ARISTOCRATIC LIBERALISM IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE*

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ABSTRACT. This article investigates the nature and prevalence of aristocratic liberalism in post-revolutionary France. Defenders of the aristocracy, it argues, departed from a specific conception of liberty, which can be distinguished both from a purely negative definition of liberty as the ability to do what one wanted to do, and from a republican conception of liberty as something that could be guaranteed through self-government alone. To legitimate the role of the aristocracy in post-revolutionary France, publicists and politicians developed a conception of liberty as a condition that could be guaranteed only through the existence of ‘intermediary powers’ between the central government and the people. Although this conception of liberty was severely criticized by Restoration liberals such as Benjamin Constant, it had a considerable impact on the debate about the best way to safeguard liberty in nineteenth-century France, as appears from texts by important political thinkers such as Tocqueville and Dupont-White.

I

In 1830, the July Revolution, in the name of liberty, brought an end to the Restoration monarchy. In response to the frequent invocations of this concept by the revolutionary leadership, A. Creuzé de Lesser, a former prefect and a staunch counter-revolutionary, published a treatise entitled *De la liberté*, in which he attempted to clarify the term. Creuzé de Lesser defined liberty as ‘the right to do what one wanted and what did not harm others’. Liberty in this sense, ‘civil’ or ‘individual’ liberty, he argued, had often been confused with popular sovereignty, or ‘political’ liberty. Creuzé de Lesser believed that such confusion was dangerous. Political liberty was not just different from civil liberty, it was often positively harmful to individual freedom. With an endless range of historical examples, *De la liberté* showed that so-called free peoples, such as the Spartans or the Romans, had really suffered from the most oppressive regimes with respect to their civil liberty. Conversely, regimes in which the nation had been unfree had often guaranteed a high degree of civil liberty. To Creuzé de Lesser, the

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history of the French Revolution served as a good example of this assertion. While, during the Revolution, liberty was constantly invoked, the individual Frenchman had remained a slave. Under Napoleon’s regime, however, in which public liberty had been usurped, order-loving citizens had enjoyed great individual liberty. Creuzé de Lesser advocated, in other words, an essentially negative conception of liberty, distinct from and even antithetical to the republican self-government propagated as the only foundation for liberty during the more radical phases of the Revolution.²

However, this was not the only, nor, indeed, the most generally accepted conception of liberty to be used in the post-revolutionary political debate in France.³ During the Restoration period, the famous liberal thinker Benjamin Constant had emphasized that political liberty, even if it differed from civil liberty, was a necessary precondition for individual freedom. He made this clear in his famous text De la liberté des anciens comparée à celle des modernes (1820).⁴ Like Creuzé de Lesser, Constant started out by arguing that liberty, as understood by the moderns, had to be distinguished from ‘ancient’ liberty, the exercise of self-government. ‘We can no longer enjoy the liberty of the ancients, which consisted in an active and constant participation in collective power’, Constant famously wrote, ‘Our freedom must consist of peaceful enjoyment and private independence.’⁵

Nevertheless, Constant was firmly convinced that such modern or civil liberty could not exist without a measure of ancient or political liberty. ‘My observations do not in the least tend to diminish the value of political liberty’, he emphasized. ‘Individual liberty, I repeat, is the true modern liberty. Political liberty is its guarantee, consequently political liberty is indispensable.’⁶ Thus, the representative system, which he defined as self-government by proxy, was indispensable for the preservation of civil liberty. But Constant did not stop there. He believed that even more was required of modern citizens to insure a stable liberal system. Only with an ‘active and constant surveillance over their representatives’ could liberty be preserved.⁷ From this perspective, the trait most characteristic for

² Quentin Skinner provides an illuminating discussion of the republican conception of liberty in his Liberty before liberalism (Cambridge, 1998); on the conception of liberty in the French Revolution, see Gerd van den Heuvel, Der Freiheitsbegriff der Französischen Revolution: Studien zur Revolutionsideologie (Göttingen, 1988).

³ I disagree on this point with Gerd van den Heuvel; see his discussion of the concept ‘Liberté’ in Rolf Reichardt and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, eds., Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680–1820, xvi (Munich, 1996), pp. 85–121.

⁴ Constant’s text was first published in 1820 in volume vii of his Collection complète des ouvrages, publiés sur le gouvernement représentatif et la Constitution actuelle de la France, formant une espèce de Cours de politique constitutionnelle (8 vols., Paris, 1818–20). I have used the English translation by Biancamaria Fontana in Constant’s Political writings (Cambridge, 1988). ‘Liberal’ will be used here to denote the political fraction that designated itself as such in post-revolutionary France; ‘liberalism’ refers to the variety of political traditions that have preservation of liberty as their most important goal. Note that all translations in the text are my own unless otherwise indicated.

⁵ Constant, Political writings, p. 316.

⁶ Ibid., p. 323.

⁷ Ibid., p. 326.
modern citizens – their passivity – was also the most dangerous for modern liberty. This led Constant to a surprisingly republican conclusion. Even modern citizens, he emphasized at the end of *De la liberté des anciens*, should be encouraged to feel involved in the *res publica*. The institutions of post-revolutionary France should not just bring peace to the people, they should achieve as well ‘the moral education of the citizens’.

As a juxtaposition of Creuzé de Lesser’s and Constant’s reflections shows, liberty was a contested concept in post-revolutionary France. But the debate about the meaning of this concept cannot be limited to an opposition between defenders of negative liberty and advocates of ‘political’ liberty. Another, third, conception of liberty was propagated during the Restoration period by the so-called royalists, Constant’s most important political opponents. Firm adherents of the restored Bourbon dynasty, as their name indicates, royalists were no less committed to the defence of the aristocracy – the liberal journal *La Minerve française* described them, not without reason, as the ‘aristocratic party’. In this capacity, royalists propagated a conception of liberty that differed from both Constant’s and Creuzé de Lesser’s.

Unlike Constant, royalist publicists and political thinkers did not believe that self-government, or even political participation in a more limited sense, was a necessary precondition for liberty. Neither did the aristocratic party believe, disagreeing in this respect with Creuzé de Lesser, that liberty was a purely negative concept, a condition independent from any political guarantee. Instead, they argued that liberty depended on the existence of an aristocracy, a class of powerful, influential, and wealthy citizens, which could function as an ‘intermediary power’ – a notion they borrowed from Montesquieu’s *Esprit des lois* – between the people and the government. Such an intermediary power was necessary, royalists believed, to check the abuse of power by the central government. At the same time, the existence of a strong aristocracy also fortified the government, thus preserving the state from degenerating into anarchy and despotism. To the aristocratic party, the lack of public spirit evinced by modern citizens was therefore not a threat to liberty. Rather, they were concerned about another trait of modern society: its levelled, ‘democratic’ social condition. While Constant had preached a moral re-education, the royalists propagated the necessity of social reform. Only the recreation of a strong aristocracy would make the French monarchy safe from despotism, they believed.

