “all but a few left wing ideologues recognize central planning as hopeless . . . [intellectuals] still seem reluctant to end central planning and economic regulation in favor of economic freedom for Americans” (1993, p. 86).

ARON, LIBERTARIANISM, AND THE INTELLECTUAL

The role of the intellectual in public life, as shown above, reveals overlaps between Aron’s philosophy and libertarianism. The shared ground is an appreciation for intellectuals’ attraction to government, acknowledgement of the existence of government intellectuals, revelation of various “myths” associated with intellectuals, and contempt for intellectuals’ views on economics.

Even though their focuses are slightly different, Aron and the libertarians agree on the intellectuals’ draw to “big” government. Aron’s main interest, of course, was international relations and the attraction of Western intellectuals to socialist or communist governments at the expense of the more limited liberal democracies. Though libertarians are mostly concerned with the attraction of intellectuals to the domestic policies of a big national government, they are in agreement as to the attraction itself for intellectuals.

Aron and libertarians use similar rhetoric to describe the phenomena of government (or court) intellectuals. Not only do both acknowledge the existence of such a class of intellectuals, they both note that such intellectuals are indispensable to the growth and maintenance of the centralized government typical of twentieth-century industrial societies.

Aron comments at great length on what may be termed the “myths” associated with intellectuals. These include their adherence to an invented secular religion designed to mask a moral and intellectual debasement, a refusal to “think politically” by employing literary politics rather than face political reality, and a decided lack of political responsibility in which the practical aspects of their ideology are ignored. Libertarians discern intellectual myths of their own, specifically that intellectuals are revolutionary or antiestablishment in any meaningful sense, and that whatever antiestablishment fervor

they may have can be easily co-opted through the offer of government funding and privilege.

It may be in the arena of economics, however, that Aron and libertarians' criticisms of intellectuals overlap the most. Both note the intellectuals' emphasis on government control of the economy and the desirability of centralized planning. Both also are cognizant of intellectuals' tendency to ignore the empirical results of state planning and cling to theories that advocate state control.

In conclusion, a strong argument can be made that Aron's opinions offer considerable philosophical support to the critiques American libertarians have voiced about intellectuals. Though Aron would deviate from the libertarian insistence on government noninterference in the economy and displayed various socialist tendencies, the French philosopher would have fully embraced those aspects of libertarianism that emphasize the primacy of the individual and celebrate political rights and property rights over those of the state. Though arriving at the conclusion from opposite ends of the political spectrum, Aron and libertarians consider themselves to be lineal descendants of the Enlightenment. Both Aron and libertarians categorically dismiss the intellectual posturing of the Left and its attendant claims of moral superiority. This posturing was evident throughout Aron's involvement in the Cold War and is still evident regarding issues such as tax policy and the war on terror. Intellectuals may seek to denounce the world, but Aron and libertarians scathingly denounce them.

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