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British sociology and Raymond Aron

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10	Introduction	10
11		11
12	Some thinkers, Nietzsche observed, are born posthumously. Slighted or ignored	12
13	by their contemporaries, they are vindicated by later generations. Far more	13
14	common, however, is the reverse path: writers celebrated in their own time do	14
15	not survive its passing. The career of Raymond Aron in Anglophone sociology	15
16	attests to just this fate.	16
17	In the 1960s and 1970s, Aron achieved international fame as a journalist, scholar,	17
18	and an interlocutor of the powerful; Henry Kissinger and Maurice Schumann were	18
19	among his more regular discussants. While the French <i>marxisant</i> Left condemned	19
20	Aron as a reactionary and a cold war apologist (he was neither), intellectuals	20
21	across the Channel took a more sensible view. Aron's combative liberalism was	21
22	understood, if not always admired. But British sociologists recognized a thinker	22
23	of rare quality, engaging with issues of real importance, whose work deserved	23
24	serious attention.	24
25	British recognition came early. During the war, Aron was based in London	25
26	editing and writing a column for <i>France Libre</i> , the official organ of the Free	26
27	French forces under General de Gaulle. 'Karl Mannheim, who was teaching	27
28	at the London School of Economics, was my host on several occasions', Aron	28
29	(1990: 133) recalled. Towards war's end, Morris Ginsberg urged Aron to take up	29
30	a permanent position at the LSE. Impatient to return to France, he declined: 'I	30
31	would be French or have no country.' ¹ Still, when the LSE-based <i>British Journal</i>	31
32	<i>of Sociology</i> began publication in March 1950, the editors saw fit to give Aron	32
33	(1950a; and 1950b) its opening article.	33
34	More LSE tributes followed, among them the Auguste Comte Memorial Trust	34
35	Lecture (1957), an Honorary Fellowship (1973), the Millennium Lecture on	35
36	International Studies (1978), and the Government and Opposition Lecture (1981).	36
37	Robert Colquhoun's (1986a; 1986b) magisterial intellectual biography of Aron	37
38	was originally an LSE doctoral thesis pursued under the supervision of Donald	38
39	MacRae. Three Directors of the School, albeit sometimes in pre-LSE incarnations,	39
40	also took notice of Aron's work. Introducing Aron's Millennium Lecture on	40
41		41
42	¹ Aron 1990: 133. Aron's daughter, Dominique Schnapper (Halsey and Runciman	42
43	2005: 117), says that, in 1944, Lionel Robbins asked Aron to 'become the chair of sociology'	43
44	at the School. The recollections of father and daughter are not mutually exclusive.	44

1 ‘War and Industrial Society: A Reappraisal’, Ralf Dahrendorf declared ‘There 1
2 cannot be a more sophisticated analyst of the socio-economics, the politics and 2
3 the philosophy of war in the world today’ (Aron 1978: 195). Anthony Giddens’s 3
4 (1973: 59–63, 76–8) judgement was cooler; advancing his own account of class 4
5 structure required Giddens to challenge the ‘industrial society’ thesis of his older 5
6 French rival. Similarly, Craig Calhoun (2012 [1989]) dissented, albeit mildly, 6
7 both from Aron’s characterization of the French revolution of 1848 and from his 7
8 interpretation of witnesses (Marx, Comte, Tocqueville) who took its measure.² 8

9 Sociologists today show little interest in Aron’s legacy. Why is that? This article 9
10 examines Aron’s British reception in his own day to help account for his eclipse as 10
11 a sociologist in ours. An archive of British university teaching materials housed at 11
12 the LSE, and assessments of Aron’s books, are my main reference points. The next 12
13 two sections are devoted to the assessments; in them, I include both British and 13
14 American appraisals because they point in the same direction. The third section, 14
15 examining the archive materials, draws on purely British sources. Given the 15
16 descriptive and explanatory objectives of this article I seek here neither to defend 16
17 Aron nor urge a reconsideration of his oeuvre. Nor, in the confines of a single 17
18 paper, can I provide a full analysis of Aron’s major commentators: in order of 18
19 importance, John A. Hall, Ernest Gellner, Tom Bottomore and Anthony Giddens. 19
20 A point worth bearing in mind as we proceed, however, is that the evaluation of 20
21 Aron among British sociologists is also a window onto the discipline itself. It 21
22 shows what sociologists consider distinctly sociological methods and arguments 22
23 to be. It shows how difficult it is for specific kinds of thinkers to be read as vital 23
24 sociologists and social theorists. It shows, in short, both the demands and the 24
25 limits of the sociological imagination as currently construed. 25

26

27

28 Sociologist Without a System 28

29

30 The 1960s to the mid-1970s witnessed the high-water mark of Aron’s global 30
31 sociological reception. Especially respected was the first volume of *Main Currents* 31
32 *in Sociological Thought* (Aron 1965) on Montesquieu, Tocqueville, Comte, Marx 32
33 and the uprisings of 1848. Hailed as a triumph of civilized exposition, adjectives 33
34 such as ‘lucid’, ‘graceful’, ‘wise’, ‘judicious’, ‘urbane’, ‘elegant’, ‘insightful’, 34
35 ‘perspicacious’ and ‘fair-minded’ abound in the commentaries.³ 35

36

37

38 2 Other British universities sought out the ‘committed observer’ (Aron 1983). He 38
39 delivered the Montague Burton Lecture on ‘Imperialism and Colonialism’ in Leeds, and 39
40 the 1965 Gifford Lectures in Aberdeen on the topic of ‘Historical Consciousness in Thought 40
41 and Action’. But London was his British base. Perhaps his greatest work on the philosophy 41
42 of history was delivered there in 1960 (Aron 2002a).