It is important not to confuse this aristocratic liberalism with traditionalism, with a defence of ancient noble rights and privileges. Royalists justified the role

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of the aristocracy on grounds of general utility, not with reference to the past. Indeed, far from being traditionalist, aristocratic liberalism, as propagated by the post-revolutionary royalists, can be seen as an attempt to provide a solution for one of the most vexing problems of modern political thought: how to safeguard liberty in a world where public virtue had disappeared, where citizens were more interested in their private interests than in the public good? In a sense, it can even be argued that the theory of the intermediary powers provided the royalists with a solution to this problem that was more modern than Constant’s. Unlike that famous liberal thinker, royalists propagated a way to preserve liberty that did not necessitate an appeal to a public spirit at all.

In the existing literature, this third, aristocratic conception of liberty has been largely ignored.\textsuperscript{10} Nevertheless, its investigation is of considerable importance for the study of post-revolutionary political thought. By showing the predominance of aristocratic liberalism in the royalists’ discourse – the main goal of this article – it becomes possible to argue that the royalists were not the mindless reactionaries they are often made out to be.\textsuperscript{11} But aristocratic liberalism merits closer investigation for other reasons as well. The political thought of Restoration liberals, I will argue, becomes more understandable when it is seen as a response to the royalists’ pro-aristocratic arguments. Furthermore, it is possible to argue that aristocratic liberalism continued to have an important influence on nineteenth-century French liberalism long after the demise of the royalist party in 1830. For this reason, an investigation of the royalists’ defence of the aristocracy is important not just to gain a better understanding of the royalist mindset, but of nineteenth-century political thought in general.

II

Although René de Chateaubriand is known today primarily as the prophet of Romanticism, he was equally famous during the Restoration period as one of the royalists’ leading politicians and theorists.\textsuperscript{12} In this capacity, Chateaubriand published in 1819 a programmatic article in the royalist journal \textit{Le Conservateur}, entitled ‘Politique’,\textsuperscript{13} in which he contrasted the ideology of the royalists with that of their political opponents, the ‘revolutionaries’ or liberals.

\textsuperscript{10} A notable exception is G. A. Kelly, ‘Liberalism and aristocracy in the French Restoration’, \textit{Journal of the History of Ideas}, 26 (1965), pp. 509–30. However, not all of Kelly’s examples are equally convincing – he describes Constant, for instance, as an advocate of aristocratic liberalism. Moreover, Kelly does not mention one single royalist thinker, although they were the most vocal defenders of aristocratic liberalism during the Restoration period.


\textsuperscript{12} On Chateaubriand as a royalist political thinker: Paul Bénichou, Jean-Paul Clément, and Gabriel de Broglie, eds., \textit{Chateaubriand visionnaire} (Paris, 2001).

According to Chateaubriand, liberty and equality – the two principles most often invoked by the liberals – were inherently incompatible. Far from being the natural counterpart of liberty, equality was ‘the greatest obstacle to the establishment of constitutional government’, because ‘absolute equality accommodates itself easily to despotism that levels everything, but is not compatible with a monarchy that establishes a distinction of powers’. Equality was, in other words, a ‘natural principle of democracy and despotism’. Chateaubriand illustrated this by referring to the French Revolution: the goal of that Revolution had been equality, and liberty had suffered in consequence. Driven by a violent hatred for the clergy and for the nobility, as for all social superiority, the revolutionaries had subdivided landed property, which had led first to an anarchic democracy and then to the imperial despotism. By continuing to propagate equality, Chateaubriand wrote, Restoration liberals opened the door to a recurrence of that cycle. Royalists, on the contrary, opposed both arbitrary government and democratic equality. While ‘detesting arbitrariness’, they had a ‘hatred of democratic equality’, a ‘penchant for social hierarchy’, and a ‘pronounced desire to see large property increase’, which alone could give ‘defenders to king and people alike’.  

In Chateaubriand’s view, in other words, the royalists’ political programme – the re-creation of social hierarchy – was essentially a liberal programme. The restoration of a nobility was necessary to create a political system in France that would guarantee both freedom and stability. This view was shared by many other royalist publicists. Pamphlets and political journals of the Restoration period illustrate the royalists’ concern with the levelled condition of French society, which was, according to royalist thinkers, the result of various historical factors, such as the rise of commerce, the development of royal absolutism, and the outbreak of the French Revolution. In the view of many royalists, this condition posed a major threat to the preservation of liberty and stability in post-revolutionary France. To restore social hierarchy, a noble elite was therefore an urgent necessity. This idea returned in royalist contributions to various political debates between 1814 and 1830.

The debate about the electoral system provides us with a first example. Liberals and royalists bickered about the electoral system – who should be qualified to vote? was the Chamber of Deputies to be renewed partially or in toto? – for most of the Restoration period. At the end of the Restoration, however, the debate became particularly acrimonious as the liberals became ever more successful at the polls, threatening to put the royalists in a permanent minority. In response to this problem, many royalist publicists propagated a substantial reform of the electoral system. Charles Cottu, a lawyer at the Royal Court in Paris, was probably the most radical of those. Although Cottu was originally seen as a liberal publicist, he turned into an active supporter of the royalist party in the course of the Restoration period. Between 1828 and 1830, he published a series

14 Ibid.  
15 Ibid.
of brochures advocating a complex electoral system in which a fixed number of hereditary electors were to elect the majority of the deputies. Cottu’s explicit goal was to turn the electorate into an aristocratic body. He even wanted to give titles to those hereditary electors: they should be chevaliers or barons, peers, dukes, marquises, or counts.16