42 3 Emblematic of this praise are Feuer (1965: 331) and Poggi (1966: 209–11). Volume 42
43 II (Aron 1967a) was far less appreciated, even by writers who admired Aron. MacRae 43
44 (1968) called it ‘tired’, its bibliography ‘ludicrously inadequate’, and its discussion of 44

1 Yet from the beginning of the 1960s, reviewers express reservations that spell 1
 2 trouble for Aron's sociological appropriation. The most common complaint is that 2
 3 his writings are insufficiently systematic. Describing the French scholar to readers 3
 4 of the *AJS* as 'a kind of French Walter Lippmann', Benjamin Barber (1962: 592–3)⁴ 4
 5 noted the fertile 'overlap' between 'the problems of sociology and philosophy' that 5
 6 Aron's work embraced. A downside was that 'Aron's essays are less systematic in 6
 7 theory and less rigorous in method and data than most sociologists would now like 7
 8 to be in their professional writing.' Writing in the *BJS*, Charles Madge (1962: 78–9) 8
 9 struck a similar note. Aron's breadth of vision was remarkable – 'Philosophy, history, 9
 10 sociology; around these three conceptions the agile mind of M. Aron never tires of 10
 11 playing' – yet this 'diversity of guises' loses 'something in theoretical rigor'. 11

12 A related set of criticisms concerned Aron's failure to articulate a rigorous, 12
 13 precise and systematic concept of the 'social'. The indictment was by no 13
 14 means arbitrary; Aron himself emphasized that sociology only emerges when 14
 15 thinkers self-consciously seek to grasp 'the social *as such*' and to theorize its 15
 16 distinctiveness from politics, regime or state (Aron, 1965: 8–9; cf. Aron, 1967a: 16
 17 vi). Roland Robertson (1966: 191–8) leveled a number of objections. One is that 17
 18 Aron's delineation of 'the boundaries of sociological analysis [is] not easy to 18
 19 follow'. Those boundaries are either too porous (Montesquieu and Tocqueville 19
 20 are evidently political writers and it is their political contribution that Aron so 20
 21 evidently values) or too impervious: can politics really be separated from the 21
 22 social? Whether 'political phenomena should be seen as a sub-category of a wider 22
 23 class of *social* phenomena is an issue about which Aron says very little' (192). 23

24 Another oddity for Robertson is that 'having stressed the aim of grasping the 24
 25 *social as such* as a defining attribute of sociology, [Aron] then proceeds to castigate 25
 26 those sociologists who have concentrated on doing just this'. The obvious case is 26
 27 Durkheim towards whom Aron exhibits a frank distaste. 'In a similarly ambiguous 27
 28 fashion, Aron, 28
 29 29
 30 although at pains to point up the limitations in Marx's infrastructure- 30
 31 superstructure model, nevertheless states that modern societies can often best 31
 32 be understood in terms of their economic infrastructure.⁵ Most of his difficulties 32
 33 33

34 Durkheim unjust. Indeed, Aron 'stresses what has been ephemeral [in Durkheim] – the 34
 35 ethical aspiration, the pedagogy and the concern about the social solidarity of the French 35
 36 at the expense of the actual sociological achievement'. Coser (1965: 948–9) and Torrance 36
 37 (1969: 255) also found the Durkheim chapter tendentious. Not everyone agreed. Barbu 37
 38 (1968: 771) claimed that from 'an expository viewpoint, Durkheim gets by far the fairest 38
 39 deal', while Runciman's review (1968: 308–9) registers no protest at Aron's handling of 39
 40 Durkheim.

41 4 Barber (and Madge) were reviewing a collection of Aron's essays written mostly in 40
 41 the late 1950s, entitled *Dimensions de la conscience historique* (1961).

42 5 'Personally, if I want to analyse a society, whether it be Soviet or American, I often 42
 43 begin with the state of the economy, and even with the state of the forces of production, and 43
 44 then proceed to the relations of production and finally to social relations' (Aron 1965: 155). 44

1 stem from the assumption that one must either be a sociological reductionist or 1
 2 claim that non-social factors determine or heavily influence social factors. It is 2
 3 true that this dichotomy has relevance to any critique of Marx and Comte; but 3
 4 Aron seems to have allowed these two men to set the problem for him, instead 4
 5 of explicating it himself and *then* discussing their work ... Thus, although Aron 5
 6 is keen to discuss the boundaries between the sciences of man, he is never 6
 7 completely successful in this respect (1966: 194–5). 7

8
 9 The problem is compounded, Robertson continues, by the fact that Aron 9
 10 chooses figures for his sociological gallery who themselves did not advance 10
 11 ‘a clear formulation of the theoretical basis’ of social analysis. It is doubtless 11
 12 true that Tocqueville’s emphasis on social and cultural constraints contains an 12
 13 implicit sociological theory. It is also evident that he remains an influential 13
 14 thinker, especially for students of American society. But Aron employs neither 14
 15 Tocqueville nor Montesquieu ‘to elaborate systematically a precise conception 15
 16 of social phenomena’.⁶ Even when writing on Marx, Aron misses the opportunity 16
 17 to engage with contemporary sociological discussions of class structure. Hence 17
 18 despite Aron’s ‘ability to spot intriguing nuances’ in the work of the classic 18
 19 writers, we are left with a writer more literary than scientific and ‘the conclusion 19
 20 ... that his program of analysis has not been consistently carried out’ (ibid.: 198). 20

21 The weakness of Aron’s articulation of the social also perplexed Martin 21
 22 Albrow (1969: 112–14) when he reviewed the second volume of *Main Currents*. 22
 23 Albrow acknowledges Aron’s gifts of erudite and controlled exegesis – the 23
 24 chapter on Pareto is especially commended for being *sine ira et studio* – 24
 25 but taxes him for matters that bear directly on theory itself and for ‘critical 25
 26 comments’ that ‘seem so puny in relation to their targets’. John Torrance (1969: 26
 27 255–6) concurred. While the condensation of Durkheim, Pareto and Weber 27
 28 is ‘elegant’ and ‘judicious’, as a ‘critical exposition, however, it is distinctly 28
 29 disappointing’. Yet, for Albrow more than for Torrance, a much greater problem 29
 30 is Aron’s ‘facile’ ontology. Aron criticizes Durkheim’s social realism by 30
 31 insisting that only human groups, rather than a society, actually exist. But to 31
 32 invoke a human group is already to take up a common ground with Durkheim 32
 33 for it gives the collectivity a *sui generis* existence, albeit on a lower level of 33
 34 generality than a society. ‘Ontological arguments either rule out the existence 34
 35 of both groups and societies [as in methodological individualism] or accept 35
 36 both.’ More generally, Aron is an example of a writer who appears to admire 36
 37 wistfully the great classical syntheses but seems unable to replicate them. Thus 37
 38 he contents himself with ‘broad interpretations of industrial society’ without 38
 39 ‘systematizing’ the ‘conceptual framework’ of the theoretical giants he depicts. 39
 40 Reinforcing these points, Anthony Giddens (1970: 134) observed that Aron’s 40
 41 *Main Currents* fails to offer a ‘systematic critique of the many difficulties and 41
 42 ambiguities inherent in the writings of the various social theorists whose work 42

43
 44 _____ 43
 44 6 Aron’s doctoral student, Jon Elster (2009), later supplied the deficiency. 44

1 is portrayed'. Instead, and despite many penetrating observations, one receives 1
2 mostly 'ad hoc' criticisms that 'are rarely developed at any length'. 2

3 These initial verdicts on Aron's work show the degree to which his writings 3
4 engaged sociologists at an especially deep level of analysis. By clarifying what 4
5 modern sociologists expect sociology to look like, they are also presentiments of 5
6 his later reception failure. An inability to be systematic, to delineate the contours of 6
7 the social, to develop core concepts, and to use exposition of the classics to launch 7
8 a major theoretical restatement of his own – all detracted from Aron's credibility as 8
9 a sociological theorist. As for Aron's more 'empirical' work on industrial society, 9
10 this also provoked near ubiquitous theoretical and methodological complaint. The 10
11 *Economist's* reviewer (Anon 1967: 1664–5) was obviously puzzled at what Aron 11
12 was up to in *Eighteen Lectures on Industrial Society* (1967b). The Frenchman's 12
13 claim to be using an analytical framework amounts to little more than two 13
14 juxtaposed concepts: a 'model of growth' and 'a type of industrial society'. But 14
15 what exactly is a model on Aron's reckoning? And is it a model at all without 15
16 formalization? Alas, the 'general impression is one of common sense discourse 16
17 interspersed with fairly unrelated methodological pronouncements. Thus the 17
18 notion that economic growth depends on economic attitudes – interest in science, 18
19 the habit of economic calculation, the desire for progress – is perfectly acceptable, 19
20 but superficial.' 20

21 Equally unimpressed were Aron's sociological colleagues. W.G. Runciman 21
22 (1967: 23–4) declared the arguments of *Eighteen Lectures* to be 'unexceptionable' 22
23 and 'a little disappointing'. The 'level of generality of the argument is throughout 23
24 just a little too high' and too tentative: 'the provisos seem to swamp the hypotheses.' 24
25 Steven Lukes (1967: 928–9) who, like Runciman, admired *Main Currents* wished 25
26 that *Eighteen Lectures* were 'a little more analytical and systematic'. To be 26
27 sure, Aron offers a welcome corrective to ideologically driven positions, and by 27
28 reviving and reshaping Comte's idea of industrial society furnishes a 'valuable 28
29 reorientation of perspective'. Yet what Aron says about modes of social inequality 29
30 and the preconditions of industrialism is no longer fresh; it appears 'to be rather 30
31 obvious, not to say banal'. Likewise, Wilhelm Baldamus (1967: 455–6), reviewing 31
32 *Eighteen Lectures* and a related volume (Aron 1967c), considered the first to be 32
33 old hat: 'Aron's contribution to the study of industrial development is already so 33
34 well known in this country that a detailed report on these books is unnecessary.' 34
35 Baldamus concedes Aron's 'versatility' but expresses a lack of sympathy with 35
36 both his politics (while Aron confesses to a form of 'conservatism', Baldamus's 36
37 'own value commitments are roughly the opposite of Professor Aron's) and with 37
38 his method. Aron tells us that disciplined sociological analysis must attend to 38
39 objective economic facts and restrain ideological predilection. Fine. The problem 39
40 is that the facts that Aron cites, the indices he employs to make sense of them, 40
41 and the conclusions he adduces are crudely assembled. The abundant use of 41
42 measurement, in the two books under review, is 'puzzling as no attempt is made to 42
43 connect interdependent economic variables with each other; there is not a single 43
44 reference to the vast literature on post-Keynesian growth theory in mathematical 44

1 economics. It seems to me therefore that the emphasis which Aron puts upon 1
 2 measurable statistical “facts” is somewhat misplaced’. And if Aron’s research 2
 3 relies chiefly on ‘crude, non-correlational statistics, how are we ever to discover 3
 4 what kind of facts are sociologically relevant?’⁷ 4

5 Even Jon Elster (1983/4: 6) who reckons *Eighteen Lectures* and *La lutte de* 5
 6 *classes* to be Aron’s most durable texts, characterizes them as masterpieces of 6
 7 *haute vulgarization* and ‘relentless common sense’. One should read these books, 7
 8 Elster adds delphically, ‘not so much in order to learn about society, as in order to 8
 9 learn how to think about society’. Yet Elster also believes that while, as a political 9
 10 writer, Aron ‘conveys above all the austere demand for intellectual honesty’, and 10
 11 is a shrewd observer of telling details and spurious analogies, sociologically he 11
 12 is a weak thinker with little ‘creative imagination’. He has ‘no eye for hidden 12
 13 similarities’, lacks the ability to generalize, and would have benefited from a more 13
 14 analytical philosophical training. Conversely, for Anthony Giddens (1973: 59– 14
 15 63, 76–8), it is precisely Aron’s penchant to over-generalize that constitutes the 15
 16 main problem. It leads Aron to incorporate capitalism too readily into the master 16
 17 category of ‘industrial society’, to reduce ‘class’ (an explanatory realist concept 17
 18 in Marxian terms) to ‘stratification’ (a descriptive, nominalist or heuristic one in 18
 19 standard sociological renderings) and to treat ‘stratum’ and ‘class’ as if they were 19
 20 the same things. All considered, Aron’s theory ‘makes little contribution towards 20
 21 reconceptualizing the notion of class’ (Giddens 1973: 77). 21

22 The publication of Aron’s (1968a) *Progress and Disillusion: The Dialectics* 22
 23 *of Modern Society* prompted similarly negative reviews.⁸ True, John Rex (1968a: 23
 24 313–14) found its sweeping vistas ‘exhilarating’, a welcome respite from the dry as 24
 25 dust quantitative analysis for which sociology is notorious. Aron’s analysis of the 25
 26 tensions among the three ideals of Western civilization – equality, personality and 26
 27 universality – is also stimulating. Yet Rex is unconvinced by Aron’s explanations 27
 28 28

29 _____ 29
 30 7 The American reviews were even more damning. *Eighteen Lectures* was frivolous 29
 31 and lacked ‘hard data’ according to Remi Clignet (1967: 207), while *The Industrial Society* 30
 32 reminded Kim Rodner (1968: 302–3) of a ‘speechwriter for a state college president’ 31
 33 advertising his moderation. Aron’s work, Rodner continued, came across as dated, poorly 32
 34 informed of relevant literature, laboured in its critiques, and tone deaf to ‘cultural ecology’ 33
 35 – Aron fails to recognize that growth means very different things in different societies, 34
 36 especially to the poor. Out of his depth in this domain, readers are better advised to consult 35
 36 *Main Currents*, a work with ‘no equal in the historiography of these matters’. 36