In Cottu’s view, the changes he proposed to the electoral system were necessary both to protect the monarchy and to preserve liberty in France. He believed that the political instability in France could be explained by the fact that the Chamber of Deputies, the most powerful institution in France, was in the hands of the small property-holders, the proven enemies of the monarchy. To allow for the continued existence of the monarchy, the government was obliged to revert to electoral corruption and to seek the support of the ‘clerical’ party – a solution that could count on little sympathy from the gallican Cottu. Eventually, this situation would provoke a war between the bourgeoisie and the throne, and so liberty would be lost, all through the fault of the electoral law. The electoral law was therefore ‘anti-social’, and the cause of ‘anarchy’. Eventually, it would lead to despotism. ‘It will deliver us to the yoke of the clergy, or it will return us to the bloody despotism of another soldier.’17

To escape from this predicament, the monarchy needed to create a new electorate, that would be composed of a hereditary body of proprietors devoted to the constitutional monarchy. The existence of such a ‘national aristocracy’, Cottu claimed, was in the interest of the people as well as of the crown. It would reassure the monarch, ‘justly concerned by the spirit of revolt which dominates in the middle classes of society’, and reaffirm ‘the public liberties menaced by the desperation of the monarch’.18 Liberty did not imply that the citizens were liberated from all ‘political superiorities’. On the contrary, ‘a levelled people is an enslaved people’. A nation could resist ‘despotism’ alone when it could unite itself around ‘a great body, or a great illustration that gives it the support of an influence long respected’.19 Thus, Cottu concluded, his system was liberal, although ‘not in the sense now accepted’.20 Cottu emphasized that these views were supported by Montesquieu’s authority. That great writer had recognized, ‘by the sole power of his genius’, how necessary it was to confer an important political role to the aristocracy.21

It is interesting to note that Cottu referred to the English example to legitimate these proposals for reform. Traditionally, English liberty was attributed to the mixed constitution of the British Isles. English government was believed to consist of different ‘powers’: king, Lords, and Commons, which, many Frenchmen believed, balanced each other. The existence of such a balance prevented each

16 Charles Cottu, Des moyens de mettre la Charte en harmonie avec la royauté (Paris, 1828); idem, Du seul moyen de sortir de la crise actuelle (Paris, 1829); idem, Des devoirs du roi envers la royauté (Paris, 1830); idem, De la nécessité d’une dictature (Paris, 1830).
17 Cottu, Moyens, p. 69.
18 Ibid., p. 87.
19 Ibid., pp. 82–3.
21 Cottu, De la nécessité, pp. 22–3.
of these powers expanding beyond their legally imposed limits, thus prohibiting the imposition of despotism. Cottu, however, did not subscribe to the theory of mixed government. He pointed out that the English House of Commons could hardly be conceived as a democratic institution. In fact, he argued, the Commons were controlled by the English aristocracy, through the system of the rotten boroughs. Precisely this aristocratic influence, often decried as an abuse, was responsible for the combination of liberty and stability in England. If the House of Commons would be reformed to eliminate the influence of the Lords, not liberty, but a bloody revolution would be the consequence.22

By invoking the English example, Cottu made a powerful argument for the connection between (modern) liberty and aristocracy. The prestige of the English political system, as guaranteeing a unique combination of liberty and stability, was unparalleled during the Restoration period. Liberal thinkers, such as the historian J. C. L. Sismondi, who was close to Benjamin Constant, saw England as the home of ‘modern liberty’. The example of the British constitution, Sismondi wrote, had taught the moderns to appreciate liberty as a product of ‘peace, happiness, and domestic independence’, instead of conceiving of it as participation of the citizens in sovereignty.23 According to a royalist such as Cottu, the English aristocracy was the main guarantee for that liberty.

Like the electoral system, the pros and cons of a reform of the local administration were frequently debated throughout the Restoration period. This was in particular the case in 1828, when the centre-left government led by Vicomte Jean-Baptiste Martignac introduced a Municipal Bill, which led to a vigorous debate both in and outside the Chamber of Deputies. Comte Vincent Marie Viennot de Vaublanc’s brochure Des administrations provinciales et municipales (1828) was one of the most important royalist contributions to this debate. Vaublanc, a committed royalist publicist and politician who had shortly served as minister of the interior at the beginning of the Restoration period, pleaded for a form of decentralization which would hand over power to the local elites. While in the existing system members of the local councils were appointed by the king, Vaublanc proposed to give local dignitaries, like the bishop, the mayor, and military commanders, a seat in these councils by right. Moreover, the councils would be presided over by functionaries appointed for life, who would receive a special title (Vaublanc suggested calling them ‘great seneschal of the province’).24

In his view, the reform of the local administration should be seen as an opportunity to ‘strengthen the feeble aristocracy of France’.25 This was necessary in the interests of both liberty and stability. ‘Considerable men’ and ‘eminent

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22 Ibid., pp. 32–63.
25 Ibid., p. 8.
bodies’, Vaublanc argued, were necessary as a ‘support’ of the monarchy. Vaublanc placed this claim in a historical perspective: he explained that the downfall of the monarchy in 1789 had been caused by the absence of ‘powerful men or bodies’. At the same time, an aristocracy was indispensable for the preservation of liberty. Aristocrats had an interest to prevent the monarchy from degenerating into despotism, as the first desire of a despot would be to reverse the aristocratic class, ‘so as no longer to find an obstacle to his power’.26 But this claim was not just valid in a monarchy. Even a republic could not survive without the patronage of a social elite. If, in a republic, the people were not restrained by an aristocracy, it would inevitably degenerate into anarchy, which in turn would bring forth a tyranny. ‘No matter what type of government one is in, powerful men are necessary to maintain liberty’, Vaublanc concluded.27 Or, as he repeated elsewhere: ‘The absolute equality of things and persons is the death of the monarchy and of public liberties.’28

Like Cottu, Vaublanc referred to the English example to support his case. In his brochure, he drew an interesting contrast between social conditions on both sides of the Channel. Both the French and the English, he pointed out, had introduced an aristocratic chamber in their political system. But in England this aristocracy was strong, because it existed not just in the Lords, but on numerous ‘intermediary levels’. The habits and prejudices of the English people were ‘eminently aristocratic’. This system protected both the throne and liberty. In France, on the contrary, the aristocracy existed only on paper. ‘Everything that was elevated has been destroyed, to the point that nothing was left but the strange spectacle of a monarchy composed of two elements, the nation and the king.’29

III

Institutional reforms, such as those proposed by Cottu and Vaublanc, were not the only way to recreate an aristocracy envisaged by royalists. Throughout the Restoration period, they campaigned for a change of the revolutionary succession laws, a campaign that must be seen as the royalists’ most sustained effort to recreate an aristocracy. These laws – introduced by the Civil Code and still valid after 1814 – stipulated that, apart from the disposable portion, an inheritance should be divided equally among legitimate children.30 Royalists believed that these laws were responsible for the increasing division of property in France. This undermined the profitability of agriculture, they argued. But more importantly, royalists believed that the division of property also had a detrimental effect on the social composition of French society. The revolutionary succession laws

prevented the restoration of a territorial aristocracy on French soil, and therefore left the nation without resistance against despotism.

The English example, which had played such an important role in the argumentation of publicists such as Cottu and Vaublanc, was again invoked in defence of primogeniture. Royalists pointed out that in England the aristocracy was sustained by succession laws that favoured the concentration of landed property. This was, in their view, the secret of English liberty. Maurice Rubichon, a now forgotten publicist who enjoyed a certain renown in his own day as a ‘Christian economist’, was the first to make this argument. Between 1815 and 1819, Rubichon published a two-volume book entitled *De l’Angleterre*, inspired by his stay in England as an émigré. From this book, it is clear that Rubichon believed the concentration of landed property to be the most important characteristic of English society. England, he argued, was still a ‘feudal society’: its economic, social, and legal framework encouraged the centralization of land in the hands of a small number of owners. In England, the eldest son of a noble family usually had an absolute right to his father’s property, entails were widespread, and *mainmorte* was predominant for the property of religious corporations. This tendency had, if anything, been encouraged during the Revolution. The enclosures of the commons had greatly increased the concentration of landed property, so that ‘feudalism’ had been even more consolidated in England.

As an economist, Rubichon was mainly interested in the effects of English property laws on agriculture. He explained at great length how they were responsible for England’s prosperity. But *De l’Angleterre* emphasized the political effects of the English property laws as well. Because primogeniture and entail favoured the concentration of property in England, the English nobility had been able to retain its strength. There was no other country than England, Rubichon emphasized, where the aristocracy was more powerful, and where class barriers were more insurmountable. Far from being a democratic society, social hierarchy was nowhere more pronounced. A deep gap existed between the nobility and the bourgeoisie. The existence of this strong territorial aristocracy was, in Rubichon’s view, an important guarantee for liberty. Rubichon argued that the nobility possessed ‘a force of opinion’ against that of the sovereign. Its influence over commoners, stemming from aristocratic wealth, traditions, and good deeds allowed it to do so. This had once been the case in France as well, as Rubichon reminded his readers. There, too, primogeniture had created noble families, fixed always on the same land, paternally disposed towards their inferiors, and acting as ‘the sole barrier that could stop the throne in the exercise of its absolute power.’ In short, entail and primogeniture were an important guarantee for liberty. According to Rubichon,

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33 In the second volume of *De l’Angleterre*.
34 Ibid., i, pp. 220–1.
‘the whole code of other civil laws’ was of ‘less importance for public liberty than the ancient laws on entail’.  

These views were further developed by Charles Cottu in his best-selling *De l’administration de la justice criminelle en Angleterre, et de l’esprit du gouvernement anglais* (1820). This brochure had been written by Cottu after a government mission to study the English jury system. As its title already indicates, Cottu’s book did not limit itself to this subject, but provided reflections on the ‘spirit’ of the English government as well. Unlike Rubichon, Cottu believed that the English property laws, to which he devoted his first chapter, were essential to its political system. Property was not equally divided in England between the children of a family, he pointed out, as was the case in France. Primogeniture was the general rule. Even where the law admitted free choice on the part of the testator, the eldest son was always preferred. As a result, families were attached to their property and to their province, and the countryside was greatly embellished. The exercise of municipal duties also attached men to their property, and landowners resided for much of the year in the provinces. This meant that a class of landowners was spread throughout the whole country.

According to Cottu, the existence of such a strong, territorial aristocracy had numerous advantages. It accounted for the superior administration of justice in England. It assured small government: in England everything went of its own accord, the government needed to interfere but little. But above all, it made that particular combination of English liberty and stability possible. The titles and prerogatives of the English aristocracy, Cottu emphasized, belonged to it less as its own property, and more for the common benefit of the nation, ‘and in the sole view of creating a powerful dyke, both against the excesses of the democratic spirit and against the encroachments of arbitrary power’. For this reason, instead of exciting envy and greed, Englishmen regarded noble titles and prerogatives as necessary for the maintenance of liberty. Attainable by everyone on basis of services and talents, they were the legitimate goal of all ambitions. In short, the English example taught that one of the means to found not just liberty but its durability was to form ‘a great body of citizens who, receiving particular advantages from its institutions, becomes naturally interested in defending them, defending at the same time the rights of the people resulting from the same concession’.

In his concluding chapter, Cottu discussed this question in more general terms, explicitly connecting the preservation of modern liberty and the existence of an aristocracy. The hatred against privileges that had engendered a hatred against all social superiorities, he wrote, prevented the French from appreciating the English system, because it had given them a mistaken conception of

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37 Ibid., pp. 218–32.
38 Ibid., pp. 1–19.
39 Ibid., p. 235.
liberty. The French had become convinced that liberty consisted in giving over the administration of the state to ‘the caprices of the multitude’. But instead, liberty consisted in something very different. To be free was never to be submitted to the authority of man, but solely to that of the magistrate; to be never arrested nor detained except according to legal rules. It was to be able profess one’s religion without constraint; to be allowed to censure all acts of the administration; never to pay arbitrary taxes; never to be submitted to laws except those judged necessary and just by the nation itself; and never to be excluded from public office or dignity by considerations of birth. For the protection of this liberty, modern liberty – for Cottu’s definition repeated almost word for word that of Constant,41 – the existence of an aristocracy was not an impediment but a necessary prerequisite. Without an aristocracy, he wrote, no moderate government, no ‘veritable liberty’ was possible. In despotic governments such as Turkey, or France under Napoleon, there was no need for an intermediary level between the tyrant and the people, for the sword decided everything. In a moderate or a free government, things were different. There, the aristocracy was necessary to protect the people against the excesses of the prince, and conversely to protect the monarch against the people. ‘To that extent the aristocracy has been established in England.’