37 The only strongly positive review of *The Industrial Society* I have found by a sociologist 37
 38 is MacRae’s (1967: 234). He calls the first essay in the collection ‘informed, skeptical, 38
 39 pluralist and politically wise’ and, more generally, warms to Aron’s critique of radical 39
 40 ideology and social engineering. More the pity, MacRae laments, that both are recrudescant 40
 41 among a new generation. 41

42 8 Among sociologists, at least, unless the anonymous *TLS* reviewer (Anon. 1969: 41
 42 651) was one. *Progress and Disillusion* was ‘a stimulating *tour de force* which presents 42
 43 with admirable clarity some of the major issues of modern social controversy’. Even so, 43
 44 some of Aron’s ‘judgements seem ... to have been overtaken by events’. 44

1 and by the narrow range of alternatives he stakes out. Alasdair MacIntyre (1968: 1
2 203–4) was more severe. ‘Time after time one is led along a path of argument 2
3 marked by insight and originality to be confronted finally with an unveiled 3
4 platitude.’ Aron is trapped by generalizations of his own devising that issue in 4
5 ‘facile and empty’ statements.⁹ 5

6 6
7 7

8 **Political Sociology** 8

9 9

10 Aron’s writings on industrial society underwhelmed reviewers; his political 10
11 sociology polarized them. On one side ranged critical enthusiasts – fallibilist big- 11
12 tent thinkers such as Ernest Gellner and John Hall – for whom sociology was 12
13 one identity among others; as if marking their own distance from the sociological 13
14 mainstream, they wrote often in politics or literary journals. Gellner (1961) 14
15 initially offered a heavily qualified endorsement. Reviewing a botched translation 15
16 of Aron’s 1938 doctoral thesis on the philosophy of history, Gellner pronounced it 16
17 conceptually elliptical and linguistically clumsy, the ‘early work of a man who has 17
18 acquired, rightly, a quite outstanding reputation as a social thinker and an incisive 18
19 writer’. 19

20 But if the early work was serpentine and vertiginous, the mature political 20
21 writing was lucid and clear-headed. Aron’s (1970) *Essai sur les libertés* deserved 21
22 to ‘stand beside’ J.S. Mill’s *On Liberty*, Gellner (1966: 258) enthused. He 22
23 particularly warmed to Aron’s sociological ‘probabilism’, the notion, adapted from 23
24 Tocqueville, that while history advances along no single path, ‘not all possibilities 24
25 are open’. Similarly, Aron’s critique of technological determinism, and his 25
26 unflinching analysis of the forces that undermine liberal democracy, especially in 26
27 France, could hardly be bettered as a framework ‘to understand the alternatives 27
28 and choices that face us’ (ibid.: 260). Not that Gellner and Aron saw eye to eye 28
29 on every issue. They disagreed, notably, in their appraisal of the prospects of 29
30 liberalization in Central and Eastern Europe, Gellner being the more positive and, 30
31 as it turned out, perspicacious party (Aron 1979a; Gellner 1979a, 1979b; also Hall 31
32 1986: 156–7, 206–9).¹⁰ 32

33 33

34 9 The American appraisal was no better. For Harvard’s Martin Peretz (1969: 437), 34
35 Aron’s book was a ‘meandering, unfocused romp ... [indeed] intellectual rigor mortis 35
36 would not be too unfair a characterization of this synoptic and synthetic view’. Reinhard 36
37 Bendix (1969: 481), a sympathetic reader who applauded a ‘superb antidote to the anarchic 37
38 utopianism so rampant in our time’, was also less than fully satisfied. The book was too 38
39 abstract and rigid. Where are the history makers in its canvass? 39

40 10 Gellner served with Aron on the editorial board of the *Archives européennes* 40
41 *de sociologie* and, as a commissioning editor of Weidenfeld and Nicolson, procured 41
42 the British rights of *Main Currents*. Aron’s influence on Gellner’s theory of industrial 42
43 society is described in Hall 2010: 134–5. Gellner also appreciated, Hall points out, Aron’s 43
44 openness to complexity and his ability to ‘understand French left-wing thought from the 44
45 inside’. 44

1 Shortly after Aron's death, John Hall added his own encomium. Aron's 1
 2 greatest contributions, Hall averred, lay in his understanding of industrial 2
 3 society and in his geopolitical analysis. But a weakness haunted the Frenchman's 3
 4 greatest strength: 4

5 5
 6 His general model is Montesquieu, and the mention of one of his masters 6
 7 demonstrates that Aron's 'sociology' is to be understood in the largest sense, 7
 8 that is, not as the study of the social but of the full workings, economic, political 8
 9 and ideological, of society as a whole. It is the greatest pity that Aron did not 9
 10 systematize the three [Sorbonne] courses, on economy, class structure and polity 10
 11 of East and West Europe, into a single book: and it is further to be regretted 11
 12 that only two of these [*Eighteen Lectures on Industrial Society and Democracy* 12
 13 *and Totalitarianism*] were translated into English, and then without a full 13
 14 appreciation of the project as a whole (Hall 1984: 425).¹¹ 14
 15 15

16 On the other side of the Aronian divide stood more perplexed or hostile critics. 16
 17 Reviewing *Peace and War* (1966) for the BJS, Robert Bierstedt (1967: 454–5) 17
 18 clearly wished Aron were an entirely different kind of political thinker, more 18
 19 utopian, less Machiavellian. While graced with a mind of unrivalled 'lucidity' 19
 20 and penetration, Aron 'offers us no vision of a new society'. On the contrary, 20
 21 he furnishes an 'entirely orthodox' view of the world, vouchsafing thereby 21
 22 'comprehensive pessimism'. Aron's treatise 'is a sociology of international relations 22
 23 as they unfortunately are rather than a sociology of war and peace that would give 23
 24 us some perception, however dim, of a world that would war no more'. Roland 24
 25 Robertson (1968: 356–7), reviewing the same book for *Sociology* conceded its 25
 26 'vast array of insights, perspectives and data on vitally important subjects'. When 26
 27 it comes to observation on 'concrete features' of the international order, Aron is 27
 28 unfailingly perceptive. But Robertson declared himself dissatisfied with a work 28
 29 that offers no evident means 'to tackle problems of analysis in the international 29
 30 field'. The problem, as Robertson saw it, was precisely Aron's inability to develop 30
 31 a sociology of international relations, notwithstanding his claim to do so. Aron's 31
 32 analysis was too traditional and hidebound, cleaving to a model of 'diplomatic- 32
 33 strategic action, *as opposed to social action*'. Socio-cultural factors, illuminated 33
 34 by writers such as Etzioni, Deutsch, Galtung, and Haas, are given 'virtually no 34
 35 attention'. Nor does Aron integrate into his analysis 'sociological concepts' such 35
 36 as conflict, power, structural balance and sociometric choice. 36
 37 37