Both Rubichon and Cottu combined their praise of the English system with a criticism of the effects of the revolutionary succession laws in France. The division of landed property, preventing the restoration of a territorial aristocracy, left the country without protection against anarchy and despotism. Rubichon placed this problem in a historical perspective. In his view, things had started to go wrong in France when non-noble lawyers had started to attack primogeniture in the seventeenth century.43 Rubichon devoted many pages of his *De l’Angleterre* bemoaning the destruction of the nobility, the ‘defenders of the people’, on the Continent. The aristocracy of Europe was destroyed, ‘that essential, fundamental, I would say exclusive basis of liberty’. The future therefore looked bleak: it would take centuries before this ‘magnificent edifice’ could be restored again.44 Cottu was pessimistic as well. France had no aristocracy comparable to that of England, he pointed out at the end of his book, and even lacked the great fortunes to make one. If the government was attacked now it would

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41 To modern citizens, Constant wrote, liberty is ‘the right to be subjected only to the laws, and to be neither arrested, detained, put to death or maltreated in any way by the arbitrary will of one or more individuals. It is the right of everyone to express their opinion, choose a profession and practise it, to dispose of property, and even to abuse it; to come and go without permission, and without having to account for their motives or undertakings. It is everyone’s right to associate with other individuals, either to discuss their interests, or to profess the religion which they and their associates prefer, or even to simply occupy their days and hours in a way which is most compatible with their inclinations or whims. Finally it is everyone’s right to exercise some influence on the administration of the government, either by electing all or particular officials, or through representations, petitions, demands to which authorities are more or less compelled to pay heed.’ Constant, *Political writings*, pp. 310–11.

42 Cottu, *De l’administration*, pp. 233–50.


be obliged to seek the support of the army. The French succession laws were therefore subversive of representative government, Cottu concluded. The only way in which an aristocracy could be reconstituted was by reintroducing primogeniture.\footnote{Cottu, \textit{De l’administration}, pp. 233–50.}

IV

References to the English example continued to be made in the royalist campaign for primogeniture. In the royalist journal \textit{Le Défenseur}, Louis de Bonald explained that English liberty depended on the existence of its territorial aristocracy rather than on its democratic institutions. In his view, English liberty could not be attributed to the fact that over half of its citizens, or their representatives, could impose laws and taxes on the other half, and pose the law to the king himself. That would be servitude for the minority and tyranny for the majority, rather than liberty for all. Instead, England was free, because a strongly constituted territorial property had the necessary force to serve as a ‘last bulwark for the monarch’ and to save it from the ‘encroachments of the democracy’.\footnote{Louis de Bonald, ‘Sur un passage de l’\textit{Esprit des lois}, originally published in \textit{Le Défenseur}, reprinted in \textit{Œuvres complètes} (3 vols., Paris, 1859), II, pp. 875–86.}

In the same periodical, a long extract was published from the writings of Carl von Haller, in which Haller defended the English succession laws as a model to the rest of Europe. Primogeniture and entail encouraged the concentration of large property in the hands of the same families, contrary to the spirit of the century that wanted to divide everything. With these laws alone was the restoration of a territorial aristocracy possible, ‘a natural nobility’, that would be truly useful to the state, and that was not dependent on the will of the prince alone.\footnote{Carl von Haller, ‘Qu’est-ce que la noblesse’, \textit{Le Défenseur}, 3 (1820) pp. 30–5, 49–60.}

At the same time, royalists put much emphasis on the baneful effect of the revolutionary succession laws on the French political system. If French society had shown itself so little resistant against the twin dangers of anarchy and despotism, they argued, this was to a large extent the result of its levelled condition. This argument was made by Nicolas Bergasse in his brochure \textit{Essai sur la propriété} (1821). With this brochure, Bergasse attempted to convince the government that the noble property nationalized during the French Revolution – the so-called \textit{biens nationaux} – should be returned to their rightful owners. As this demand was likely to cause much social unrest among the new owners of the \textit{biens nationaux}, who had been afraid that their property would be confiscated ever since the return of the Bourbons to France, Bergasse’s brochure was censured by the government upon its first publication in 1815, which gave it great notoriety when it was finally published in a modified version in 1821.
In this context, Bergasse’s brochure is important because he connected his arguments about the *biens nationaux* to a vindication of the political importance of landed property in general and of primogeniture in particular. The latter was necessary, he argued, for the restoration of an aristocracy and therefore of liberty. It was ‘a truth that might surprise’, Bergasse wrote, that without an aristocracy, liberty was impossible in a monarchy. ‘There is no liberty in a monarchy if all compose the same mass, the same multitude.’ A hierarchy was necessary that reflected the natural superiorities in society, instead of being imposed by the government. For this reason, Bergasse added, the condition of post-revolutionary France looked bleak. Montesquieu had described England as a country in which liberty was threatened through a lack of ‘intermediary bodies’. However, the French now had far fewer intermediary bodies than the English. ‘There is a lot of talk about liberty in France’, Bergasse warned, ‘but I must confess that I see nothing there but a prince, two Chambers and a multitude; for sure, something else is needed, not just to constitute liberty, but also to establish the authority of the Prince on durable foundations.’

In 1826, the campaign for primogeniture led to the introduction of the Succession Laws Bill by the royalist government headed by Joseph de Villele. With this bill, primogeniture would be reintroduced in France in a mitigated way. The government proposed to give, in case of deaths *ab intestat*, the disposable portion to the eldest son. Thus, primogeniture did not become obligatory; it could be easily avoided if the testator indicated otherwise in his will. Moreover, the bill did not apply to the whole legacy. The bulk of the inheritance would still be divided equally between all of the children; only the disposable portion went in its integrality to the eldest son. Another limitation on the reintroduction of primogeniture was that the bill was aimed only at families with an income on which they paid at least 300 fr. in taxes. Despite all these restrictions, the government and its royalist supporters expected much of the bill, as became clear in the debate in parliament and in the press. In particular, they believed that it would contribute to stabilizing the political regime in France. Although the bill eventually failed in face of the liberal opposition, its very existence and the debate that it engendered show how much importance the royalists attached to the restoration of an aristocracy in France.

In a speech to defend the Succession Laws Bill in the Chamber of Peers, Marc-René de Montalembert, a diplomat and a faithful servant of the Bourbon dynasty, made clear that the reintroduction of primogeniture was necessary by hammering on the pernicious aspects of the revolutionary succession

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48 Nicolas Bergasse, *Essai sur la propriété, ou considérations morales et politiques sur la question de savoir s’il faut restituer aux émigrés les héritages dont ils ont été dépourvus durant le cours de la révolution; ouvrage où il est parlé de quelques-unes des causes qui préparent la chute des états, et surtout des états monarchiques* (Paris, 1821), pp. 43–9; quotes pp. 48–9.