38 38
 39 11 *La lutte de classes* (1964) remains untranslated. Hall planned to write an 39
 40 intellectual biography of Aron for the publisher Longmans. It never appeared. Still, an 40
 41 expressly sympathetic appraisal of Aron is Hall 1981: 156–96, a book framed largely as 41
 42 a contribution to the philosophy of history rather than to sociology proper. Hall's (1981; 42
 43 1984a; 1984b; 2011) prolific work on Aron is too large a topic for me to examine properly 43
 44 here. Suffice it to say that, over three decades, no one has done more, and done it more 44
 45 cogently, to keep Aron's ideas in play. 45

1 A more caustic opinion of Aron's political sociology was expressed by 1
 2 Bierstedt's compatriot Thomas Lough (1970: 559–60), who declared *Democracy* 2
 3 *and Totalitarianism* (1968b), 'dated, biased, and unsystematic' notwithstanding 3
 4 its 'interesting' analyses of violence, terror and political parties. The book is dated 4
 5 because it is a translation of lectures delivered at the Sorbonne in the later 1950s. 5
 6 It is biased because of its evident partiality towards the Western side of the cold 6
 7 war. And it is unsystematic because, lacking methodically gathered empirical data, 7
 8 its arguments are supported only by 'ad hoc historical facts'. John Rex (1968b: 8
 9 612) likewise bemoaned a 'dreary wandering argument marked by a rather mean 9
 10 lack of objectivity in its discussion of matters relating to Marxism'. The book's 10
 11 pivot – a contrast between monopolistic and multi-party regimes – cannot disguise 11
 12 the fact that it has too little sociological analysis; the argument 'settles somewhere 12
 13 between that of Seymour Lipset's *Political Man* and the journalism of Peregrine 13
 14 Worsthorne'. It is all very well for Aron to be a multi-faceted, cross-discipline 14
 15 Simenon. The result is 'ultimately to base himself on no discipline at all'. We 15
 16 need sociology, Rex implores, not 'the better form of journalism'. *Democracy and* 16
 17 *Totalitarianism* simply fails to be what it sets out to be: 'a political sociology for 17
 18 our times.'¹² 18

19 Lough, in the previously mentioned assessment, offers another criticism that is 19
 20 especially telling of how Aron bucked the expectations of sociologists interested 20
 21 in politics. Political sociologists, Lough stipulates, are scholars 'concerned with 21
 22 poverty, pollution, militarism, racism, and weapons of mass destruction'. Yet 22
 23 precisely on these problems *Democracy and Totalitarianism* is silent, and this dates 23
 24 it and limits its usefulness. Evident in such an opinion is the marked difference 24
 25 in meaning of 'political sociology' as Lough and Aron conceived it. For Lough, 25
 26 political sociology is concerned with 'world problems', with the interface of social 26
 27 ills and political behaviors. Political sociology and the sociology of politics shade 27
 28 into one another. Aron, conversely, separates them analytically and substantively. 28
 29 As he sees it, political sociology is focally concerned to examine the impact of 29
 30 politics *on* society, not the other way round. Its task is to show how politics is 30
 31 an independent force with independent dynamics – without a monopolistic 31
 32 party system, for instance, the Soviet Union would never have been able to 32
 33 collectivize agriculture or set industrial prices and quotas. Equally, because such 33
 34 a system prohibits civil society it is also far less amenable to social pressure than 34
 35 constitutionally pluralist societies are. Here, then, it is not only Aron's particular 35
 36 arguments that are problematic or 'reactionary' (Starr 1971: 159) to sociologists; 36
 37 the approach itself is utterly alien to their way of thinking. 37

38
 39
 40 12 Similarly, the TLS reviewer (anon. 1969: 651) who commented favorably on 39
 41 *Progress and Disillusion*, found *Democracy and Totalitarianism* 'somewhat disappointing'. 40
 42 Many of the 'phenomena with which it deals are by now so familiar that it is difficult to say 41
 43 anything new about them'. Moreover, 'it seems to suffer more than the others books in the 42
 44 [Sorbonne trinity] series from its origin in lectures and to give only a superficial survey of 43
 45 the question which it raises, often in the style of daily journalism'. 44

1 Yet, from a quite different vantage point, Aron's political theory was 1
 2 objectionable not because it was orthogonal but because it was conventional: a 2
 3 species of elite theory first articulated by Mosca, Pareto and Michels. For Tom 3
 4 Bottomore (1966), Aron was a political cousin of Schumpeter; both were theorists 4
 5 who considered democracy to be integrally a competition among elites. Yet 5
 6 Aron went further than Schumpeter by claiming that the plurality of elites – in 6
 7 government, trade unions, and in civil society – caused their division and lack of 7
 8 synchronization. This contrasted fatefully with the unified elite structure of the 8
 9 Soviet Union, orchestrated by the Communist Party. According to Bottomore, 9
 10 however, the Aronian approach is deeply conservative and tendentious. For 10
 11 one thing, Aron, like Schumpeter, appears to believe that Western democracy 11
 12 is somehow a completed project, whereas for democratic socialists such as 12
 13 Bottomore it is still in its infancy. Much more needs to be done to enable people 13
 14 to participate in decisions that affect their lives. For another, Bottomore disputes 14
 15 Aron's postulate that democracy in modern states is representative or it is nothing. 15
 16 Direct democracy is not the anachronism that many claim it to be, and if it is not 16
 17 a panacea it is at least a potential medium of involvement in the spheres of work 17
 18 and community. Indeed, Aron seems to concede as much in his remarks about 18
 19 the role played by professional and voluntary associations in modern life. Such 19
 20 organizations diffuse power by providing 'so many occasions and opportunities 20
 21 for ordinary men and women to learn and practice the business of self-government. 21
 22 They are the means through which government *by* the people is made more real 22
 23 and practical in a large, complex society' (ibid.: 126).¹³ 23

24 24
 25 25
 26 **What Gets Taught?** 26
 27 27

28 Until recently one could only speculate on how Aron's work, and that of numerous 28
 29 other writers, was communicated to students by British sociologists. Now we have 29
 30 a better sense, thanks to a cache of Sociology Teaching Materials collected by 30
 31 Jennifer Platt and archived in the LSE.¹⁴ Platt is frank that the teaching materials 31
 32 – synoptic degree syllabi outlines; individual course reading lists; university 32
 33 Calendar digests – are not a 'representative sample of anything'; the cache 33
 34 represents all that she was able to gather, without any deliberate selection of 34
 35 topic areas. On one side of the spectrum, we have large collections of material: 35
 36 notably, from the universities of Edinburgh (1954–2003; nineteen folders), Hull 36
 37 (1957–2006; fourteen folders) and Leicester (1952–2004; eleven folders). On the 37
 38 other side, we have tiny deposits: for instance, from Brunel (c. 1969; ten sheets), 38
 39 Aberdeen (1972–1982; one folder), Kent (1969–2003; two folders), Durham 39
 40 40

41 13 Bottomore's wide ranging critique also taxes Aron for failing to articulate his elite 41
 42 theory of democracy to a theory of social classes. 42

43 14 <http://archives.lse.ac.uk/TreeBrowse.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&field=> 43
 44 RefNo&key=STM 44

1 (1965–1998; three folders). Collections occupying the middle range include 1
 2 Sussex (1966–2002; nine folders) and Bristol (1970s–2003; seven folders). Other 2
 3 discrepancies are obvious. Some syllabi are more detailed than others; gap years, 3
 4 both of short and long duration, are evident where syllabi are missing and the trail 4
 5 goes cold; not all universities and polytechnics are represented; and so forth. Even 5
 6 so, the Platt archive is the richest documentation yet assembled on British teaching 6
 7 recommendations in sociology. 7

8 In regard to Aron, these materials tell us several things. They will tell us 8
 9 more, and with greater accuracy, if the archive is ever digitized. This would 9
 10 correct for human error (mine) by enabling accurate counts of Aron citations. 10
 11 Digitization would also enable the didactic usage of Aron to be compared with 11
 12 that of other sociologists. For instance, it would reveal precisely what I can only 12
 13 state impressionistically from a perusal, conducted over ten days in the spring 13
 14 of 2012, of all the folders and CDs: that, despite extensive translation, Aron is 14
 15 far less present in the syllabi that cover his topics (theory, stratification, political 15
 16 sociology) than contemporaries such as Frank Parkin, Ralf Dahrendorf, John Rex, 16
 17 Tom Bottomore, Reinhard Bendix, Robert Nisbet, W.G. Runciman and Anthony 17
 18 Giddens. I venture tentative explanations for this asymmetry as the story proceeds. 18
 19 For the moment, let some bald observations suffice. They should be treated as 19
 20 indicative of broad trends rather than rigorously systematic accounting. Many 20
 21 nuances are obliterated, much colour bleached, in the generalizations that follow. 21

22 First, the materials show which teachers cited Aron.¹⁵ They include Peter 22
 23 Lassman (Birmingham), Ian Hamnett (Bristol), David Marsland (Brunel), Robert 23
 24 Moore (Durham), Frank Bechhofer, John Holmwood and John Orr (Edinburgh), 24
 25 Colin Creighton and Martin Shaw (Hull), Frank Parkin, Ray Pahl and Richard 25
 26 Scase (Kent), Zygmunt Bauman and Paul Bagguley (Leeds), Steven Hill, Angus 26
 27 Stewart, Leslie Sklair and Elizabeth Weinberg (LSE), David [‘Norman’] Ashton, 27
 28 Clive Ashworth, Eric Dunning, Nick Jewson and John Scott (Leicester), Peter 28
 29 Worsley and D.T.H. Weir (Manchester), Ken Plummer (Polytechnic of the South 29
 30 Bank), Tom Bottomore, Luke Martell, William Outhwaite and Jennifer Platt 30
 31 (Sussex), Steve Fuller and Charles Turner (Warwick), Philip Stanworth and 31
 32 Andrew Tudor (York). Note that to cite authors is not necessarily to teach them. 32
 33 In fact, no one, so far as I can see, now teaches or has taught Aron in the way 33
 34 they have taught Parsons, Dahrendorf, Parkin or Bourdieu – as a debate-shaping 34
 35 theorist who spins off concepts or distinctions that require, and are worthy of, 35
 36 narrative explication. 36

37 Second, the Platt archive confirms that of all Aron’s cited works, the two 37
 38 volumes of *Main Currents* predominate by a large margin. My practice was to count 38
 39 each course syllabus in which an Aron text was cited; if in a particular syllabus the 39
 40 _____ 40

41 ¹⁵ In courses taught by more than one individual, it is unclear who initiated Aron’s 41
 42 inclusion. Some courses show clear signs of inheritance as teachers adapt only slightly 42
 43 a course they have taken over. And many courses, including those that cite Aron, do not 43
 44 specify a lecturer at all. 44

1 same Aron text was cited more than once, I still counted the text only once. Using
 2 that method, Aron's work appears in at least 123 course syllabi.¹⁶ Of that number, 2
 3 79 references or sixty four per cent of the total refer to *Main Currents*, volume 1 3
 4 being cited more often than volume 2. A more revealing number, however, is one 4
 5 that contrasts these 79 citations to the next most cited work – *German Sociology* 5
 6 (Aron 1964a) – which receives only ten hits. Most of the other books mentioned 6
 7 in sociology syllabi – for instance, *Opium of the Intellectuals* (1985 [1955]), *La* 7
 8 *Lutte de classes* (1964b), *Progress and Disillusion* (1968a) – garner four or fewer 8
 9 citations. 9

10 Suppose we divide Aron's texts into two broad categories: those principally 10
 11 of commentary or creative exegesis, and those that seek strategically to make a 11
 12 theoretical contribution in their own right. *Main Currents*, *German Sociology* and 12
 13 the books on the philosophy of history are salient examples of the former type;¹⁷ 13
 14 the articles on class structure (Aron 1950, 1969a), *Democracy and Totalitarianism* 14
 15 (1968b), *Eighteen Lectures on Industrial Society* (1967b) are instances of the latter. 15
 16 On that basis, 91 counts or almost seventy four per cent of the total, refer to books 16
 17 of commentary, and 32 or only twenty six per cent refer to texts of theoretical 17
 18 contribution. The most cited theoretical article, at 8 counts, is the BJS two-parter 18
 19 (Aron 1950a and b), while its later elaboration (Aron 1967d) receives 3. Texts 19
 20 one would expect to be cited many times rarely receive a mention: the stunning 20
 21 example is *Eighteen Lectures* which picks up only eight mentions; the companion 21
 22 book *The Industrial Society* collects another four. 22