First, Montalembert pointed out that the division of property had an influence on the mental disposition of the nation. It encouraged ‘egoism’, the ‘dissolvent of each society’, and prevented public spiritedness. This mental disposition, Montalembert argued, made a constitutional government impossible, it encouraged servility or anarchy, despotism or a republic. Likewise, the division of property encouraged centralization and bureaucratization. A legislation that established ‘an immense quantity of small proprietors, poor, exclusively occupied with their domestic needs’, prevented the existence of institutions, guarantees, limits to ministerial power. In short, it delivered the nation to the bureaucracy. A people, ‘curbed under the exigencies of the unlimited division of property’, remained under the thumb of fiscal agents and salaried functionaries. ‘If such a people has rights, has institutions, they are a sham, because they cannot exercise the first, nor preserve the latter.’ In a country where there were nothing but ‘individuals without political consistency, temporary, accidental fortunes, ephemeral existences without local influence’, neither centralization nor bureaucracy could be avoided.

But egoism and centralization were not the only dangers resulting from the unlimited division of property. The revolutionary succession laws, Montalembert warned, were also the best means to establish despotism. The unlimited division of property left the prince with the possibility to reign arbitrarily, finding no other limit to his authority than his own will. The destruction of large territorial property, local influences, independent existences, created a nation in which no other ‘political notabilities’ existed between the throne and the people than those that depended on the court. The subdivision of large properties allowed the prince to make his people into ‘a great and inert agglomeration of individuals, without influence, without mutual trust, without national spirit, without means to unite or agree, and in consequence without interest in public affairs’.

In the view of the royalists, the Succession Laws Bill was, in other words, a liberal measure. Montalembert put the principle of liberty squarely central in his defence of the bill. ‘A noble peer told you at the beginning of this discussion: “The revolution has been made to conquer equality.” – I respond: the restoration has come to give us our liberties, and as I am among the number of those who prefer liberties to equality, I support everything that can consolidate our institutions.’ The bill’s ‘liberal’ nature was emphasized as well in several brochures and pamphlets published by royalists in 1826. In his *Observations sur le principe du droit d’aînesse et sur son application aux familles électorales*, Charles Cottu praised the bill because it would create ‘local influences’ to counteract the spirit of equality. ‘Let us then conclude that the system of primogeniture is basically favorable to liberty and to equality; and that it is moreover one of the

50 Not to be confused with his son Charles de Montalembert, the famous Catholic activist.
52 Ibid., p. 521.
53 Ibid., p. 522.
54 Ibid., p. 519.
necessities of representative government.' Likewise, in _Du partage égal et du droit d’aïness_, J.-J. Brehier argued that the goal of the bill was not to concentrate France in the hands of a few, but to impede the dissolution of landed fortunes. ‘Thus will form itself the likeness of a local aristocracy, numerous, spread over the whole territory of France. That is the only guarantee of order; that is the only hope of liberty.’

An analysis of royalist pamphlets and speeches shows how important aristocratic liberalism was in the political debates of the Restoration period. Royalists argued that an aristocracy, as a support for the monarch, played a crucial role in the maintenance of stability. But most importantly, an aristocratic class was indispensable for the preservation of liberty – directly, by checking abuses, and, indirectly, by preserving the government from anarchy. The English political system, which was seen as the most liberal in Europe, and which was based on the existence of a powerful aristocracy, illustrated this argument to perfection. Conversely, royalists argued that a levelled society such as post-revolutionary France offered but little protection against the danger of despotism.

What was the liberal response to this discourse? On first sight, Restoration liberals might seem to have agreed with the royalists in their positive evaluation of the role of the aristocracy. During the constitutional debates in the beginning of the Restoration period, a number of liberal publicists pleaded for the introduction of an aristocratic hereditary institution modelled on the English House of Lords. As is well known, Germaine de Staël, whose political treatises had an important influence on liberals of a younger generation, was a great admirer of the English political system. In her influential _Considérations sur la révolution française_ (1818), part memoir, part political brochure, Staël held the English model up as an example to the French. From her account, it is clear that she believed that the existence of an aristocratic body was a necessary element in this model. Likewise, Staël’s friend and collaborator Benjamin Constant pleaded during the constitutional debates of 1814–15 for the creation of a hereditary institution in the French political system, which would be capable of checking royal power, and it was partly through his support that a hereditary

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57 Although J. R. Jennings claims that royalists were hostile to the English political model: ‘Conceptions of England and its constitution in nineteenth-century French political thought’, _Historical Journal_, 29 (1986), pp. 65–85.
Chamber of Peers was created which shared legislative power with the king and the elective Chamber of Deputies.\footnote{Constant, \textit{Political writings}, pp. 198–200.}

After 1815, however, the liberals’ initial enthusiasm for the English model rapidly waned. While pro-aristocratic attitudes became identified with the royalist party, their liberal opponents became ever more critical of aristocratic liberalism. In 1818, Constant wrote a disparaging account of the English situation in \textit{La Minerve française}, in which he argued that the English model did not warrant an identification between liberty and aristocracy. Constant described England as ‘a vast, opulent and vigorous aristocracy’. Immense possessions were united in the same hands, colossal wealth accumulated on the same heads. Great landowners could dispose of a numerous and faithful clientele, who usually voted as told by their social superiors. As a result, the national representation was composed for one part of salaried officials, and for the other part of those appointed by the aristocracy. This system, far from being the secret of England’s liberty, was ‘oppressive in theory’; and it was softened only by the inheritance of 1688 and by certain elements specific to England, which, Constant emphasized, made its constitution inapplicable to other people.\footnote{Benjamin Constant, ‘De la puissance de l’Angleterre durant la guerre, et de sa détresse à la paix, jusqu’en 1818’, first published in \textit{La Minerve française} in 1818, reprinted in Constant’s \textit{Mélanges de littérature et de politique} (2 vols., Louvain, 1830), 1, pp. 19–31.}