23 A third fact to emerge from the archive is doubtless related to the second. 23
 24 Because Aron was construed to be principally a commentator on the classical 24
 25 tradition rather than as an innovative theorist in his own right, Modern Theory 25
 26 courses tend to pass him by unless they have a prefatory section with a quasi- 26
 27 classics overview. Hence Aron is absent from Bryan Heading's (East Anglia, c. 27
 28 1980) 18 page syllabus for *Sociological Theory*, a 'modern theory' course, dense 28
 29 with reading recommendations, whereas Giddens, Rex, Percy Cohen, Lenski, 29
 30 Runciman, Gouldner, Merton, Peter Blau, Ossowski and Dahrendorf all appear 30
 31 there. The same is true for John Holmwood's (Edinburgh, 1981–1982) course 31
 32 *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, Andrew Tudor's *Contemporary Sociological* 32
 33 *Theory* (York, 1981) and, further back, Terry Johnson's and Clive Ashworth's 33
 34 (Leicester, 1974/5) *Theoretical Sociology* and Christopher Dandeker's Leicester 34
 35 iteration of the following year. To this a few exceptions can be mentioned, 35
 36 among them Essex's *Theoretical Sociology* (1973/4) taught by H. Newby and 36

37
 38
 39 16 The majority of these courses are run-ons and adaptations: repeats of courses with
 40 either the same or similar titles. Sometimes the same instructor or instructors teach them, at
 41 other times new teachers take them over.

42 17 This is a simplification. As I show elsewhere, *Main Currents* does include a
 43 viable vision of sociology encrypted within its exegetical frame. Even so, this and *German*
 44 *Sociology* are not works where Aron stakes out deliberately and explicitly his theory of
 44 modern society. 44

1 G. Kolankiewicz, John Scott's (Leicester, 1991–1) *Sociological Analysis* and 1
 2 the Warwick courses *Sociological Imagination and Investigation* and *Forms of*
 3 *Sociological Investigation* (2000–2004) – but, in all cases the citations are to *Main* 3
 4 *Currents*. The conclusion to draw from the above is that Aron, sequestered in 4
 5 classical sociology, rarely makes the leap in to its modern equivalents. Teachers 5
 6 who deemed him a great guide to a past era left him there. 6

7 Worse, and this is the fourth observation, by the mid-seventies Aron's commentary 7
 8 on the classics had come to play second fiddle to Giddens's *Capitalism and Modern* 8
 9 *Social Theory* (1971). That book had three distinct advantages over Aron's *Main* 9
 10 *Currents*: it simplified the canon into the magic number 3, rather than dispersing it 10
 11 across seven individuals; it distilled those three authors into one volume, rather than 11
 12 Aron's two; and it set the classics in the frame of 'capitalism', a concept congenial 12
 13 to the Marxist tide in British sociology, instead of 'industrial society'. 13

14 More surprising is a fifth fact: that Aron often fails to appear in course syllabi 14
 15 that fall squarely in his major topic areas, as if he really were of no consequence 15
 16 to them. The most obvious example is courses or sections of courses that concern 16
 17 Industrial Society. Examples are *Industrial Society* (Durham, 1966–1967); 17
 18 *Sociological Theory and Industrial Society* (Aberdeen, 1972–1974, taught by 18
 19 Ellis Thorpe, Adrian Adams, Chris Wright, Bryan Turner and Peter McCaffery); 19
 20 *The Class Structure of the Industrial Societies* (Manchester, 1974, taught by Peter 20
 21 Martin). Instead, texts by Goldthorpe (1971), Giddens (1973), Scott (1979) and 21
 22 Kumar (1976, 1978) quickly supplant the earlier writings of people like Clark 22
 23 Kerr, Daniel Bell and Aron.¹⁸ This process of author-text displacement is common: 23
 24 faculty read new books, write new ones, many of these are synoptic and good to 24
 25 teach with and, accordingly, reference to older authorities declines. In time, the 25
 26 secondary sources become the primary ones and the cycle then repeats itself. 26

27 Was the growing criticism of *Industrial Society* the main cause of Aron's being 27
 28 sidelined? Possibly. Yet it bears emphasis that the critique of concepts such as 28
 29 Industrial Society – or Culture, Citizenship and Nation – in no way necessitates 29
 30 their eclipse. Critique can burnish, rather than tarnish, the significance of its 30
 31 targets. Disputes keep works alive, totemic. The more individuals are criticized, 31
 32 the more entrenched their reputations become. The bigger problem for Aron, I 32
 33 suspect, was that the concept of Industrial Society was trumped by new labels 33
 34 that painted our social condition as 'post-industrial', post-modern', 'late modern', 34
 35 'post-fordist' 'liquid' or 'risk' centred. Industrial Society, for all the sophistication 35
 36 Aron brought to it, looked old hat. 36

37 If I am right that Aron was swept away by a tide of new terms and debates, why, 37
 38 then, is Dahrendorf ubiquitous in the Platt archive and still a fixture in sociology 38
 39 textbooks today? Was his book not about *Class and Class Structure in Industrial* 39
 40 40

41 18 Goldthorpe (1971) defends Aron, Giddens (1973) and Scott (1979) critically 41
 42 appraise him, and Kumar (1976, 1978) largely ignores him. The best overall treatment of 42
 43 Industrial Society as a concept and theory, in which Aron figures prominently, is Badham 43
 44 1986. 44

1 *Society* (1959)? Dahrendorf's sociological longevity is explained by the fact that 1
 2 his work, aside from enunciating a provocative theory of class as authority, was 2
 3 readily slotted into 'conflict theory' – a key category of the discipline. Much like 3
 4 power and class, conflict is a feature of all societies not just one type of them. It is 4
 5 constitutive rather than time bound. As a concept it can be continually finessed but 5
 6 it cannot, unlike *Industrial Society*, be deemed outdated. Accordingly Dahrendorf, 6
 7 like Rex,¹⁹ became emblematic of the conflict 'school' or 'approach' or 'tradition' 7
 8 enshrined in sociological textbooks and surveys both pedestrian and refined (see 8
 9 Alexander 1987; Collins 1994, Joas and Knöbl 2009). The mercurial Aron is not so 9
 10 easily identified – unless it is under *Industrial Society*, a category most sociologists 10
 11 now consider shop soiled. 11