On the other hand, however (and this was the more important argument), Constant became convinced that the restoration of a (territorial) aristocracy was not just undesirable, but simply impossible in France. Modern times, he came to think, were characterized by a progress towards equality, both in moral and economic terms. For this reason, he publicly retracted his support for the Chamber of Peers in his \textit{Mémoires sur les Cent-Jours} of 1820. He had come to realize, he wrote, that the ‘national disposition’ was in favour of ‘an almost absolute equality’. Likewise, the social structure, characterized by the division of properties, by the ever increasing influence of commerce, industry, and capital, made the restoration of a landed nobility well-nigh impossible. In these circumstances, a hereditary peerage representing nothing but the great landowners had something contrary to nature. ‘The peerage, when it exists, can subsist’, he wrote, ‘which is obvious by the fact that we have one; but if it did not exist, I would believe it to be impossible.’\footnote{Benjamin Constant, \textit{Mémoires sur les Cent-Jours}, ed., O. Pozzo di Borgo (Paris, 1961), p. 156.}

In short, in Constant’s view, the royalists’ aristocratic liberalism was problematic because it was not just mistaken in theory but above all because it was anachronistic. France had become a ‘democratic’, levelled society and that process could not be reversed. Attempts of the royalists to safeguard the monarchy from despotism by restoring a territorial nobility were inspired by an obsolete political model. Constant criticized the royalists, in other words, in much the same way as he criticized the attempts undertaken by the
Jacobins during the Revolution to impose on France a government modelled on the ancient republics. This parallelism between Constant’s critique on the royalists and on the Jacobins is clear in particular in his *De la liberté des anciens comparée à celle des modernes*. The representative government was ‘the only one in the shelter of which we can find some peace today’, he stressed at the beginning of his text. Both the ‘Lacedaemonian republic’, and the ‘regime of the Gauls, which quite resembled the one that a certain party would like to restore to us’, were political models of the past, that were unsuitable for modern nations.62

The charge of anachronism was put forward by other Restoration liberals as well. The anti-modern character of the royalist campaign for the restoration of an aristocracy was emphasized by the liberal economist Charles Ganilh. In his brochure *De la contre-révolution en France ou de la restauration de l’ancienne noblesse et des anciennes supériorités sociales dans la France nouvelle*, Ganilh argued that the restoration of an aristocracy – the goal of the counter-revolution – had become impossible in France. In modern times, Ganilh wrote, the accumulation of wealth derived from the labour of the entire population; its circulation in all classes was encouraged by the arts and sciences. ‘That movement is so general, so universal, so unanimous, that it reverses all social barriers, levels all ranks and confounds all classifications.’63 To reverse it would have fateful consequences. The only way to restore an aristocracy would be to abolish modern wealth. To do that, the French people would have to be isolated from the rest of the world, and France’s various departments from each other. Means of communication would have to be abolished. In short, Ganilh concluded, the modern commercial-industrial economic system was incompatible with ‘the monarchical system with its privileges and corporations’.64

During the debate about the Succession Laws Bill, liberal opponents of the bill likewise argued repeatedly that the reintroduction of primogeniture in France would be an attack on modern society, an attempt to turn back the clock. During the debate on the bill in the Chamber of Peers, Comte Louis-Matthieu de Molié objected against the bill that equality was made necessary by the ‘present state of civilization’.65 Baron Étienne Pasquier, a former government minister, argued that the bill was made impossible by the current ‘social condition’.66 Particularly illuminating was the speech by Duc Victor de Broglie, one of the most important liberal leaders in the Peers. The goal of the bill, Broglie pointed out, was to reintroduce primogeniture. This was the source of all inequality, it was pure privilege. It was an attempt to create a special class, to introduce inequality everywhere. It was an attempt to destroy the free market. But above all, it was an attempt to recreate a class that had been destroyed by the Revolution. ‘What

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62 Constant, *Political writings*, p. 310; see Holmes’s remarks on this issue in *Benjamin Constant*, p. 37.
64 Ibid., p. 238.
is attempted, is to create an intermediary aristocracy, a sort of nobility \textit{en petit pied}.’ In other words, ‘what is here prepared, is a social and political revolution, a revolution against the revolution that has been made in France almost forty years ago’.  \textsuperscript{67}

But liberals did not just contend themselves with brandishing the royalists’ political model as anachronistic. They put alternatives forward as well. Thus, Constant’s defence of the representative system – and therefore of a modified form of political liberty – as ‘the only one in the shelter of which we could find some freedom or peace today’, must be understood as much as a response to the royalists’ aristocratic liberalism, as to the Jacobin’s republicanism.  \textsuperscript{68}

Other liberals likewise upheld the representative government as an alternative to both Jacobinism and aristocratic liberalism. In 1815, the influential liberal journal \textit{Le Censeur} criticized what it described as ‘Montesquieu’s doctrine’ that the nobility was necessary in the protection of liberty. Although this might be true in theory, it was no longer so in practice. Aristocracy was an irrational prejudice, and as such it could not resist the progress of enlightenment. Today, the aristocracy could appeal to no prejudice to legitimate its pre-eminence over other classes. It could therefore no longer function as a barrier. This was perhaps the reason, \textit{Le Censeur} suggested, that European nations were turning towards representative governments instead.  \textsuperscript{69}

But this was not the reaction of all liberals. Some believed that, even if royalists were wrong to defend the aristocracy, their conception of liberty was valid. Charles Bailleul, who was certainly not a reactionary thinker – he was a former member of the Convention – is an interesting witness to the liberal ambiguity vis-à-vis the royalist argument. As any other liberal, Bailleul resolutely opposed the restoration of primogeniture in his \textit{Du projet de loi sur les successions et sur les substitutions}. Nevertheless, in this brochure, he expressed concerns about the equalized condition of France that were very similar to those of the royalists. The French Revolution had destroyed all intermediary bodies in France. Thus, the king faced the nation, a multitude of isolated individuals, while there were no barriers to counteract the ministers if they had bad designs. This situation was problematic: ‘I confess that the more I contemplate the condition of things’, Bailleul wrote,

\begin{quote}
the more I worry about that isolation, that mobility, which delivers all to power, and moreover delivers power to itself, because it can be reduced to one single agent, that encounters nowhere any resistance, no check, no necessary council, nothing even that obliges it to take the lessons of time into account. I see nothing fixed in that. In such a
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{67} Broglie, \textit{Archives parlementaires}, XLVI, p. 621.
\textsuperscript{68} Constant, \textit{Political writings}, p. 309. A similar argument is made by Holmes, \textit{Benjamin Constant}, pp. 28–52. It should be noted, however, that Helena Rosenblatt attributes Constant’s emphasis on public spiritedness to an intra-liberal quarrel rather than to his reaction against the royalists’ aristocratic liberalism. Rosenblatt, ‘Re-evaluating Benjamin Constant’s liberalism: industrialism, Saint-Simonianism and the Restoration years’, \textit{History of European Ideas}, 30 (2004), pp. 23–37.
\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Le Censeur}, 2 (1815), pp. 145–55.
Bailleul realized that this analysis was close to the royalists’ (if they argued that one metre counted hundred centimetres, he pointed out, one could hardly disagree with them). But he believed that they were mistaken to conclude from this that a return to the institutions of the Old Regime was necessary. Under the Old Regime, power had been limited by many obstacles, but they were all based on usurpation. Moreover, it was impossible to change society back to its old form. Bailleul, therefore, proposed an alternative to the reintroduction of primogeniture. Instead of a territorial aristocracy, he felt that it was necessary to create a series of ‘High Councils’ of ‘doctrine and discipline’, which would be ‘the eyes and ears of the crown and the people’. Each High Council would be composed of members appointed for life, and have a moderator called ‘duke’. These ‘great intermediary bodies’ would fill ‘the emptiness that is between the throne and the nation’ – again, Bailleul echoed the royalist discourse here – and thus preserved the monarchy from ‘anarchy and despotism’.

VI

After the July Revolution of 1830, the liberal discourse, the idea that French society was on an irreversible track towards equality, became the dominant way of thinking about politics. By bringing liberals to power, the July Revolution gave them the opportunity to turn this view into an officially accepted way of thinking. Moreover, the events of 1830, interpreted as another bourgeois victory over an aristocratic regime, confirmed the myth of a progressive development towards equality in and of themselves. As the Catholic historian and political thinker Louis de Carné pointed out in 1838: ‘For twenty years it has been repeated that democracy was on the rise, and the July Revolution seems to have given that maxim a manifest confirmation.’ From this perspective, the royalist attempts to restore a (territorial) aristocracy in France seemed hopelessly anachronistic. Although Carné was not unsympathetic to the royalist cause, in his *Vues sur l’histoire contemporaine* (1833), he judged their attempts to restore primogeniture in 1826 as completely misguided. Moreover, he indicated that royalists themselves had modified their political views after 1830. Now, he commented, even the royalists accepted the inevitable domination of democratic interests.

But aristocratic liberalism, even if it was transformed, did not disappear after 1830. Many post-Restoration liberals agreed with Bailleul that the royalist...
concerns about the levelling of French society were not without grounds; that the absence of intermediary powers was indeed a danger for liberty. Although they did not believe that the restoration of a (territorial) aristocracy was possible, they did argue that a measure of social and institutional reform was necessary to make France safe from despotism. This theme could take many different shapes. Some liberals advocated, like Bailleul, the creation of a ‘new’ aristocracy, more adapted to the needs and characteristics of modern France. But arguments borrowed from the royalist discourse were used as well to plead for very different reforms, such as decentralization, or a greater liberty of the press (as a means to create a strong public opinion). It is only when the discourse used to legitimate these proposals is taken into account that the importance of the royalist bequest to nineteenth-century liberalism becomes clear.

An obvious example of this royalist bequest can be found in the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville, who was himself a member of an old noble family and who had many connections with the royalist party through his friends and relatives. In his *De la démocratie en Amérique* (1835–40), Tocqueville maintained that a condition of social equality, while being the most characteristic trait of modern society, was at the same time an important threat to liberty. In aristocratic societies, Tocqueville argued, liberty was protected by ‘secondary powers’ between sovereign and subjects. But this limitation of central government did not come naturally to a ‘democratic’ people. Democratic societies ‘tended towards a unique and central power’, because they had no individuals and families that were influential and powerful in their own right. The democratic condition of society, Tocqueville warned, was therefore favourable to ‘despotism’; a despotism that was not oppressive or tyrannical in a violent way, but that aimed to have total control over the citizens’ lives. The restoration of an aristocracy was not a possible solution to this problem, Tocqueville argued. Instead, he put his hopes on decentralization. By association, simple citizens could form ‘aristocratic persons’, as Tocquville expressed it, which, like real aristocrats, could not be oppressed easily or in secret.

A similar analysis can be found in the writings of other liberals, less close to the royalist milieu than Tocqueville. Charles Dupont-White, a member of the liberal opposition against Napoleon III, provided a discussion of the concept of liberty along royalist lines in his *De la liberté politique considérée dans ses rapports avec l’administration locale* (1864). Dupont-White started out from the observation that freedom was impossible when there were only individuals vis-à-vis the

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75 A. Jardin’s *Alexis de Tocqueville* (Paris, 1984) provides the most complete information on Tocqueville’s life.
77 Ibid., pp. 242–5.
78 Ibid., pp. 271–8.
state. It was necessary to create ‘intermediary bodies’ in between the state and individuals, with life and independence, to temper the power of central government. Liberty could only be protected when there were several powers in the nation to defend itself against central government. This view, Dupont-White pointed out, was widely prevalent amongst the French. He explained this as an inheritance of the monarchical past, in which the executive power always had great force. Like Tocqueville, Dupont-White did not believe that the aristocracy could be restored to solve this problem. But neither did he believe that decentralization was a good alternative. Instead, he suggested that ‘opinion’, ‘the accordance of minds (esprits) on everything that interests men’, was the most suitable barrier against despotism in a modern society such as France. In his view, the levelling of society was therefore less problematic than it had been to Tocqueville, because modernization had brought the rise of public opinion, a ‘new power’ that modern nations could use to defend their rights.  

Tocqueville’s and Dupont-White’s references to the importance of intermediary bodies were not isolated remarks. Arguments borrowed from the royalist discourse were widely prevalent in the liberal opposition against the centralizing, ‘despotic’ tendencies of the July Monarchy. After the February Revolution of 1848 and the subsequent imposition of a new imperial dictatorship in 1852, the resonance of aristocratic liberalism became even more pronounced in the liberal discourse. Both the liberal analysis of the problems confronting French society – its levelled condition – and the solutions proposed – the recreation of intermediary powers – were clearly inspired by the royalist discourse of the Restoration period. The conviction that intermediary powers, a source of influence independent from the government, needed to be restored became a liberal obsession. Constant’s attempt to link ‘modern’ liberty firmly to ‘political’ liberty or self-government was, in other words, not wholly successful. The rival conception of liberty developed by the royalists – liberty guaranteed by intermediary powers – remained as least as important in nineteenth-century liberalism.

81 Lucien Jaume discusses arguments of this type in his L’individu effacé, pp. 288–320.