12 Before closing this brutally abbreviated section, shorn of many possible 12
 13 illustrations, I must address one area in which Aron (1966, 1974, 1985b, 1985c) 13
 14 is generally recognized a pioneer: the sociology of war and global conflict.²⁰ 14
 15 What presence does this aspect of his work have in the Platt archive? Practically 15
 16 none. As is well known, war and global conflict were not of pressing interest to 16
 17 post-war British sociologists until the early eighties. But even then Aron is not 17
 18 conspicuously on the radar of those who taught these topics. 18

19 The paucity of Aron reference in this area may well be an artifact of the 19
 20 archive itself. It contains no syllabi on war and civil military relations of 20
 21 sociologists with a keen interest in these topics: Christopher Dandeker, John 21
 22 Hall, Anthony King, Lynn Jamieson and Donald MacKenzie. Michael Mann 22
 23 left Britain in 1987 to join the UCLA faculty; the previous decade he spent 23
 24 at the LSE has left no trace in the Platt archive. In any event, he tells me that 24
 25 'Raymond Aron is one of the many distinguished social scientists whom I have 25
 26 barely ever read – in fact only *Main Currents* for teaching purposes' (email 26
 27 of July 3, 2012).²¹ Clive Ashworth's Leicester syllabus on *European Societies* 27
 28 (Leicester 1986) emphasizes the neo-Machiavellian tradition of which Aron is 28
 29 a modern exemplar (Ashworth and Dandeker 1987: 7; also 1986); yet students 29
 30 are referred to Hall (1984b; cf. 1985) on Aron rather than any article or book by 30
 31 Aron himself. 31

32 Nor do Martin Shaw's syllabi at Hull flag Aron until Shaw begins to pull away 32
 33 from dogmatic Marxism. Even then, the Frenchman's presence is slight. Professor 33
 34 Shaw remarks that 'When I turned to war at the beginning of the 1980s, although I 34
 35 was much more influenced by Weberian ideas, I was aware of Aron but not really 35
 36 attracted to his work' (email of 9 July). This is evident in the courses on *Modern* 36
 37 37

38 _____ 38
 39 19 Another perennial. Rex filled two niches simultaneously: that of a conflict theorist, 39
 40 that of a race/ethnicity theorist. 40

41 20 Though Joas (2003: 136) believes Aron's 'neo-Clausewitzian strategic realist' 41
 42 theory of war to be a dead end. On the topic of warfare, Joas compares Aron unfavourably 42
 43 with C. Wright Mills! 43

44 21 One Essex syllabus of Mann's is preserved in the archive (*Sociological Analysis* 43
 44 Summer 1976, Essex) but it has no mention of Aron. 44

1 *Industrial Societies*²² and *Social Structures of Advanced Societies* that, during the 1
 2 1980s and 1990s, Shaw shared with Colin Creighton. Creighton's sections of the 2
 3 course invariably cite Aron (for *Main Currents*), whereas Shaw's never do, even 3
 4 when they contain parts on war and the state. On the other hand, Shaw's edited 4
 5 collection on *War, State and Society* (1984) contained a major article by Hall on 5
 6 Aron's contribution to this area and Shaw's third year course for 1984/5, with the 6
 7 same title as the book, does mention two Aron (1958 and 1978) pieces on war. 7

8
 9

10 **Conclusion** 10

11 11

12 Reputational success, the formation of the so-called 'canon', is a common topic of 12
 13 sociological discussion. Reputational collapse attracts less attention (McLaughlin 13
 14 1998; Turner 2007). This essay is a contribution to its study. When A.H. Halsey 14
 15 (2004: 169–79) conducted his 2001 survey of British chair professors (n. 255) and 15
 16 asked them 'Who have been the most important mentors in your career?' and 'In 16
 17 the world as a whole which sociologists of the twentieth century have contributed 17
 18 most to the subject', Raymond Aron appears in neither category.²³ In a subject 18
 19 teaming with influential continental writers – Beck, Bourdieu, Elias, Foucault, 19
 20 Habermas, Touraine – Aron no longer figures.²⁴ Various reasons may be adduced 20
 21 for this state of affairs. Aron was a liberal conservative in a leftist discipline.²⁵ His 21
 22 measured lucidity – 'a respect for the humble fact is one of the qualities that keep 22
 23 his prose permanently fresh' remarked Clive James (2007: 37) – collides with what 23
 24 British social theorists expect of their French counterparts: opacity, iconoclasm, 24
 25 promethean ambition. Yet, as this article has shown, Aron also failed to live up 25
 26 to what sociologists more generally expect of the discipline: digestible concepts; 26
 27 theoretical systems; methodological design; in a word, 'professionalism'. Aron 27
 28 was simply too broad ranging, too humanist, too unclassifiable to attract a critical 28
 29 mass of sociologists. 29

30 If, as Nietzsche said, some writers are born posthumously might others be 30
 31 posthumously re-born? Some renewed interest in Aron is certainly evident today.²⁶ 31
 32 Might that portend a larger reappraisal? We cannot know. Yet a nagging question 32
 33 hangs over anyone who takes the trouble to read Aron carefully in the context of 33

34 34

35 35

36 22 Before 1984/5 the course was *Modern Industrial Society*. 36

37 23 Halsey's citation analysis of British sociology journals shows Aron to be the ninth 37
 38 most cited author in the 1970s (175). 38

39 24 Aron's irrelevance to British sociology is evident by his absence in Scott (2007), 39
 40 Elliott (2009) and Blackhouse and Fontaine (2010). 40

41 25 Aron 2002b, 1969b, 1975. On the meaning of leftism among the left, see Aron 41
 42 1979a: 49–50 and 1979b. 42

43 26 See the special issue of the *Journal of Classical Sociology* (Baehr (2011a, 2011b) 42
 43 and the work of Robbins (2011, 2012), Scott (2011) and du Gay and Scott (2010). More 43
 44 evanescently, see Alexander 1995: 6–64 and 211, n. 43. 44

1	our own age of hyper specialization, historical amnesia and ideological addle.	1
2	Raymond Aron was a big thinker who asked big questions, straddled disciplines	2
3	and challenged doctrinaire formulae from whatever quarter they came. He was a	3
4	writer who put the highest store on intellectual honesty and political responsibility.	4
5	When sociologists fail to read Aron because he does not conform to what they	5
6	expect of a sociologist, is it Aron or sociology that is the bigger loser?	6
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